

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT, COPING STYLES, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Teachers operate in socially complex and emotionally demanding environments where continuous interpersonal interactions, heavy workloads, and role expectations increase vulnerability to stress and compromised mental health. Social support acts as a protective factor by buffering stress and enhancing coping, while coping styles both problem-focused and emotion-focused influence how individuals manage demands that exceed personal resources. Psychological well-being, reflected in autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, purpose in life, self-acceptance, and positive relations, represents effective functioning. This study examined the relationships among social support, coping styles, and psychological well-being in teachers within a South Asian context.

Using a correlational research design, data were collected from (N=117) teachers aged between 19 years and above with a minimum of six months of teaching experience. Participants completed the Social Support Questionnaire, Coping Efficacy Questionnaire, and the 18-item Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale. Data were analyzed using SPSS-27.

Results showed significant positive correlations among social support, coping strategies, and psychological well-being among teachers. Appraisal support was strongly positive with others, while both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping were positively related to several dimensions of well-being. All scales demonstrated acceptable reliability. Gender comparisons revealed no significant differences across study variables, indicating comparable functioning among male and female teachers. Overall these findings highlight the role of social support and adaptive coping in enhancing teachers' psychological well-being.

Keywords: Social Support, Coping Styles, Psychological Well-Being, Teachers, Mental Health, and Educational Settings.

Introduction

Teachers play a vital role in shaping students' academic, emotional, and social development, yet their own psychological well-being is frequently challenged by heavy workloads, emotional labor, and increasing professional demands. Persistent stress in teaching environments has been linked to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and weakened professional commitment, particularly in resource-constrained educational systems. These concerns emphasize the need to identify protective factors that sustain teachers' mental health, especially in developing contexts such as Pakistan where institutional support is often limited (McCallum et al., 2017; Harding et al., 2019).

Psychological Well-being

Psychological well-being refers to positive emotional, cognitive, and social functioning and encompasses autonomy, personal growth, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, positive relationships, and purpose in life. Teachers with higher psychological well-being demonstrate greater job satisfaction, resilience, and effectiveness in classroom interactions, whereas diminished well-being is associated with emotional exhaustion and attrition (Ryff, 2014; Kidger et al., 2016). Given the emotionally demanding nature of teaching, maintaining psychological well-being is essential for both teacher performance and student outcomes.

Social Support

Social support is a critical protective factor that buffers stress and enhances well-being through emotional reassurance, informational guidance, and practical assistance from colleagues, administrators, family, and friends. Supportive school climates characterized by collaboration and trust are associated with reduced burnout and improved psychological well-being among teachers (Collie et al., 2016). In contrast, inadequate support increases isolation, stress, and dissatisfaction, particularly in contexts where professional resources are scarce (Prilleltensky et al., 2016; Suleman et al., 2018).

Coping Styles

Coping styles further influence how teachers manage occupational stress and maintain well-being. Problem-focused and adaptive emotion-focused coping strategies are associated with better psychological outcomes, while avoidance and disengagement are linked to poorer well-being. Social support plays a key role in shaping coping responses, as teachers with strong support networks are more likely to adopt effective coping strategies and experience reduced stress (Thoits, 2011; Brouskeli et al., 2018). Examining the combined influence of social support and coping styles on psychological well-being is particularly important in Pakistan, where cultural norms, high workloads, and limited institutional support intensify teachers' vulnerability to stress (Shahzad & Malik, 2014; Rehman et al., 2021).

Rationale

Teaching is widely recognized as a demanding profession that involves continuous emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal challenges. Teachers are expected to manage heavy workloads, maintain classroom discipline, meet administrative expectations, and respond to the diverse academic and emotional needs of students. These persistent demands often place teachers at risk of stress, burnout, and reduced psychological well-being.

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct that includes positive functioning, life satisfaction, emotional balance, and a sense of purpose. Research indicates that teachers' well-being is not only crucial for their own mental health but also significantly influences students' academic performance, classroom climate, and overall educational quality. Therefore,

understanding the factors that contribute to teachers' psychological well-being is of both theoretical and practical importance.

