

Organizational Wellness, Coping Mechanisms, and Work Productivity among Centro Escolar University Makati Employees: A Descriptive-Correlational Study

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occupational wellness, coping mechanisms, work productivity, remote work, organizational resilience, pandemic adaptation

Abstract. Occupational stress poses a significant threat to employee well-being and organizational productivity, especially during periods of crisis. Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic transformed workplace structures and imposed unprecedented psychological and organizational demands on employees. This descriptive-correlational study examined the organizational wellness status, coping mechanisms, and work productivity of 63 employees at Centro Escolar University–Makati during the pandemic. Employing validated self-administered questionnaires, the study evaluated physical, mental, and emotional wellness, as well as coping strategies classified as problem-focused, emotion-focused, and less constructive mechanisms. Results revealed that employees experienced moderate organizational wellness ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.45$) and employed coping strategies at a medium level ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.36$). Mental and emotional wellness appeared relatively stronger than physical wellness, showing the challenges of prolonged remote work arrangements. A strong relationship between length of service and organizational wellness suggests that institutional experience adds to greater resilience, familiarity with organizational structures, and stronger support networks. Employees simultaneously demonstrated adaptive coping strategies and psychological resistance, revealing cognitive dissonance between productivity expectations and personal well-being during pandemic-induced work transitions. The findings bring to the fore the need for institutionalized organizational wellness programs that systematically address employees' physical, mental, and emotional health. The study concludes that employee well-being during crises is influenced more by coping strategies and institutional experience than by demographic factors. It is therefore recommended that Centro Escolar University–Makati implement comprehensive workplace wellness initiatives, including mental health support services, stress management programs, and resilience-building interventions, particularly for employees with shorter organizational tenure. Such programs may strengthen employee adaptability, sustain productivity, and enhance long-term organizational resilience.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic undeniably brought unparalleled disruptions to work life and employee well-being across the globe. More than three years into the pandemic, the said health catastrophe substantially affected various aspects of people's lives, including the economy, the government and private sector, and the working group. Specifically, the global economy experienced a deep recession in a short period, while workplaces were compelled to rapidly shift from traditional on-site operations to remote or work-from-home arrangements. This sudden transformation altered the conventional paradigm of work and required employees to adjust to new work structures, expectations, and technological demands. As a result, workers faced significant challenges in balancing personal and professional responsibilities within the context of the "new normal" workplace environment (Chang, 2020).

Traditionally, work stress has been associated with managing workplace relationships, concerns about job security, and anxieties related to job performance. However, during the pandemic, these traditional stressors were compounded by new psychological pressures such as physical isolation, uncertainty about productivity expectations, and disruptions in daily routines (Jonen, 2020). Organizations worldwide also implemented workforce adjustments such as layoffs and furloughs, which further intensified employees' emotional and psychological strain. These circumstances contributed to various psychological outcomes including anxiety, depression, boredom, and a sense of inertia that may undermine motivation and work engagement. Consequently, employees' personal approaches to coping with unexpected changes and uncertainty may lead to varying productivity outcomes (Milani et al., 2026; Li et al., 2021).

Occupational stress does not only affect the quality of life of employees, but it also produces significant organizational outcomes. When workers experience prolonged stress and emotional exhaustion, they may develop burnout—a condition characterized by emotional depletion, detachment from work, and decreased job performance (Kelly, 2021). The pandemic has intensified the factors underlying burnout by increasing isolation, workload demands, and uncertainty, as well as by creating potential conflicts between organizational directives and personal safety concerns (Nidal et al., 2020). Thus, there is a need for organizations to pay closer attention to employee well-being as a vital feature of organizational resilience and productivity.

In response to these challenges, many organizations have recognized that health extends beyond the mere absence of disease. Rather, wellness encompasses a holistic state of physical, mental, and social well-being (Loo et al., 2021). A healthy working environment, therefore, becomes essential not only for employee welfare but also for organizational sustainability. Research suggests that individuals thrive in learning and working environments that actively support well-being through positive social relationships, supportive leadership, and effective human resource practices (Bennett, 2018). Such environments nurture employee vitality, learning, and productivity, which are particularly crucial in service-oriented sectors such as higher education.

Higher education institutions, whose operations depend heavily on human capital and interpersonal collaboration, have been particularly susceptible to pandemic-related disruptions. As workers explore the challenges of remote work arrangements, shifting workloads, and intensified psychological pressures, their ability to cope with stress becomes an essential determinant of both individual well-being and institutional performance. Psychological theories on coping emphasize that individuals employ different strategies when confronted with stressors that may or may not be within their control. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) categorize these coping strategies into problem-focused coping, which aims to manage or modify the source of stress, and emotion-focused coping, which seeks to regulate the emotional responses associated with stressful situations.

