Student and Faculty Coping and Impacts on Academic Success in Response to COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how faculty and students differed in their coping strategies to handle the severe stress brought on by COVID-19 and how this stress impacted student academic achievement. For this study,103 students and faculty at a rural southern university participated in the study where they reported on their coping mechanisms during the pandemic. Student grade data from midterm and final course grades were collected to measure academic achievement. Results of the study indicated that students were more likely than faculty to engage in maladaptive coping strategies, specifically emotional disengagement. The findings have theoretical and practical implications for teaching in higher education such as consideration of how students cope with severe stress compared to faculty and how it impacts academic achievement.

In the Spring of 2020, a global pandemic reached the United States and quickly had a devastating and resounding impact on American life with the closing of small businesses, stay at home orders, and school systems abruptly moving into an online mode of teaching and learning, if not closing all together (Armitage & Nellums, 2020). Once WHO (World Health

Organization) declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic March 12th, 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020) many U.S. universities prevented their students from returning after Spring Break and transitioned all courses to an online format. Given that there has not been a global pandemic in recent history to help chart appropriate responses nor was there common understanding of how COVID was spread, many universities transitions and responses were reactionary and left many faculty, staff, and students in a state of confusion, frustration, and uncertainty (Son et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Whereas in an ideal setting a shift to online learning would require faculty to have at least multiple weeks to prepare appropriate and effective pedagogical online practices, they were now faced with making this shift in a few days (Bao, 2020). The abrupt switch to an all online course structure added an immense amount of stress to both faculty and students who then had to learn new teaching methodologies in an already stressful context.

While physical health was affected for some, individuals mental health was more severely impacted by the mandated stay at home orders (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Previous research studying epidemic impact and disasters of various forms (terrorist attacks, school shootings, oil spills, hurricanes, etc.) have found that these extreme events are followed by an increase in posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and a host of other mental illnesses (Neria, Nandia, & Galea, 2008). Although previous epidemics have marked differences to COVID-19, the SARS epidemic (a similar respiratory disease) had found that both patients and clinicians had an increase in PTSD, stress, and psychological distress that also persisted over time (Lee et al., 2007). Unlike the epidemics from previous research which were regionally disruptive, COVID-19 led to a worldwide disruption in teaching modalities. Research surrounding the mental and emotional impact on faculty and students during COVID-19 is still underway, and what has been distributed demonstrates a stark image.

A survey conducted by a mental health charity called YoungMinds in the UK found that out of the 2111 participants up to age 25 that had a previous mental health history, 83% said the pandemic had made their conditions worse via a lack of access to support systems both physical and social (Lee, 2020). Not only are lost resources negatively impacting students, but the loss of the consistency and school routines has increased levels of depression among students who rely on routine as a coping mechanism (Baloran, 2020; Lee, 2020; Son et al., 2020). The impact of COVID-19 has been substantial and taken an especially intense focus on student mental health. For instance, even before the pandemic, college students were already experiencing mental health concerns with rising levels of depression and anxiety (Lipson et al., 2019). With COVID-19 procedures requiring isolation and removing a sense of belonging most college students need for well-being and success (Johns & Hawkes, 2020), the pandemic has only exacerbated mental health risk factors

(Lederer et al., 2020; Son et al., 2020). Although the negative impact on student mental health is clear, what should be further explored is how students used coping mechanisms during this experience and how this may have impacted their academic resilience. If we can identify and understand student coping experiences, we may be better suited to also understand how to best help them moving forward. Further, there is little research focusing on the experience of faculty members during the pandemic as well.

Given the significant shift in everyday life due to COVID-19 there is reason to believe that the mental health impacts are not just limited to students but are also be felt by faculty in unique ways. A lack of routine not only impacted faculty as well, but educators all over were faced with a drastic new transition into purely online teaching and learning in a rapid time allotment. In an ideal setting, faculty would have weeks to develop each course into an online structure. Online teaching requires extensive lesson plans, audio and visual content, and constant monitoring as well as tech support teams that many universities may not have the infrastructure to provide (Bao, 2020). The rapid transition to an online platform without appropriate preparation and training had many scholars arguing that pandemic teaching would not classify as 'online learning' but more of distance education, or triage teaching (Bates, 2020; Johnson et al., 2020). In response to closing university campuses, many educators had a manner of days to transform face-to-face classes to online, with many faculty having little or no previous online teaching experience (Bao, 2020). Further, previous research indicates that during times of acute stress, mental and physical health take a great hit, making academic engagement difficult (Saleh et al., 2017). High levels of stress toward the end of the semester has shown a negative impact on academic success in college students (Elias et al., 2011; Rafidah, 2009). Due to stress and its negative impact on academic success and the acute amount of stress that COVID-19 and abrupt switching to an online program, it seems that it is only natural for academic achievement to also suffer. The current research postulates that the high stress transition accompanied with already overwhelming stress of the pandemic and heightened uncertainty impacted faculty coping mechanisms which may have compounded the stress on students and therefore impacting their academic success.