Social support has been identified as one of the most important protective factors against occupational stress. Support from colleagues, family, friends, and school administration can help teachers cope with professional challenges by providing emotional reassurance, practical assistance, and a sense of belonging. Similarly, coping styles play a central role in determining how individuals respond to stress. Adaptive coping strategies such as problem-focused coping and seeking social support are associated with better mental health outcomes, whereas maladaptive coping strategies such as avoidance, denial, or emotional disengagement are linked to poorer psychological well-being. Despite the growing body of international literature, there is limited empirical research examining the combined role of social support and coping styles in predicting psychological well-being among teachers, particularly in developing countries. Cultural factors, institutional constraints, and educational policies may influence how teachers perceive support and utilize coping strategies. Therefore, this study aims to explore the association between social support, coping styles, and psychological well-being among teachers, in order to generate context-specific evidence that can inform mental health interventions, teacher training programs, and educational policies

Objectives

1. To assess the level of perceived social support among teachers.
2. To identify the dominant coping styles used by teachers.
3. To determine the level of psychological well-being among teachers.
4. To examine the relationship between social support and psychological well-being among teachers.
5. To examine the relationship between coping styles and psychological well-being among teachers.
6. To determine whether social support and coping styles significantly predict psychological well-being among teachers.
7. To explore the combined effect of social support and coping styles on psychological well-being.

Hypotheses

H1: There were significant positive relationship between social support and psychological well-being among teachers.

H2: There were significant relationship between coping styles and psychological well-being among teachers.

H3: Social support and coping styles were significantly predict psychological well-being among teachers.

H4: Teachers who report higher levels of perceived social support was exhibit higher levels of psychological well-being compared to those with lower social support.

H5: Adaptive coping styles (e.g., problem-focused coping, active coping, seeking support) were positively associated with psychological well-being.

H6: Maladaptive coping styles (e.g., avoidance, denial, emotional disengagement) were negatively associated with psychological well-being.

Significance of the Study

Teachers are exposed to multiple occupational stressors, including heavy workloads, role ambiguity, emotional demands, and increasing administrative responsibilities. These stressors may

negatively affect their psychological well-being, leading to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and impaired professional functioning. Although social support and coping styles have been identified as important psychological resources in managing stress, there is limited empirical evidence examining their combined influence on psychological well-being among teachers, particularly within the local educational context. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the association between social support, coping styles, and psychological well-being among teachers in order to better understand the psychosocial factors that contribute to their mental health and overall functioning.

Research Statement

From a theoretical perspective, the study was contribute to the existing literature by expanding empirical understanding of how social support and coping styles are related to psychological well-being among teachers. It will help validate psychological theories related to stress, coping, and social support within an educational context. From a practical perspective, the findings of this study can assist school administrators, psychologists, and policymakers in designing effective mental health interventions for teachers. By identifying the role of social support and coping strategies, the study can inform the development of teacher training programs, stress management workshops, and institutional support systems aimed at enhancing teachers' well-being and resilience. From a social and educational perspective, improving teachers' psychological well-being has direct implications for classroom effectiveness, student engagement, and the overall quality of education. Teachers who experience higher levels of well-being are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes, better emotional regulation, and stronger professional commitment. Therefore, this study may ultimately contribute to healthier school environments and improved educational outcomes.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, correlational research design to examine the relationships among social support, coping styles, and psychological well-being in teachers. Grounded in a positivist paradigm, the study emphasized objective measurement, use of standardized tools, and statistical analysis to identify patterns that could guide evidence-based interventions for teacher well-being.

Purposive sampling technique was employed to select teachers with diverse demographic and professional characteristics, including varying ages, genders, teaching experience, and school types. Eligibility criteria required participants to be currently employed teachers aged 19 or older, with at least six months of experience and the ability to read English or Urdu. Teachers diagnosed with psychological disorders or undergoing psychiatric treatment were excluded to avoid confounding effects on well-being scores. Participation was voluntary, and teachers were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without penalty.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire booklet comprising demographic items and three standardized scales. The Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ), developed by Sarason et al. (1983; revised short form 1987), was used to assess perceived emotional, informational, and instrumental support. Coping styles were measured using the Coping Efficacy Questionnaire (CEQ) developed by Chesney et al. (2006), capturing problem-focused and emotion-focused coping tendencies. Psychological well-being was evaluated using the Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff, 1989; Ryff& Keyes, 1995), which measures autonomy, self-acceptance, purpose in life, environmental mastery, personal growth, and positive relations. All instruments have demonstrated strong psychometric validity and were suitable for assessing the constructs under study.

