

Coping strategies used by EPS teachers- Study on teachers of M'sila

استراتيجيات المواجهة المستخدمة من قبل معلمي التربية البدنية- دراسة عن معلمي المسيلة

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- Abstract: The goal of our research is to elucidate the coping strategies employed by physical education teachers in the province of M'sila. To achieve this objective, we adopted a descriptive method on a sample of 30 randomly selected general teachers. A questionnaire consisting of 24 items was distributed: 5 items focused on problem-focused coping strategies, 6 items on emotion-focused coping strategies, and on social support, and 8 items on avoidance-focused coping strategies. Data were collected and analyzed using the "SPSS" statistical analysis program. After analyzing the results, the study showed that physical education teachers in the province of M'sila mainly rely on problem-solving coping strategies, while some teachers rely on avoidance coping strategies, and to a lesser extent, on social support-focused coping strategies, followed by avoidance-focused strategies. Based on these results, the study recommends that teachers implement differentiated pedagogy where the role of the child is central to the educational system. Additionally, it suggests the optimal use of coping strategies to reach decisions that are compatible with the adolescent age group, which will yield better communication results with them.

Keywords: coping strategies – EPS – Teachers.

- **الملخص:** الهدف من بحثنا هو توضيح استراتيجيات المواجهة التي يعتمدها معلمو التربية البدنية والرياضية بولاية المسيلة. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، اعتمدنا الطريقة الوصفية على عينة تتألف من 30 معلماً تم اختيارهم بشكل عشوائي من بين المعلمين العاملين. وقد تم توزيع استبيان يتكون من 24 عبارة، 5 عبارات لاستراتيجيات المواجهة المركزة على المشكلة و6 عبارات لاستراتيجيات المواجهة المركزة على الانفعال وكذلك المركزة على السند الاجتماعي، و8 عبارات لاستراتيجيات المواجهة المركزة على التجنب، تم جمع البيانات باستخدام برنامج "SPSS" لتحليل البيانات الإحصائية. وبعد تحليل النتائج، أظهرت الدراسة أن معلمي التربية البدنية والرياضية في ولاية المسيلة يعتمدون بشكل رئيسي على استراتيجيات المواجهة التي تركز على حل المشكلات، بينما يعتمد بعض المعلمين على استراتيجيات المواجهة التي تركز على التجنب، وبدرجة أقل استراتيجيات المواجهة المركزة على السند الاجتماعي ثم استراتيجيات المواجهة المركزة على التجنب، بناءً على هذه النتائج توصي الدراسة بأن يقوم المعلمون بتنفيذ بيداغوجيا متميزة حيث يتم تحديد دور الطفل "في صميم النظام التعليمي، وكذلك الاستخدام الأمثل لاستراتيجيات المواجهة للوصول الى قرار يتلاءم مع الفئة الشبانية من المراهقين مما يعطي نتائج أفضل في التواصل معهم.

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Introduction:

Throughout their existence, every individual is faced with a variety of challenges, whether related to daily concerns or significant crises, such as grief, leading to emotional distress and behavioral disruptions. The individual thus employs coping strategies with the aim of overcoming conflicts, adjusting to their new reality, or protecting themselves against any undesirable influence.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the concept of coping encompasses the entirety of cognitive and behavioral efforts deployed to manage specific pressures, whether originating from within or outside, and perceived by the individual as requiring the use or exceeding their resources. These authors identify four types of strategies: problem-focused coping, which aims to reduce the demands of the situation or increase individual resources to cope more effectively; emotion-focused coping, which includes attempts to regulate emotional tensions induced by the situation; social support-focused coping, which involves seeking sympathy and help from others; and finally, avoidance-focused coping, characterized by efforts to physically and psychologically disengage from the stressful situation.

