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# **Finnish Primary School Teachers' Emotional Coping in Student-related Stressful Situations**

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## **Abstract**

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The current study aimed to explore primary schoolteacher's emotional stress-coping strategy and to examine its possible relationships with stressful situations caused by pupils' misbehaviours in Finland context. A total of 12 items in four subscales with second-order model was the most appropriate structure to understand teachers' emotional coping strategy. In the student-related stressful situations, the most relevant emotional coping strategies were religion/mindfulness, social support from family members, and self-blame. In addition, when teachers use self-blame to acknowledge their stressful emotions, they use another emotional strategy simultaneously, and vice versa. Those results showed significance of future studies on understanding more effective emotional strategies for student-related stress and investigating how teachers use several types of emotional coping strategies coincidentally.

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**Keywords:** emotional coping; teacher-student interaction; student-related stress; confirmatory factor analysis.

# **El Afrontamiento Emocional de los Maestros de Primaria Finlandeses en Situaciones de Estrés Relacionadas con los Estudiantes**

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## **Resumen**

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El estudio actual tiene como objetivo explorar la estrategia de afrontamiento del estrés emocional por parte de los maestros y examinar su posible relación con las situaciones estresantes causadas por el mal comportamiento de los alumnos en la Finlandia. La estructura más adecuada para comprender la estrategia de afrontamiento emocional de los profesores fue clasificar un total de doce elementos en cuatro subescalas con un modelo de segundo orden. Las estrategias de afrontamiento emocional más relevantes en las situaciones estresantes relacionadas con los alumnos fueron la religión o conciencia plena, el apoyo social de los familiares y la autculpabilidad. Además, cuando los profesores usan la autculpabilidad para reconocer las emociones estresantes, usan otra estrategia emocional simultáneamente y viceversa. Los resultados mostraron la importancia de que los futuros estudios comprendan las estrategias emocionales más eficaces para afrontar el estrés relacionado con los estudiantes e investiguen cómo los profesores utilizan varios tipos de estrategias de afrontamiento emocional de forma coincidente.

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**Palabras clave:** Afrontamiento emocional; interacción profesor-estudiante; estrés relacionado con el estudiante; análisis factorial confirmatorio.

**S**tress is a crucial factor affecting the quality of teachers' works (Hartney, 2008; Travers & Cooper, 1996; Greenaway et al., 2014), so understanding specific classroom environments and the optimal ways of coping linked to teachers' psychological and emotional well-being is important (Snyder et al., 2004).

In Finland, the context in which this study was developed, even though a school as a complicate occupational setting that embraces diverse social contexts to interact with many groups such as pupils, colleagues, and administrators, the dynamics has often been overlooked in teacher stress and coping studies (Pietarinen, Pyhältö, Soini, & Samela-Aro, 2013). Recently, Taddei, Contena, Pepe, and Venturini (2017) agree with previous findings that interaction with pupils i.e. teacher stress social-student-related (TSS-Sr) has been the strongest reason causing teacher stress (Van Doogenbroeck, Spruyt, & Vanroelen, 2014; Johnson et al., 2005), and found that it has to be considered differently with other social groups in teacher stress.

With regard to stress coping, the general expectation in Finland is that teachers are rational experts who should manage their own emotions and those of their pupils (Uitto, Kaunisto, Syrjälä, & Estola, 2015). That is, teacher stress-coping or well-being studies might treat emotional issues as a natural part of teachers' roles (Lassila, Jokikokko, Uitto, & Estola, 2017). However, teacher stress covers two crucial concepts related to emotion: one is emotional labour which is an occupational point indicating emotional discrepancies and difficulties of workers who have to interact with others (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Grandney, 2000; Morris & Feldman, 1996). The other is emotional competence which means teachers' emotional control abilities (Lazarus, 2006a; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Gross, 2002). Lazarus (2006b) found that, since stress-coping is a comprehensive process of emotional arousal, the three concepts, stress, coping, and emotion form a conceptual unit. Jeter (2013) also stated that using emotion-focused coping more efficiently reduces teachers' work-related stress and burnout.

