



Teacher well-being and coping strategies: a two-wave qualitative study with secondary school teachers in Switzerland

Isabelle Krummenacher¹ · Julia Mori¹ · Jakob Schnell¹ · Katja Saxer¹ · Tina Hascher¹

Received: 20 April 2026 / Accepted: 27 April 2026
© The Author(s) 2026

Abstract

This qualitative study examines the role of coping strategies in shaping teacher well-being within secondary school environments while considering different levels of professional expertise. Focus groups with 23 secondary school teachers over two waves revealed the dynamic nature of well-being and coping mechanisms throughout a school year. Utilizing Zuckerman and Gagne's (2003) framework, our analysis confirmed five key coping strategies: self-help, approach, accommodation, avoidance, and self-punishment. Self-help, mainly instrumental support-seeking, emerged as the most frequently used strategy, especially among novice teachers who relied on the experiences of their more experienced colleagues. Approach strategies, including active problem-solving, were prevalent among more experienced teachers, while accommodation strategies involved accepting unchangeable aspects of their roles. While less frequently reported, some teachers described using avoidance and self-punishment as coping mechanisms, indicating ongoing challenges in their professional experiences. The findings underscore the importance of fostering a supportive work environment where teachers can use effective coping strategies to navigate professional challenges. This study contributes to understanding how coping strategies relate to teacher well-being, providing insights into the specific strategies that support or hinder well-being in challenging contexts. The results emphasize the need for targeted interventions to enhance teacher well-being, considering teachers' professional expertise, and particularly for those employing maladaptive coping strategies.

Keywords Teacher well-being · Coping strategies · Teacher challenges · Secondary school · Qualitative research

Extended author information available on the last page of the article



Springer

1 Introduction

The body of research on teacher well-being is growing rapidly, driven by increasing concerns over the adverse effects of stress on teachers' physical and mental health (Hagermoser Sanetti et al., 2021), efforts to retain teachers (Weiland, 2021), and the crucial link between teacher well-being and student outcomes, such as academic achievement (Granziera et al., 2023). Given their daily tasks and responsibilities, maintaining teacher well-being is paramount in order to effectively meet these demands (Collie et al., 2015; Weiland, 2021). Teachers play an essential role in upholding instructional quality and cultivating a positive school climate – crucial factors in promoting student learning and well-being (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2011; Schumacher, 2012). While most Swiss teachers express satisfaction with their profession, mandated professional development and administrative duties are often perceived as stressors (Sandmeier et al., 2017). Similar findings emerge from studies conducted in other countries, indicating rising stress levels among teachers attributed to the demands of their profession (e.g. Herman et al., 2020; Woods et al., 2023). For instance, German and Norwegian teachers report diminished well-being at work, marked by emotional exhaustion from intense work pressure and insufficient recovery time (Klusmann et al., 2023; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

To cope with these stressors and maintain their well-being, teachers can employ various strategies, such as seeking social support from colleagues and administrators, engaging in problem-solving and time-management techniques, practising self-care and stress management activities, and taking advantage of professional development opportunities (Nwoko et al., 2023). These coping strategies allow teachers to manage their workload while maintaining their well-being effectively, ultimately benefiting student outcomes. Previous research has identified several coping strategies teachers commonly use to manage stress and promote well-being (Kim et al., 2022).

This study aimed to explore the well-being and coping strategies of secondary school teachers in Switzerland over two school years. Recent research highlights the importance of investigating teacher well-being and coping strategies (e.g. Aulén et al., 2021; Bjørndal et al., 2022). The study addresses a gap in understanding teachers' perceptions of their well-being, their specific coping strategies in response to school environment challenges, and the evolution of these strategies over time. Furthermore, the nuanced relationship between well-being and coping strategies, particularly in the context of professional challenges faced by secondary school teachers, is under-explored. This study aims to bridge these gaps by providing a detailed, longitudinal exploration of how secondary school teachers' perceptions of their well-being and coping strategies develop and interact over two school years, shedding light on the dynamic nature of teacher well-being.

1.1 Teacher well-being

A systematic review of the literature on teacher well-being highlights the complex nature of the construct (Hascher & Waber, 2021). This complexity stems from various factors: the diversity in theoretical frameworks and empirical approaches, cultural disparities, and the contextual nature of teaching across different countries

(Cumming, 2017; Stromquist, 2018). For example, teacher well-being, a multidimensional construct encompassing various facets, can be perceived as the prevalence of positive emotions and thoughts regarding different aspects of the school environment (Hascher, 2007). Work engagement, happiness at work, and job satisfaction can also be considered positive indicators of teacher well-being (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011). Teacher well-being has also been described as the absence of stress and negative emotions (Breeman et al., 2015; Lavy & Eshet, 2018; Yildirim, 2015), and has been defined as a positive emotional state that is crucial for teachers' effectiveness (Brouskeli et al., 2018). However, defining and measuring teacher well-being consistently helps in understanding and identifying its determinants and outcomes (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Nwoko et al., 2023). Due to the intricate nature of the construct of teacher well-being, it is crucial to continue research in this area to enable a better understanding of the factors underlying teacher well-being and the sources contributing to it, and also to understand better how teachers themselves frame well-being at work (Ozturk et al., 2024).

1.2 Teacher coping strategies

Research on teacher coping strategies is strongly based on the transactional model of stress and coping introduced by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping strategies are purposeful activities aimed at addressing work-related challenges. Coping strategies can be categorized into problem-focused or emotion-focused and adaptive or maladaptive. Problem-focused strategies include dealing directly with the problem such as using problem-solving skills (e.g., taking action, weighing pros and cons) whereas emotion-focused strategies serve to minimize distress related to the problem (e.g., meditate, distance oneself) (e.g., Parker et al., 2012; Wang & Hall, 2021). Depending on context and implementation, problem-focused and emotion-focused coping can be either adaptive or maladaptive. Adaptive strategies promote health and are associated with better outcomes in stress management. Examples include physical activity, communication with friends and family, positive reframing, active coping, planning, problem-solving, and seeking social support (Bakker et al., 2023; Herman et al., 2020; Klapproth et al., 2020). Conversely, maladaptive strategies are detrimental to health and linked to negative outcomes. These include behaviours like alcohol consumption, overeating, avoidance, and confrontation (Carver et al., 1989; Klapproth et al., 2020). Research shows that maladaptive coping impacts health outcomes substantially more than adaptive coping (Gustems-Carnicer & Calderón, 2013).

Teachers employ various coping strategies to manage work-related stress and demands, which is critical for addressing the numerous stressors in the teaching profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015), and empirical research on teachers' coping strategies reveals diverse findings. Some studies underscore emotion-focused approaches, others stress problem-focused strategies, and some emphasize the combination of both (Alghaswyneh, 2012; Blase et al., 2008). Problem-focused coping addresses the source of teacher stress, whereas emotion-focused coping regulates their emotional responses (Beltman & Poulton, 2019). It was also found that avoidant coping can exacerbate stress and lead to burnout (Wang et al., 2022). Previous

studies have also highlighted the importance of adaptive strategies, such as seeking social support and engaging in problem-solving, as being crucial for maintaining teachers' well-being (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2022). Therefore, raising awareness about effective coping strategies is crucial for teachers in managing stress and effectively supporting students. The coping model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) offers a deeper understanding of how individuals manage challenges through dynamic interactions shaped by perceived resources and risks (McEwen, 2007). Tools like the COPE Inventory and Brief-COPE (Carver, 1997; Carver et al., 1989) have been developed to assess coping strategies. However, critics argue that these tools lack a holistic perspective, advocating broader approaches that capture the multifaceted nature of coping (Zuckerman & Gagne, 2003). Zuckerman and Gagne (2003) proposed a comprehensive framework that emphasizes emotional expression, active problem-solving, positive reinterpretation, and acceptance of uncontrollable circumstances as important aspects of coping. It also acknowledges less effective behaviours like avoidance and self-punishment, recognizing their lower efficacy compared to adaptive strategies (Gustems-Carnicer & Calderón, 2013). Based on several empirical studies, Zuckerman and Gagne (2003) introduced a revised multi-dimensional approach to coping and a five-factor model of coping strategies including the factors self-help, approach, accommodation, avoidance, and self-punishment. Their instrument, COPE revised, consists of five subscales: 'Self-help' covers the strategies of expressing emotions and emotional support seeking, 'approach' includes active coping and planning, and 'accommodation' comprises strategies such as maintaining optimism, positive reframing and acceptance. Self-help, approach, and accommodation are typically considered adaptive, while 'avoidance' that represents denial and behavioural disengagement and 'self-punishment' that includes self-blame and self-focused rumination are viewed as maladaptive. Applying this more holistic approach to teacher coping can help to improve our understanding of teacher stress and its antecedents and consequences. For example, according to Stanton et al. (2000) and Zuckerman and Gagne (2003), the emotional processing and expression needs more attention in the coping process. This might specifically apply to research on teacher coping strategies as teaching is known as a profession full of emotions and high demands on emotion regulation (e.g., Smith et al., 2025).