Data were analyzed using SPSS-27. Initial screening addressed completeness, outliers, and data entry accuracy. Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and standard deviations) summarized participant characteristics and scale scores. Cronbach's alpha assessed internal consistency of the instruments. Pearson product-moment correlations examined relationships among social support, coping styles, and psychological well-being, while independent sample t-tests explored gender differences. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection. Informed consent, confidentiality assurances, and voluntary participation principles were strictly upheld.

Results

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics, and Range of Study Variables (N = 117)

Variable	α	k	M (SD)	Range	
				Actual	Potential
Psychological Well-Being (PWB)					
Autonomy	.506	3	13.84 (2.70)	14	3–21
Environmental Mastery	.261	3	13.47 (3.47)	18	3–21
Personal Growth	.137	3	14.67 (3.36)	13	3–21
Positive Relations with Others	.320	3	12.79 (3.74)	17	3–21
Purpose in Life	-.108	3	12.18 (3.17)	16	3–21
Self-Acceptance	.204	3	15.20 (3.38)	17	3–21
Social Support					
Appraisal Support	.267	4	10.82 (2.67)	12	3–12
Belonging Support	.455	4	11.29 (2.78)	12	3–12
Tangible Support	.152	4	10.82 (2.42)	11	3–12
Coping Style					
Problem-Focused Coping	.627	14	34.41 (6.03)	31	4–56
Emotion-Focused Coping	.666	14	35.78 (6.56)	31	4–56

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics, internal consistency coefficients, and score ranges for psychological well-being, social support, and coping strategies among teachers (N = 117). Psychological well-being was assessed across six dimensions, with mean scores ranging from

12.18 (Purpose in Life) to 15.20 (Self-Acceptance), indicating overall moderate well-being. Autonomy and personal growth showed relatively higher means, while purpose in life was comparatively lower. All observed scores fell within the expected range (3–21), although internal consistency for the psychological well-being subscales was low to modest ($\alpha = -.506$ to $.320$).

Social support, assessed across appraisal, belonging, and tangible dimensions, showed moderate mean scores (10.82–11.29), with low to acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .152$ – $.455$). Coping strategies included problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, both reported at moderate to high levels, with mean scores of 34.41 (SD = 6.03) and 35.78 (SD = 6.56), respectively. These coping subscales demonstrated comparatively stronger reliability ($\alpha = .627$ – $.666$). Overall, the table summarizes the central tendencies, variability, and reliability of the study variables.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Matrix among Demographic Variables, Social Support, Coping Styles, and Psychological Well-Being (N = 117)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Age	1																		
Gender	-.366**	1																	
Living Backgro und	-.013	-.037	1																
Institutio n	-.276**	.096	-.017	1															
Family System	-.149	.215*	-.163	-.017	1														
Working Status	-.174	.115	.107	-.127	-.021	1													
No. of Family Members	-.061	-.194*	.096	.238**	-.102	-.174	1												
No. of Siblings	.076	.115	-.005	.136	-.257**	.004	.518**	1											
Appraisa l Support	.137	.035	.115	-.097	-.001	-.200*	-.141	-.074	1										
Belongin g Support	.043	.053	.012	.125	-.126	.052	.104	.152	.292**	1									