The effectiveness of a coping strategy is measured by its ability to help the individual gain control over a stressful situation and/or reduce its impact on their physical and mental well-being. Regarding situations deemed controllable, research suggests that problem-solving-focused strategies are beneficial and correlated with positive indicators of mental health. (Bruchon-Schweitzer, 2002, p. 68)

Nevertheless, when confronted with a situation beyond individual control, repeated attempts may prove ineffective, exhausting, and potentially detrimental to one's health. (Lazarus r.s, 1984, p. 141)

In such circumstances, emotion-focused strategies may prove effective in the short term, but in the long run, they are associated with the development of depressive feelings. (Bruchon-Schweitzer, 2002, p. 83)

However, there is broad consensus among researchers that coping serves as a stabilizing element, enabling the individual to maintain psychosocial adaptation during periods of stress.

The term "stress," introduced by Selye (1974), refers to situations that impose psychological demands on the organism. According to Selye, stress is a reaction, which he defines as "the nonspecific response of the body to any demand made upon it" (Selye, 1974). By using the term "nonspecific," he means to convey that the same pattern of response can be triggered by various stimuli or stressors.

Some authors conceptualize stress as a stimulus, an event, or a set of circumstances requiring an unusual response. A third perspective involves considering stress not as a stimulus or response but rather as a transaction or relationship between the individual and their environment.

This individual perceives stress as an excessive demand on their resources, constituting a threat to their well-being (Lazarus, 1984). The situation is objectively perceived as more or less demanding (for example, bereavement, serious illness, terrorist attacks), but the constraining nature takes on its meaning from the individual's evaluation of it. Therefore, evaluation, along with coping mechanisms, represents one of the two essential processes to determine the degree of stress in the interaction between the person and their environment.

Coping strategies encompass behavioral, cognitive, and affective dimensions that influence how an individual deals with the demands of a situation and the emotions elicited by it. Indeed, our research falls within the psychological domain and focuses on studying the coping strategies adopted by teachers in physical education and sports (EPS).

1. Problem Formulation

Faced with a situation perceived as stressful, an individual, far from remaining passive, will develop a significant response to cope. According to the classical conception of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the coping concept "represents the set of

constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts deployed by a person to manage demands, whether internal and/or external, perceived as consuming or exceeding their resources." Thus, coping is generally considered a specific, flexible, and continually evolving process.

1.1 Research question:

"This leads us to explore the following question: • What are the types of coping strategies implemented by teachers in physical education and sports (EPS)?"

1.2 Hypothesis:

"We hypothesize that certain coping strategies, specifically those centered around problem-solving and seeking social support, are effective, while others focused on problem avoidance are considered dysfunctional."

1.3 Study objectives:

Our research aims to describe the coping strategies adopted by teachers in physical education and sports. Two main objectives are defined:

- Identify the coping strategies implemented by teachers in physical education and sports in response to adverse situations in the M'sila province.
- Evaluate the most frequently used coping strategy by teachers in physical education and sports in the M'sila province.

1.4 The significance of the study

Every research endeavor involves the selection of a study topic to focus efforts on understanding a phenomenon and providing logical explanations for it. Successful research must be conducted objectively, aiming to yield beneficial results. The choice of the theme or study subject is not arbitrary but is based on specific reasons and clearly defined objectives.

Our study sparks particular interest in two major axes:

a) On a personal level:

The completion of this project represents a source of personal satisfaction, demonstrating our intellectual ability to understand, analyze, and explain the coping

strategies employed by teachers in physical education and sports in the M'sila province.

b) On a scientific level:

This study constitutes a contribution that we make available to the scientific community and institutional authorities, serving as a resource and reference. Furthermore, it provides us with the opportunity to apply the knowledge gained during our academic journey. Finally, it aims to add value and enrich academic research on this topic, benefiting future researchers.

2. Definition of concepts

2-1- Coping strategies:

Lazarus and Folkman describe coping as "the constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts deployed to deal with specific demands, whether internal and/or external, evaluated by the individual as consuming or exceeding their resources" (Lazarus r.s, 1984, p. 365).

Thus, the psychology dictionary describes coping as an "active process by which the individual, through self-evaluation of their own capacities and motivations, faces life, especially a stressful situation, and manages to master it (A.G, Grand Dictionnaire de Psychologie)" (Monat, 1991, p. 39).