1.3 The relation between teacher well-being and coping strategies

Teacher well-being is influenced by various factors, with subjective professional competence emerging as a significant predictor, unlike the limited impact of objective factors such as teaching experience (Aldrup et al., 2017; Collie et al., 2015). One consistent finding is the crucial role of social relations, which echoes research on social support in educational settings (Acton & Glasgow, 2015). Also, it explains why previous studies have highlighted the importance of adaptive strategies, such as seeking social support and engaging in collaborative problem-solving, as being crucial for maintaining teachers' well-being (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2022). The inherently social nature of teaching underscores the importance of fulfilling teachers' need for relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

While higher stress levels and psychological distress often negatively affect teacher well-being (Savage & Woloshyn, 2022; Stapleton et al., 2020), coping strategies mediate stress and well-being (Gustems-Carnicer et al., 2019). Effective coping, such as seeking support and self-help, can mitigate stressors (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Adaptive strategies correlate with lower burnout and improved well-being (Griffith et al., 1999; Wamea & Nompo, 2024), while maladaptive strategies link to higher burnout (Herman et al., 2023). In teaching, well-being and coping are vital due to the demands of the work. Effective strategies help in reducing burnout risks (Parker & Martin, 2009) and in sustaining a positive professional outlook (Aulén et al., 2022). Problem-focused coping, such as problem-solving and goal-setting, addresses stressors directly, while emotion-focused strategies, like relaxation and reframing, regulate emotional responses (Beltman & Poulton, 2019; Gu & Day, 2011). A mix of both approaches provides a holistic way to support well-being (Sharplin et al., 2011). More resilient teachers are more likely to employ adaptive coping strategies, which can mitigate the effects of stressors on psychological well-being (Boczkowska, 2023; Chan, 1998). However, while some strategies may work effectively in the short term, they might not be sustainable over time, thus underscoring the need for resources to support teachers with stress management (Abdi & Kharbiryumbai, 2019).

Coping strategies evolve with teachers' continuing career. Both, individual experiences and professional development training contribute to changes in coping strategies and their role for teacher well-being. For example, Tait (2008) found that novice teachers' coping skills and resilience improve over time, contributing significantly to their professional success and commitment. Similarly, Dicke et al. (2014) demonstrated that emotional exhaustion and coping behaviors related to classroom management are closely linked to teaching experience, suggesting that coping strategies become more adaptive as teachers gain confidence and skills. Building on this understanding, Lindqvist et al. (2023) highlighted evolving strategies among beginning teachers, while Wang et al. (2022) linked coping profiles to job satisfaction and burnout. These findings show that experience and professional training can foster better coping strategies and confidence in handling challenges. Research exploring the interplay between coping strategies and well-being is thus vital for supporting teachers' advancement in the successful application of coping strategies and for designing interventions to prevent burnout. Differentiating between direct effects (immediate stress reduction) and indirect effects (long-term well-being outcomes) is key (Karlsen et al., 2006; Rajesh et al., 2022). Understanding these dynamics from teachers' perspectives will significantly contribute to research and practice, guiding targeted interventions to enhance teacher well-being.

1.4 The present study

Based on extensive research on teacher well-being and the challenges faced in the teaching profession, it can be assumed that different professional challenges call for employing distinct coping strategies to maintain well-being. As teachers gain experience, particularly in the early stages of their careers, their coping strategies and perceptions of well-being may evolve. Therefore, this qualitative study aimed to: (1) identify the coping strategies that secondary school teachers use to navigate the

challenges encountered in the school environment; (2) investigate how these coping strategies evolve over two school years, particularly in relation to teachers' increasing experience; and (3) better understand the relationship between coping strategies and teacher well-being. Ultimately, we seek to contribute to developing evidence-based practices that promote teacher well-being and support their coping strategies in the secondary school context. Accordingly, we addressed the following research questions:

1. What coping strategies do teachers use to navigate the challenges encountered in the school environment?
2. How do these coping strategies evolve over two school years, particularly in relation to teachers' increasing experience?
3. How is teacher well-being related to the reported strategies?

2 Methods

2.1 Participants

In this study, we used data from the first and second waves of the longitudinal SNF project "WESIR" (Wellbeing in schools in Switzerland, 2021–2025), which is investigating the well-being of lower secondary school students and their teachers. Lower secondary schools in Switzerland educate students from Grades 7–9 (student age between 12–16) and provide education in two different levels qualifying students to transit to vocational education or high school (Hascher & Mori, 2023). Teachers from five lower secondary schools in the cantons of Bern and Aargau in Switzerland participated in the semi-structured group discussions in March 2022 (Wave 1; $N=29$; Grade 7) and March 2023 (Wave 2; $N=23$; Grade 8). In Wave 1, five schools were randomly selected from the total sample of participating schools for the qualitative study. Initially, four to six teachers from each selected school were recruited for the study. These teachers were then divided into groups of two to three participants for the group discussions. Each group discussion lasted 45 to 60 min. The sample in Wave 1 included $N=29$ secondary school teachers ($M_{age}=42.54$, $SD=14.19$). However, due to the withdrawal of one school from the study, the cohort size for Wave 2 was reduced to $N=23$ ($M_{age}=38.68$, $SD=11.78$).

Additionally, introducing two new teachers in Wave 2 necessitated their exclusion from the comparative analysis. Consequently, the study focused on the subset of 23 teachers who contributed data across both waves of data collection. We aligned their responses over two waves with their respective ID number. The use of two data collection waves allowed us to explore potential developments and shifts in teachers' coping strategies and perceptions of well-being over the course of one school year. The participating schools were all state-funded lower secondary schools located in agglomeration areas. Although we did not systematically collect information regarding socioeconomic status, safety, or infrastructure, the participating schools can be considered largely average and comparable in terms of resources and student demographics based on their funding type and location. Regarding participant demo-

graphics, detailed information beyond gender was not collected. Overall, the sample included 13 female and 10 male teachers among the 23 participants who contributed data across both waves.

In analysing the focus group data, we employed a thematic approach that captured individual perspectives and shared visions and experiences, recognizing that the discussions reflected personal insights and collective understandings within the school contexts. This involved maintaining the group as a structural unit within each theme, allowing us to capture teachers' collective insights and shared experiences within the same school environment. To further refine our analysis, we categorized teachers based on their professional experience into novice teachers (0–5 years), mid-career teachers (6–15 years), and experienced teachers (16+ years). This categorization informed the grouping of participants, enabling us to systematically explore variations in coping strategies and well-being across different career stages.

By considering factors such as experience level, age, and career transitions, we aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of how these elements influence teachers' coping mechanisms and perceptions of well-being. This approach ensured that the analysis was not solely focused on individual statements but also reflected the broader context of teacher interactions in school. It provided a comprehensive understanding of the data, acknowledging the influence of school context on teacher experiences and coping strategies. The researchers involved in data collection and analysis were educational scientists with expertise in teacher education and qualitative research methods. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process to acknowledge the researchers' perspectives and to minimize potential biases during data collection, coding, and interpretation.