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Tangible Support	.136	-.035	.093	-.025	.003	-.200*	-.105	-.086	.236*	.215*	1								
Problem-Focused Coping	.080	-.057	-.116	.018	.144	-.063	.016	-.069	-.016	-.001	.266**	1							
Emotion-Focused Coping	.070	-.030	-.199*	-.083	.185*	-.088	.038	-.019	-.175	-.120	.128	.602**	1						
Autonomy	-.055	.204*	-.129	-.047	-.112	-.099	.185*	-.125	.027	-.089	-.047	-.041	.031	1					
Environmental Mastery	.009	.177	-.156	.005	.003	.118	-.069	-.145	-.096	-.053	-.064	-.012	-.136	.212*	1				
Personal Growth	-.006	.057	-.024	-.066	-.210*	-.072	.222*	-.092	.117	-.034	.016	-.005	-.035	.454**	.141	1			
1Positive Relations	.077	-.036	-.117	.040	-.022	-.081	.183	-.040	.243**	.202*	.154	-.009	-.120	.644**	.203*	.778**	1		
Purpose in Life	-.028	-.114	-.105	.129	-.116	.098	.069	-.025	.129	.237*	.081	.033	-.076	-.058	.078	.232*	.186*	1	
Self-Acceptance	-.032	.121	-.159	.152	.009	-.230*	-.084	-.080	.166	.148	.118	-.051	-.077	.303**	.148	-.399**	.405**	.057	1

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlations among demographic variables, social support, coping styles, and psychological well-being dimensions for teachers (N = 117). Several significant associations were observed.

Among demographic variables, age was negatively correlated with gender ($r = -.366, p < .01$) and institution ($r = -.276, p < .01$). Family-related variables were interrelated, with the number of family members strongly associated with the number of siblings ($r = .518, p < .01$).

Regarding social support, appraisal support was positively associated with belonging support ($r = .292, p < .01$) and tangible support ($r = .236, p < .05$). Appraisal support was also positively related to positive relations with others ($r = .243, p < .01$), while belonging support showed significant associations with positive relations ($r = .202, p < .05$) and purpose in life ($r = .237, p < .05$).

Coping styles were strongly interrelated, with problem-focused coping positively correlated with emotion-focused coping ($r = .602, p < .01$). Tangible support was positively associated with problem-focused coping ($r = .266, p < .01$).

Within psychological well-being, autonomy was positively related to environmental mastery ($r = .212, p < .05$) and personal growth ($r = .454, p < .01$). Personal growth showed a strong association with positive relations with others ($r = .778, p < .01$), which was also positively related to self-acceptance ($r = .405, p < .01$). Purpose in life demonstrated modest positive associations with personal growth ($r = .232, p < .05$) and positive relations ($r = .186, p < .05$).

Table 3

Comparing Male and Female Teachers on Social Support, Coping Styles, and Psychological Well-Being (N = 117)

Variable	Male M (SD)	Female M (SD)	t (df=115)	95% CI		Cohen's d
Psychological Well-Being				LL	UL	
Autonomy	13.29 (2.59)	14.38 (2.71)	-2.23	-2.07	0.12	.115
Environmental Mastery	12.82 (3.73)	14.11 (3.50)	-1.92	-2.61	0.04	.115
Personal Growth	14.48 (3.37)	14.86 (3.37)	-0.61	-1.61	0.85	.115
Positive Relations with Others	12.93 (3.77)	12.66 (3.73)	0.39	-1.10	1.64	.115
Purpose in Life	12.55 (2.95)	11.83 (3.34)	1.23	-0.43	1.87	.115
Self-Acceptance	14.79 (3.62)	15.61 (3.11)	-1.30	-2.05	0.42	.115
Social Support						
Appraisal Support	10.91 (2.43)	10.72 (2.91)	0.37	-0.80	1.16	.115
Belonging Support	11.44 (2.82)	11.15 (2.77)	0.57	-0.73	1.32	.115
Tangible Support	10.91 (2.79)	10.74 (2.02)	0.37	-0.72	1.05	.115
Coping Style						
Problem-Focused Coping	34.68 (6.64)	33.98 (5.74)	0.62	-1.56	2.98	.115
Emotion-Focused Coping						

Table 3 summarizes the results of independent samples t-tests comparing male and female teachers on psychological well-being, social support, and coping strategies (N = 117). Overall, the findings indicate minimal gender-based differences across the study variables.