2-2- The teacher:

Consensually, a professional teacher is characterized as an individual focused on the processes of teaching and learning. They draw their knowledge and skills from practices conceptualized within the professional group. They continuously seek appropriate strategies, techniques, and tools while critically analyzing complex situations through various approaches. Engaging in a process of self-evaluation, they thus close the loop between practice and assessment (Everly, 1990 , p. 122).

Experiential knowledge and scholarly knowledge are two distinct dimensions. These characteristics correspond to four paradigms, each aligning with a mode of

thinking about teacher education. These are archetypes to which we can associate certain models of professionalism in the field of teaching (CAGA., 1993, p. 56).

2-3- EPS:

The teaching discipline of Physical Education and Sports (EPS) facilitates the acquisition of knowledge, the construction of understanding, and the management of physical well-being at various stages of life.

It also provides access to the cultural domain, particularly through sports practices.

According to Parlebas, Physical Education and Sports (EPS) is an intervention practice aimed at exerting influence on the motor behaviors of participants based on educational norms, whether implicit or explicit (Parlebas, 1981, contribution to an annotated lexicon in the science of motor action).

According to MIALARET, Physical Education and Sports (EPS) is "a discipline integrated into educational programs where the student specifically develops and maintains their motor and bodily behaviors."

Haut du formulaire. (MIALARET, 1979).

Physical education and sports consist of a set of teachings in the field of Physical, Sports, and Artistic Activities (APSA) with the objective of transmitting culture and developing motor behaviors considered desirable and likely to promote well-being, in accordance with established values (Calier, 2006, p. 74).

3- The research methodology

3-1-Population:

For the practical component of our study, we focused our attention on physical education and sports teachers working in various high schools in the M'sila province. For the practical part of our study, we targeted physical education and sports teachers in various high schools in the M'sila province.

In the practical implementation of our study, our focus was on physical education and sports teachers in various high schools in the M'sila province.

We began the distribution of questionnaires to teachers on 17/11/2023, using a direct method. We personally visited the teachers to hand out the questionnaires manually, and the collection was completed on 27/11/2023.

We explained to the teachers the importance of this research and assured them of the confidentiality and respect for their responses.

Our questionnaire was designed to conduct research over a relatively short period, using a methodology focused on a series of questionnaires specifically intended for physical education and sports teachers.

3-2- Research tool:

We distributed 40 semi-structured questionnaires over a period of 4 days and collected them a week later. These questionnaires were distributed to teachers in various high schools in the M'sila province, including 5 high schools in the city of M'sila, 2 high schools in Bousaada, as well as Hammam Dalaa, Berhom, Magra, and finally, Sidi Aissa. The questionnaire consists of 24 items distributed as follows:

(22, 16, 2, 4, 23) For the problem-focused coping strategy,

(15, 3, 12, 21, 19, 9) For the emotion-focused coping strategy,

(1, 5, 7, 11, 14, 20) For the strategy focused on seeking social support,

and (8, 6, 18, 10, 17, 13, 24) For the avoidance-focused coping strategy

The items represent the teacher's behaviors in each of the four coping strategies. For each item, the teacher must indicate their frequency level using the DEWE scale with 4 levels: 'Never, Sometimes, Often, very often.'

3-3- Validation of the research tool:

Our questionnaire was validated by the teachers at the Institute of Science and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities (ISTAPS) at the University of M'sila.

3-4- Statistical tool:

The data obtained from the questionnaire were entered into Excel. Statistical data processing was then carried out using the SPSS software. This approach considers the descriptive statistical method. To better understand the results and provide logical

meaning in our interpretations, we used responses ranging from 'never' to 'very often.' We also utilized scoring to calculate the questionnaire results.