The aim of the study was to understand the experience of both faculty and students in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and how both parties engaged in coping mechanisms and how that may have impacted academic achievement. The results of this study can help educators understand how students and faculty respond to extreme stress and unique environments and how-to best support both our students and faculty in moving forward in this new normal.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Coping

There are many ways people respond to stress in their lives. The concept of coping originated in psychology in the 1940's and 1950's (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). In their foundational work, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as, "...constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of that person" (p. 18). Coping is outlined as a stage-wise process that functions as consistent assessment and re-assessment of an individual's environment or situation. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) go on to describe specific factors that influence an individual's ability to cope. Some are labeled "coping resources" (p. 157), which we might refer to as protective factors. These protective factors include social support, social skills, problem-solving skills, positive beliefs, and health and energy. In opposition to that, there are also "constraints against coping resources" (p. 157) which we could also label as risk factors. These risk factors include the influence of cultural values and norms around emotions and behaviors, environmental constraints such as material resources, and level of threat (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

The way an individual generally responds to stress is often referred to as *coping style* (Lazarus, 1999; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping style was originally conceptualized by correlating thoughts and behaviors related to coping in the same people over time or between situations (Lazarus, 1999). Previous literature classifies coping styles in different ways. For example, Folkman and Lazarus (1980) outline the differences between emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. Emotion-focused coping usually involves either reducing emotional distress, or re-framing an encounter that caused emotional distress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Individuals may engage in strategies such as minimizing, positive comparisons, or trying to see the good in negative events as part of emotion-focused coping. The goal of emotion-focused coping is to help an individual stay hopeful and optimistic in the face of negative events (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In contrast, problem-focused coping strategies are directed towards problem solving, rather than emotional avoidance. Problem-focused coping is considered an active coping style where an individual engages in specific activities to negate the problem or negative event. Oftentimes, problem-focused coping is used when an individual feels some sense of control over the outcome (American Psychological Association, n.d.).

Additionally, literature exists that defines coping as adaptive or maladaptive (Snyder & Pulvers, 2001). Avoidant coping is considered a maladaptive coping style. Someone employing the avoidant coping strategy

is trying to avoid the problem itself, and the emotional discomfort associated with the problem or negative event. Avoidant coping keeps the individual in denial the problem exists (Snyder & Pulvers, 2001). The COPE Inventory includes questions that address active and maladaptive coping behaviors (Carver, 2013). More specifically, the COPE Inventory breaks down an individual's score based on specific coping behaviors such as: positive reinterpretation of growth, mental disengagement, humor, and substance use, just to name a few (Carver, 2013).

Coping and Academic Achievement

Previous research has identified relationships between coping styles and emotional and mental health (Ben-Zur, 2009; Carver, 2013). For example, research by Moskowitz and colleagues (1996) demonstrated that AIDS caregivers that had positive reappraisal coping mechanisms had positive emotions during and after their partners death. This research was corroborated in Turner-Cobb's research in 2002, demonstrating positive coping mechanisms and relationship to better life satisfaction and positive adjustment in HIV-positive persons. Whereas research on cancer patients who engaged in cognitive and behavioral avoidance coping mechanisms demonstrated detriments to both health (Epping-Jordan et al., 1994) and adjustment (Carver et al., 1999). The connection between coping strategies and overall health has been well studied, but more recently scholars have identified the relationship between coping styles and academic achievement.

Research by MacCann and colleagues (2011) demonstrated that coping styles mitigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. Within their study, students who were higher in emotion management demonstrated more problem-focused coping (a coping strategy highly effective in stress management by providing a sense of mastery over the stressor or threat (Zeidner & Saklofske, 1996)) and higher grades. The relationship between emotion management and higher GPA was non-significant without problem-focused coping strategies, indicating that coping style can not only mediate other impacts on academic achievement, but could show benefit to academic achievement itself.