In sum, by finding the optimal emotional coping strategies, teachers can be helped to accept and cope with student-related stress. Thus, this current study aims to investigate teachers' emotional coping styles connected with student misbehaviours. We developed a scale to clarify the kinds of emotional coping strategies Finnish teachers use, and then examined the interrelationships with types of pupils' misbehaviours.

**Necessity of coping scale item reorganization and emotional coping**

According to Hobfoll (1988), stress results from an imbalance between stressful demands and coping resources, both involving an internal psychological process. Therefore, stress-coping processes cover finding the best resources and actions to combat the stressor (Blum, Brow, & Silver, 2012). Many researchers have tried to categorize types of those actions and resources—stress-coping strategies—, including cognitive, emotional, and problem-solving perspectives.

Table 1

*Summary of coping dimensions evaluated in developed stress-coping measurements*

<b>Authors (year)</b>	<b>Coping dimensions</b>
Amirkhan (1990)	• Problem-solving / Seeking social support / Avoidance
Billings & Moos (1984)	• Appraisal-focused / Problem-focused / Emotion-focused
Carver et al. (1989)	• Problem-focused / Emotion-focused / Venting of Emotions / Behavioural disengagement / Mental disengagement
Dise-Lewis (1988)	• Aggression / Stress-recognition / Distraction / Self-destruction / Endurance
Endler & Parker (1990a/b)	• Task-oriented / Emotion-oriented / Avoidance-oriented
Epstein & Meier (1989)	• Emotional / Behavioural / Categorical thinking / Superstitious Thinking / Naïve optimism / Negative thinking
Feifel & Strack (1989)	• Problem solving / Emotion-focused
Folkman & Lazarus (1988)	• Confrontive / Distancing / Self-controlling / Seeking social support / Accepting responsibility / Escape-avoidance / Planful problem-solving / Positive reappraisal
Miller (1980, 1987)	• Information-seeking (Monitoring) / Information-distancing
Nowack (1989)	• Intrusive positive thoughts / Intrusive negative thoughts / Avoidance / Problem-focused
Patterson & McCubbin (1987)	• Ventilating feelings / Seeking diversion / Developing self-reliance / Developing social support / Avoiding problems/ Seeking spiritual support / Investing in close friends / Seeking professional support / Engaging in demanding activities / Being humorous / Relaxing

Table 1 displays varied sets of instruments (cited from Parker & Endler, 1992). Some of them contain similar items with different or differently labelled subscales. For instance, using the Life Events and Coping Inventory (LECI), Olafsen and Viemerö (2000) researched bullying problems and

coping in primary school kids in Finland. One item, ‘get advice from someone’ is in the stress-recognition subscale, while the same item is generally in the social support subscale of other measurements (Chinaveh, 2013; Amirkhan, 1990). That is, if researchers use different measurements, we cannot state whether the results are about the same phenomena and constructs. In the perspectives of research communities and practitioners, some findings can cause confusion (Parker & Endler, 1992). Hence, Greenaway and her colleagues (2014), who recently evaluated several established coping strategy measurements, suggested ‘subscale item reorganization.’

With regards to items of emotion-focused subscales in several measurements, some of them were also correlated inversely (Scheier, Weintraub, & Carver, 1986), so they are needed reclassification. In detail, denial (in the meaning of avoidance) and seeking social support (in the meaning of facilitating approach toward the stressor) are aggregated under the rubric of emotional coping (Stanton, Danoff-Burg, Cameron, & Ellis, 1994). In addition, Stanton and colleagues (2000) considered most of the established emotional coping strategies as indicators of maladjustment like pessimism, psychopathology, and negative affect and depression. So, they concentrated on a functionalism perspective of emotion, which represents efficient modes of adaptation to changing environmental demands and to nature of emotion and its expression. They reorganized emotion-focused coping items, using only two subscales: emotional processing (four items, e.g. I acknowledge my emotions) and expression (four items, e.g. I allow myself to express emotions).

Even though this scale clarified how emotion is involved in coping processes, those are not enough to describe details of using emotional coping strategies. Moreover, they believed social support strategies more facilitate negative emotion by making people straight focus on stressors (Stanton et al., 2000). However, emotion makes us establish our favourable actions to the stressful environment, pulling us toward certain people, objects, actions, and ideas to process and express it (Levenson, 1999). Therefore, we should know which types of social support group, such as family, colleagues, or friends, people express emotion and get understanding from in coping processes. For this, we consider the broader view of emotional coping to reorganizing, by including more items and subscales from the previous ones.

