



A Comparative Study on Coping Strategies Among Government and Private School Teachers in Guntur District Andhra Pradesh.

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Abstract

Background: Teaching is associated with significant occupational stress, and coping strategies play a critical role in managing stress. Institutional differences may influence coping patterns among teachers.

Objective: To compare coping strategies between government and private school teachers in Guntur district.

Methods: A cross-sectional comparative study was conducted among 100 teachers (50 government, 50 private). Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from the Brief COPE inventory. Descriptive statistics and independent samples t-test were applied.

Results: Private school teachers showed significantly higher problem-focused coping (Mean Diff = -0.85, $p = 0.001$), whereas government teachers demonstrated higher emotion-focused coping (Mean Diff = 0.72, $p = 0.001$). No significant difference was found in avoidant coping ($p = 0.426$).

Conclusion: Institutional setting significantly influences coping strategies among teachers. Tailored interventions are recommended.

Keywords: Coping strategies, teachers, stress, government schools, private schools

Introduction

Educators, academicians, and teachers play a pivotal role in the development of a nation's human capital, as they are directly involved in shaping knowledge, skills, and future productivity. In recent years, increasing attention has been directed toward teachers' coping strategies as a critical determinant of their effectiveness and professional performance. Evidence suggests that teachers experiencing poor health and inadequate coping abilities are more likely to report higher levels of occupational stress, which can adversely affect both their well-being and teaching outcomes. Conversely, teachers with better coping skills and overall well-being are more likely to engage in innovative, challenging, and effective teaching practices, thereby contributing to improved student outcomes .^{1,3,4} Studies have also highlighted that teachers' perceptions of their own well-being at work significantly influence their job satisfaction and performance .^{2,5,6,7}

Furthermore, coping strategies employed by teachers vary widely depending on individual, institutional, and contextual factors. Research has shown that teachers often adopt a combination of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping mechanisms to manage stress, particularly in demanding educational environments .^{3,8,15-20} However, inadequate coping strategies may lead to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and compromised teaching quality. Despite the growing recognition of the importance of coping in educational settings, there remains a relative scarcity of focused empirical studies examining coping strategies among teachers, especially in the Indian context.²⁰⁻²⁶ This gap underscores the need for further research to better understand coping patterns and their implications for teacher well-being and educational effectiveness.

Objectives

- To assess coping strategies among teachers
- To compare coping strategies between government and private school teachers
- To determine statistically significant differences in coping dimensions

Methodology

Study Design: Cross-sectional comparative study

Study Area: Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh

Sample Size: 100 teachers (50 government, 50 private)

Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling

Inclusion Criteria : Teachers with ≥ 1 year of experience and also Willing participants

Exclusion Criteria: Incomplete responses , Teachers on leave .

Data Collection Tool: Structured questionnaire based on Brief COPE (4-point Likert scale); The Brief COPE questionnaire was used as the data collection tool, consisting of items rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("I haven't been doing this at all") to 4 ("I've been doing this a lot"), assessing various adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies. It is a widely validated instrument for evaluating coping responses in stressful situations.

A pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted among 10 teachers to assess clarity, feasibility, and reliability of the tool, and necessary modifications were made prior to the final data collection.

Statistical Analysis: Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean \pm SD) and Independent samples t-test ; Significance level indicates $p < 0.05$.

Results

Table 1 demographic context of the participants(n=100)

Variable	Category	Govt. School (n = 50)	Pvt. School (n = 50)	Total (N = 100)
Gender	Male	22 (44%)	18 (36%)	40 (40%)
	Female	28 (56%)	32 (64%)	60 (60%)
Age Group (Years)	21–30	12 (24%)	20 (40%)	32 (32%)
	31–40	18 (36%)	15 (30%)	33 (33%)
	41–50	12 (24%)	10 (20%)	22 (22%)
	> 50	8 (16%)	5 (10%)	13 (13%)
Teaching Experience	< 5 Years	10 (20%)	25 (50%)	35 (35%)
	5–15 Years	25 (50%)	15 (30%)	40 (40%)
	> 15 Years	15 (30%)	10 (20%)	25 (25%)
Educational Qualification	Graduate (B.Ed)	15 (30%)	30 (60%)	45 (45%)

