

SUPERMARKET FRONTLINE WORKERS' WORK-RELATED STRESSORS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, occupational stress has escalated progressively. Occupational or work-related stress is the response of employees when presented with complicated work demands and pressures. Meanwhile, coping strategies, a series of action taken or done by an individual to at least overcome or overlook stress, plays an important role in alleviating the emergence of such psychological distress at work. This study assessed the occupational stressors and coping strategies of frontline workers in selected supermarkets located in the San Jose City, Nueva Ecija during the COVID-19 pandemic. The insights gained in this study helped in establishing a significant understanding of supermarket frontline workers, which could help the management to plan programs that could help their employees cope with their work-related stress. The researchers used a validated self-constructed survey questionnaire to gather responses from the selected respondents, while a descriptive-correlational research design was used. The respondents comprised of fifteen (15) supermarket frontline workers who are considered to be frontline service providers as they are often performing face-to-face interaction with customers. The results showed that Health and Safety in the Workplace obtained the highest mean of 3.71, making it the most prevalent occupational stressor among the group, whereas, in terms of coping strategies, the results showed that distraction is the most effective way in dealing with work-related stress as evidenced by the mean of

3.63. Further, after the Spearman Rank Correlation analysis was conducted, it showed that there is no significant relationship between the Socio-demographic profile, Occupational Stressors, and Coping Strategies of supermarket frontline workers. Thus, based on the results, the following recommendations were provided: 1.) Implement health protocols; 2.) Provide EAP program and work-life balance; 3.) Foster open communication and employee recognition; and 4.) Adopt work-sharing and work shifting. Future conduct of the same study with a greater scope is also encouraged.

Keywords: Work-related Stressor, Supermarket Frontline Workers, Coping Strategies, COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

Many people believe that stress is a natural human response when something unexpected occurs that results in an impending change. People typically perceive stress as something positive because it allows them to persevere, being passionate and motivated to complete a specific task, whereas others perceive stress as something negative because it negatively affects their mental health, effectiveness, and current state of performance. According to Baqutayan (2015), various factors contribute to the development of stress. The first is a person's internal struggle, and the second is those caused by their external environment and circumstances, such as their job.

Occupational stress has steadily increased in every part of the world over the years. Employees' reactions to complicated work demands and pressures are referred to as

occupational or work-related stress. If their knowledge and abilities do not match, it can have an impact on their performance and even their ability to cope (WHO, 2020). The nature and demands of a specific job, as well as the type of industry in which a specific entity is anchored, all influence occupational stress. It is common when the job entails dealing with a diverse group of people with varying needs, as well as when the work requires long-standing hours with only a short amount of break. Working in the retail industry, such as supermarkets, whether small, medium, or large in scope, is regarded as one of the most important yet stressful jobs these days.

Supermarket is a retail store that sells a variety of products to customers, is usually divided into several sections. It primarily sells necessities such as foods, beverages, and other products deemed necessary in every household, such as shampoo, soap, kitchen wares, pharmaceutical products, and clothing, to name a few.

San Jose City was chosen for its strategic and accessible location, which is located between the towns of Munoz, Lupao, Carranglan, Rizal, and Llanera. Because it houses various facilities and a large number of skilled workers, it entices other business owners and operators to invest in this city. Regardless as to where they work, it is clear that supermarket workers, particularly frontline workers, face a high level and degree of occupational stress. Supermarket frontline workers work closely with cashiers and are in charge of packing out all of the goods purchased by a customer, whether in plastics, paper bags, or boxes (Salary, n.d.). Similarly, they assist customers in loading and unloading groceries, pushing carts, and returning all used carts in an orderly fashion within the supermarket. Aside from being denied an equal opportunity for advancement and job security, supermarket frontline workers frequently face occupational stress due to family problems, inadequate pay, work inequality, too much work, staff shortage, poor recognition and promotion, time pressure, job insecurity, and a lack of management support. To make matters worse, the COVID-19 pandemic immediately reshaped how work should be performed by both management and its employees as a result of the imposition of health protocols and the strict requirement to follow them. The current protocols in supermarkets include the need to sanitize entrances, counters, and shelves, as well as the mandatory use of face masks and face shields while working. If not addressed immediately, occupational stressors can contribute to the prevalence of burnout or supermarket frontline workers' loss of motivation to work. As a result, coping strategies, which are a series of actions taken or done by an individual to at least overcome or ignore stress, play an important role in reducing the emergence of such psychological distress at work.

The insights gained in this study entitled "*Supermarket Frontline Workers' Work-Related Stressors and Coping Strategies Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic*" permitted the researchers to develop a relevant intervention, which in return, enabled the management to help its employees reduce stress in the workplace and produce more efficient and productive employees.

The study made significant contributions to understanding the occupational stressors brought on by the pandemic for supermarket frontline workers. The researchers conducted this study, which includes insights from selected supermarket frontline workers. Its findings were used to develop an intervention or solution to the problem within the organization.

Statement of the Problem

The study was conducted to assess the work-related stressors and coping strategies of the supermarket frontline workers located in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

- a. What are the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents?
- b. What is the level of stressfulness do the following work-related stressors affect the supermarket frontline

- workers in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija?
- c. What is the level of effectiveness of the following coping strategies adopted by the supermarket frontline workers in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija to overcome the work-related stressors they encountered?
 - d. Is there a significant relationship between the socio demographic profile, work-related stressors, and coping strategies of supermarket frontline workers?
 - e. What intervention program can be proposed to reduce work-related stressors experienced by supermarket frontline workers in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija??

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to assess the work-related stressors and coping strategies of the supermarket frontline workers located in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, it aimed to achieve the following:

- f. To describe the socio demographic profile of the supermarket frontline workers in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija.
- g. To measure the level of work-related stress of supermarket frontline workers in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija.
- h. To examine the coping strategies adopted by supermarket frontline workers.
- i. To analyze the relationship between the socio demographic profile, work-related stressors, and coping strategies of supermarket frontline workers.
- j. To propose an intervention program that can minimize the work-related stressors encountered by the supermarket frontline workers in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija.

Conceptual Framework

This study was conceptualized to determine the link between the occupational stressors encountered by the supermarket frontline workers and coping strategies used to manage their thoughts, feelings, and actions encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study used the independent and dependent variable schemes to present their relationship. The first column contains the independent variable, which includes the respondents' socio demographic profile, such as their age, sex, civil status, job status, and length of service. It also contains the coping strategies of supermarket frontline workers, such as self-efficacy, distraction, avoidance, and emotional support. On the other column was the dependent variable, which includes the occupational stressors of the supermarket frontline workers such as family-related relationship with a co-worker, relationship with supervisor, health safety in the workplace, and job security Figure 1.

The Dependent-Independent Variable framework was patterned after the Transaction Model of Stress by Lazarus (1991) that served as the research scheme of this investigation. According to this theory, stress was defined as a transaction between an individual and their environment. Stress response was evoked when an individual appraised a potentially stressful situation as being stressful, which is considered primary appraisal. On the other hand, a judgment of the options available to cope with a stressor and perceptions of how effective they are being regarded as a secondary appraisal.

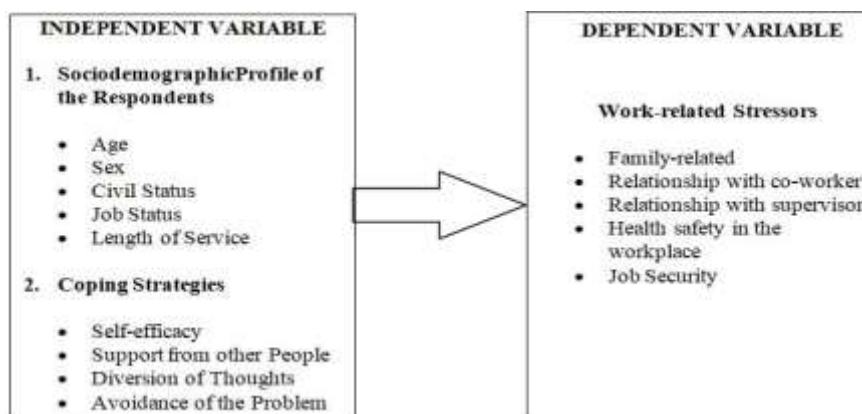


FIGURE 1
PARADIGM OF THE STUDY

Significance of the Study

This study intends to establish an understanding of the work-related stressors and coping strategies of supermarket frontline workers in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija. Furthermore, this study could be of great importance to the following groups:

To the supermarket frontline workers: The result will help the supermarket frontline workers to better manage the stress/stressors that they encounter in their work by using the most effective coping strategy. If they are less exposed to work-related stressors, they will be more productive in their respective jobs. Furthermore, the results will help them improve their working conditions and their relationships with their co-workers and superiors.