**Student-related Teacher Stress**

This kind of teacher stress stems from student misbehaviours (Kyriacou 2001; Tsouloupas et al., 2010) and disrespectful and superficial relationships with pupils (Geiving, 2007). Finnish teachers also have perceived these as primarily causing psychological exhaustion (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Pietarinen et al., 2013). For example, verbal hostility, and uncooperativeness characterised by playing with personal devices during lectures commonly generate teacher stress (Dalgıç & Bayhan, 2014; Stephens, Kyriacou, & Tønnessen, 2005).

When teachers experience student-related stress in the classroom, they are required to hide negative emotions. This causes job strain from feelings of inconsistency and unfairness (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000). Furthermore, in teachers' pedagogical thinking, if they have retained internalized pessimistic feelings and schemas of problematic pupils, they are more likely to evaluate those students as posing hardships (Split & Koomen, 2009). O'Connor (2008) stated teachers experience intrinsic compensation from having healthy pupil-related interpersonal relationships; thus, if they have disrespectful and superficial relationships, they easily experience more stress (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). In sum, teachers feel stress not only when they directly experience student misbehaviours and relationships involving mistreatment but when they form a negative impression on their students and their behaviours.

**Aims of the study**

This study aims to explore teachers' emotional stress-coping strategies in a Finnish context. In addition, the study examines the relation between the teachers' emotional coping strategies and student-related stressful contexts. To respond to the research tasks, the relevant measurements and the items were recategorized to adapt to the Finnish school context. The following questions were tested:

1. What kinds of emotional coping strategies Finnish teachers use?
2. How does emotional coping strategies relate to student-related stressful contexts?

## Methods

### Procedure and Participants

After getting a permission from a municipality based on the national research integrity or ethics guidelines (TENK, 2012), headmasters of 20 schools located in the central area of Finland were requested to participate data collection via email. Then, four principals replied and asked us to visit their official teacher meetings (10th of Jan, 31st of Jan, 6th of Feb, and 17th of Feb in 2018). Hence, total 85 in-service teachers who are working in four of primary or comprehensive schools—only 1 to 6 grades' teachers—completed the research survey. Most respondents were female teachers ( $n = 68$ ; 80%) and the minority was men ( $n = 17$ ; 20%). They have 17.5 years ( $SD = 10.27$ ) teaching experiences. Total 85 out of 135 teachers participated in the study which is 65.2% response rate.

### Measurements

#### Teacher Social Stress-Student related (TSS-Sr)

TSS-Sr was developed by Taddei and colleagues (2017) inspired by the customer-related social stressor concept (Dorman & Zapf, 2004). Total 18 items in four subscales in this scale: (a) Verbally Aggressive i.e. students' rudeness and inclination to shout out, (b) Dislike i.e. students' unpleasant behaviours like impolite manners, (c) Awkward Reactions i.e. students' incomprehension of teacher work, and (d) Demanding Requests i.e. students' belief to be special, more important, and more experienced than other pupils. The scale presented convergent validity with Maslach Burnout Inventory and reliability with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .75 to .86. As Kalliopuska (2008) stated that shier and inactive pupils are not considered as a stressor for Finnish teachers, three educational experts discussed items and decided to remove two of them: students who have no sense of humour, and who lack confidence. In summary, the final instrument includes 16 items, rated with six ordered categorical options: 1 = None to 6 = Too much Stressful. With the pilot samples, the measurement was highly reliable ( $\alpha = .82$ ).