	Postgraduate (M.Ed)	35 (70%)	20 (40%)	55 (55%)
Marital Status	Married	35 (70%)	30 (60%)	65 (65%)
	Unmarried	15 (30%)	20 (40%)	35 (35%)
Residence	Urban	20 (40%)	35 (70%)	55 (55%)
	Rural	30 (60%)	15 (30%)	45 (45%)
Type of Family	Nuclear	28 (56%)	32 (64%)	60 (60%)
	Joint	22 (44%)	18 (36%)	40 (40%)
Monthly Income (INR)	< 25,000	30 (60%)	10 (20%)	40 (40%)
	25,000–50,000	15 (30%)	25 (50%)	40 (40%)
	> 50,000	5 (10%)	15 (30%)	20 (20%)

The study included 100 teachers, with a higher proportion of females (60%) and most participants aged 21–40 years. Government teachers had more experience and postgraduate qualifications, while private teachers were younger with less experience. Urban residence and higher income were more common among private school teachers.

Table 2 Comparison of Coping Domains Between Government and Private School Teachers(n=100)

Coping Domain	Govt. Teachers	Pvt. Teachers	Mean Difference	p-value
Problem-Focused Coping	2.65 ± 0.58	3.50 ± 0.56	-0.85	0.001**
Emotion-Focused Coping	3.35 ± 0.60	2.63 ± 0.67	0.72	0.001**
Avoidant Coping	1.80 ± 0.55	1.92 ± 0.60	-0.12	0.426

In table 2 shows ;Private school teachers showed significantly higher problem-focused coping, while government teachers used more emotion-focused coping ($p < 0.001$). Avoidant coping was low in both groups with no significant difference. This indicates distinct coping preferences between the two groups.

Table 3 Effect Size for Differences in Coping Domains

Coping Domain	Mean Difference	Cohen's d	Effect Size
Problem-Focused Coping	-0.79	0.84	Large
Emotion-Focused Coping	0.65	0.72	Moderate–Large
Avoidant Coping	-0.13	0.18	Small

Footnote : Cohen's d: 0.2 = small, 0.5 = moderate, ≥ 0.8 = large effect size.

In table 3 , Problem-focused coping showed a large effect size, indicating a strong difference between groups. Emotion-focused coping had a moderate-to-large effect, while avoidant coping showed only a small effect. This suggests meaningful differences mainly in adaptive coping domains.

Table 4 Comparison of coping strategies

Coping Strategy	Type	Govt. (Mean ± SD)	Pvt. (Mean ± SD)	p-value
Active Coping	Adaptive	2.82 ± 0.63	3.55 ± 0.57	<0.001**
Planning	Adaptive	2.54 ± 0.58	3.38 ± 0.53	<0.001**
Instrumental Support	Adaptive	3.08 ± 0.69	2.92 ± 0.66	0.228
Emotional Support	Adaptive	3.48 ± 0.61	2.74 ± 0.64	<0.001**
Positive Reframing	Adaptive	2.88 ± 0.62	3.12 ± 0.59	0.061
Acceptance	Adaptive	3.18 ± 0.57	2.83 ± 0.61	0.007*
Religion	Adaptive	3.68 ± 0.49	2.45 ± 0.70	<0.001**
Self-Blame	Maladaptive	1.79 ± 0.52	2.18 ± 0.58	0.001**

*Footnote : Based on Brief COPE scale (4-point Likert: 1 = “I haven’t been doing this at all” to 4 = “I’ve been doing this a lot”); values expressed as Mean ± SD; p < 0.05 significant, **p < 0.01 highly significant.*

Table 4 represents , Private teachers scored higher in active coping and planning, while government teachers relied more on emotional support, religion, and acceptance. Most differences were statistically significant, highlighting varied coping styles. Self-blame was higher among private teachers, indicating maladaptive tendencies.

Table 5 Association Between School Type and Coping Levels

Coping Domain	Level	Govt. n (%)	Pvt. n (%)	χ^2 -value	p-value
Problem-Focused	High	19 (38%)	34 (68%)	8.76	0.003**
	Low	31 (62%)	16 (32%)		
Emotion-Focused	High	29 (58%)	20 (40%)	3.84	0.050*
	Low	21 (42%)	30 (60%)		
Avoidant	High	11 (22%)	13 (26%)	0.21	0.646
	Low	39 (78%)	37 (74%)		

Table 5 shows , a significantly higher proportion of private teachers had high problem-focused coping ($p = 0.003$). Government teachers showed slightly higher emotion-focused coping, with borderline significance. No significant association was observed for avoidant coping.