To the managers: This study will help the managers to create better stress management interventions for their employees to minimize their exposure to work-related stress and reinforce the most prevalent coping strategy that their employees can use to cope with their work-related stress. It will also help the managers to design better working conditions for their employees that will cause overall better organizational performance.

To the supermarkets: The result will help different supermarkets to realize the work-related stress that their employees encounter and to understand the challenges that they are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also enable the supermarkets to plan programs to help their employees cope with their work-related stress to have a better performance in the company.

To the future researchers: Researchers who want to conduct similar studies determining the relationship between work-related stressors and coping strategies in different geographical locations can use this study as their basis or reference in their review of related literature.

Scope and Limitations

The study focused on assessing the work-related stressors and coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic of the supermarket frontline workers specifically located in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija. There were six main supermarkets operating in San Jose City which include Walter Mart-San Jose, Magic Mall 1, Magic Mall 2, Save More Supermarket, Friendship, and Pure Gold. Only the frontline workers from these supermarkets will be the focus of the study. Frontline workers include the cashiers, frontline workers, stock clerks, as well as the store supervisors.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

Stress: Its Basic Nature

While Shahsavarani et al. (2015) thought that stress has become a common and natural phenomenon that affects people from all walks of life, Segerstrom & O'Connor (2012) described stress as something created by an external situation or circumstances that influence a person.

In general, individuals frequently identify the word "*stress*" with a bad event that led to significant obstacles and changes in their overall state. Others, however, see stress as something that has benefits since it makes people more determined and accountable to complete the tasks or responsibilities at hand. In fact, feeling "*stressed out*" is a widespread human reaction, sensation, and phenomena that affects practically everyone. Everyone suffers stress, especially at work, and this type of stress is referred to as occupational stress.

Work-related or Occupational Stress

A change in an employee's physical or emotional status as a result of obstacles they faced at work is referred to as occupational stress, also known as workplace stress or stress at work. While Macedo et al. (2017) claimed that a good adjustment to work stress results in satisfaction and accomplishment, and Jaret (2015) asserted that stress may raise one's performance and memory, Harshana (2018) firmly thought that a stressful work environment only worsens an employee's performance. Poor working environment, inefficient leadership, and complicated job requirements are some of the variables that contribute to workplace stress, says her research, "*Work-Related Stress: A Literature Review*." As a result, if they are not appropriately and promptly handled, it may result in employee burnout, absenteeism, low morale, low productivity, decreased efficiency and performance, and a rise in both on- and off-the-job accidents.

In contrast, occupational stress occurs in supermarkets when workers, such as frontline workers, are unable to manage the high workload and amount of work pressure, thereby impeding their ability to properly perform and meet their obligations at work. Supermarket frontline workers frequently do tasks other than simply packaging and bagging groceries. They occasionally engage in brief exchanges with clients and even help them carry big boxes and plastics to their cars on their own initiative. On the other side, due of increased consumer demand for grocery items during peak seasons, there is a higher degree of occupational stress experienced. As a result, in addition to working long hours, they would also have to put up with hunger and weariness and exhibit greater flexibility, especially while packing heavy objects.

It's also crucial to keep in mind that employees' levels of occupational stresses differ according to their age, sex, civil status, employment status, length of service, and job stability. In this context, research by Chasovschi & Niculescu (2013) indicated that employees between the ages of 26 and 45 were more likely to experience occupational stress than those between the ages of 18 and 25 or 46 and 62. Furthermore, Rozman et al (2019) research found a substantial difference between younger and older workers in terms of the occupational stress they experienced at work. They discovered that younger employees felt more occupational stress than older ones did. In contrast, Yaldiz et al. (2018) study found that when their employers didn't give older workers or employees the assistance and resources, they required accomplishing their jobs properly; they had much greater levels of stress than their younger counterparts.

According to research by Chasovschi & Niculescu (2013) titled "*Analysis of Stress Sources in Retail Organizations*," female employees experience more work-related stresses than male employees do. Female employees have high levels of job overload, more responsibility in addition to household or family responsibilities, repetitious labor, and time

constraints at work, which leads to tiredness. However, a study by Menendez-Espina et al. (2019) found that women use a greater proportion of coping mechanisms, which has a favorable impact on their mental health. In addition, social connection within and outside of the business is the most important method in the relationship between work insecurity and mental health, and women mostly adopted this approach. As a result, it is concluded that improving interpersonal connections both within and outside of the workplace is a guarantee of wellbeing. The research listed above were corroborated by Harris (2012) study, "*Ways of Coping: Understanding Workplace Stress and Coping Mechanisms for Hospice Nurses*," which found that women are more likely than males to utilize emotion-focused coping.

More specifically, when it comes to civil status, the Communication Workers of America (2021) article asserted that both single and married persons experience pressure at work and bring these issues home with them. According to research by Rahmani (2013), there is no discernible difference in the stress that single and married employees experience in the workplace. Rahman et al. (2020), on the other hand, perceived stress as a result of changes in employees' employment status during the coronavirus pandemic and found that it was linked to a higher degree of stress. As a result, in addition to the available resources, there should be particular interventions to support their well-being.

In terms of job security, Menendez-Espina et al. (2019) study found that job instability is widespread, on the rise, and frequently accompanied by high rates of temporary employment and unemployment. Previous studies have demonstrated a connection between employment uncertainty and deteriorated mental health. Results indicate that the relationship between work uncertainty and mental health might be moderated by coping mechanisms. Employees' mental health is highly essential and may have a significant impact on how well they perform at work.

Finally, in regards to the length of service, researchers discovered that stress increases relatively with employment lasting between five (5) and ten (10) years due to the necessity of adapting to the working environment, particularly to the factors that cause stress, in a study titled "*Investigation of Occupational Stress and its Relationship with the Demographic Characteristics of Workers in Ilam, Iran*." An employee will ultimately start to gradually eliminate or diminish such stress-causing variables after such adaptation and adjustment.

Causes of Occupational Stress

Because of the imposition of health regulations and the stringent requirement to comply with them, the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to the present has changed how work should be regarded and executed by the business and its personnel (Kramer & Kramer 2020). Some employees in various businesses have made the switch to working from home, while others are still required to show up at a physical office. Even if every case is different, there is little question that the coronavirus pandemic brought about some changes that led to the workers' or employees' higher levels of economic instability and occupational stress (Nigam et al., 2020).

Even while the specific reasons of professional stress vary from person to person, it's crucial to keep in mind that all businesses, regardless of size, may have an impact on their employees. Environments, organizational atmosphere, and a conflict resulting from employee job expectations are all elements that lead to occupational stress, claim Mustafa et al. (2015). Similar findings were made by Mosadeghrad (2013), who discovered that the workers' job demands—such as excessive workloads, unequal distribution of tasks, and staff shortages—are the main causes of occupational stress. Additionally, low compensation, poor recognition and advancement, time constraints, job instability, and a lack of management support were all factors that contributed to workplace stress and were positively correlated with employees' intentions to leave their jobs. The employee's family, relationships with coworkers and

managers, and workplace health and safety might all be additional sources of stress.