4- Identifying the coping strategies of teachers:

The principal component analysis of responses to the 24 coping items was followed by a score on four important coping strategies. The items defining each coping strategy are presented in the following tables:

Table 01: Table presents the distribution of the problem-focused coping strategy:

Problem-focused coping	never	sometimes	often	very often	
- Try to objectively analyze the situation and control your emotions.	16	18	13	19	66
- Think about the positive aspects of teaching.	10	08	12	82	112
- Take a step back and try to rationalize the situation.	00	21	39	08	68
- Positively encourage the students."	00	08	10	86	104
- Strive to always be consistent and honest in your relationships with your students.	00	04	30	64	98
Scores					89,6

According to the results of this table, the distribution of problem-focused coping indicates a total score of 89.6. This strategy encompasses 5 items contributing to the overall score. We named this strategy 'problem-focused coping' as the first significant strategy, as these elements (analyzing the situation, rationalization, etc.) are generally labeled as such by the teachers. Thus, this strategy breaks down into more specific sub-strategies (efforts to control the situation, rationalization and task orientation, putting things into perspective), appearing here as an overarching strategy."

Table N°02: Presents the distribution of the emotion-focused coping strategy:

Emotion-focused coping	never	sometimes	often	very often	
-Maintain discipline, sanction students.	16	18	14	06	54
-Demand that students remain quiet.	00	06	12	86	104
-Behave in an authoritarian manner.	00	24	44	08	78
-Separate or isolate certain students from others for a moment.	00	06	14	70	90
-Keep students busy.	00	06	35	66	107
-Establish habits in your teaching approach.	12	12	25	23	72
Scores					84.16

According to the table regarding the distribution of emotion-focused coping, it is observed that this strategy obtained a total score of 84.16. Generally, this strategy comprises six items contributing to the overall score. It also appears as a specific adjustment strategy for physical education and sports teachers.

In this context, most physical education teachers seem to adopt more of a traditional teaching style. This means that the physical education teacher consistently seeks to establish new habits in their teaching approach, often adopting an authoritarian behavior towards their students.

Furthermore, they choose methods that facilitate the transmission of the message.

This justification is reinforced by the prevalence of responses from teachers who indicated 'Often' compared to the other options.

Table N° 03: Presents the distribution of the social support-seeking coping strategy.

Coping centré sur la recherche de soutien sociale	never	sometimes	often	very often	
-Talk about the problem with your colleagues.	07	15	22	18	63
-Express your opinion on how things are done at school and how they are evolving.	02	28	32	19	81
-Ensure that your colleagues experience things the same way you do.	05	24	13	14	51
-Make sure that others are aware that you are doing your best.	18	12	12	08	72
-Let others know exactly what your position is.	08	14	27	24	73
-Discuss problems with the principal.	02	14	48	20	84
Scores					70.66

According to this table and the interpretation of the results regarding the distribution of the social support-seeking coping strategy, it is observed that this strategy obtained a total score of 70.66.

This strategy comprises six items. Based on the responses of physical education teachers in this table, we have designated social support-seeking as the 'need for communication.

This means that its content corresponds more to verbal communication with the professional environment rather than seeking support, excluding the item 'solicit the opinions and advice of more experienced colleagues.

Thus, this coping strategy is very general, and as a precautionary measure, we have chosen a more descriptive than interpretative name for this dimension. Finally, it is important to note that this strategy does not have as pronounced a meaning on the

coping of physical education teachers compared to other strategies, as the total score is lower.

Table N° 04: Presents the distribution of the avoidance coping strategy:

Avoidance-focused coping	never	sometimes	often	very often	
-Not bringing work home.	01	22	39	20	82
-Completely forgetting about work when the day is done.	02	12	45	28	87
- Not working any harder or longer	01	22	39	20	82
- Engaging more in extracurricular activities (hobbies, leisure, etc.).	01	08	18	76	103
- Simply trying to ignore difficulties.	00	18	42	28	88
-Avoiding other members of the teaching team.	03	20	39	16	78
scores					86.66

According to the analysis and interpretation of the results from this table representing the distribution of avoidance-focused coping strategy, it is observed that this strategy obtained a total score of 86.66. This strategy comprises seven items and is referred to as 'avoidance coping.