**Emotional stress-coping strategy**

To develop this scale, 254 items in six stress-coping strategy measurements<sup>1</sup> integrated the item pool. With two item selection criteria, if there were explicit emotion-related words and phrases, we chose the items (e.g. I let my feelings out in WCQ). Items also related to religion/meditation (e.g. I pray or meditate in CSES) and substance use (e.g. I try to make myself feel better by eating, drinking alcohol in WCQ) were selected as those items positively influence relieving stress in an emotional way (Goyal et al., 2014; Ferguson, Willemsen, & Castañeto, 2010). Then, a phrase ‘to feel better’ was added on those items, if needed. After removal of overlapped items, 68 literature reviewed items were narrowed down to 29 items in ten subscales: Venting Emotions, Avoidance, Positive Mind 1-3, Social Support, Substance Use, Professional Support, Religion/Mindfulness Support, and Self-Blame. Thereafter, 23 Finnish Master’s degree students at teacher training schools (male:  $n = 3$ ; female:  $n = 20$ ) took part in the pilot study. All participants had teaching experiences and understanding of student-related stress.

In sum, Table 2 indicates pre- and post-pilot items and its reliabilities, respectively. Consequently, five items in PMs and all items in A were eliminated to correct insufficient pre-pilot items’ reliability ( $\alpha = .65$ ). In addition, one item related to drinking in SU was divided into drinking alcohol (item 21) and tea (item 22) to differentiate types of stimulants. Hence, we confirmed 22 items in eight subscales ( $\alpha = .74$ ) for the main study rated with self-reported six categorical options:  $1 = None$  to  $6 = Many\ times$ .

Table 2

*Emotional coping items and reliability changes between pre- and post-revisions*

Factor	Scales	Subscales	Items	Pre <i>α</i>	Post <i>α</i>
VE	WCQ	Confrontive Coping	1. I let my feelings out	.82	.82
	COPE	Venting Emotions	2. I get upset and let my emotions out		
	CRI	Emotional Discharge	3. I cry to let my feelings out		
SB	WCQ	Accepting Responsibility	4. I criticize or lecture myself	.72	.72
	CISS	Emotion Coping	5. I blame at myself for not knowing what to do		
	WCQ	Accepting Responsibility	6. I realize I brought the problem on myself		
PS	WCQ	Seeking Social Support	7. I get professional help	.77	.77
	CRI	Seeking Guidance and Support	8. I talk with a professional person (e.g., doctor, professors)		
	CSI	Seeking Support	9. I go to a professional to help me to feel better		
A	WCQ	Avoidance	<sup>a</sup> I try to keep my feelings from interfering with other things too much	.43	-
	CSES	Stop Unpleasant Emotions and Thoughts	<sup>a</sup> I keep from feeling sad		
	CSES	Stop Unpleasant Emotions and Thoughts	<sup>a</sup> I keep myself from feeling lonely		
PM 1	CSES	Get Support from Friends and Family	<sup>a</sup> I do some positive activities for myself to feel better (sports, watching movies)	.44	-
	CSES	Use Problem-Focus Coping	10. I talk positively to myself to feel better		
	WCQ	Self-controlling	11. I tell myself positive things that helped me to feel better		
SS	WCQ	Seeking Social Support	12. I talk about my feelings with co-workers and get accepted sympathy and understanding from co-workers	.45	.45

	CSI	Seeking Support	13. I talk about my feelings with friends and get accepted sympathy and understanding from friends		
	CSES	Get Support from Friends and Family	14. I talk about my feelings with family and relatives and get accepted sympathy and understanding from family and relatives		
PM 2	CSES	Stop Unpleasant Emotions and Thoughts	<sup>a</sup> I take off my mind with unpleasant thoughts		
	CSES		<sup>a</sup> I make unpleasant thoughts go away	<b>.76</b>	-
	CSES		<sup>a</sup> I stop from being upset by unpleasant thoughts		
RMS	WCQ	Positive Reappraisal	15. I pray		
	COPE	Religious Coping	16. I try to find comfort in my religion	.98	.98
	COPE	Religious Coping	17. I seek to God's help		
PM 3	WCQ	Distancing	18. I try to look on the bright side to feel better		
	CRI	Positive Reappraisal	19. I try to see the good side of a situation to feel better	<b>.64</b>	<b>.80</b>
	WCQ	Distancing	<sup>a</sup> I make light of the situation to feel better		-
SU	COPE	Substance Use	20. I use alcohol or drugs to make myself feel better		
	WCQ	Escape-Avoidance	21. I try to make myself feel better by eating, drinking alcohol	.92	.92
			22. I try to make myself feel better by eating, drinking tea		
<b>Total</b>				<b>.65</b>	<b>.74</b>