Workers across all sectors shoulder a significant portion of the cost of how various nations combat the COVID-19 Pandemic (Sinclair et al., 2020). They deal with a variety of pressures, including issues with their home life and professional health and safety. The tension between work and family obligations and the worry that family members would contract the virus once they got home from work were the family-related issues that grocery employees had to deal with during the COVID-19 epidemic. They are prone to catching the virus and their family is very likely to contract it since they are vital employees who are still going to their respective jobs to distribute or sell necessary meals, commodities, and services. According to Communications Workers of America (2021), both single and married people experience extremely high pressure from their jobs since they carry it home with them. The report also addressed how work-related stress affects couples. Additionally, because they are the ones who handle the entire domestic responsibilities themselves, solitary individuals sometimes struggle with having no one to listen to them or just covering up their exhaustion.

Additionally, coworker connections also indicate workplace stress for the employees. Medium-level occupational stress is present at work and may have an impact on employees' performance at the store, claim Prasad et al. (2016). Additionally, they demonstrated that one of the stressors that had a bad impact on the workers' performance was their coworkers. According to a study by Macedo et al. (2017) titled "*Occupational stress: A study with supermarket professionals in Brazil*," isolation among coworkers is common in supermarkets because staff members don't assist one another when one is finished with their tasks and don't provide support for one another. This led to certain personnel being separated from one another and losing sight of the organization as a whole.

A second stressor that a grocery employee may experience is interactions with supervisors, according to research by Macedo et al. (2017). According to the findings of his investigation, employees do not feel that their efforts are sufficiently appreciated, favoritism is commonplace inside the store, and pressure that was meant for the top management was instead applied to them. Employee demotivation, dissatisfaction with coworkers, lower productivity, and poor overall performance have all resulted from this. Furthermore, COVID-19 has an impact on a person's emotional health (Hamouche, 2020). It includes a perspective on stresses that takes into account a person's health, the risk of contracting the virus, infobesity versus the unknown, isolation and confinement, shame, and social prohibition in addition to financial hardship and job insufficiency.

Effects of Occupational Stress

Throughout the world, job stress has gradually increased over the past few years. It has a wide variety of effects. It may result in behavioral, emotional, and physical issues that affect the workers' well-being, energy levels, mental clarity, and interpersonal and professional relationships (Heathfield, 2020). It causes health problems for workers and may make it difficult for them to do their jobs effectively.

Stress has the potential to physically impact any employee, according to Lindberg (2019). It causes headaches, intestinal problems, and sleeping problems. In addition, the State of Victoria suggests that weariness, muscle tension, headaches, heart palpitations, difficulty sleeping, gastrointestinal problems, and dermatological issues are some of the physical symptoms linked to work-related stress (2020). In a similar vein, Zuckerman (2020) stated that long-term stress negatively affects both the mind and body, which can result in major health problems. Lethargy, headaches, and restless nights are just a few of the negative impacts of stress on the body.

As a result, stress has negative impacts on employees' mental health, increasing the likelihood of anxiety, burnout, and depression, according to Corporate Wellness Magazine

(2021). People with substance use disorders are more prone to smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, use drugs, and have poor eating habits. Furthermore, according to the Mental Health Foundation (2021), persons who are under stress may feel a variety of emotions, such as worry, fear, anger, sorrow, or irritation. Burnout and despair are also included. On the other hand, research by Katepiva (2021) found that empowered workers exhibit better levels of engagement, which in turn promotes successful dedication to the company.

Workplace stress also affects a person's behavior and gradually modifies it. Absenteeism, hostility, decreased creativity and initiative, a decline in performance, mood swings and irritation, impatience, and a reduced threshold for frustration, apathy, and isolation are some behavioral indicators (State of Victoria, 2020). Similarly, stress is the main factor contributing to absenteeism in the UK (Clarke & Griffin, 2011). According to the National Health and Safety Commission, stress at work is to blame for the absences that last the longest. However, the effects of professional stress on a person's psychological health include despair, anxiety, discouragement, pessimism, inability to cope, and cognitive issues including having trouble concentrating or making decisions.

The aforementioned causes and consequences of occupational stress are both considered crucial in this study since they may help identify the origins of an employee's stress as well as examine the impact it had on them, allowing for the development of management strategies. As was previously noted, there are a variety of factors that can lead to workplace stress for an employee; knowing this would aid management in developing and coordinating strategic measures to avoid or manage such stress. Additionally, understanding the impacts of occupational stress is crucial to determining the best remedies that management may use.

Coping Strategies against Stress

Coping is widely described as the cognitive and behavioral strategies that individual uses to cope with stressful situations both inside and outside of themselves. These actions, which are sometimes referred to as tactics, can be carried either consciously or unconsciously. According to Folkman (2013), coping allows a person to overcome the difficulties brought on by the many stresses in their environment and inspires hope when they are at their lowest point in life. It is a critical process that shows how individuals recognize, respond to, and take lessons from the stress they experience. It is crucial to their adaptability and survival (Skinner & Gembeck, 2016).

People occasionally see stress negatively and coping positively. To deal with the challenge posed by how stressful the situation is, coping mechanisms are either successful or inefficient. Stress, however, can be either mentally beneficial or harmful. There are various stress management techniques one may use to release tension and recover control. Lazarus and Folkman had a notable impact on the theory of stress and coping, and their work continues to serve as a crucial foundation for research on psychological stress and coping mechanisms in a variety of domains. They clarified that dealing with stress entails either problem-focused coping or emotion-focused coping, commonly known as active and passive coping strategies that people adopt to handle internal and/or external stresses. When presented with a problem, a person first determines whether they believe it to be threatening or not, and then they consider if they have the resources necessary to properly respond to or deal with the situation. When a person feels out of control or is unable to react to the situation, they are prone to employ emotion-focused coping techniques such as wishful thinking, distance, or stressing the good. However, if they have the ability or resources to handle the issue, they will often adopt problem-focused coping as a reaction. Additionally, ideas like locus of control, feeling of coherence, and self-efficacy are connected to stress management.

Problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping were further defined by Harris (2012). According to him, problem-focused coping involves taking charge of the unpleasant

event in an effort to alter it. One looks for more information and weighs the advantages and disadvantages. The way one views the conditions of the stressful situation alters with emotion-focused coping. He claimed that events that are impossible to control are best suited for emotion-focused coping. Praying, wishing for the best, diverting oneself, ranting, and getting emotional support from another person are a few examples of emotion-focused coping.

Coping mechanisms have been shown to be an effective means of reducing the negative consequences of any work-related stress. In reality, it is crucial now for people, especially employees, to have the information and skills necessary to choose what kind of coping mechanisms will function best in their particular circumstances. According to a research by Nekzada & Tekeste, (2013) titled "*Stress causes and its management at the workplace*," there are a number of techniques to effectively manage stress in order to lessen its effects and impact on a particular employee. A worker must first be completely aware of its surroundings. Finally, a worker must be able to act and discover answers on how he can successfully cope with such stress. First, he must be able to recognize the symptoms and the causes of his stress that prevent him from performing well in the business. This may entail asking for assistance from management, managers, or coworkers. Additionally, they emphasized the management's and managers' roles in managing the stress of their employees in the same research. Along with giving them the right instruction and advice, other things that must be done include task assignment, flexible scheduling, teamwork promotion, and creating a welcoming workplace.

On the other hand, managers, according to Glazer & Liu (2017), are essential in assisting employees in managing their overall stress. Here, they must participate, stay up to date on the workplace climate, and determine which work procedures are worthwhile adjusting based on effectiveness. Similarly, they can utilize surveys to elicit the views, attitudes, and working circumstances of the employees. The data acquired here will be very useful in preventing the potential exacerbation of such work-related stress. Employees, on the other hand, may successfully handle stress when they know how to organize so that work will be properly prioritized, how to manage their time, and when they are familiar with some simple relaxation techniques.