2.2 Instruments

The focus group guidelines included questions about various topics, such as school climate, teacher and student well-being, and classroom experiences. In this article, we focus on teacher well-being and the coping strategies teachers use to navigate the daily challenges of the teaching profession. At the beginning of each focus group, teachers were invited to articulate their understanding of teacher well-being. Following this, the group discussion was structured around three main themes. First, we discussed teacher well-being at the school, classroom, and individual levels. The second theme was devoted to the challenging events or situations teachers experienced at school and the strategies teachers used. The third theme encompassed potential prevention and intervention actions to foster and maintain well-being in school.

Teachers' answers to the following three questions were analysed in this study:

1. How would you describe your well-being within the school environment where you teach?
2. What challenging events or situations have you experienced at school that influenced your well-being?
3. What strategies do you use to maintain your well-being in such situations?

Table 1 Teachers applied coping strategies across two waves

First-order category	Second-order category	Teacher example	N in W1	N in W2
Self-help	Expressing emotion	<i>letting it all out</i>	3 (10.0%)	6 (13.0%)
	Setting emotional boundaries	<i>setting emotional limits for parents and children</i>	3 (10.0%)	1 (2.2%)
	Instrumental support-seeking	<i>discussing the problem with a colleague to understand the problem, and addressing it together</i>	7 (23.3%)	19 (41.3%)
	Ongoing professional learning	<i>signing up for a course, reading a book</i>	6 (20.0%)	1 (2.2%)
	Emotional support-seeking	<i>venting with a colleague, talking it through to feel better</i>	8 (26.7%)	19 (41.3%)
Total Self-help			30 (28.6%)	46 (38.0%)
Approach	Active coping	<i>trying to find a different solution</i>	7 (22.6%)	10 (37.0%)
	Professional communities	<i>talking about the issue in a meeting</i>	4 (12.9%)	1 (3.7%)
	Effective communication	<i>addressing the problem</i>	2 (6.5%)	3 (11.1%)
	Planning	<i>organizing things in advance</i>	3 (9.7%)	1 (3.7%)
	Previous experience	<i>relying on things one did before</i>	2 (6.5%)	7 (25.9%)
	Goal-setting	<i>working with clear goals to get things done</i>	2 (6.5%)	0 (0.0%)
	Suppression of competing activities	<i>finishing things at school without getting distracted</i>	3 (9.7%)	2 (7.4%)
	Setting priorities	<i>being as efficient as possible</i>	4 (12.9%)	1 (3.7%)
	Setting limits	<i>not bringing work home</i>	4 (12.9%)	2 (7.4%)
Total Approach			31 (29.5%)	27 (22.3%)
Accommodation	Acceptance	<i>just accepting it, sometimes one cannot do anything about it</i>	7 (33.3%)	6 (27.3%)
	Positive reframing	<i>seeing it in a different light, seeing the good</i>	6 (28.6%)	6 (27.3%)
	Replacement	<i>thinking about the other children</i>	3 (14.3%)	2 (9.1%)
	Maintaining optimism	<i>thinking that the next day will be better, believing it will turn out for the better</i>	3 (14.3%)	3 (13.6%)
	Humour	<i>seeing the humorous coincidence, laughing at the funny moment</i>	2 (9.5%)	2 (9.1%)
Total Accommodation			21 (20.0%)	19 (15.7%)
Avoidance	Mental disengagement	<i>thinking about other job opportunities, no longer thinking about it</i>	3 (23.1%)	7 (31.8%)

Table 1 (continued)

First-order category	Second-order category	Teacher example	N in W1	N in W2
Total Avoidance	Behavioural disengagement	<i>giving up, no longer trying, looking for other job opportunities, substance abuse</i>	6 (46.2%)	6 (27.3%)
	Other blame	<i>blaming colleagues or the principal</i>	2 (15.4%)	9 (40.9%)
	Denial	<i>not believing that the situation happened</i>	2 (15.4%)	0 (0.0%)
			13 (12.4%)	22 (18.2%)
Self-punishment	Self-focused rumination	<i>difficulties with sleep and mental load, taking it personally and overthinking</i>	6 (60.0%)	4 (57.1%)
	Self-blame	<i>feeling that it's one's fault, thinking that somebody else would have dealt with the situation better</i>	4 (40.0%)	3 (42.9%)
Total Self-punishment			10 (9.5%)	7 (5.8%)
Total (all strategies)			105 (100%)	121 (100%)

* "N in W1" and "N in W2" indicate the number of coded mentions across all focus groups. One teacher could contribute multiple mentions. Grey shading highlights strategies with marked differences across waves (≥ 10 percentage point change or notable thematic shift)

After completing the focus groups, they were transcribed and analysed using Mayring's (2015) content analysis method. The participants' responses were categorized into different themes based on the content of their statements, with the categorization carried out inductively using MAXQDA22 (2022).

To analyse the responses, we first explored how teachers described their well-being within the school environment. This involved identifying common themes and patterns in their descriptions to provide an overview of the participants' various aspects of well-being. Next, we examined the challenging events or situations that teachers reported as influencing their well-being. This analysis aimed to categorize the specific stressors mentioned, offering a comprehensive understanding of the challenges impacting teacher well-being.

The coping strategies employed by teachers were analysed using a combination of deductive and inductive approaches. Building on the coping framework proposed by Zuckerman and Gagne (2003), we categorized strategies into five first-order categories — self-help, approach, accommodation, avoidance, and self-punishment. Definitions for these five first-order categories are provided in Appendix Table 2. Within each first-order category, second-order categories were inductively identified to capture more specific and nuanced coping strategies. These were grouped into aggregate dimensions, which summarize thematically related second-order categories and offer a broader conceptual understanding of teachers' coping approaches (Gioia, 2021). This structure is reflected in the layout of Table 1. In addition to categorizing coping strategies, teachers were qualitatively grouped based on their perceived well-being. This categorization was informed by the teachers' descriptions

during the focus groups. Indicators for good well-being included a consistently positive emotional tone, expressions of professional satisfaction, supportive interpersonal relationships, and an absence of major stress symptoms. In contrast, teachers who frequently reported emotional exhaustion, dissatisfaction with their work environment, high perceived stress, disengagement, or critical views towards their school setting were categorized as having lower well-being. Throughout both waves, we analysed teachers' description of the strategies and resources they perceived as most effective in maintaining their well-being when facing professional challenges. During the initial wave, all coding endeavours were executed collaboratively by three researchers, fostering a unified approach and establishing a strong foundation for subsequent analyses. In the second wave, a hybrid methodology was adopted: 30% of the data underwent joint analysis to cultivate consensus among coders, while each coder independently analysed the remaining 70% to encourage diverse perspectives and minimize bias. Inter-coder reliability, calculated using Cohen's kappa, was 91.87%, indicating a high level of agreement among coders. Each strategy was coded per mention within the group discussions. Accordingly, a single teacher could contribute multiple mentions. The values reported in Table 1 represent the frequency of strategy mentions across all groups and waves, rather than the number of unique teachers who applied each strategy. This approach allowed us to capture the salience and recurrence of coping references throughout the focus group discussions. The final grouping of second order categories into aggregated dimensions (Gioia, 2021) was achieved through consensus (Mayring, 2015).

3 Results

The findings are based on teachers' direct responses during the focus group discussions and place an emphasis on the group dynamics present in the discussions. The analysis considered the eight groups formed by teachers from different schools, allowing us to capture both individual and collective insights. Each group provided a unique perspective on the challenges and coping strategies discussed, reflecting the shared experiences within their school environments. Participant numbers (P01–P29) and wave (W1–2) are indicated with examples, e.g. P17W1 indicates an exact quote from participant number 17 in Wave 1. This notation helps in contextualizing the responses within the specific group and temporal context in which they were provided. By maintaining the group structure as a guiding framework, we ensured that the analysis highlighted individual responses and emphasized the collective themes that emerged from the group discussions.