Given these considerations, understanding employee wellness, coping strategies, and productivity outcomes becomes vital for organizations seeking to maintain organizational effectiveness during crises. Centro Escolar University–Makati, as a major educational institution in Metro Manila, experienced the same workplace transformations and challenges brought about by the pandemic. Examining the wellness status, coping mechanisms, and work productivity of its employees can provide valuable insights into how institutional personnel respond to large-scale disruptions. Moreover, such investigation may serve as a basis for developing a comprehensive workplace well-being program designed to support employees' physical, psychological, and social health.

Accordingly, this study sought to systematically examine and analyze the organizational wellness status of Centro Escolar University–Makati employees, their perceived coping mechanisms, and resulting work productivity outcomes during the acute pandemic period. Specifically, the research addressed the following questions: (1) What are the current wellness status levels across physical, mental, and emotional dimensions? (2) What coping strategies—problem-focused, emotion-focused, and less useful—do employees employ when confronted with pandemic-related stressors? (3) What relationships exist between organizational wellness status and perceived coping mechanisms? (5) How do demographic characteristics, particularly organizational tenure, relate to wellness outcomes?

Research Framework

This study is anchored on the Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional theory of stress and coping, which explains how individuals manage stressful situations through different coping strategies. According to this theory, coping mechanisms are broadly categorized into problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping involves active efforts to address or modify the source of stress, while emotion-focused coping refers to strategies aimed at regulating emotional responses to stressful events. These coping responses reflect individuals' cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage internal and external demands that are perceived as taxing or exceeding their available resources.

In relation to organizational wellness, coping mechanisms are closely associated with individuals' locus of control, which refers to the extent to which individuals believe that life events are influenced by internal actions or external circumstances. Employees with an internal locus of control tend to adopt proactive coping strategies to manage stress, while those with an external locus of control may rely more on emotional adjustment strategies. Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, coping mechanisms became essential tools that enabled employees to maintain psychological balance while confronting unprecedented changes in work structures and daily routines.

Furthermore, this study recognizes wellness from a holistic perspective that integrates the balance of body, mind, and spirit in achieving overall health and well-being (Cohen, 2010; Strohecker, 2010). Organizational wellness programs that support this holistic approach can help employees manage stress, sustain productivity, and maintain positive engagement with their work. In this regard, the present study examines how organizational wellness, coping mechanisms, and work productivity interact among employees of Centro Escolar University–Makati and how these relationships may inform the development of an institutional workplace well-being program.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a descriptive–correlational research design to examine the organizational wellness, coping mechanisms, and work productivity of employees of Centro Escolar University–Makati during the COVID-19 pandemic. The descriptive component of the study determined the current status of employees' wellness across physical, mental, and emotional domains, as well as to identify the coping strategies they used in response to pandemic-related stressors. Meanwhile, the correlational aspect of the research sought to know the relationships among organizational wellness, coping mechanisms, and work productivity.

Research Participants

The study involved 63 participants who are all CEU Makati employees who voluntarily responded to the survey questionnaire. The respondents represented various demographic and employment characteristics, including differences in age, employment status, and length of service, which provided a diverse representation of the university workforce. These participants included both teaching and non-teaching personnel, such as permanent administrative staff, permanent faculty members, fixed-term or probationary teaching personnel, and teaching personnel who also hold administrative or office functions within the institution. The inclusion of employees from different age groups, employment classifications, and years of service allowed the study to capture a broad range of experiences related to organizational wellness, coping mechanisms, and work productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A majority or 33 percent belong to the 30-39 age group, while seven percent (7 percent) of them belong to the 60-69 age bracket. On the other hand, more than half or 55.6 percent of the participants are non-teaching personnel with a permanent status. In addition, 30 percent of the participants are relatively young professionals who have served Centro Escolar University-Makati for four years. Length of service analysis indicated substantial organizational tenure diversity, with 33 percent of them having served the institution for 1-4 years. This demonstrates the relatively recent recruitment alongside longer-tenured employees who provided institutional continuity and organizational knowledge.