According to Lawless (2014) study, "*Checking Out: A Qualitative Study of Supermarket Cashiers' Emotional Response to Customer Mistreatment*," emotional support was sought by supermarket cashiers as a successful way to deal with the difficulties they encountered. According to the study's findings, cashiers used interpersonal and personal techniques, two different sorts of emotion management abilities. Peer support is the main interpersonal tactic used by cashiers, who ask their colleagues for help and guidance. Additionally, when cashiers are mistreated by clients, they immediately seek assistance from their bosses or colleagues. They also ask for suggestions based on their manager's prior encounters with similar circumstances. The personal coping mechanisms employed by cashiers to deal with issues they experience are professionalism and forgiving the client. These coping mechanisms are also proven to be beneficial. Additionally, principals and assistant principals frequently employed emotion-focused coping to reduce job stress, according to Melancon (2014) study. They were said to find comfort from work stress by eating, drinking, taking medicine, and praying.

Engaging in social activities, such as spending time with family and friends, can help people stay upbeat and motivated while lowering professional stress. The planned-breath leisure coping strategy, on the other hand, was positively and significantly associated with female employees' well-being, whereas the avoidant leisure coping strategy has a negative and significant impact on job stress and well-being of female employees in hospitality, according to Tsaur & Tang's (2013) study, "*Job stress and well-being of female employees in hospitality: The role of regulatory leisure coping styles*." Like Berto (2014), he proposed that exposure to

natural surroundings was the greatest strategy to deal with work-related stress since it enables physiological, emotional, and attention restoration for an individual. Natural settings provide powerful soothing effects and relieve physiological stress as well as mental exhaustion brought on by exposure to various work-related stresses.

According to Wiens (2016), self-efficacy is a useful personal resource that supports one's capacity to manage stress at work. According to the findings of his research, Chief Medical Officers may effectively manage their stress at work by developing a sense of self-efficacy. Additionally, Vagni et al. (2020) reported that among healthcare and emergency professionals, individual efficacy, or self-efficacy, was found to be one of the preventive measures against the likelihood of developing traumatic symptoms and managing the job stress connected to coronavirus illness.

Since occupational stress is something that everyone experiences at work, it's critical for every employee to learn how to deal with it. The COVID-19 epidemic has increased stress levels among workers across a variety of businesses. Early in the epidemic, the government imposed a compulsory national lockdown, which led to economic stagnation and forced firms to cease operations. However, businesses like supermarkets and food stores stayed open to serve people's necessities. As a result, despite the dangers and stress brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic, workers at these enterprises continue to report to work. In addition to the frontline workers who work closely with the cashiers and are in charge of packing out and assisting the customers at loading or unloading their grocery products, the cashiers who have direct contact with consumers in a supermarket may also be subjected to various occupational stresses. Employees should not, however, allow work-related stress to rule their daily lives since this might compromise their performance and productivity. Williams (2018) noted the significance of managing stress at work. First, having developed coping mechanisms enables a person to handle the severe difficulties of life in a positive and healthy manner. The secret is to have the best plan of action to help you through that circumstance. Resilience is also increased through coping. It aids individuals in managing challenging circumstances and unfavourable feelings that may lead to more readily letting go of that circumstance and moving on from it.

Effective stress management is another crucial component of stress management for an individual. It aids in releasing the grip that stress has on life, resulting in a happier, healthier, and more fruitful existence (Stress Management, 2021). As coping techniques used by employees might vary, it's critical to find what each individual employee finds most effective in reducing stress.

METHODOLOGY

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at San Jose City, Nueva Ecija. The city is surrounded by towns and municipalities which includes Science City of Munoz, Lupao, Llanera, Rizal, and Carranglan which offer fewer commercial establishments specifically, supermarkets. People from those places sometimes travel to San Jose City because of the availability of various stores where they can buy their things. There are six main supermarkets operating in San Jose City: WalterMart-San Jose, MagicMall 1, Magic Mall 2, Save More Supermarket, Friendship, and PureGold. Only the frontline workers from the supermarket section were included.

Unit of Analysis and Respondents

The unit of analysis of the study was the frontline workers in the supermarkets in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija. The workers shall be officially working in the supermarket during the time of COVID-19 pandemic. They are the employees of the supermarkets considered as frontline service providers and are susceptible to a high level of work-related stress since they

often perform face-to-face interaction among the customers.

Sampling Design

The sampling method used in this study is purposive sampling. According to the Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods, a purposive sample, also known as a judgmental or expert sample, is a nonprobability sample type. The primary aim of purposive sampling is to create a selection of the population that is logically claimed. They often attain this by applying expert knowledge of the population to identify in a non-random manner a sample of elements that represent a cross-section of the population.

The researchers used this type of sampling as it can explain a specific phenomenon, theme, or concept. The study focused on frontline workers of supermarkets because they are the perfect respondent to the study. Frontline service providers have great occupational stress during this time of the pandemic.

Instrumentation

The researchers used a validated self-constructed survey questionnaire to gather responses from the selected respondents of the study. The self-constructed survey questionnaire helps the researchers gather the data to answer the study's statement of the problem. This was used to assess the socio demographic profile, occupational stressors, and coping strategies of frontline workers working in supermarkets.

Survey questionnaire is the most common and convenient way of collecting information for research. Hence, the researchers choose to conduct their research through disseminating survey questionnaires.

Data Collection

Researchers gained permission to conduct the study at the target respondents to get pertinent information needed. To gather data for the study, a formal letter addressed to managers was given to the branch and store managers of selected supermarkets in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija to get permission to survey the workers. Researchers also prepared a letter for the respondents for the formality of the conduct of the survey. The researchers proceeded to the floating of questionnaires. From the list provided by the branch and store managers, the researchers identified the sample size.

Data Analysis

The study used Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) for data computation. It was commonly used for social science data of management and statistical analysis of social science data. Most top researchers used SPSS to analyze survey data to get the most out of their research. Moreover, the researchers used Microsoft Excel. It can be a useful way to input and continue research study information. Excel was easy to use and learn. Excel's manageable statistical and planning functions easily gain understanding into the gathered data.

The study was descriptive-correlational research that is why the researchers used descriptive statistics and Spearman's rank correlation statistical tools.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to portray the result in a study such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation to have an overview of the socio demographic profile of the frontline workers of supermarkets, occupational stressors and coping strategies.

This aims to give a credible descriptive computation as well as analysis of the socio demographic profile of respondents.

Moreover, the Likert scale was considered an ordinal number. Ordinal was used to

describe a way to arrange a collection of objects in order, one after another. It was usually an infinite number. It was also one generalization of the concept of a natural number. Spearman Rho was the appropriate statistical tool for the study to compute the correlation of the variables accurately.

Table 1	
INTERPRETATION TABLE OF SPEARMAN RANK-ORDER CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS	
Spearman p	Interpretation
≥0.70	Very strong relationship
0.40-0.69	Strong relationship
0.30-0.39	Moderate relationship
0.20-0.29	Weak relationship
0.01-0.19	No or negligible relationship

Operational Definition of Terms

Operationally defined terms used in the study listed below for better understanding are the following:

Coping Strategies: This study refers to the series of actions taken or done by supermarket frontline workers to overcome their respective occupational stress. The study categorized coping strategies as self-efficacy, distraction, avoidance, and emotional support.

COVID-19: This word stands for coronavirus disease in 2019. It is one of the factors this study that contributes to the worsening of occupational stress encountered by supermarket frontline workers.

Work-related Stress: In this study, this refers to the stress experienced by supermarket frontline workers in their workplace. The study categorized occupational stress as family-related, relationship with supervisor, relationship with co-workers, health safety in the workplace, and job security.

Stressor: It refers to the source of supermarket frontline workers' stress that arises from an individual, group, or organization.

Supermarket: A type of business under retail industry that is small, medium, or large. It is mainly sold necessities such as foods, beverages, and other household products, known by the public through the concept of customer or self-service.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the study that the researchers performed are included in this chapter as they were gathered from the respondents. It includes a presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the tabular data that was gathered.

Socio demographic Profile of the Respondents

The first part of the survey questionnaire, which asked about the students' backgrounds and personal information, is shown in the statistics that follow. The socio demographic profile of the respondents is displayed in terms of age, sex, civil status, employment status, and duration of service. The frequency and percentage distribution are used to examine the respondents' socio demographic characteristics.