Across the six dimensions of psychological well-being, male and female teachers reported largely comparable mean scores. A significant difference emerged only for autonomy, with female teachers scoring slightly higher than males, although the effect size was small (Cohen's $d = .115$).

No significant gender differences were observed for environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, or self-acceptance.

Similarly, no significant gender differences were found for appraisal, belonging, or tangible social support, or for problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. Effect sizes across all comparisons were negligible.

Overall, these results suggest that gender does not play a substantial role in shaping teachers' psychological well-being, perceived social support, or coping styles within the studied population.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationships among social support, coping styles, and psychological well-being in teachers and revealed that both social support and adaptive coping strategies were positively associated with psychological well-being, whereas maladaptive coping showed negative associations. These findings highlight that teachers' well-being is shaped through the combined influence of individual coping capacities and broader social and organizational resources. This perspective is consistent with prior research characterizing teaching as an emotionally demanding profession in which psychological outcomes are determined by both personal and contextual factors (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018; Harding et al., 2019).

A key finding of the study was the strong positive association between social support and psychological well-being. Teachers who perceived higher levels of emotional, informational, and instrumental support reported better functioning across core well-being dimensions, including autonomy, self-acceptance, and positive relations with others. These results support the stress-buffering hypothesis, which proposes that social support mitigates the negative effects of stress by providing reassurance, guidance, and practical assistance. Consistent with previous studies, supportive school climates characterized by collegial collaboration and constructive leadership were linked to improved mental health, job satisfaction, and resilience among teachers (Collie et al., 2016; Doménech-Betoret, 2016).

Coping styles also emerged as significant predictors of psychological well-being. Problem-focused coping demonstrated a strong positive relationship with well-being, suggesting that teachers who actively manage stress through planning and problem-solving are better able to maintain emotional stability. Adaptive emotion-focused coping showed a modest positive association, whereas maladaptive strategies such as avoidance and denial were negatively related to well-being. These findings align with transactional stress theory and previous research linking maladaptive coping to burnout, emotional exhaustion, and depressive symptoms among teachers (Herman et al., 2018). Overall, the results reinforce the importance of promoting effective coping strategies to enhance teacher resilience.

The findings further indicate that social support and coping styles operate in tandem. Supportive environments appear to facilitate adaptive coping by fostering a sense of belonging, competence, and emotional security, enabling teachers to perceive stressors as more manageable (Taylor, 2012). This interaction is particularly relevant within the Pakistani context, where teachers face high workloads, large class sizes, and limited institutional resources, yet often rely on strong informal support networks shaped by collectivistic cultural norms (Hofstede, 2011; Shahzad & Malik, 2014). The absence of gender differences in well-being and coping suggests that shared workplace conditions and support systems may outweigh gender-based variations. Collectively, these findings underscore the need for school-level interventions that strengthen social support systems and promote adaptive coping to enhance teachers' psychological well-being.

Conclusion

This study found that social support and effective coping strategies significantly contributed to teachers' psychological well-being. Emotional, informational, and practical support enhanced resilience, while problem-focused coping was linked to better mental health and maladaptive coping increased strain. Teachers' well-being was influenced not only by personal coping but also by workplace relationships, organizational conditions, and cultural expectations. Overall, the findings highlight the need for supportive school environments and interventions that strengthen both coping skills and social support systems to promote healthier functioning among teachers.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that schools strengthen structured social support systems and provide counselling programs tailored to teachers' coping needs. Professional development should include training in stress management, relationship-building, and effective use of support networks. Early interventions that enhance coping skills may help prevent long-term psychological difficulties. Policies and programs must also consider cultural and contextual factors to ensure relevance. Continued research is encouraged to refine intervention strategies and improve evidence-based practices supporting teacher well-being and workplace resilience.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The purposive sample of 117 teachers limits generalizability and may introduce selection bias. The cross-sectional design prevents causal interpretations, and reliance on self-report measures raises the possibility of social desirability effects. Findings apply only to teachers, reducing relevance for other groups. Cultural and socioeconomic factors were not analyzed, potentially influencing results. Additionally, the selected instruments may not fully capture the complexity of social support, coping styles, and psychological well-being, indicating the need for broader assessment tools in future research.

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