Profile of the Participants

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-29	16	25.3
30-39	21	33.3
40-49	10	15.8
50-59	11	17.7
60-69	5	7.9
Total	63	100.0

Table 1. Participants' Age

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Non-Teaching (Permanent)	35	55.6
Teaching Permanent	16	25.4

Teaching Term/Probationary)	(Fixed	8	12.7
Teaching Personnel with		4	6.3
Office/Administrative Function			
Total		63	100.0

Table 2. Participants' Employment Status

Length of Service	Frequency	Percentage
1 month - 1 year	2	3
1 - 4 years	19	30
4 - 7 years	10	16
7 - 10 years	10	16
11 - 14 years	8	13
14 years and up	14	22
Total	63	100.0

Table 3. Participants' Length of Service

Research Instrument

To gather the necessary data, a validated researcher-made questionnaire was utilized. The instrument was designed to assess employees' perceived wellness status and to measure the extent to which they employed various coping strategies, including problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and less useful coping strategies. The questionnaire also included items related to employees' perceived work productivity under the work-from-home and pandemic work arrangements. The questionnaire was administered online through Google Forms to the institutional employee population frame (N = 150). A total of 63 employees voluntarily participated, yielding a 42 percent response rate. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and written informed consent was obtained from all respondents prior to data collection. The research adhered to established ethical standards for studies involving human participants, and approval to conduct the study was secured in accordance with institutional research protocols.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistics to determine the levels of organizational wellness, coping mechanisms, and work productivity. In addition, correlational analysis was employed to determine the strength and direction of the relationships among these variables.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations in this study focused around protecting the rights of the participants while ensuring that no potential harm occurs during the conduct of the study. The ethical principles were followed, i.e. informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study. Prior to the data collection, the researcher obtained a permission to conduct study from the university administrators in CEU. Then, an informed consent was sought from all the participants. The informed consent process included clear, detailed information about the study's purpose, the expected roles of participants, the duration of the study, and any risks involved. After the completion of the study and all necessary analyses, the data was securely destroyed to prevent any future misuse. Participants were informed of the timeline for data retention, which would last only as long as required for analysis, after which all collected data would be permanently deleted.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study on the organizational wellness, coping mechanisms, and work productivity among employees of Centro Escolar University–Makati during the COVID-19 pandemic. Particularly, it discusses the level of organizational wellness across physical, mental, and emotional domains, the coping strategies employed by employees, and their perceived work productivity under pandemic-related work arrangements.

Wellness Domains	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Physical	3.65	0.53	Every once in a while
Mental	4.39	0.54	Sometimes
Emotional	4.07	0.67	Sometimes
Overall Wellness	4.03	0.45	Sometimes

Table 4. Organizational Wellness Status of the Employees

The assessment of organizational wellness across three dimensions revealed nuanced patterns suggesting situational rather than comprehensive wellness compromise. Physical wellness showed the lowest mean rating ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 0.53$) with verbal interpretation of “every once in a while.” This means that employees experienced periodic rather than persistent physical well-being challenges. This pattern likely reflects the physical demands of prolonged remote work arrangements, including ergonomic challenges, reduced physical activity associated with elimination of commuting and on-campus movement, and the cumulative physiological impacts of sustained sitting in home-based work environments. Mental wellness demonstrated substantially higher mean levels ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.54$) with verbal interpretation of “sometimes,” while emotional wellness showed moderate levels ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.67$), also interpreted as “sometimes.” Generally, organizational wellness composite score ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.45$) indicated that employees experienced situational wellness challenges rather than pervasive well-being compromise.

However, the psychological and emotional dimensions warrant deeper consideration within the broader pandemic context. Specifically, the participants acknowledged that their decision-making sometimes is at risk because of the difficulty of the transition of the unexpected situation, i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic. Their focus on work has been a battle of learning and adapting that led them to become distressed, less motivated, and unfortunate. Li (2020) found out that there is an increase of negative emotions and sensitivity to social risks. As such, positivity toward life judgment and satisfaction is less expected. According to Aldana (2021), “the core of every good wellness program is behavior change.” With the right education, skills, motivation, skills, tools, and social support, people change behaviors. Healthy behaviors lead to lower health risks, and lower health risks lead to less chronic disease.