Further research in various higher education contexts has demonstrated the academic benefit of a problem-focused coping strategy versus either emotion-focused or avoidant coping. Researchers believe that emotion-focused coping can help with maintaining emotional balance via appropriate venting and prevent extreme emotional reactions, but does little to help overcome the threat or perceived stressor (Lazarus, 1999; MacCann et al., 2011; Pickens et al., 2019). Avoidant coping has little positive benefit as substance abuse, denial, and disengagement rarely ever lead to beneficial outcomes (MacCann et al., 2011; Parker & Endler, 1996). However, research

on problem-focused coping has demonstrated relationships to higher exam scores and satisfaction in medical school (Alimoglu et al., 2011), students' university adjustment (Abdullah et al., 2010) and higher GPAs (Abdullahn et al., 2010; Gustems-Carnicer et al., 2019).

Previous research has indicated that overall college students rely heavily on emotion-focused coping strategies compared to problem-focused strategies (Broughman, et al., 2009; Strenna et al., 2009), with indications of gender differences of female college students being more likely to use emotion-focused coping and males more likely to use problem-focused coping strategies (Broughman et al., 2009; Ramya & Parthasarathy, 2009). Further, there is little research on faculty coping strategies, but research on secondary education teachers has indicated that teachers who used problem-focused coping strategies experienced less burnout and exhaustion (Pogere et al., 2019). Based on the rigor and high stress of the faculty job, it could be that faculty may have more experience in dealing with stress and working through it via effective problem-focused coping as compared to university students. Given this relationship and the immense amount of stress that COVID-19 has put on students and faculty, we felt it necessary to determine what coping styles both faculty and students were using and how that may impact academic behavior.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Given the on-going crisis in higher education caused by the pandemic of COVID-19 it is imperative to understand the impact on both faculty and students. Moving forward and preparing for teaching in this new normal, knowing how both faculty and students cope during this acute stress and how it may impact course achievement will be necessary. The main research questions being analyzed in this current study are:

1. What coping strategies are both faculty and students engaging in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the abrupt shift to online learning?
2. How has the abrupt switch to online learning in response to COVID-19 impacted student academic achievement?

RESEARCH METHOD

The current study used a survey method to collect data on both faculty and students during the transition to online learning in the wake of COVID-19. A survey methodology was used due to participants being accessible only through an online format during quarantine due to COVID-19. Further, the self-report nature of the measurement used made a survey design a more

appropriate method for collecting information on coping strategies. Survey design is a common methodology used in psychological research and provides reliable access to participants not readily accessible otherwise (Iarossi, 2009). Through data screening to check for outliers and normality, survey research allows for appropriate rigor to data analysis (Sovacool et al., 2018). Participants were recruited through a campus wide e-mail that provided a link to the survey materials. The survey was distributed the week of April 6th-10th, two weeks after the university had switched to an online only format due to COVID-19.

Table 1
Demographic Information Separated by Faculty or Student Status

	Student f(%)	*Faculty f(%)*
Age		
18-22	54 (68.3)	-
22-30	22 (27.9)	3 (10.7)
31-40	3 (3.8)	3 (10.7)
41+	-	22 (78.6)
Gender		
Female	42 (73.6)	18 (64.3)
Male	15 (26.3)	8 (28.6)
Other	-	-
Ethnicity		
White (non Hispanic)	43 (60.6)	22 (78.6)
Black or African American	14 (19.7)	3 (10.7)
Latino/a	2 (2.8)	1 (18)
American Indian or Alaska Native	2 (2.8)	-
Mixed Ethnicity	1(1.4)	-
Other:	-	-

Note: Participants could select multiple options for ethnicity.

Participants

This study utilized a convenience sample of 103 students and faculty at a regional university in rural Mississippi. A convenience sample was used to get as large of a sample size as possible given the limitations and limited access to participants due to COVID-19 procedures. Ideally a probability sample is used in research with two samples, but given the conditions were pre-determined (faculty vs student) a probability sample was not feasible. A campus wide survey was sent to all faculty at the study site, giving every faculty member an equal opportunity to respond to the survey. For the faculty that responded, they were asked to send their own students the survey to gather responses from students of various majors, rankings, and status. An a

priori power analysis showed that for our analyses, need approximately 60 participants to have an 80% probability to detect a small effect ($d = 0.25$). Participants' ethnicity was 65% Caucasian, 16.5% African-American, 2.9% Latino/a, 1.9% Native American/Pacific Islander, and 1% Other. Demographic information separated by faculty or student status can be found in Table 1.