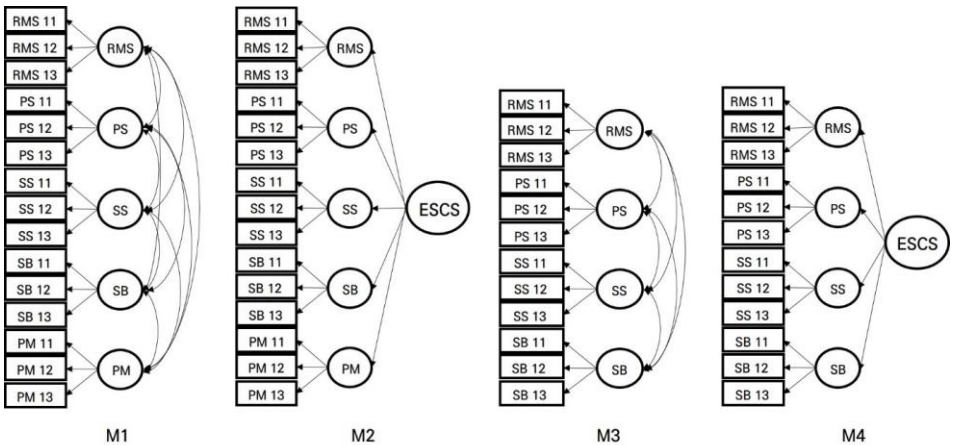
Note: WCQ = Ways of Coping Questionnaire; COPE = COPE Inventory; CISS = Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations - Situation Specific Coping; CSI = Coping Strategy Indicator; CSES = Coping Self-Efficacy Scale; CRI = Coping Responses Inventory; VE = Venting Emotion; SB = Self-Blame; PS = Professional Support; A = Avoidance; PM 1-3 = Positive Mind 1-3; SS = Social Support; RMS = Religion/Mindfulness Support; SU = Substance Use

<sup>a</sup> Items were deleted

**Data Analysis**

**Model proposal**

To check whether this scale has the same second-order structure with the original ones (Heck & Thomas, 2015), we considered first- and second-order models. Based on the results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) which is for expected skewed subscales (Muijs, 2011), seven more items in Positive Mind 1, Venting Emotion, and Substance Use were deleted. Although those strategies could mitigate Finnish teachers’ negative feelings, but it indicated that teachers do not use them in an emotional way (Westman, Hobfoll, Chen, Davidson, & Laski, 2005; Agabio, Campesi, Pisanu, Gessa, & France, 2016). Therefore, we determined total 15 items with first (M1) and second order (M2) including five factors — Religion/Mindfulness Support, Professional Support, Social Support, Self-blame, and Positive Mind—. Subsequently, six out of nine items in Positive Mind (PM) 1-3 were deleted in this process. Thus, we also considered models without any PM item—12 items in four factors —with both first (M3) and second order (M4) to find the most appropriate ‘emotional’ coping strategies (See Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Proposed models illustrate the numbers of factors and orders. M1 is first-order five factors, M2 is second-order five factors, M3 is first-order four factors, and M4 is second-order four factors.

**Analytic strategy**

Before investigating the correlation between student-related stress and emotional coping, we tested reliability and validity of the selected emotional coping items via Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) which is a method for researchers to specify how latent variables are measured using observed variables (Geiser, 2013). This methodological choice is in agreement with the studies of the original item pools (see Note in Table 1) that provided evidence that ESCS can be understood as a latent construct measured by different but correlated observed variables. So, standardized regression weights of every individual relationship between an item and a factor were described. We also run Full-Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) with estimate means and intercepts function (Byrne, 2010) for missing values. To reach the model fit, we used indexes, such as Chi-Square test, Comparative Fit Index (CFI > .95), Tucker-Lewin Index (TLI > .95), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA < .6 or < .8) (Kline, 2013).