Table 2		
DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO AGE		
Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)

18-22	6	40.0
23-27	5	33.3
28-32	3	20.0
33-37	1	6.7
TOTAL	15	100
Mean- 24.80SD-5.13		

Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents according to age. As depicted, six or 40.0% of the respondents was 18-22 years old, while 5 or 33.3% of them were 23-27 years old. Moreover, 3 or 20% of them were 28-32 years old, and one or 6.7% of them was 33-37 years old. Further, the average age of the respondents was 24 years old with a standard deviation of 5.13.

The finding implies that most of the respondents were in the age range of 18-22 years old, thereby showing that there are more younger employees working as a bagger in supermarkets compared to older employees. According to Aluculese et al. (2015), stress-related symptoms and work-related behavioral changes were common among supermarket employees, but they vary between individuals and across different age groups.

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	10	66.7
Female	5	33.3
Total	15	100

Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents according to sex. As shown, majority of the respondents in this study are male with a frequency count of 10 comprise of the 66.7 percent of the total population out of the 100 percent total respondent population, while 5 or 33.3% of them were female. The male respondents have outnumbered their female counterparts by a half percentage, thereby showing that male is preferably to work as a bagger in supermarkets. According to Prasad et al. (2016), even though both male and female employees encounter stress in their workplace, there are still moderate differences in the stress levels among them.

Civil Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	11	73.3
Married	4	26.7
Separated	0	0
Widower	0	0
Total	15	100

Table 4 shows the distribution according to civil status. As shown from the table, 11 or 73.3% of the respondents are single, 4 or 26.7% are married, and 0% of the respondents are separated and widowed.

The finding implies that the majority of the respondents were single, and this result can also be seen from the study of Shukla & Srivastana (2016) which states that the majority of their respondents are also single employees which feel more job stress and anxiety compared to married employees. The reason is because married employees are high in emotional intelligence.

Table 5

DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO JOB STATUS		
Civil Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Contractual	2	13.3
Permanent	13	86.7
Total	15	100

Table 5 shows the distribution of the respondents according to job status. As depicted, 13 or 86.7% of the respondents were permanent, and 2 or 13.3% were contractual employees.

The finding implies that the majority of the respondents were permanent employees of the supermarkets in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija. According to Brennan (2018), retail sector can be a major source of job stress of every individual regardless if they are part-time employees or full-time employees.

Table 6 DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO LENGTH OF SERVICE		
Length of Service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0-2	6	40.0
3-5	8	53.3
6-8	0	0
9 and above	1	6.7
Total	15	100

Table 6 shows the distribution of the respondents according to the length of service. There was only a minimal difference between the respondents working as a frontline worker in supermarkets for 3 to 5 years with 8 or 53.3% and those respondents with less than three years' experience with 6 or 40%. One respondent or 6.7% was working as a frontline worker in supermarkets for 9 years and above, while none of the respondents answered that they were working for 6-8 years in the supermarket.

The result in the number of years in the length of service infers that a significant majority of the respondents are serving for 3 to 5 years as supermarket frontline workers. The result is also supported by the findings of Maramba & Llego (2018), who found out that most of the employees who work at private hospitals are rendering their service under five years and concluded that majority of them tend to seek another career because of the stress they are experiencing in their workplace.

Work-related Stressors Encountered by the Frontline Workers of Selected Supermarkets in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija

The next table displays the responses provided by grocery store frontline workers on their perception of the stress level of occupational stresses they have experienced at work. The five (5) categories of occupational stresses were family-related, relationships with co-workers and supervisors, health and safety at work, and job security. Respondents provided a degree of stress response on a Likert scale, which was then calculated along with a descriptive rating.

Table 7 OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS OF THE RESPONDENTS		
Occupational Stressors	Mean	Descriptive rating
Family-related	3.09	Moderately Stressful
1. Fear for the family members to acquire the virus after coming home from	3.53	Stressful

work.		
2. Difficulty in paying existing loans/debt of the family.	3.47	Stressful
3. Breadwinner of the family.	3.07	Moderately Stressful
4. Conflicting responsibilities between work and home.	2.40	Slightly Stressful
5. Separation from family or loved ones because of the distance of home from the workplace.	2.47	Slightly Stressful
6. Death of a family member.	3.60	Stressful
Relationship with Co-worker	1.80	Not Stressful
1. No sense of belongingness in the group.	1.67	Not Stressful
2. Misunderstanding with co-workers.	1.87	Slightly Stressful
3. Lack of cooperation within employees.	2.13	Slightly Stressful
4. Inconsiderate and unsupportive co-workers.	1.80	Not Stressful
5. Unsupportive co-workers.	1.87	Slightly Stressful
6. Jealousy in the workplace.	1.47	Not Stressful
Relationship with Supervisor	2.07	Slightly Stressful
1. Conflicting job orders from the supervisor.	2.06	Slightly Stressful
2. No appreciation of work well done.	2.60	Slightly Stressful
3. Unfair treatment or the practice of "favoritism" by the supervisor.	2.00	Slightly Stressful
4. Communication gap between my supervisor and me.	1.87	Slightly Stressful
5. Lack of help and direction in accomplishing a certain task.	2.13	Slightly Stressful
6. Lack of understanding of the supervisor's standard for a good work product	1.73	Not Stressful
Health Safety in the Workplace	3.71	Stressful
1. Anxiety and depression brought by COVID 19.	3.60	Stressful
2. Depression brought by COVID 19.	3.13	Moderately Stressful
3. Chance of being exposed and infected by COVID 19 at the workplace.	4.07	Stressful
4. Alarmed by the surge of active cases in our town/city.	3.73	Stressful
5. Discomfort feeling because of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like face masks and face shield.	3.67	Stressful
6. Big probability of gaining physical illness because of mandatory face-to-face interaction kind of job.	4.07	Stressful
Job Security	2.34	Slightly Stressful
1. Chance of lay-off of employees.	2.40	Slightly Stressful
2. Probability of closing the business.	2.60	Slightly Stressful
3. Security of the business to sustain its employees.	2.13	Slightly Stressful
4. Maintaining the financial position of the business.	2.27	Slightly Stressful
5. Uncertainty of losing position in the business.	2.33	Slightly Stressful
6. Redundancy of job descriptions.	2.33	Slightly Stressful
Overall Mean	2.60	Slightly Stressful
Legend: 1.00-1.80 Not Stressful 1.81-2.60 Slightly Stressful 2.61-3.40 Moderately Stressful 3.41-4.20 Stressful 4.21-5.00 Very Stressful		

Family-related

Table 7 lists the respondents' top family-related stressors. The greatest weighted mean of 3.60 was orally perceived as difficult for item 6 ("*Death of a family member*"), while the lowest weighted mean of 2.40 was understood as mildly stressful for item 4 ("*Conflicting obligations between work and home*"). The respondents' overall average weighted mean for the family-related stressor was 3.09, which is vocally characterized as somewhat distressing.

The findings imply that the work stress felt by supermarket frontline workers may be affected by family-related issues. These are detrimental ramifications in relation to their place and duties within the family. This is also consistent with the findings of the King et al. (2012) study, which found that employees who hold dual responsibilities as both workers and family members suffer detrimental consequences from chronic stress brought on by an unbalanced work-family schedule.

Relationship with Co-worker

Table 7 lists the respondents' workplace stresses in terms of their interactions with coworkers. The greatest weighted mean of 2.13 was orally evaluated as somewhat stressful for item 3, "*Lack of collaboration among employees*," while the lowest weighted mean of 1.47 was understood as not stressful for item 6, "*Jealousy in the Workplace*." Overall, the respondents' relationships with coworkers received a weighted average of 1.80, which was orally assessed as not stressful.

The results show that, when they are available to an individual, interpersonal interaction, both on and off the work, may be important resources for reducing stress brought on by occupational pressures. Employee stress is a result of bad working relationships. According to Nappo (2020), having satisfying relationships with coworkers both prevents respondents from feeling stressed and can lower their risk of doing so. Workplaces that get along well and continue to cooperate with one another are less stressful.