It generally encompasses what typically defines this general strategy, such as distraction, diversion, avoidance, and escape, used here in relation to work.

By examining the responses of the majority of physical education teachers in this table, it is observed that these teachers report that most students take less leisure time and use more avoidance in the face of the difficulties of this profession. Thus, this strategy appears to reduce a positive and significant factor in the coping of physical education teachers.

5- Discussion:

01- The results obtained in the items related to the various coping strategies of the physical education teacher are task-oriented due to the set of problems encountered in the teaching profession. This highlights the impact of the effective side, which remains a determining psychological factor in the face of problematic situations encountered in professional life.

Thus, problem-focused coping (or vigilant coping) has functional effects, both in the teaching environment and in other professional contexts. This strategy helps reduce or eliminate the stressful situation, i.e., alleviate or remove the stress it induces.

02- Returning to the results discussed in Table No. 1, we reinforce our view regarding the psychological aspect, particularly the effective aspect. The latter is related to the nature of teaching, where the physical education teacher seeks in one way or other strategies that reinforce him in his teaching. It is a coping strategy specific to teaching situations.

03- The results from this table are significant regarding coping strategies oriented towards social support. Since teaching situations are unpredictable, this emphasizes a need for communication that would build relationships, subsequently becoming a solution to the problems encountered in teaching situations. Social support becomes crucial in the face of the challenges of teaching.

Thus, the items in this strategy only refer to discussing professional issues with colleagues. This means that from the perspective of the physical education teacher, it is challenging to acknowledge that talking about their problems is, in fact, a way of seeking help and support.

04- The results from this table provide rich information about seeking a balance in the relational mode related to various teaching situations. Teaching also involves seeking other comfortable strategies for the physical education teacher. Among these coping strategies is avoidance used in the workplace to avoid the completion of certain tasks or assignments.

Teachers tend to resort more to this strategy, reporting more stress and having less leisure, indicating that some physical education teachers are more involved in professional and extra-professional activities, while others are not involved in either.

In general, avoidance coping and emotion-focused coping have been described as dysfunctional strategies in the face of various aversive situations, which can also contribute to stress among physical education teachers. Indeed, such a strategy, which involves avoiding problems and forgetting about work, leads to a decrease in self-esteem and perceived resources.

6- Conclusion:

This study aims to examine how physical education teachers in the high schools of the M'sila province teach, based on the various coping strategies they employ.

Next, our research hypothesis was formulated as follows: Some problem-focused coping and social support-seeking coping strategies are functional, while others, such as avoidance-focused problem coping, are dysfunctional.

To test this hypothesis, a questionnaire was developed and validated by the head of the department and other teachers from the training department at ISTAPS M'sila.

Upon analyzing the results, it is evident that physical education and sports teachers in the M'sila region tend to use the problem-focused coping strategy more frequently, while some teachers rely on the avoidance-focused coping strategy.

One can also justify our research hypothesis by highlighting that most authors now seem to agree that the effectiveness of a coping strategy can only be determined based on several criteria. This includes the teacher implementing it, how the teacher assesses the situation, and its appropriateness in relation to the specific circumstances of the moment when it is applied.

This evolution in the conceptualization of coping, as well as how it is studied, largely stems from the development of the transactional model and the integration of

related concepts in the majority of research, including those that adopt an interindividual approach.

The synthesis of results from interindividual and intra-individual approaches has revealed connections between the coping process as it manifests in a specific situation and more stable coping dispositions.

After concluding this study on coping strategies used by physical education and sports teachers, several recommendations can be formulated:

It can be envisaged that when teachers feel overwhelmed by problems, they might be tempted to protect themselves by imposing strict working conditions, which can be restrictive for students and allow them to have some peace of mind. However, to address these challenges, teachers should instead adopt a differentiated pedagogy approach in which the child is placed "at the center of the educational system."

In conclusion, it is also crucial to consider the students' perspective to assess whether the coping strategies used by physical education and sports teachers are well-received. It would also be beneficial to understand students' expectations in terms of pedagogy, to promote a positive learning environment tailored to their needs.

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