Instruments

Demographics. Participants were asked to report their age, gender identity, and ethnicity. To prevent facilitating stereotype threat, the demographic questions were the last items participants filled out in the survey (Steele & Aronson, 1995).

COPE Inventory. This study used Carver's (2013) COPE Inventory. This Likert-Style 60 item survey measures 14 categories of an individual's coping behaviors to individual events. Participants were asked to respond with what they generally do and feel when experiencing stress. Each question presented a particular activity and participants indicated on a scale of 1-4 (1- "I usually don't do this at all," 4-"I usually do this a lot.") how much they engaged in that activity when dealing with stress. Items were then summed based on their sub-scales. The COPE inventory is widely used in counselor education and clinical research and is a valid and rigorous scale that accurately measures coping behaviors to individual events (Greer et al., 2007).

Course Grades. Student participants consented to have their grade information accessed for the semester. At the end of the term, we reached out to the university's Institution of Research Effectiveness and Planning to gather both midterm and final course grades of each course enrolled in by each student participant. Each participant was enrolled in an average of 5 courses giving a total of 300 points of grade data. The university reports grade data as a letter grade ("A" "B" etc.) and so data were analyzed as ordinal due to there being a rank order to the categorical data.

RESULTS

All skewness and kurtosis values were less than or equal to an absolute value of 3, indicating that we could assume normality in the remainder of the analyses (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Furthermore, no outliers were found in any of the data (i.e., zs ≤ 3). All reported tests are two-tailed. All data screening techniques, descriptive statistics, and advanced statistical analysis were conducted using the SPSS 21 software.

To answer research question one, "*What type of coping strategies are both faculty and students engaging in in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the abrupt switch to online learning?*" we conducted an independent samples t-test comparing the two groups on their sub scores of coping strategies. This test revealed a significant difference between student and faculty in their coping strategy of mental disengagement ($t(84) = -1.995$, $p = .049$, $d = 0.47$), see Figure 1. Other coping strategies were approaching significance, but did not reach the $p < .05$ level. Means, standard deviations, and alpha levels can be found in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Error Bars: 95% CI
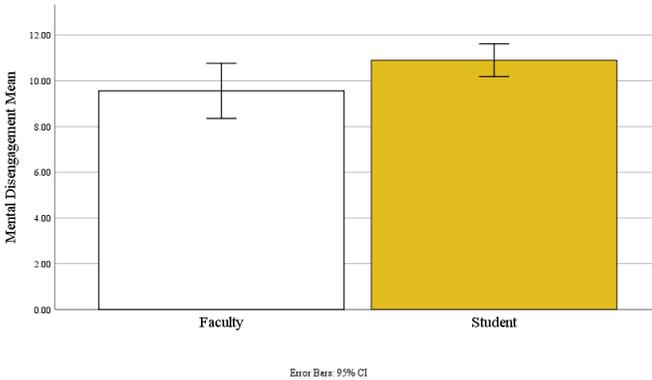
Figure 1. *Means on mental disengagement coping strategy separated by faculty and students.*

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and Other Descriptive Information

Variable Name	N	Range	M (SD)	Cron. Alpha
COPE Subscales:				
Positive Reinterpretation	88	11.00	12.86 (2.53)	.78
Mental Disengagement	88	12.00	11.17 (2.64)	.52
Focus on Venting of Emotions	88	12.00	10.15 (3.23)	.81
Instrumental Social Support	88	12.00	10.83 (3.06)	.79
Active Coping	88	12.00	11.49 (2.37)	.73
Denial	88	11.00	5.66 (2.12)	.71
Religious Coping	88	12.00	11.68 (4.40)	.95
Humor	88	12.00	10.16 (3.69)	.89
Behavioral Disengagement	88	11.00	6.08 (2.27)	.78
Restraint	88	12.00	10.00 (2.53)	.62
Emotional Social Support	88	12.00	10.80 (3.65)	.90
Substance Abuse	88	12.00	5.78 (3.09)	.97
Acceptance	88	10.00	12.16 (2.50)	.65
Suppression of Competing Activities	88	11.00	10.36 (2.05)	.29
Planning	88	12.00	12.20 (2.72)	.84

Table 3

Frequencies of course grades at midterm and final grade points.

Course Grade	A	B	C	D	F
Midterm Course Grade	208	55	12	7	3
Final Course Grade	222	48	14	4	1

Note: On average students were enrolled in 5 courses. Grades from each enrolled course were used. There was one student who withdrew post midterm, their data was subsequently removed.