Relationship with Supervisor

Table 7 lists the respondents' workplace stresses in connection to their interactions with the supervisor. The greatest weighted mean of 2.60 was orally assessed as slightly stressful for item 2 ("*No recognition of work well done*"), while the lowest weighted mean of 1.47 was viewed as not stressful for item 6 ("*Lack of comprehension of the supervisor's criterion for a good work output*"). Overall, the respondents' connection with their supervisors was rated as a stressor by a weighted average of 2.07, which is described as mildly stressful.

The findings of this study demonstrate that stress among employees is caused by a lack of appreciation for work well done and a failure to comprehend the supervisor's expectations for high-quality work products. The results of Macedo et al. (2017), whose respondents indicated that relationships with supervisors may contribute to workplace stress, are consistent with this. The findings of their study indicate that workplace favoritism and inadequate appreciation of employees' contributions are widespread in supermarkets. Additionally, they received the pressure that was intended for the upper management.

Health Safety in the Workplace

Table 7 lists the respondents' job pressures in terms of workplace health and safety. Items 2 "*Depression brought on by COVID 19*" obtained the lowest weighted mean of 3.13, which was verbally interpreted as moderately stressful, while items 3 "*Chance of being exposed to and infected by COVID 19 at the workplace*" and 6 "*Big Probability of Gaining Physical Illness Because of Mandatory Face to Face Interaction Kind of Job*" obtained the highest weighted mean of 4.07, which was verbally interpreted as stressful. An average weighted mean of 3.71 was verbally perceived as stressful for the respondents' stressor related to health and safety at work.

The results of this study demonstrate that stress related to employee health worries about the COVID-19 Pandemic affects not only the employees' physical but also their mental health. The epidemic has had a serious impact on their physical and emotional health. The possibility of getting the virus and continuing to work in supermarkets despite the present

situation causes concern and tension among shop frontline workers. According to Brennan (2018), as long as health professionals and others working in crucial areas have continued their activities, there have been numerous reports of high infection rates and high deaths. In addition, a research by Hamouche (2020) demonstrates that COVID-19 has an impact on a person's emotional health. Healthcare professionals are more likely to have mental illnesses like depression, especially those who work in front-line positions like grocery store employees, migrant workers, and those that interact with the general public.

Job Security

Table 7 displays the respondents' occupational pressures in terms of job security at work. While item 3 "*Security of the business to support its employees*" had the lowest weighted mean of

2.13 and was also vocally assessed as little stressful, item 2 "*Probability of closing the firm*" received the highest weighted mean of 2.60. The respondents' overall average weighted mean for the stressor of job stability was 2.34, which is verbally evaluated as slightly stressful.

The findings indicate that employees are worried about whether they can be sure they will still have a job now that the globe is dealing with a pandemic. This is demonstrated by the study of Wilson et al. (2020), which explained that COVID-19 causes more job insecurity. The majority of their respondents said that COVID-19 worries them about their jobs. Concerns about their financial condition for the coming year are also expressed by several respondents.

Level of Effectiveness of Various Coping Strategies Adopted by Frontline Workers of Selected Supermarkets in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija

The supermarket frontline workers' evaluation of their coping mechanisms in light of the work-related stress they mostly experienced at work are shown in tables 12 and 13. We separated the coping mechanisms into four categories: emotional support, avoidance, distraction, and self-efficacy. Following that, it used the frequency and percentage distribution to assess the respondents' replies, while assigning the estimated mean for each item the proper descriptive rating.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	14	93.33
No	1	6.67
Total	15	100

As shown in Table 8, 14 or 93.33% out of 15 or 100% of the respondents have a coping strategy while only 1 or 6.67% of the respondents have no coping strategy when experiencing occupational stress. This result is supported by the findings of George et al. (2020), which states that most healthcare professionals used multiple coping strategies to deal with the threat posed by the COVID-19 virus. Based on the result of their study, they used emotion-focused coping by being aware of their negative mental representations, avoiding negative rumination, cognitive reappraisal, and positive reframing. However, while these coping strategies brought positive emotions, they occasionally struggled with the pandemic's irresolvable aspect ('whatever they do, they still have a higher risk to acquire this deadly infection'). They employed meaning-focused coping to maintain well-being during a difficult time by deriving meaning from a stressful event.

Table 9
COPING STRATEGIES OF THE RESPONDENTS

Coping Strategies	Mean	Descriptive Rating
Self-efficacy	3.24	Moderately Effective
1. Investing necessary effort to solve problems.	3.20	Moderately Effective
2. Remaining calm when facing difficulties.	3.40	Moderately Effective
3. Making plans to make something work.	3.20	Moderately Effective
4. Managing time to do task.	3.27	Moderately Effective
5. Do what has to be done, one step at a time.	3.07	Moderately Effective
6. Mustering confidence to do and finish work on time.	3.33	Moderately Effective
Distraction	3.63	Effective
1. Listening to music to relax.	3.87	Effective
2. Having fun with co-workers (e.g., gossiping).	3.40	Moderately Effective
3. Watching movies or television to avoid thinking about problems.	3.60	Effective
4. Doing some type of physical activities such as playing basketball, badminton, volleyball, etc.	3.73	Effective
5. Attending spiritual services of some kind.	3.87	Effective
6. Meditating whenever possible.	2.80	Moderately Effective
Avoidance	1.82	Slightly Effective
1. Having a short vacation to forget my problems temporarily.	2.87	Moderately Effective
2. Wishing that my problems would go away.	2.00	Slightly Effective
3. Absence of work to avoid stress.	2.00	Slightly Effective
4. Drinking alcohol to keep my mind out of the problem.	1.33	Not Effective
5. Smoking to keep my mind out of the problem.	1.33	Not Effective
6. Seeking for a new job to get away with my problem.	1.40	Not Effective
7. Seeking for a new job to forget my problem	3.40	Moderately Effective
Emotional Support	3.43	Effective
1. Venting out my problems to my friends.	3.73	Effective
2. Talking to others on how they deal with stress.	3.13	Moderately Effective
3. Seeking help from my co-workers to do my job.	3.40	Moderately Effective
4. Explaining my problems to family members to help me deal with it.	3.13	Moderately Effective
5. Approach my boss about my work-related problems.	3.60	Effective
6. Appreciation of people around at my work.	3.60	Effective
Overall Mean	3.03	Moderately Effective
Legend: 1.00-1.80 Not Effective 1.81-2.60 Slightly Effective 2.61- 3.40 Moderately Effective 3.41-4.20 Effective 4.21-5.00 Very Effective		

Table 9 displays the respondents' coping mechanisms. The four categories used by the researchers were self-efficacy, diversions, avoidance, and emotional support.

Self-efficacy

Table 9 details respondents' use of self-efficacy as a coping mechanism. The highest weighted mean, 3.40, was orally assessed as moderately successful for item 2 ("*Remaining cool when facing challenges*"), while the lowest weighted mean, 3.07, was verbally regarded as moderately effective for item 5 ("*Do what has to be done, one step at a time*"). Overall, self-efficacy was rated as a fairly successful coping method by the respondents with a weighted average of 3.24.

The study's findings imply that self-efficacy needs to be a consistent form of coping because it is only somewhat successful in reducing the impacts of the occupational stresses that supermarket frontline workers experienced. Vagni et al. (2020) discussed the significance of self-efficacy in terms of coping mechanisms to control work-related stress. They claimed that individual efficacy, also known as self-efficacy, aids healthcare workers in managing and

coping with the work-related stress brought on by the coronavirus pandemic and has been proven to be an effective protective strategy to stop the healthcare workers from developing traumatic symptoms like having negative thoughts and losing faith in their ability to make effective decisions during the pandemic.