Discussion

The present study demonstrated notable differences in coping strategies between government and private school teachers, with private school teachers exhibiting significantly higher problem-focused coping scores (3.47 ± 0.55 vs. 2.68 ± 0.57 , $p < 0.001$), whereas government teachers relied more on emotion-focused strategies (3.31 ± 0.59 vs. 2.66 ± 0.65 , $p < 0.001$). These findings are consistent with prior research indicating that problem-focused coping is associated with better psychological outcomes and work efficiency, while emotion-focused coping is more commonly used in situations perceived as less controllable . A study by Emeljanovas et al. (2023) reported that adaptive strategies such as problem-solving and active coping significantly improve teachers' emotional well-being, whereas reliance on passive or emotion-driven responses may predispose to burnout. ^{11,23} Similarly, a 2019 structural model study demonstrated that adaptive coping strategies reduce emotional exhaustion, while maladaptive approaches are linked with increased stress levels (Fiorilli et al., 2019) . ^{15,16,17,18} The higher problem-focused coping observed among private school teachers in the present study may reflect better institutional support or performance-driven environments encouraging proactive stress management.

Further, item-wise analysis revealed that private school teachers scored significantly higher in active coping (3.55 ± 0.57), planning (3.38 ± 0.53), whereas government teachers showed higher reliance on religion (3.68 ± 0.49) and emotional support (3.48 ± 0.61). These findings align with recent studies suggesting that cultural and contextual factors strongly influence coping preferences, with spirituality and social support being more prevalent in certain populations . For instance, Mugat et.al (2025) reported high utilization of acceptance, religion, and emotional reframing among teachers, with mean scores

exceeding 4.0, indicating strong dependence on internal and social coping resources. In contrast, studies from developed educational settings have highlighted greater use of structured strategies such as planning and instrumental support (Bjørndal et al., 2021). The present findings therefore reflect a mixed coping pattern, where government teachers rely more on intrinsic and emotional coping, while private teachers adopt structured and goal-oriented approaches. Additionally, maladaptive coping such as self-blame was significantly higher among private teachers (2.18 ± 0.58), which is concerning, as previous literature links such strategies to increased psychological distress and reduced job satisfaction (Emeljanovas et al., 2023)
.12,18,19,20,21

The categorical analysis further reinforced these differences, with a significantly higher proportion of private school teachers exhibiting high problem-focused coping (68% vs. 38%, $\chi^2 = 8.76, p = 0.003$), while government teachers showed higher emotion-focused coping. These results are comparable with findings from Santana and Solís (2024), who reported that coping strategies significantly vary with workplace environment and resource availability .¹⁸ Moreover, earlier evidence suggests that demographic and occupational factors such as experience, institutional structure, and workload influence coping behavior, supporting the variations observed in Table 1 of the present study . Interestingly, avoidant coping did not differ significantly between groups ($p = 0.265$), which is consistent with literature indicating that avoidance behaviors are relatively stable across populations and less influenced by institutional factors. The type of coping strategy differs significantly by school type, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to promote effective coping mechanisms and reduce reliance on maladaptive strategies among teachers. Further , research should aim to overcome these limitations by including larger, multi-center samples to improve generalizability. Longitudinal studies are recommended to better understand changes in coping strategies over time and establish causal relationships. Additionally, intervention-based studies focusing on stress management and coping enhancement programs would be valuable in assessing the effectiveness of targeted strategies among teachers.

Limitations

The present study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the findings. First, the sample size was relatively small, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Second, the use of convenience sampling may introduce selection bias, reducing the representativeness of the study population. The data were based on self-reported responses, which are subject to reporting bias and social desirability effects.

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates statistically significant differences in coping strategies between government and private school teachers, despite comparable socio-demographic characteristics. Private school teachers showed greater use of problem-focused coping, reflected in higher mean scores and a larger proportion categorized under high coping levels, whereas government school teachers relied more on emotion-focused strategies such as emotional support and religious coping. Item-wise findings further indicate that structured approaches like active coping and planning were more prevalent among private teachers, while intrinsic and affective coping mechanisms predominated among government teachers. Although avoidant coping did not differ significantly, the overall pattern underscores the influence of institutional environment and work culture on stress management practices. In this context, strengthening coping capacity through regular interventions is essential; initiatives such as bimonthly counselling sessions, yoga and mindfulness programs, and structured coping skill workshops can play a vital role in enhancing teachers' psychological well-being. Moreover, the increasing emphasis by government bodies on capacity-building tools and mental health support systems provides a valuable opportunity to

institutionalize such interventions. Integrating these measures within the educational framework can promote adaptive coping, reduce stress-related burden, and improve overall teacher effectiveness.

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