3.1 Teachers' coping strategies at work

The self-help category – which involves reaching out for support and understanding one's own emotions – emerged as the most frequently cited coping strategy in our study (76 total mentions across both waves; see Table 1). Within this category, teachers described several second-order strategies centred on seeking support and a prominent aggregate dimension was support-seeking, summarizing the inductively

identified second-order categories of instrumental support-seeking and emotional support-seeking. Novice teachers especially relied on colleagues for guidance, often drawing on the experiences of more seasoned peers. For example, one early-career teacher explained, “When I experience something for the first time, I am very happy when I hear: ‘Yes, that sometimes happens to us; it’s not because you did the lesson wrong. You could try this out...’” (P10W2). This quote illustrates how instrumental advice and reassurance from veteran colleagues helped alleviate the novice’s concerns. Similarly, teachers valued emotional encouragement from their peers. “I can benefit from the other teachers... you can also copy certain things or take over teaching materials,” noted another participant, highlighting collaborative problem-solving and resource sharing as key self-help tactics (P10W2). Emotional support from colleagues fostered a sense of validation and belonging – “I feel valued in this team and know that I will always receive support here” (P05W2) – which in turn bolstered well-being. In addition to seeking social support, some teachers managed stress through personal emotional regulation. They described expressing emotions openly – essentially “letting it all out” – as a form of release, and setting emotional boundaries to prevent work frustrations from seeping into their personal lives. For instance, one teacher established a firm rule to preserve personal time: “I never do anything for school on Sunday now” (P22W2). Others learned to temper self-imposed pressure by adjusting their expectations. After a few years of teaching, one teacher learned to take a step back and gain perspective, saying, “Pfff, maybe this lesson plan wouldn’t work for someone else either” (P07W2). Such reflections indicate an understanding that not all challenges are personal failings, which helped reduce self-blame. Self-help coping in this context is characterized by an aggregate dimension of social-support-based coping – teachers actively reaching out for help and camaraderie – coupled with conscious emotional self-care. This approach was collectively viewed as an effective way to mitigate stress and was pervasive across the focus groups, with many participants echoing the sentiment that “now I just have my people that I talk to” when issues arise (P10W2). The approach category – defined by active problem-solving and planning – was the second most frequently mentioned coping strategy (58 total mentions). Teachers employing approach-oriented coping focused on confronting problems head-on and strategically organizing their work. Within this category, the aggregate dimension of active problem management emerged, summarizing multiple inductively identified second-order strategies such as active coping, planning, and professional collaboration. For example, participants across different experience levels stressed the importance of addressing problems directly. One experienced teacher shared, “Yes, I try to address it directly with them,” when referring to handling student difficulties as soon as they arise (P20W1). Another concurred in the second wave, “If I notice things where I think it’s not okay, I react from my side and address it,” underlining a consistent problem-focused stance over time (P13W2). Beyond immediate problem-solving, teachers highlighted proactive organizational tactics. Several mentioned setting priorities and limits in order to balance their workload. By “being as efficient as possible” and “not bringing work home,” (P22W2) they established clear boundaries between work and personal life. Likewise, teachers spoke of suppressing competing activities (exercising self-discipline to avoid distractions) so they could concentrate on pressing tasks. In the focus group discussions, it

was evident that such planning and time-management strategies were often shared and encouraged among colleagues as effective coping practices. Teachers also leveraged previous experience and peer insight when devising solutions. One teacher reflected that sometimes problems would resolve on their own, but other times “I have to think about a different approach” (P04W2), indicating a willingness to adapt and try new strategies based on past lessons learned. Similarly, engaging with professional communities – for instance, discussing issues in staff meetings or collaborative groups – was another approach sub-strategy, though mentioned less frequently. Taken together, these second-order themes illustrate that approach coping in our teacher sample was characterized by deliberate, solution-oriented adjustments. Whether through direct action in the classroom, careful planning and boundary-setting, or drawing on collective wisdom, teachers as a group viewed active engagement with problems as a constructive way to protect and enhance their well-being. The accommodation category – which entails accepting one’s circumstances and positively reframing challenges – also featured in teachers’ accounts (40 total mentions). Accommodation strategies involve acknowledging aspects of the job that cannot be changed while maintaining an optimistic outlook. Teachers in our study reported using acceptance, positive reframing, and optimism to cope with stressors beyond their control. These strategies were summarized under the aggregate dimension of adaptive adjustment. Participants described coming to terms with fixed conditions such as demanding classes or additional workload. “Afterwards you just have to accept it; that’s the way it is in this class,” one teacher remarked about handling a particularly challenging class (P18W2). Another concurred that sometimes external pressures must simply be borne: “Sometimes you can do nothing about it – there’s a time where we need to deal with more things” (P15W1). By accepting that certain stressors were unavoidable, teachers could release futile frustrations and conserve emotional energy. A second key theme was positive reframing, wherein teachers tried to find a constructive or hopeful perspective on their challenges. Some teachers deliberately looked for a “silver lining” or learning opportunity in stressful situations. For example, one teacher with low well-being still employed reframing in the classroom, noting that “I look at it as an opportunity” when confronted with difficulties, rather than viewing them purely as setbacks (P02W2). This mindset of seeing obstacles as chances for growth helped to sustain teachers’ motivation and sense of efficacy even under strain. Additionally, maintaining optimism – sometimes through humour – emerged as an accommodation strategy. A teacher shared, “I simply try to approach the lessons with my rather relaxed, humorous manner,” illustrating how infusing humour and light-heartedness into daily work was used to cope with stress (P04W2). Such efforts to maintain optimism in the face of adversity were often reinforced by colleagues during group discussions, as teachers collectively acknowledged the value of staying positive. Overall, accommodation strategies allowed teachers to adjust emotionally to demanding conditions. By accepting what they could not change and actively shifting their mindset to focus on what could be positive, teachers protected their well-being. These approaches were discussed across the focus groups as gentle yet important ways to cope – aligning with the idea that “one cannot do anything about it sometimes,” and thus the healthiest response is to adapt one’s attitude (P15W1). The avoidance category – characterized by evading problems or stressors

– was mentioned less frequently by participants (35 total mentions), but its presence was significant in the context of low well-being. Avoidance strategies involve mentally or behaviourally disengaging from stress, denying problems, or shifting responsibility away from oneself. The aggregate dimension of escape/withdrawal coping encompassed the second-order avoidance strategies identified in our data, such as mental disengagement, behavioural disengagement, denial, and externalizing blame. A prevalent theme was disengagement, both mental and behavioural. Some teachers admitted to mentally “switching off” or distancing themselves from work issues as a way to cope – for instance, by fantasizing about other careers or trying not to think about it. One teacher, feeling overwhelmed, even contemplated quitting: “I’ve already thought about whether I should just quit without notice if things continue like this” (P02W2). Likewise, behavioural disengagement was evident in participants’ accounts. A teacher with low well-being shared that they no longer put full effort into certain tasks as a form of self-protection: “I don’t give 100 percent in a small group anymore because I want to protect myself” (P01W2). By intentionally reducing their engagement at work, this teacher hoped to shield themselves from further stress, albeit at the cost of withdrawing effort. In the focus group discussions, colleagues empathized with this sentiment, indicating that such withdrawal was not an isolated impulse. Avoidant coping also took the form of substance use for a few individuals: “For me, it’s the alcohol that helps when I’m in over my head,” one teacher confessed (P01W2), underscoring a maladaptive tactic to momentarily escape stress. Another notable avoidance subtheme was externalizing blame (or “other-blame”). Instead of reflecting on solutions, some teachers coped by attributing the cause of problems to others, such as colleagues or administrators, thereby removing themselves from responsibility. “They don’t see that at all; they just see what they want to see,” one teacher said about the school leadership’s lack of recognition (P01W2), reflecting frustration and a deflection of blame. Similarly, another remarked, “If the class teacher hasn’t worked with them, then I can’t do anything either” (P06W1), implying that the fault lay with someone else’s actions. Such statements, which were sometimes echoed by others in the group, reveal a coping pattern where teachers distance themselves from the stressor by denying their own agency in the situation. Overall, avoidance coping in our study signified a retreat from confronting problems – through withdrawal, denial, or blaming – and was often voiced by teachers who also reported lower well-being. While these tactics provided short-term relief or protection, participants implicitly recognized in their collective dialogue that avoidance did little to resolve underlying issues and could even exacerbate feelings of helplessness over time. The self-punishment category – a maladaptive coping style involving self-blame and self-focused rumination – was the least frequently mentioned strategy overall (17 total mentions). Nevertheless, it emerged as a significant theme among some teachers grappling with stress, highlighting an inward-turning pattern of coping. The second-order strategies of self-focused rumination and self-blame were grouped under the aggregate dimension of self-critical coping, which characterized an inward-directed and maladaptive coping strategy. In these instances, participants described being caught in cycles of overthinking, guilt, and personal reproach in response to challenging situations. The most common subtheme was rumination – continuously replaying events or difficulties in one’s mind. “I cannot stop thinking