Distraction

Table 9 provides an example of the respondents' diversionary coping mechanisms. The two items with the highest weighted means of 3.87 that were verbally assessed as effective were item 1 ("*Listening to music to relax*") and item 5 ("*Attending spiritual services of some type*"). The lowest weighted mean, 2.80, was orally assessed as somewhat helpful for item 6, "*Meditating whenever feasible.*" Overall, the respondents' coping mechanisms for distraction received an average weighted mean of 3.63, which was orally assessed as effective.

The study's findings make it abundantly evident that using distraction as a coping mechanism is a successful means of managing workplace pressures. Diverse forms of self-distraction have a favorable impact on their performance and how they handle difficult situations. The outcome is consistent with the research by Ahmed et al. (2020), which found that the majority of its participants used various transference or distraction techniques to reduce stress connected to their jobs. It was reported that the majority of front-line nurses engage in religious practices including meditation, prayer, and reading in addition to relaxing hobbies like watching movies, working out, and reading.

Avoidance

The respondents' avoidance coping mechanisms are included in Table 9 as well. The highest weighted mean, 3.40, was verbally interpreted as moderately effective for item 7 ("*Seeking for a new job to forget my problem*"), while 1.33 was verbally interpreted as not effective for items 4 ("*Drinking alcohol to keep my mind off the problem*") and 5. "*Smoking to keep my mind off the problem.*" Overall, the weighted average of the respondents' avoidance coping techniques was 1.82, which might be viewed as just marginally successful.

The study's findings indicated that using avoidance as a coping mechanism has only marginally significant effects. Therefore, engaging in activities like consuming alcohol, smoking, or looking for a new job are ineffective coping mechanisms for stressful situations. For instance, the outcome of this study differs from that of AlJhani et al. (2021), who used avoidance as one of their methods to defend themselves from situations that went above their tolerance threshold. However, it was shown that the majority of healthcare professionals who used an avoidant coping strategy had greater levels of stress, disengagement, sadness, and anxiety at work.

Emotional Support

Table 9 displays the respondents' coping mechanisms in terms of emotional support. The highest weighted mean of 3.73 was verbally interpreted as effective for item 1 ("*Venting out my problems to my friends*"), while the lowest weighted means of 3.13 were interpreted as moderately effective for items 2 ("*Talking to others about how they deal with stress*") and 4 ("*Explaining my problems to family members to help me deal with it*"). Overall, respondents' coping mechanisms received a weighted average score of 3.43, which is considered to be a successful result.

The study's findings imply that one of the best ways to combat the detrimental impacts of work stress is to have adequate emotional support. They are better able to handle difficult events when they have someone around to listen and support them whenever they do. The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Lawless (2014), who found

that cashier employees who experienced stress and emotional upheaval at work tended to seek support from their coworkers, share their experiences with them, and ask their managers for advice on how to handle their jobs. Additionally, Ahmed et al. data from 2020 demonstrated that nurses who are under stress at work talk to their loved ones most of the time to get more support. This supports Tahara et al. (2020) conclusion that workers' psychological well-being was maintained by seeking out social and emotional support.

Relationship between Socio demographic Profile, Occupational Stressor and Coping Strategies

Tables 10 to 12 use the spearman's rank correlation to show the relationship between the socio demographic profile, occupational stressors, and coping mechanisms of the supermarket frontline workers.

Variables	Correlation	Sig
Age	0.070	0.803
Sex	-0.003	0.991
Civil Status	-0.124	0.661
Job Status	0.321	0.243
Length of Service	0.235	0.399

Correlation analysis utilizing Spearman's Rank was employed in this study to examine if socio demographic factors had an impact on the occupational stressor of supermarket frontline workers. As shown in Table 10, there is no correlation between the occupational stressor experienced by supermarket frontline workers and socio demographic characteristics such as age, sex, civil status, employment status, or length of service. The alternative hypothesis 1 was disproved and the null hypothesis 1 was accepted since all of the variables have significant values higher than the approved 0.05 threshold of significance. This suggests that the occupational pressures faced by the supermarket frontline workers are not directly impacted by or connected to socio demographic factors.

The findings are also supported by research by Rauschenbach et al. (2013), who found no overall relationship between age and irritability as a short-term indication or work-related stress when they combined the two variables in a meta-analysis. According to Padkapayeva et al. (2018), men and women had comparable levels of life and job stress. Therefore, sex disparity is not a major predictor of workplace stress. Additionally, according to Khoshakhlagh et al. (2015), there was no correlation between marital status and occupational stress. According to Virtanen et al. (2011), both permanent and temporary employees may experience negative health impacts related to perceived job instability depending on their employment status. This shows that occupational pressures may affect both permanent and temporary employees, regardless of their job status. According to Elahi & Apoorva's (2012) research, depending on the issue under consideration, the length of service has a positive or negative link with stress.

Variables	Correlation	Sig
Age	-0.202	0.471
Sex	-0.119	0.673
Civil Status	0.429	0.110

Job Status	-0.300	0.278
Length of Service	-0.256	0.358

Table 11 demonstrates that there is no correlation between respondents' coping mechanisms and socio demographic characteristics. This suggests that the respondents' socio demographic characteristics are not directly impacted by or linked to the coping mechanisms they employed in response to the stress at work. The alternative hypothesis 2 was rejected whereas the null hypothesis 2 was accepted since characteristics including age, sex, civil status, employment position, and duration of service had a significant value larger than the recognized 0.05 threshold of significance.

The outcome is corroborated by investigations carried out by several academics. For instance, Sasi (2015) study showed that there was no evidence of a significant association between demographic factors such age, sex, civil status, and duration of service and coping techniques. According to their socio demographic profile, the majority of the respondents were said to utilize a variety of coping mechanisms, including emotion-focused, problem-focused, and avoidant coping. Furthermore, Perreault et al. (2017) noted that in terms of employment status, the majority of respondents who were part-time and full-time workers who took part in their study demonstrated that, despite experiencing stress and employing various coping mechanisms to lessen its occurrence, it does not significantly affect their coping mechanisms.

Table 12		
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS AND COPING STRATEGIES		
Variables	Correlation	Sig
Coping Strategies	0.380	0.162

Using Spearman's rank correlation, Table 12 shows how respondents' coping mechanisms and workplace stresses are related. The findings indicated that there is no connection between workplace pressures and coping mechanisms. This indicates that the workplace pressures the supermarket frontline workers experienced had no impact on their coping mechanisms. The alternative hypothesis 3 was rejected whereas the null hypothesis 3 was accepted because coping techniques had a significant value above the approved 0.05 threshold of significance.

The findings of Sasi (2015), who sought to ascertain the association between respondents' levels of professional stress, emotional intelligence, and coping mechanisms, are consistent with this conclusion. The study's findings showed that there is no connection between coping mechanisms and work stress. However, a substantial link between work-related stress and coping mechanisms was discovered when emotional intelligence shown clear strength. However, when emotional intelligence needed to be developed, there was no correlation between professional stress and coping mechanisms.

SUMMARY

This study examined the relationship between the work-related stressors and coping mechanisms used by the frontline workers in a sample of San Jose City, Nueva Ecija supermarkets during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also examined the level of stressfulness of the specified occupational stressors and the effectiveness of the coping mechanisms.

The primary tool used in this study was a validated self-constructed survey questionnaire divided into three sections: the demographic profile of the supermarket

frontline workers employed by the chosen supermarket, the work-related stressors faced by frontline workers, and the degree of effectiveness of the various coping mechanisms. In this study, descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation as well as spearman's rank correlation was employed as statistical tools.