**Results**

Teachers used more social support ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ; SS) and self-blame ( $M = 2.63$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ; SB) than other emotional coping strategies. Interestingly, SB subscale had moderate relations with all other subscales ( $r$  (RMS) = .45;  $r$  (PS) = .45;  $r$  (SS) = .40,  $p < .001$ ) (See Table 3). This indicates that those participating teachers might use self-blame strategies with other coping strategies rather than using it alone.

Table 3

*Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations of research variables*

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	$\alpha$	
1. RMS	1.77	1.14	1.00				.92	
Emotional	2. PS	1.70	0.76	.67***	1.00		.85	
Coping	3. SS	3.84	0.81	.30***	.37***	1.00	.76	
	4. SB	2.63	0.75	.45***	.45***	.40***	1.00	.71
	5. DIS	3.74	0.89	-				.75
Student-	6. VA	3.64	0.86	-	-			.84
related	7. DR	3.47	0.95	-	-	-		.83
Stress	8. AR	3.04	0.94	-	-	-	-	.85

*Note.* 1. RMS = Religion/Mindfulness Support; 2. PS = Professional Support; 3. SS = Social Support; 4. SB = Self-Blame. 5. DIS = Dislike; 6. VA = Verbally Aggressive; 7. DR = Demanding Request; 8. AR = Awkward Reaction

\*\*\* $p < .001$

In addition, all types of students’ misbehaviours made those teachers get stress over the average level. For example, teachers feel stress when students treat them with impolite manners ( $M = 3.74, SD = .89$ ; DIS). Moreover, pupils’ rudeness and inclination to shout out ( $M = 3.64, SD = .86$ ; VA) and their belief to be special and more important than other pupils ( $M = 3.47, SD = .95$ ; DR) affect teacher stress. Lastly, students’ incomprehension of teachers’ work causes teacher stress but it affects lesser than other types of misbehaviours ( $M = 3.04, SD = .94$ ; AR). This pupil-related stress scale was highly reliable with the sampled Finnish schoolteacher data ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

As shown in Table 4, regardless of orders, four-factor models (M3 and M4) of emotional coping shows fair or good model fit. However, criteria values suggested that 12 items with second-order model (M4) better explain the whole data [ $\chi^2(50) = 68.70, p > .01, RMSEA = .06, CFI = .96, TLI = .94$ ].

Table 4

*Goodness-of-model-fit indices for four proposed models*

	M1	M2	M3	M4
Chi-Square	163.40	170.59	90.17	68.70
df	80	85	49	50
<i>p</i>	< .01	< .01	< .01	> .01
RMSEA	.11	.11	.09	.06
CFI	.88	.87	.92	.96
TLI	.81	.82	.87	.94
Total	-	-	Fair	Good

Notes: M1 = Model 1 (First-order Five-factor); M2 = Model 2 (Second-order Five-factor); M3 = Model 3 (First-order Four-factor); M4 = Model 4 (Second-order Four-factor); RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error Approximation, CFI = Comparative Fit Index, TLI = Tucker-Lewin Index

Figure 2 shows the final model with the standardized coefficients of relationships. All the standardized regression weights of the factor items are over .5 ( $p < .01$ ) except for social support (SS) subscale to the emotional coping scale (ESCS) ( $\beta = .43$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Thus, 12 items with second-order model presented to be the most suitable model for further relational investigation with pupil-related stress.