about it, I cannot sleep, and I just keep thinking about the kids,” one teacher admitted, describing how work-related concerns dominated her nights (P05W1). This cognitive turmoil exemplifies self-focused rumination, often accompanied by feelings of responsibility or guilt (“in the end, it’s carried out on their backs”, P05W1, added the same teacher, expressing worry over the students’ well-being as a result of her perceived shortcomings). Other teachers echoed similar struggles in the group discussions, indicating that this was not an isolated experience. Another educator reflected on her continual self-questioning: “I haven’t slept well lately, thinking, yes, what is it? What is my role in this story? Where can I do something to change the climate?” (P02W2). Here the teacher is interrogating her own role and fault in the situation, implicitly assuming she ought to have the power to fix systemic problems. These self-punitive thoughts were often shared in a tone of frustration and self-doubt during the focus groups, and other members would sometimes affirm having felt the same way. Through this collective lens, it became clear that while self-punishment coping was less openly discussed than other strategies, it was recognized as a destructive pattern. Teachers acknowledged that turning stress inward – by blaming themselves or ruminating over faults – tended to erode their well-being.

3.2 Changes in teachers’ use of coping strategies over one school year

Our analysis of coping strategies revealed changes over time. While an increase was observed in adaptive coping strategies, the data also indicated a rise in avoidance behaviours during the second wave, particularly in mental and behavioural disengagement, as well as a tendency to attribute blame to others. Interestingly, differences in coping strategies and perceived well-being were evident among teachers within the same school. For instance, some teachers expressed feelings of uncertainty and restlessness, with statements like, “There’s a constant restlessness, an uncertainty, everything unspoken hangs in the air” (P01W1) and “My sense of well-being is not guaranteed at our school. Integrity is being violated, which is also reflected at class level (...) my well-being is latently at risk” (P01W2). These comments highlight a sense of discomfort and vulnerability in the school environment.

Conversely, other teachers reported positive experiences and support, as reflected in statements such as, “We get on well together, I feel comfortable. We also play volleyball at lunchtime, go out for a meal together or play puzzles” (P04W2) and “I am always supported when I need something, and I feel that I can get an opinion at any time” (P05W2). In examining the aggregate dimensions related to self-help, approach, and avoidance, we observed a notable shift between the first and second waves. Initially, teachers new to the school or profession focused on gaining experience to manage daily challenges effectively. As they accumulated more experience over the year, there was a discernible shift in their approach: they began to rely more on their past experiences and were more proactive in planning their work. For instance, one teacher remarked, “Sometimes, it solves itself, and sometimes, I have to think about a different approach” (P04W2). Meanwhile, another stated, “I have now clearly defined where I work, and when I work, I never do anything for school on Sunday now” (P22W2). During the second wave, there was an increased emphasis on self-help strategies, particularly in seeking instrumental and emotional support.

One teacher noted, "So now I just have my people that I talk to here" (P10W2), and another commented, "If I'm honest, it's just about getting confirmation from my colleagues that I'm not the one doing it wrong and I can always approach them about that" (P12W2).

Additionally, there was a notable decrease in mentions of ongoing professional learning. In the first wave, six instances were recorded, compared to only one in the second wave. One teacher explained, "Then I see a course advertised at the university for teachers and try to further my education there with courses I would like to study more" (P09W1).

3.3 The relation between teacher well-being and the selection of coping strategies

In our study, we first observed a group of teachers who reported normal to high levels of perceived well-being. These teachers predominantly employed accommodation and self-help strategies, contributing positively to their mental health and job satisfaction. For example, one teacher noted, "I feel valued in this team and know that I will always receive support here" (P05W2). Another teacher said, "I simply try to approach the lessons with my rather relaxed, humorous manner" (P04W2). In contrast, we identified a group of teachers who reported low levels of perceived well-being. These teachers exhibited various coping strategies at the individual and school levels and within their classes. At the individual level, self-focused rumination was common, with teachers expressing uncertainty and needing progress in understanding their roles. This rumination often led to a lack of sleep and increased stress: "Moreover, I haven't slept well lately, thinking, yes, what is it? What is my role in this story? Where can I do something to change the climate?" (P02W2).

At the school level, avoidance strategies, such as behavioural disengagement, were prevalent. Teachers expressed reluctance to give their full effort in small group settings as a means of self-protection: "I'm thrilled to give 100 per cent, but I don't give 100 per cent in a small group, I just don't do that anymore because I want to protect myself there too" (P01W2). Additionally, some teachers tended to blame others for the challenging work environment, citing a lack of recognition from leadership: "They don't see that at all; they just see what they want to see" (P01W2). Mental disengagement was also evident, with some teachers contemplating quitting without notice if conditions did not improve: "Because I don't know either, I've already thought about whether I should just quit without notice if things continue like this" (P02W2). Substance use emerged as a coping mechanism for some, with reports of increased alcohol consumption: "For me, it's the alcohol that helps me when I'm in over my head" (P01W2). However, some teachers with low perceived well-being employed reframing as a coping strategy in their classes, viewing challenges as opportunities for growth: "It doesn't have any effect on my teaching, it doesn't influence or anything. I look at it as an opportunity" (P02W2). As noted by the teachers, the presence of different groups within the school highlights the diverse perceptions and coping mechanisms at play: "There are different groups that perceive the world differently in their bubbles" (P03W2). These observations highlight the diversity in

coping strategies and well-being perceptions among teachers within the same school environment.

4 Discussion

The purpose of our study was to identify teachers' coping strategies, how these strategies change over time and how these strategies are linked to teacher well-being in the context of work-related challenges. Current research has pointed out that teacher well-being has decreased indicating high levels of work-related stress, anxiety and depression being reported by teachers (Ozturk et al., 2024). This crisis is also visible by an increasing teacher attrition. According to Ozturk et al (2024), most of the existing literature on teacher well-being is grounded on deficit-based definitions or frameworks of poor mental health, overlooking alternative discourses such as teacher autonomy or positive emotions. Our study contributes to a better understanding of teacher well-being by analysing both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies and their changes over time. This approach is in line with Ozturk et al.'s (2024) call for a more holistic view of teacher well-being. By exploring the relationship between coping strategies and well-being, our research adds to the emerging body of work that seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of teacher well-being.

4.1 Coping strategies used by teachers

We identified various ways through which teachers navigate challenges encountered in the school environment. The identified strategies can be classified into adaptive and maladaptive strategies. Teachers frequently used accommodation and self-help strategies to address work-related challenges. These included seeking instrumental and emotional support from colleagues and school management, which aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of social support mechanisms in teacher well-being (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Despite the common use of adaptive strategies, some maladaptive coping strategies were also identified. These included avoidance behaviours, such as mental and behavioural disengagement, and the tendency to blame others. The use of such strategies are consistent with previous findings linking maladaptive coping to increased stress and reduced well-being among teachers (Parker & Martin, 2009; Seidman & Zager, 1991).

4.2 Changes in coping strategies over time

Our longitudinal approach allowed us to observe how teachers' coping strategies changed over two school years, particularly in the context of teachers' increasing experience. During the second wave of our study, we found an increase in adaptive coping strategies. Teachers placed more emphasis on self-help strategies, particularly in seeking instrumental and emotional support. This period was characterised by a supportive environment in which teachers felt more comfortable talking about classroom challenges, suggesting an improvement in their professional relationships and communication skills (Beltman & Poulton, 2019). As their experience grew, teachers

relied more heavily on their past experiences and were more willing to plan their work (Beltman & Poulton, 2019). This shift suggests a change in the development of self-confidence and competence over time. However, we also observed an increase in avoidance behaviour during the second wave, which included mental and behavioural disengagement and a tendency to blame others. This inappropriate strategy was particularly evident when teachers faced communication and support issues in the school environment. These included a reluctance to ask questions and seek help due to the perceived chain of command, the lack of a school culture that encourages teachers to report problems, and the limited availability of school management to address important matters such as grading systems, despite the generally good cooperation among teachers. This finding could possibly be consistent with Kamtsios' (2018) finding that the dimensions of burnout change as teachers progress through the career stages, with emotional exhaustion possibly increasing at later stages.