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations Separated by Faculty and Student

	Faculty	Student	Faculty	Student
Variable Name	N	N	M (SD)	M (SD)
COPE Subscales				
Positive Reinterpretation	26	62	12.92 (2.42)	12.84 (2.60)
Mental Disengagement	26	62	9.56 (2.92)	10.90 (2.79)
Focus on Venting of Emotions	26	62	9.92 (3.10)	10.24 (3.30)
Instrumental Social Support	26	62	11.12 (2.93)	10.71 (3.13)
Active Coping	26	62	11.77 (2.27)	11.37 (2.42)
Denial	26	62	5.46 (1.75)	5.74 (2.26)
Religious Coping	26	62	11.77 (4.54)	11.65 (4.37)
Humor	26	62	10.00 (3.07)	10.23 (3.94)
Behavioral Disengagement	26	62	5.58 (2.04)	6.29 (2.34)
Restraint	26	62	9.88 (1.86)	10.05 (2.77)
Emotional Social Support	26	62	10.69 (3.48)	10.84 (3.74)
Substance Abuse	26	62	5.54 (3.01)	5.89 (3.14)
Acceptance	26	62	11.92 (2.33)	12.26 (2.57)
Suppression of Competing Activities	26	62	10.50 (1.96)	10.31 (2.09)
Planning	26	62	12.62 (2.55)	12.03 (2.79)

To answer research question two, "*How has the abrupt switch to online learning in response to COVID-19 impacted student academic achievement?*" a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used because the grade data collected was ordinal (the university reported midterm and final course grades as letters and not percentages). The results showed that students' grades demonstrated a significant change from their midterm course grades reported prior to COVID-19 school shift to their final course grades reported 6 weeks after the COVID-19 online course shift ($z = 2.025$, $p = 0.043$). The median course grade rating was an A at both pre- and post-treatment, but the 75th quartile of students increased from a B median at midterms to an A median at finals.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In examining the coping strategies of both faculty and students there seems to be a pattern in the different types of coping strategies used by faculty compared to their students. Although mental disengagement was the only statistically significant difference in coping strategy use with students ($M = 11.58$, $SD = 2.46$) engaging in a significantly higher amount than faculty ($M = 10.19$, $SD = 2.84$), there were other strategies that faculty had higher levels in than students. Specifically, faculty were higher, although non-significant, in their use of positive reinterpretation, use of instrumental social support, active coping, religious coping, suppression of competing activities and planning. This leaves students scoring higher in their use of mental disengagement, venting of emotions, denial, humor, behavioral disengagement, restraint, emotional social support, substance abuse, and acceptance. These were not statistically significant, so one can only speculate, but it seems that faculty overall were engaged in healthier active engagement, problem-focused coping mechanisms than students. This is also mirrored in the significant difference of students engaging in higher levels of mental disengagement, which is a maladaptive coping mechanism (Lazarus, 1999). This finding corroborates previous research that indicates that students are more likely to engage in emotion-focused coping mechanisms (Broughman, et al., 2009; Strenna et al., 2009). Although there is limited research studying the coping strategies of faculty, our findings provide some evidence that they are more likely to engage in problem-focused strategy use than students. Although the stress from COVID-19 equally impacted both faculty and students, given that faculty are a support system for their students as well (Keown et al., 2021; Smidt et al., 2021) that they are unable to mentally distance themselves because their job duties do not allow to cope via disengagement. In fact, research on early faculty experiences and needs during the early weeks of COVID-19 indicated that faculty desired more support for their students in online learning and information on how best to support remote students (Johnson et al., 2020). Although faculty were experiencing extreme stress, their focus was still on supporting their students, not allowing them the privilege of coping through disengagement.

