

EMOTIONAL AND COGNITIVE COPING AND PERSONAL AUTONOMY AMONG TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the relationship between emotional and cognitive coping strategies and personal autonomy among teachers, aiming to understand how adaptive regulation of emotions and thoughts supports professional well-being and resilience in educational contexts. The main objective was to identify the extent to which emotional and cognitive coping predict teachers' perceived autonomy and their capacity for self-directed decision-making in stressful situations. A quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design was employed. The sample consisted of 172 teachers from various educational levels across Romania, predominantly from the Dobrogea region, aged between 25 and 60 years ($M = 41.7$, $SD = 8.9$). Data were collected using standardized psychological instruments assessing coping dimensions and autonomy-related variables. Statistical analyses revealed significant positive correlations between adaptive coping strategies (emotional regulation, problem-focused thinking) and personal autonomy ($r = .48$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis showed that cognitive coping was a stronger predictor of autonomy ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$) than emotional coping ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$). These results emphasize the importance of strengthening teachers' self-regulation skills and reflective coping mechanisms to enhance their autonomy and professional resilience. The findings have practical implications for psychological training and educational policy development focused on teacher well-being.

Keywords: emotional coping, cognitive coping, personal autonomy, teachers, psychological resilience

INTRODUCTION

Understanding how teachers regulate emotions and cognitions in demanding professional environments has become a central topic in contemporary educational psychology. Teaching is widely recognized as a high-stress occupation that requires continuous emotional labor, rapid decision-making, and sustained interpersonal engagement (Kyriacou, 2011). In this context, coping strategies—defined as the cognitive and emotional efforts individuals employ to manage stressors—play a critical role in shaping psychological functioning and professional adaptation [4], [6]. Among these strategies, emotional coping refers to the regulation of affective responses to