4.3 Relationship between well-being and coping strategies

The present study reveals a certain link between teachers' well-being and their coping mechanisms. The results of the study showed that teachers who felt well about themselves often used adaptive coping strategies such as adjustment and self-help. The strategies helped them to view the challenges as solvable and thus improve their teaching practice (Hascher & Mori, 2023). On the other hand, teachers with low well-being resorted to coping mechanisms that were not adaptive, including avoidance and rumination. These strategies were associated with stress and hopelessness, demonstrating how unhealthy coping mechanisms affect teacher well-being (Parker & Martin, 2009; Seidman & Zager, 1991). This implies that there is a need to develop interventions tailored to the needs of teachers with low well-being.

Our study highlights several key factors that contribute to maintaining teacher well-being. First, a supportive school environment proved to be a crucial element. Teachers who reported high levels of well-being often emphasised the importance of a supportive school climate, which included feeling valued by school leadership and having opportunities to communicate openly with colleagues (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). Equally important were adaptive coping strategies, particularly approaches that involved adjustment and self-help. Teachers who were able to reframe challenges positively and seek support when needed were better able to maintain their well-being (Parker & Martin, 2009). Professional development also played an important role. As teachers gained more experience and developed their skills, they reported feeling more confident in dealing with challenges, which had a positive impact on their well-being (Beltman & Poulton, 2019). Finally, creating an environment of trust in which teachers could solve problems together, seek advice, and benefit from their colleagues' experience was crucial to effective coping and improved well-being (Soini et al., 2010; Tsuyuguchi, 2023). These interrelated factors work together to improve teacher well-being.

4.4 Strengths, limitations, and future research

This study contributes significantly to our understanding of teacher well-being by focusing on the voices of teachers and the role of school environment. Its longitudinal design allowed for the observation of changes in coping strategies over time, thus contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of teacher well-being. The study highlights the critical role of schools and school leaders in promoting teacher well-being through collaborative structures that foster connectedness, such as every day rituals and shared working hours for collaboration (Mulford, 2003). By acknowledging the developmental nature of teacher well-being, this study highlights how changes in perceptions of school environments may affect teacher well-being.

However, there are some limitations to keep in mind when interpreting our findings. First, the relatively small and unrepresentative sample size limits the generalisability of our results. Likely, our sample has a positive bias in terms of well-being. While our qualitative longitudinal design provided insights into the changes of strategies over time, a larger sample size and a more diverse sample in terms of perceived well-being could reveal a broader range of challenges and additional coping strategies as well as a comparison of teachers with lower and higher well-being. Second, conducting group discussions only once a year limited our ability to capture fluctuations in teachers' experiences throughout the school year. Also, the observed increase in adaptive strategies could be due to greater awareness of the topic after the initial focus groups and not just a change in coping strategies. Furthermore, while group discussions encouraged collaborative sharing, they could have been influenced by dominant voices or social desirability. For example, dominant personalities can play a role in the dialogue, and may have acted as barriers to allow other voices to be heard (Krumpal, 2013). Additionally, participants may have censored their responses to align with socially desirable norms (Krumpal, 2013). Whilst we attempted to explore indirect effects on long-term well-being outcomes (Karlsen et al., 2006; Rajesh et al., 2022), further research is needed to fully understand these complex dynamics from teachers' perspectives.

Future studies could address these limitations by using larger, more representative samples to improve generalizability (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is particularly important because teachers' coping strategies may be different depending on many factors such as demographic factors, contextual factors, teaching experience, school environment, and cultural expectations (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021). More frequent data collection could capture more nuanced changes in coping strategies over the course of the school year. It is important to note that coping strategies are not fixed and tend to change depending on the stressors and resources that are present at different points in time (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2021). Combining one-on-one interviews and group discussions could reduce potential group effects. Expanding the focus to include primary school teachers and comparing findings across different educational levels may provide a more comprehensive understanding of teacher well-being. The impact of adaptive coping strategies on teachers' turnover and students' achievement in the long-term and the efficacy of interventions that aim at enhancing the use of adaptive coping strategies in teachers research would be valuable direction for future research.

4.5 Practical implications

The research we have conducted contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the dynamic nature of teacher's well-being and their coping strategies over time. It also brings attention to the central role of the school environment for teacher well-being and underlines the importance to develop adaptive coping strategies over the course of their careers (Beltman & Poulton, 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). The present study also reveals how schools affect teacher well-being and how it is influenced by the conditions that prevail in schools. Our findings also show that a positive and constructive school climate can enhance the well-being of teachers. For instance, the findings show that teachers who rate their well-being as low employ different coping strategies than those who rate their well-being as high. Therefore, it requires targeted interventions and support systems to meet these needs. Some strategies that can help in enhancing teacher well-being include: encouraging collaborative problem-solving, emotional support, and recognition of teachers' contributions.

These approaches strengthen teacher resilience and thus help to create a positive school culture. Understanding the multifaceted dimensions of teacher well-being and the range of coping strategies may provide insights for developing appropriate forms of support in schools. However, it should be noted that schools operate differently, and a one-size fits all solutions do not work. Schools should conduct need assessments and work with teachers to develop specific, achievable measures tailored to their own needs. School leaders should know that subgroups can develop a culture of collaboration through social contagion processes, which have an impact on job satisfaction and work engagement (Meredith et al., 2023). Transformational leaders who foster a sense of belonging can facilitate organizational change and improve team well-being (Paganin et al., 2023).

However, there are certain factors which can act as constraints and affect the development of collaborative work culture such as external accountability and prescribed learning outcomes (Ibrahim, 2022). In light of our finding, our work is contributing to the identification of better ways in supporting teachers during their initial training and professional development. As the concept of teacher well-being continues to change, its understanding enables schools to develop targeted interventions and coping strategies for teachers throughout their careers (Hepburn et al., 2021).

5 Conclusion

In this two-wave study, we examined teachers' experiences of their school environment, coping strategies, and teacher well-being through focus groups. Our findings demonstrated that teachers' perception of their school environment plays a crucial role in their choice of coping strategies, with these experiences varying across different career stages. Whilst teachers who perceived their environment negatively tended towards maladaptive strategies, those working in better-perceived environment showed an increase in adaptive coping strategies, which contributed to their well-being. This pattern varied across career phases, with novice teachers showing distinct patterns of strategy adoption compared to their more experienced teachers,

suggesting that professional experience plays a crucial role in how teachers respond to their environments.

The results support previous research that teaching is not simply an individual endeavour but is deeply embedded within the institutional context and professional development trajectory. Our two-wave approach has helped to illuminate how these experiences unfold over time, providing a more nuanced understanding of teachers' perceived well-being and their coping strategies across different career stages.

Appendix

See Table 2

Table 2 Definitions of first-order coping strategy categories (based on Zuckerman & Gagne, 2003)

Coping strategy category	Definition (Zuckerman & Gagne, 2003)
Self-help	Involves seeking support and dealing with the incident by understanding and expressing one's own emotions
Approach	Focuses on actively solving the problem and planning ways to address the stressor directly
Accommodation	Entails accepting that a problem cannot be resolved and using positive reframing to maintain an optimistic outlook
Avoidance	Aims to direct attention away from the problem through disengagement, denial of the issue, or blaming external factors
Self-punishment	Involves maladaptive responses such as self-focused rumination and self-blame, even when one's own role in the problem is minimal or absent

Acknowledgements We highly acknowledge the time and effort that all participating teachers contributed into this research project.