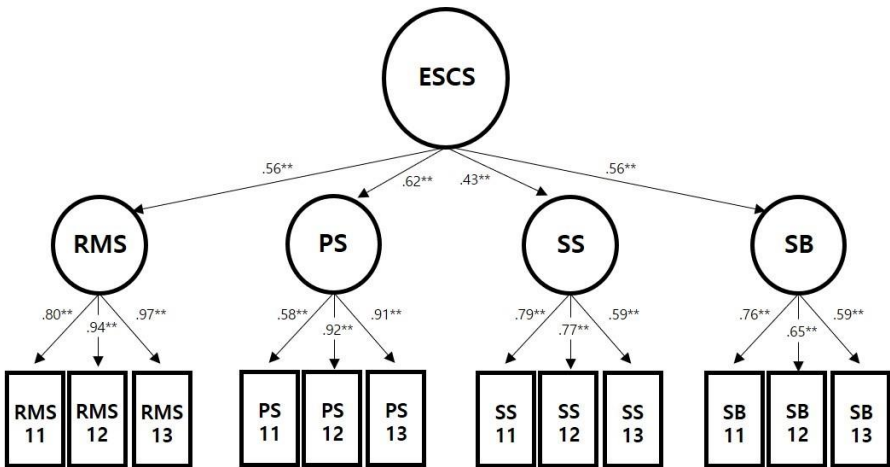


Figure 2. The final coping scale has four-factor and 12 items of second order model (M4). RMS = Religion/Mindfulness Support; PS = Professional Support; SS = Social Support; SB = Self-Blame. All parameters were significant at  $p$  level  $< .01$

According to the correlation results between emotional coping and student misbehaviours, when students a) attack verbally and non-verbally ( $r = .35$  to  $.38, p < .01$ ), b) make teachers feel burden ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ), c) make teachers' voice loud ( $r = .29, p < .01$ ), d) have critical attitudes toward teachers ( $r = .28$  to  $.42, p < .01$ ), e) make teachers angry ( $r = .24, p < .05$ ), f) misbehave ( $r = .23, p < .05$ ), g) have complains to teachers ( $r = .22, p < .05$  and  $r = .30, p < .01$ ), and h) ask teachers to do overburden work ( $r = .22, p < .05$ ), the participating teachers use the most self-blame strategies which represent accepting and acknowledging the stressful situations. Next, the teachers used religion/mindfulness coping strategies when their pupils make them angry ( $r = .23$  to  $.24, p < .05$ ), student complains make their' work more complicated ( $r = .23$  to  $.25, p < .01$ ), and when students attack verbally and non-verbally ( $r = .25, p < .05$ ). Lastly, when students behave impolitely ( $r = .27, p < .05$ ) and attack in several ways ( $r = .22$  to  $.24, p < .05$ ), the sampled teachers relied on social support strategies by addressing their feelings to family and relative members more than friends and colleagues.



## **Discussion**

This study aimed at finding the optimal emotional coping strategies to explore associations with student-related stressful contexts. We found three of four emotional coping ways except for professional support were related with stress coming from pupils' misbehaviours. So, we proffer practical suggestions for emotional coping to reduce student-related teacher stress.

### **Practical spirituality based on chatting with mind**

All items in religion/mindfulness support subscale contributed the most in the model, meaning that such support can function as an important emotional coping resource for teachers. The relevant item of this falls under the 'cognitive elements' category in certain previous coping measurements. However, the item reorganization in the emotional coping scale showed its' direct effect on emotional switch from negative to positive ones (Schilderman, 2001; Spezio, Wildman, Sosis, & Bulbulia, 2016). That means these practical-spiritual supports are a sort of conscious living which involves silencing the continuous chatter of the mind in a relaxed playful manner and looking within to connect with what is going inside us (Giri, 2019).

Additionally, although few participants used this strategy, religion/mindfulness coping connects with specific types of misbehaviours, including when a) students attack them verbally and non-verbally, b) students suddenly get angry at them, and c) students' claims make their work more complicated. Thus, not to ignore but to make teachers recognize using those coping ways is important (Jennings & DeMauro, 2017) by providing places, time, and seminars in school. This does not mean the entire environmental changes. However, it means considering minor parts to make a better working environment for the teachers to be aware of where they are and not overly overwhelmed by what is going on around them (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2011). To know clearly how this coping works in an emotional way for individual teachers, this result should be further examined with different types of analyses, such as interviews.

### **Genuine care and assistance from social networks**

Social support strategy has been the most basic and important element to relieve teacher stress (Travers & Cooper, 1996; Botwinik, 2007; Pennebaker, Zech, & Rime, 2001). Montgomery (2017) also stated that relationships

between the external stressors, coping, and burnout are influenced by the degree to which individuals feel socially supported with their boss and colleagues, with their spouse, children—family—, and with friends. Although the sampled Finnish teachers most used social support strategies, they reported talking about ‘student-related’ concerns mostly only to their family members rather than to friends and colleagues (Thompson & Meyer, 2007). This finding contradicts a Finnish cultural expectation that home is a place free from working stress (Kinnunen et al., 2012). Thus, we should further examine why the other social groups such as colleagues and friends were not pertained to the stressor coming from students’ misbehaviours and how talking to family coping strategy influences reducing student-related stress empirically.