Regarding student academic achievement, looking at the significant increase in grades from midterm to final grade points, it seems that students performed better in their courses as the pandemic went on. This seems counterintuitive given their higher levels of mental disengagement and that mental engagement is necessary for effective learning especially in higher education. There are a few factors that may explain this variance. First, it could be that students perform better in an online environment due to being able to pace the information and work on material at their own schedule. There is some research to indicate that students perform better in online

courses dependent on select factors such as emotional intelligence (Berenson et al., 2008) and technology self-efficacy (Ozerbas & Erdogan, 2016). These findings, however, are from online courses with an appropriate amount of prep time from the faculty, students who chose an online modality with online learning expectations instead of being forced into it abruptly, as well as a non-pandemic world. With unique context of an abrupt switch to an online learning environment which may require an adjustment period (Bao, 2020), the lack of resources in order to complete the online work especially in lower SES areas (Rohman et al., 2020; Shapiro et al., 2017), and the increase in other responsibilities that coincide with the pandemic (ex: picking up extra work hours, taking care of family members, etc. (Dziech, 2020) it is likely that student engagement and academic achievement would suffer. What is the more plausible explanation for this increase in grades is that faculty recognized the extreme stress and unique context this change created for students and were more lenient on student performance. Many other higher education facilities had made an administrative decision to either give students all passing grades for the Spring semester or simply keep their midterm grades as final grades given the pandemic (Kadakia & Bradshaw, 2020). Other faculty from various universities having recognized the acute stress students were under decided to be more forgiving of students regarding timed exams, late work, and due dates (Colleen, 2020; Retta, 2020; Svrluga, 2020).

Theoretical Implications
With a limited sample size and small effect size, theoretical implications are limited but still relevant. Regarding the literature on coping styles of college students, our study corroborates prior research (Broughman, et al., 2009; Strenna et al., 2009) that indicated college students use maladaptive coping styles (emotion-focused (Snyder, 2003; Lazarus, 1999)). Further, our study is one of the only to our knowledge to specifically focus on faculty coping styles during a severely stressful event such as a pandemic. The context of this study makes generalizability difficult, but provides a starting place to add to the literature of faculty coping styles which may have impacts on teaching pedagogy during high stress events.

Practical Implications
With a shift to an online platform, many faculty were now finding themselves working odd hours with no sure structure, making disengagement difficult (Flaherty, 2020). Although students do have a monetary investment in their coursework, students do not have the same constant connection and need for availability that faculty do. The concern for future implications of teaching online and during acute stress is the importance of setting boundaries for faculty. Since there may be an unfelt need or requirement to be constantly

available for online teaching given the lack of clear 'working hours', faculty may need to find a coping mechanism that allows a healthy level of mental disengagement to prevent burnout and feelings of being overwhelmed that many faculty have indicated over the past few months (Sahu, 2020).

The implications of the grade data moving forward is relatively limited. It possibly illuminates the compassion of faculty toward struggling students in a time where triage teaching and stress was rampant. As far as the impact of the stress and disruption caused by COVID-19 on student academic performance, more detailed investigation would need to occur. It seems likely that student performance would have decreased but given the lack of individual assignment data as well as qualitative responses this study cannot conclusively say and in fact our data would indicate the opposite. Future studies would greatly benefit from qualitative interviews with both faculty and students to give a further narrative to the quantitative data.

Limitations and Future Directions

As with any study, our research has some limitations. First, because the data were only collected for one semester at one university at the brink of the pandemic, it will be difficult to make generalizable claims based on the findings. We are aware of this limitation and our implications from the research were discussed with these limiting factors in mind. Second, our sample size was relatively limited. Future studies would benefit from gathering a greater sample to give further power to analyses and give greater generalizability to findings. Further, although our findings were statistically significant, they had a relatively small effect size. Future research should consider comparing variances between student and faculty coping styles to see if similar patterns emerge. Finally, our research was exploratory and took place during a pandemic, this context will be difficult to replicate. Moving forward, future research should consider how coping styles of both faculty and students during times of high stress impact teaching as well as student achievement over time. Although the grade data indicates that students performed better at the end of the semester than they did at midterms (prior to the closing of campus), it seems there may be more to the story than is accessible purely from grade data. Future studies should include a qualitative component for both faculty and students to gain a more holistic understanding of the impact on academic achievement.

CONCLUSION

The goal of our research was to gain further understandings of how faculty and students engaged in coping strategies during the first stages of COVID-19. Further, wanted to investigate how the pandemic may have impacted student and faculty coping strategies and how the acute stress of the pandemic

impacted student academic achievement. We found that students were more likely than faculty to engage in mental disengagement as a coping mechanism, corroborating previous research indicating students' likelihood of using maladaptive (emotion-focused) coping mechanisms (Broughman, et al., 2009; Lazarus, 1999; Strenna et al., 2009). We also provide some evidence indicating faculty's greater use of problem-focused coping strategies, adding to the limited research in this area. These findings have implications for both theoretical and practical implications for college teaching and coping with stress, but future studies are needed to confirm these findings and explore these phenomena in greater depth.

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