Author contributions Conceptualization, methodology, I.K.; formal analysis and investigation, all authors; data interpretation, all authors; writing—original draft preparation, I.K.; writing—review and editing, I.K., T.H., J.M, J.S; visualization, I.K.; project administration, I.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding Open access funding provided by University of Teacher Education of Bern. This research was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation [grant number 100019_197299].

Data availability The data presented in this study are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Declarations

Conflicts of interest The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval For this study, we were dedicated to the Code of Ethics of the German Educational Research Association (<https://www.dgfe.de/en/about-dgfe-gera/code-of-ethics> (accessed on 6 November 2024)). Ethical approval was obtained from the ethics committee at the University of Bern prior to data collection (Ethics Application Nr. 2021–08-00005, August 2021).

Informed consent Informed consent for using the data for scientific purposes was obtained from all teachers involved in the study.

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

References

- Abdi, A. A., & Kharbiryimbai, B. (2019). Teacher shortage in Kenya: Trends and policy implications. *Online International Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 9(5), 128–137.
- Acton, R., & Glasgow, P. (2015). Teacher wellbeing in neoliberal contexts: A review of the literature. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(8), 99–114.
- Aldrup, K., Klusmann, U., & Lüdtke, O. (2017). Does basic need satisfaction mediate the link between stress exposure and well-being? A diary study among beginning teachers. *Learning and Instruction*, 50, 21–30.
- Alghaswyneh, S. A. M. (2012). Teacher stress: Causes and consequences. *Journal of Research in Educational Psychology*, 10(27), 1181–1197.
- Aulén, A. M., Pakarinen, E., Feldt, T., & Lerkkanen, M. K. (2021). Teacher coping profiles in relation to teacher well-being: A mixed method approach. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 102, Article 103323.
- Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Sanz-Vergel, A. (2023). Job Demands-Resources Theory: Ten years later. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-120920>
- Bakker, A. B., & Oerlemans, W. G. M. (2011). Subjective well-being in organizations. In K. S. Cameron & G. M. Spreitzer (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of positive organizational scholarship* (pp. 178–189). Oxford University Press.
- Beltman, S., & Poulton, E. (2019). “Take a step back”: Teacher strategies for managing heightened emotions. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 46, 661–679.
- Bermejo-Toro, L., Prieto-Ursúa, M., & Hernández, V. (2016). Towards a model of teacher well-being: Personal and job resources involved in teacher burnout and engagement. *Educational Psychology*, 36(3), 481–501.
- Bjørndal, K. E. W., Antonsen, Y., & Jakhelln, R. (2022). Stress-coping strategies amongst newly qualified primary and lower secondary school teachers with a master's degree in Norway. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 66(7), 1253–1268.
- Blase, J., Blase, J., & Du, F. (2008). The mistreated teacher: A national study. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 46(3), 263–301.
- Boczkowska, M. (2023). Teacher' resilience in Poland – The role of sociodemographic and professional factors. *Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny*, 42(3), 53–69.

- Breeman, L. D., Wubbels, T., Van Lier, P. A. C., Verhulst, F. C., van der Ende, J., Maras, A., Hopman, J. A. B., & Tick, N. T. (2015). Teacher characteristics, social classroom relationships, and children's social, emotional, and behavioral classroom adjustment in special education. *Journal of School Psychology, 53*(1), 87–103.
- Brouskeli, V., Kaltsi, V., & Loumakou, M. (2018). Resilience and occupational well-being of secondary education teachers in Greece. *Issues in Educational Research, 28*(1), 43–60.
- Carver, C. S. (1997). You want to measure coping but your protocol's too long: Consider the brief COPE. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 4*(1), 92–100. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327558ijbm0401_6
- Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintraub, J. K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56*(2), 267.
- Chan, D. W. (1998). Stress, coping strategies, and psychological distress among secondary school teachers in Hong Kong. *American Educational Research Journal, 35*(1), 145–163.
- Collie, R. J., Shapka, J. D., Perry, N. E., & Martin, A. J. (2015). Teacher well-being: Exploring its components and a practice-oriented scale. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 33*(8), 744–756. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734282915587990>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Cumming, T. (2017). Early childhood educators' well-being: An updated review of the literature. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 45*(5), 583–593. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-016-0818-6>
- Dicke, T., Parker, P. D., Marsh, H. W., Kunter, M., Schmeck, A., & Leutner, D. (2014). Self-efficacy in classroom management, classroom disturbances, and emotional exhaustion: A moderated mediation analysis of teacher candidates. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 106*(2), 569.
- Gioia, D. A. (2021). A systematic methodology for doing qualitative research. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 57*(1), 20–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886320982715>
- Granziera, H., Martin, A. J., & Collie, R. J. (2023). Teacher well-being and student achievement: A multi-level analysis. *Social Psychology of Education, 1007/s11218-022-09751-1*
- Griffith, J., Steptoe, A., & Cropley, M. (1999). An investigation of coping strategies associated with job stress in teachers. *British Journal of Educational Psychology, 69*(4), 517–531.
- Gu, Q., & Day, C. W. (2011). Challenges to teacher resilience: Conditions count. *British Educational Research Journal, 39*, 22–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411926.2011.623152>
- Gustems-Carnicer, J., & Calderón, C. (2013). Coping strategies and psychological well-being among teacher education students: Coping and well-being in students. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 28*, 1127–1140.
- Gustems-Carnicer, J., Calderón, C., & Calderón-Garrido, D. (2019). Stress, coping strategies and academic achievement in teacher education students. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 42*(3), 375–390. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2019.1576629>
- Hagermoser Sanetti, L. M., Boyle, A. M., Magrath, E., Cascio, A., & Moore, E. (2021). Intervening to decrease teacher stress: A review of current research and new directions. *Contemporary School Psychology, 25*, 416–425. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-020-00285-x>
- Hascher, T. (2007). Exploring students' well-being by taking a variety of looks into the classroom. *Hellenic Journal of Psychology, 4*, 331–349. <https://doi.org/10.2304/eerj.2010.9.1.13>
- Hascher, T., & Hagenauer, G. (2011). Schulisches Wohlbefinden im Jugendalter – Verläufe und Einflussfaktoren (Adolescents' well-being in school – Time courses and antecedents). In A. Ittel, H. Merken, & L. Stecher (Hrsg.), *Jahrbuch Jugendforschung* (S. 15–45). VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Hascher, T., & Mori, J. (2023). Teacher and student well-being: Theoretical reflections and perspectives. In *Motivation and emotion in learning and teaching across educational contexts* (pp. 114–127). Routledge.
- Hascher, T., & Waber, J. (2021). Teacher well-being: A systematic review of the research literature from the year 2000–2019. *Educational Research Review, 34*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2021.100411>
- Hepburn, S.-J., Carroll, A., & McCuaig-Holcroft, L. (2021). A complementary intervention to promote wellbeing and stress management for early career teachers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 18*(12), Article 6320. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126320>
- Herman, K. C., Prewett, S. L., Eddy, C. L., Savala, A., & Reinke, W. M. (2020). Profiles of middle school teacher stress and coping: Concurrent and prospective correlates. *Journal of School Psychology, 78*, 54–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.11.003>