Results showed that employees recognized difficulty in maintaining stable decision-making processes due to the overwhelming transition demands imposed by the unexpected pandemic circumstances. Employees consistently described their work focus as characterized by a dual learning and adaptation battle that culminated in distress, reduced motivation, and psychological discomfort. In fact, pandemic conditions generate increases in negative emotions and heightened sensitivity to social risks, mechanisms through which positivity about life and life satisfaction become less psychologically available. Thus, while the quantitative wellness scores mirrored situational rather than pervasive impairment, the qualitative dimensions revealed substantial psychological burden that quantitative metrics alone inadequately capture. The behavioral change model suggests that sustainable wellness improvement depends on educating employees about wellness, building motivational capacity, providing necessary skills and tools, and cultivating social support systems that reinforce healthy behavioral patterns. This framework highlights that wellness programs require comprehensive multifaceted approaches rather than simple educational initiatives.

Coping Mechanisms	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Problem-focused	3.22	0.56	To a moderate extent
Emotion-focused	3.09	0.57	To a moderate extent
Less useful	2.08	0.50	To a small extent
Overall Wellness	2.80	0.36	To a moderate extent

Table 3. Perceived Coping Mechanisms of the Employees

Coping mechanism can fall into two categories: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Basically, problem-focused coping strategies aim to eliminate sources of stress or work with the stressors themselves while emotion-focused coping focuses on regulating negative emotional reactions to stress such as anxiety, fear, sadness, and anger (Scott, 2020). Facing the challenges is draining at some point because employees were in denial of what is happening (less useful). However, they manage to pause for a while by doing their stress relievers and accepting the fact that some work or situation cannot be handled immediately (emotion-focused). Moreover, a fresh start was taken by a meditative problem-focused behavior. Employees know that there is a need for an action, but they also understand the value of planning and strategy. Learning from experiences open the doors for opportunity. The positive role of visibility and an organizational “experiential” learning is imperfect due to the focus on “similar” past experience and what is known (Gunessee & Subramanian, 2017). According Brander et al., (2017), some emotion-focused coping strategies act as an amplifier in the association between job hassles and burnout.

Psychological theory indicates that coping mechanism effectiveness depends on stressor characteristics and the extent to which individuals can modify the stressor itself (Bondarchuk et al., 2023). The pandemic context—characterized by widespread uncertainty, physical isolation requirements, and constraints on individual control—appears to have promoted this balanced coping approach (Sohrabijam et al., 2023). Employees engaged in periods of denial concerning pandemic realities and experienced difficulty adjusting to altered work arrangements, yet paradoxically maintained productivity-focused motivation (Al-Marhoon et al., 2024). This dual engagement likely reflects the necessity imposed by organizational demands: despite psychological difficulty accepting the new work paradigm, employees recognized that continued functioning was required. The research suggests that this represents a temporary adjustment mechanism rather than integrated acceptance, indicating potential vulnerability to sustained burnout or psychological deterioration as pandemic demands persist without end-point clarity.

Notably, the literature documents that emotion-focused coping strategies can function as amplifiers in the relationship between job hassles and burnout. This finding suggests that while emotion-focused coping represents necessary emotional regulation during pandemic circumstances, excessive reliance on such strategies without corresponding improvements in objective working conditions risks intensifying burnout accumulation over time. The research participants' balanced coping approach suggests emerging recognition of this dynamic, with many employees describing deliberate transitions between stress management activities (emotion-focused) and renewed action (problem-focused). Learning from past experiences and maintaining organizational visibility can facilitate discovery of adaptive opportunities, suggesting that organizations might actively support such experiential learning processes.

	P Value	Problem-Focused	Verbal Interpretation	Emotion -Focused	Verbal Interpretation	Less Useful	Verbal Interpretation
Organizational Wellness	.05	0.54	Moderate correlation	0.44	Moderate correlation	0.36	Weak correlation

Table 4. Relationship of Organizational Wellness Status to their Perceived Coping Mechanisms

Correlation analysis examined relationships between organizational wellness status and both coping mechanisms and demographic characteristics. Problem-focused coping demonstrated moderate positive correlation with organizational wellness ($p = 0.05$, $r = 0.54$, verbal interpretation: moderate correlation), suggesting that employees who engaged in deliberate problem-solving experienced higher wellness outcomes. Emotion-focused coping demonstrated moderate correlation with wellness ($r = 0.44$, verbal interpretation: moderate correlation), indicating that emotional regulation strategies also contributed to wellness maintenance, though with slightly reduced effect magnitude compared to problem-focused approaches. Less useful coping strategies demonstrated weak negative correlation with wellness ($r = 0.36$, verbal interpretation: weak correlation), confirming that denial-based approaches did not support wellness outcomes.