FINDINGS

Based on the results gathered, the following findings are hereby presented:

1. The socio demographic profiles are the respondents' background-related personal data. These are the outcomes: The majority of responders are male, the majority is between the ages of 18 and 22, the majority is unmarried, the majorities are permanent workers, and the majority has between three and five years of employment.
2. Work-related Stressors Encountered by the Supermarket Frontline Workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic Results from an analysis of the work-related stressors that the frontline workers experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic reveal that Health Safety in the Workplace had the highest mean of 3.71 verbal interpretations of stress of all the occupational stressors. The second most stressful category, family-related, with a mean of 3.09, which is considered to be somewhat stressful. Additionally, verbally perceived as mildly stressful, Relationship with Supervisor and Job Security had mean scores of 2.07 and 2.34, respectively. Relationships with coworkers, on the other hand, had a mean of 1.80 and were verbally described as not stressful. These are based on the respondents' evaluations of the statements and scenarios that were provided.
3. Coping Strategies of Supermarket Frontline workers. The study's findings revealed that the majority of the respondents have a coping strategy in dealing with occupational stress and the threat posed by the COVID-19 virus.
4. The results of the study showed that distraction techniques like listening to music, watching movies or television, going to religious services, and engaging in other forms of physical exercise received the highest weighted mean of 3.63, which indicated that they were an effective method of dealing with stress. This finding was based on an assessment of the supermarket frontline workers' coping strategies they used in response to the work-related stress they primarily experienced at work. With an average weighted mean of 3.43, supermarket frontline workers rated emotional support as the second most effective coping method for reducing work-related stress. Additionally, self-efficacy achieved an average weighted mean of 3.24, which was assessed orally as somewhat successful in managing stress at work. Conversely, avoidance had the lowest weighted mean (1.82), which the supermarket frontline workers vocally believed to be a marginally successful strategy for managing their job-related stress.
5. Relationship between Socio demographic Profile, Occupational Stressor and Coping Strategies In general, the examination of the association between the socio-demographic profile and work-related stresses of supermarket frontline workers accepted null hypothesis 1 and rejected alternative hypothesis 1. The findings show that there is no correlation between the socio demographic profile and the workplace pressures that the supermarket frontline workers experienced during the COVID-19 epidemic. Similarly, for the examination of the association between the socio demographic profile and coping techniques of supermarket frontline workers, the null hypothesis 2 was accepted and the alternative hypothesis 2 was rejected. It follows that the socio demographic profile and coping mechanisms of the supermarket frontline workers have no meaningful association. In addition, the examination of the association between workplace stresses and coping mechanisms of supermarket frontline workers supported the null hypothesis 3 and rejected the alternative hypothesis 3. This shows that there is no causal connection between workplace pressures and coping mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

The level of work-related stress or occupational stress has steadily increased. Due to the current scenario brought on by the epidemic, every employee today faces increased professional stress. Employees might use their coping mechanisms to deal with or minimize the stress they experience as a result of their jobs. They are given a variety of coping mechanisms from which they can select the one that best suits them.

Since frontline workers are the frontline service workers who are most likely to deal with customers and who may face occupational stress at this period, this study focuses on their

coping mechanisms.

The researchers came to the following conclusions based on the findings already mentioned:

1. The socio-demographic profiles show that most of the supermarket frontline workers working in San Jose City, Nueva Ecija belong to the age of 18-22 years old. Majority of supermarket frontline workers are male and single. Majority of the frontline workers are also permanent employees working for about at least 3-5 years in the supermarket.
2. Work-related Stressors Encountered by the Supermarket Frontline workers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Employees are stressed out when they think about their health and safety at work because they are aware of how important it is. They might not feel as though their health and safety at work are guaranteed. Accordingly, the administration can make an effort to reassure workers that their company is doing appropriately in relation to this issue.

Employees view the occupational stressor of family as fairly stressful given the various challenges and concerns offered; therefore it is also necessary to manage this stressor. Employees who are most inclined to carry that tension to work may perform less well.

The administration must pay attention to the employee's relationship with the supervisor as well because it might be stressful for them. The findings indicate that there may be a communication gap that frequently contributes to one employee's stress. One way to build positive connections at work is to develop effective communication.

The tension that employees endure is also influenced by their job security. Employees are concerned about the uncertainties that may occur in the current circumstances and have an impact on their job. It could include firing an individual, or the company might decide to go out of business.

The relationship with coworkers, on the other hand, was not thought to be stressful by the grocery frontline workers. However, as changes in behavior may occur over time, this must also be watched carefully.

Coping strategies of supermarket frontline workers: The majority of supermarket frontline workers used coping mechanisms to manage their stress at work and to minimize the COVID-19 pandemic danger.

According to the study's findings, supermarket frontline workers' preferred method of coping with the workplace stress caused by the COVID-19 epidemic was to use diversions. In order to reduce their stress levels, supermarket frontline workers took part in relaxation activities including reading, watching movies, working out, and attending religious events like meditation and prayer. Finding emotional support from friends, family, and coworkers has been found to be the second successful method of dealing with stress. However, it was also shown that self-efficacy was a useful coping mechanism for managing stress at work. Frontline workers at supermarkets think they can handle the conditions in which they find themselves and carry out or carry out a plan of action in a particular situation. Avoidance, however, appears to be the least popular coping mechanism. The grocery frontline workers deemed avoidance to be a marginally successful method of managing work-related stress because rather than avoiding their stressors, they do so relatively regularly.

Relationship between socio demographic profile, occupational stressor and coping strategies: The socio demographic profiles, occupational stress faced by supermarket frontline workers, and coping mechanisms were not significantly related, according to the Spearman's Rank correlation study that was given.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions are made in light of the study's results and conclusion:

1. Because this study's findings show that supermarket frontline workers face work-related stress related to

their health and safety at work, supermarket employers should put in place health protocols. These include sanitizing the entire store before and after business hours, maintaining a safe distance and putting up a barrier between customers and employees, and pre-screening workers by taking their temperatures and looking for signs of COVID. By doing this, the function that they play in the spread of COVID-19 in supermarkets will be diminished, and the employees' health and safety will be guaranteed. Additionally, supermarkets may reduce their sick leave policies for staff members who have the illness. This policy is designed to let employees stay at home when sick with COVID-19 or exhibiting symptoms related to COVID-19 while still receiving pay while on leave, easing their concerns and anxieties about not getting paid for missing work.

2. It is advised that businesses provide Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) for work pressures connected to family. All staff members, as well as those in their immediate families, are eligible. It is a service created by an employer to address personal or family difficulties. According to the findings, difficulties faced by grocery frontline workers include, but are not limited to, relationships, money problems, health problems, separation and loss, juggling work and home obligations, and crisis counseling (e.g., death at work). The objective is to identify and address professional and personal issues that might adversely affect performance and well-being, and to offer proactive and preventative treatments. Employees might suggest to management that they maintain a work-life balance that benefits both their families and themselves. It has to do with how people schedule their time both for work and for personal activities. Relationships, parental responsibilities, and other extracurricular interests and hobbies may require time away from work. Along with having the time, doing it with loved ones—especially family—may be more enjoyable and provide you an opportunity to connect with them in a way that can be a source of emotional support. Employees who have the moral or emotional support of their family can handle any work-related stress. As a result, it may be advantageous to the company since he will always have his family to lean on in times of hardship. Therefore, the best coping mechanisms for relieving stress are diversions like listening to music, watching movies or television, going to religious services, and engaging in physical activity with family. This may lead to a balanced and healthy professional and personal life. Given that lockdown is still in effect, these can be completed at home or in the appropriate backyard.
3. To decrease and mitigate the degree of occupational stress at work, managers at the supermarket are advised to promote open communication among their staff members. Conflicts like miscommunications and misunderstandings will be avoided thanks to this. Additionally, it is advised for them to consistently practice employee recognition, whether it be in the form of intangible recognition like acknowledgment or tangible recognition like the provision of financial rewards, in order to raise their morale and motivation and increase the commitment and effectiveness of their workforce.
4. It is advised that supermarket employers apply both the work-sharing and work-shifting programs in their operations to allay employees' worries about their job security, particularly during these difficult times. Thus, the practice of downsizing or layoffs will be avoided due to enhanced efficiency and production as well as cost reduction.
5. It is advised that future researchers who wish to do the same study first identify other elements that significantly exacerbate the occupational stress of supermarket personnel and the degree of efficacy of their various coping mechanisms. To create a more extensive evaluation and intervention program, they may utilize a different group of frontline workers in other supermarkets or decide to involve all of the staff at that location.

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