In addition, Finnish teachers consider themselves as experts (Pyhältö, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2012), but talking with colleagues was included in socially support, not professional support coping for the participants. This means those two items must be separated from each other and professional support should be understood as a help from people who have a specific qualification(s) such as counsellors, professors, and lawyers. These results indicate that we need to clearly explain and re-consider the specific support groups to which Finnish teachers have recoured based on cultural features (Rime, 2009).

### **Acceptance stress as a crucial emotional regulation process**

The participating teachers used the self-blame strategy in an attempt to relieve their uncomfortable feelings. According to Stanton and her colleagues’ research (2000), this is not about literally blaming themselves but about admitting and acknowledging their emotional status. That is, we found the teachers get emotional support from their own emotional regulation processes. This corresponds with the fact that stress management programmes such as Stress Management Training (SMT; Monroy, Jonas, Mathey, & Murphy, 1997) were designed to build the individual’s capacity to cope stress proactively by using self-regulation in the context of stressful situations.

In addition, this strategy was the most frequently presented emotional coping resource against student misbehaviours. When students request many things from, have antagonistic attitudes to, and complain about teachers, teachers’ use of this strategy helps them understand where their negative emotions stem from (Chang, 2013). The most interesting finding was when

the teachers use this strategy, they were prone to use other emotional coping resources. According to Cook, Blair, and Buehler (2018), when people communicate with others such as experts or friends, such chances provide an opportunity for them to look back or re-think objectively about behaviours or words. Therefore, when the teachers acknowledge their stressful emotions, they probably use another emotional strategy simultaneously, and vice versa. That is, this result indicated significance of future studies on investigating how teachers use several types of emotional coping strategies coincidentally.

### **Limitations**

Analysing self-reported questionnaire should be considered carefully (Carson & Hardy, 1998), because teachers may feel guilty to reflect on the pupils' misbehaviours by thinking its' occupational inappropriateness (Fiorilli, Albanese, Gabola, & Pepe, 2017; Maghan, 2017; Taddei et al., 2017). In addition, the number of participants in the study is not enough to make generalizable conclusions about the entire group of Finnish teachers and we attribute the study findings to the group of participating teachers. However, the study reveals relevant elements which are emerging among teachers and increase our understanding in this context. Also, the quantity of sample alone does not decide the quality of the property's presumption (Zaher, 2007; Boivin & Ng, 2006), but a certain amount—'large'—of data has been emphasized on application feature of factor models (Geiser, 2013; Byrne, 2010). Consequently, the limited sample size of this study should be supplemented for further research to confirm the generalizability of the findings by covering more participants and broader areas of Finland.

Despite of those limitations, this study contributed to investigate stress-coping with the specific stressful situation- and emotion-focused perspectives. We explored previous literatures on teacher stress by probing pre-existing stress-coping scales and distinguishing the best sets of items based on culturally sensitive evidence. Therefore, this trial of item reorganization with emotional perspective can help researchers when they try to identify more effective emotional strategies on student-related stress and apply this into specific stressful school contexts in different cultures.

### **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> a) Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WCQ;  $\alpha = .61$  to  $.79$ ) (Folkman & Lazarus, 1988 as recited in Greenaway et al., 2014), b) COPE Inventory (COPE;  $\alpha = .45$  to  $.92$ ) (Carver, Scheier, & Kumari, 1989), c) Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations - Situation Specific Coping (CISS-SSC;  $\alpha = .70$  to  $.93$ ) (Endler & Parker, 1994: as recited in Greenaway et al., 2014), d) Coping Strategy Indicator (CSI;  $\alpha = .84$  to  $.91$ ) (Amirkhan, 1990), e) Coping Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES;  $\alpha = .80$  to  $.91$ ) (Chesney, Neilands, Chambers, Taylor, & Folkman, 2006), and f) Coping Responses Inventory (CRI;  $\alpha = .73$  to  $.75$ ) (Moos, 1993; as recited in Chinaveh, 2013).

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