	P Value	Age	Verbal Interpretation	Status	Verbal Interpretation	Length of Service	Verbal Interpretation
Organizational Wellness	.05	.1	Very weak correlation	.205	Weak correlation	.629	Strong Correlation

Table 5. Relationship of Organizational Wellness Status to their Profile

Demographic correlations revealed that length of organizational service emerged as the strongest predictor of wellness status, demonstrating strong correlation ($r = 0.629$, verbal interpretation: strong correlation). This finding suggests that organizational tenure substantially moderates employees' capacity to maintain wellness during workplace transitions. Employees with longer institutional histories likely developed both formal and informal support networks, possessed greater familiarity with institutional coping resources, and had established patterns of successful adaptation to previous organizational changes that could be deployed during pandemic disruption. Age demonstrated very weak correlation with wellness ($p = 0.1$, verbal interpretation: very weak correlation), suggesting that age per se does not substantially predict pandemic-related wellness outcomes. Employment status showed weak correlation with wellness outcomes, indicating that while employment category marginally influences wellness, the pandemic-induced stress appears to affect employees across institutional status categories relatively similarly, suggesting that pandemic disruption creates relatively universal stressor exposure across diverse institutional roles.

The pattern of these findings suggests that organizational factors and accumulated institutional experience substantially outweigh demographic characteristics as predictors of pandemic-related wellness. This observation carries important implications for institutional policy, suggesting that supporting employee wellness requires systematic organizational interventions that build institutional resilience capacity, rather than relying on demographic targeting or individual-level

interventions alone. Research documents that uncertainty regarding risk management can arise when institutional leaders and employees hold divergent or contradictory views about organizational responses, suggesting that enhanced organizational communication and alignment around wellness strategies could meaningfully improve outcomes.

Implications of the Findings

The study indisputably shows that psychological consequences of the pandemic warrant systematic organizational response. The conflict between work and home domains regarding decision-making, learning processes, and adaptation requirements created employee states of reduced motivation and psychological well-being, with employees simultaneously demonstrating denial responses and continued productivity obligations. This simultaneous manifestation of psychological resistance and behavioral compliance indicates cognitive dissonance that, if unaddressed, risks evolving into burnout and performance deterioration. Accordingly, organizational initiatives designed to systematically improve physical and mental health of employees represent not optional enhancements but critical institutional investments in human capital sustainability and organizational resilience.

Comprehensive wellness programs incorporating appropriate education, motivation, skill development, resource provision, and social support can effectively generate behavior change. However, such programs require sustained institutional commitment and integration with broader organizational practices. One-time wellness initiatives or limited educational offerings prove insufficient; rather, wellness must become embedded within organizational culture and supported through human resource policies, leadership practices, and work design modifications that nurture employee vitality and learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings indicate that employees of Centro Escolar University–Makati experienced moderate organizational wellness during the pandemic, with stronger mental and emotional well-being than physical wellness, likely due to the challenges associated with prolonged remote work arrangements. Employees generally relied on balanced coping strategies—particularly problem-focused and emotion-focused approaches—and organizational experience, particularly longer length of service, appeared to support better wellness outcomes compared to other demographic factors.

Thus, it can be concluded that while employees experienced situational wellness challenges during the pandemic, their overall level of well-being remained relatively stable due to the use of adaptive coping mechanisms and accumulated organizational experience. Employees who engaged more frequently in problem-focused coping strategies, such as planning and taking action to manage stressors, tended to exhibit higher levels of wellness compared to those who relied on less constructive coping behaviors. The moderate association between emotion-focused coping and wellness further suggests that emotional regulation also contributed to maintaining psychological balance in times of uncertainty.

Additionally, the strong relationship between length of service and organizational wellness indicates that employees with longer institutional experience possess greater resilience, familiarity with organizational systems, and stronger support networks that enable them to better cope with workplace disruptions. In general, the findings highlight that organizational wellness is influenced more by coping strategies and institutional experience than by demographic factors such as age or employment status.

It is recommended that Centro Escolar University–Makati develop and implement a comprehensive workplace well-being program aimed at strengthening employees' physical, mental, and emotional health. Such initiatives may include wellness education programs, mental health support services, stress management workshops, and activities that encourage healthy behavioral practices among employees. The institution should also promote problem-focused coping strategies and resilience-building interventions, particularly for newer employees who may have less institutional experience in managing workplace challenges.

Furthermore, strengthening organizational communication, peer support systems, and professional development opportunities may help employees adapt more effectively to evolving work conditions. Future studies may expand the scope of research by including larger samples, examining additional organizational factors affecting wellness, and exploring the long-term effects of workplace disruptions on employee well-being and productivity.

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.