- Herman, K. C., Sebastian, J., Eddy, C. L., & Reinke, W. M. (2023). School leadership, climate, and professional isolation as predictors of special education teachers' stress and coping profiles. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 31(2), 120–131.
- Ibrahim, A. (2022). What hurts or helps teacher collaboration? Evidence from UAE schools. *Prospects*, 52(3), 249–266.
- Kamtsios, S. (2018). Burnout syndrome and stressors in different stages of teachers' professional development: The mediating role of coping strategies. *Hellenic Journal of Psychology*, 15(3), 229–253.
- Karlsen, E., Dybdahl, R., & Vittersø, J. (2006). The possible benefits of difficulty: How stress can increase and decrease subjective well-being. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 47(5), 411–417.
- Kim, L. E., Oxley, L., & Asbury, K. (2022). "My brain feels like a browser with 100 tabs open": A longitudinal study of teachers' mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(1), 299–318. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjep.12450>
- Klapproth, F., Federkeil, L., Heinschke, F., & Jungmann, T. (2020). Teachers' experiences of stress and their coping strategies during COVID-19 induced distance teaching. *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, 4(4), 444–452.
- Klusmann, U., Aldrup, K., Roloff-Bruchmann, J., Carstensen, B., Wartenberg, G., Hansen, J., & Hanewinkel, R. (2023). Teachers' emotional exhaustion during the Covid-19 pandemic: Levels, changes, and relations to pandemic-specific demands. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 121, Article 103908.
- Krumpal, I. (2013). Determinants of social desirability bias in sensitive surveys: A literature review. *Quality and Quantity*, 47, 2025–2047. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-011-9640-9>
- Lavy, S., & Eshet, R. (2018). Spiral effects of teachers' emotions and emotion regulation strategies: Evidence from a daily diary study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 73, 151–161.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer.
- Lindqvist, H., Weurlander, M., Wernerson, A., & Thornberg, R. (2023). The emotional journey of the beginning teacher: Phases and coping strategies. *Research Papers in Education*, 38(4), 615–635.
- Mayring, P. (2015). *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Grundlagen und Techniken* (12., überarb. Aufl.). Beltz.
- McEwen, B. S. (2007). Physiology and neurobiology of stress and adaptation: Central role of the brain. *Physiological Reviews*, 87(3), 873–904.
- Meredith, C., Moolenaar, N., Struyve, C., Vandecandelaere, M., Gielen, S., & Kyndt, E. (2023). The importance of a collaborative culture for teachers' job satisfaction and affective commitment. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 38(1), 43–62.
- Mulford, B. (2003). School leaders: Challenging roles and impact on teacher and school effectiveness. *A paper prepared for the OECD Improving School Leadership activity*, available at www.oecd.org/edu/schoolleadership.
- Nwoko, J. C., Emeto, T. I., Malau-Aduli, A. E. O., & Malau-Aduli, B. S. (2023). A systematic review of the factors that influence teachers' occupational wellbeing. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(12), Article 6070. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20126070>
- Ozturk, M., Polatcan, M., Erdogan, C., & Wit, A. (2024). A systematic review of studies examining teacher well-being. *Educational Research Review*, 41, Article 100503.
- Paganin, G., Avanzi, L., Guglielmi, D., Alcover, C.-M., & Mazzetti, G. (2023). How emotional contagion among teachers affects the relationship between transformational leadership and team cohesion. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13(8), Article 685. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13080685>
- Parker, P. D., & Martin, A. J. (2009). Coping and buoyancy in the workplace: Understanding their effects on teachers' work-related well-being and engagement. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(1), 68–75. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.06.009>
- Parker, P. D., Martin, A. J., Colmar, S., & Liem, G. A. (2012). Teachers' workplace wellbeing: Exploring a process model of goal orientation, coping behavior, engagement, and burnout. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28(4), 503–513. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.01.001>
- Rajesh, C., Ashok, L., Rao, C. R., Kamath, V. G., Sekaran, V. C., Devaramane, V., & Swamy, V. T. (2022). Psychological well-being and coping strategies among secondary school teachers: A cross-sectional study. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 11, Article 152. https://doi.org/10.4103/jehp.jehp_1248_21
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>
- Sandmeier, A., Heim, D. K., Windlin, B., & Krause, A. (2017). Negative Beanspruchung von Schweizer Lehrpersonen. Trends von 2006 bis 2014. *Swiss Journal of Educational Research*, 39(1), 75–94. <https://doi.org/10.24452/sjer.39.1.5000>

- Savage, M., & Woloshyn, V. (2022). Coping is crucial: Exploring relations between K-12 educators and staff coping strategies, perceived stress and psychological wellbeing. *International Journal of Emotional Education*, 14(2), 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.56300/QBVZ8040>
- Schumacher, L. (2012). Wege zu einer guten gesunden Schule – Gesundheitsförderung durch Organisationsentwicklung (Pathways to a good healthy school – Health promotion through organizational development). In L. Schumacher, B. Nieskens, & B. Sieland (Hrsg.), *Handbuch Lehrergesundheit – Impulse für die Entwicklung guter gesunder Schulen* (2. Auflage, S. 97–128). Carl Link.
- Seidman, S. A., & Zager, J. (1991). A study of coping behaviours and teacher burnout. *Work & Stress*, 5(3), 205–216.
- Sharplin, E., O'Neill, M., & Chapman, A. (2011). Coping strategies for adaptation to new teacher appointments: Intervention for retention. *Teaching and teacher education*, 27(1), 136–146. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.07.010>
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2015). Job satisfaction, stress and coping strategies in the teaching profession – What do teachers say? *International Education Studies*, 8(3), 181–192.
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2018). Job demands and job resources as predictors of teacher motivation and well-being. *Social Psychology of Education*, 21(5), 1251–1275. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-018-9464-8>
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2021). Teacher stress and coping strategies – The struggle to stay in control. *Creative Education*, 12, 1273–1295. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2021.126096>
- Smith, K., Sheridan, L., Duursma, E., & Alonzo, D. (2025). Teachers' emotional labour: The joys, demands, and constraints. *Teachers and Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2025.2466560>
- Soini, T., Pyhältö, K., & Pietarinen, J. (2010). Pedagogical well-being: Reflecting learning and well-being in teachers' work. *Teachers and Teaching*, 16(6), 735–751.
- Stanton, A. L., Kirk, S. B., Cameron, C. L., & Danoff-Burg, S. (2000). Coping through emotional approach: Scale construction and validation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 1150–1169.
- Stapleton, P., Garby, S., & Sabot, D. (2020). Psychological distress and coping styles in teachers: A preliminary study. *Australian Journal of Education*, 64(2), 127–146.
- Stromquist, N. P. (2018). *The global status of teachers and the teaching profession*. Education International.
- Tait, M. (2008). Resilience as a contributor to novice teacher success, commitment, and retention. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 35, 57–75.
- Tsuyuguchi, K. (2023). Analysis of the determinants of teacher well-being: Focusing on the causal effects of trust relationships. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 132, Article 104240.
- Wamea, Y., & Nampo, R. S. (2024). The effectiveness of adaptive coping strategies for work stress: A meta-analysis. *Indonesian Journal of Medical Reviews*, 4(3), 634–644.
- Wang, H., & Hall, N. C. (2021). Exploring relations between teacher emotions, coping strategies, and intentions to quit: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of School Psychology*, 86, 64–77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2021.03.005>
- Wang, H., Lee, S. Y., & Hall, N. C. (2022). Coping profiles among teachers: Implications for emotions, job satisfaction, burnout, and quitting intentions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 68, Article 102030.
- Weiland, A. (2021). Teacher well-being: Voices in the field. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 99, Article 103250. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103250>
- Woods, S., Sebastian, J., Herman, K. C., Huang, F. L., Reinke, W. M., & Thompson, A. M. (2023). The relationship between teacher stress and job satisfaction as moderated by coping. *Psychology in the Schools*, 60(7), 2237–2256. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22857>
- Yildirim, K. (2015). Testing the main determinants of teachers' professional well-being by using a mixed method. *Teacher Development*, 19(1), 59–78.
- Zuckerman, M., & Gagne, M. (2003). The COPE revised: Proposing a 5-factor model of coping strategies. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37(3), 169–204. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566\(02\)00563-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0092-6566(02)00563-9)

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Isabelle Krummenacher is an advisor and lecturer at the University of Teacher Education in Bern, Switzerland, where she also completed her doctorate at the University of Bern in 2025. Her research centres on teacher resilience, professional wellbeing, and the psychological and institutional conditions that enable sustainable professional development among educators and school teams.

Julia Mori is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the Institute of Educational Science at the University of Bern in Switzerland and a senior researcher at the University of Teacher Education in Special Needs. Her research centres around positive education that not only promotes effective learning in school but also supports children's and young adolescents' socio-emotional development.

Jakob Schnell is an advanced lecturer at the Institute for Special Learning Needs, University of Teacher Education in Special Needs in Zurich, Switzerland, and a doctoral researcher in the project "Student Well-being in Switzerland (WESIR)" at the University of Bern. His research centres on student well-being in school, with particular interests in emotion, motivation, and social inequality in educational contexts.

Katja Saxer is a research associate at the University of Teacher Education in Bern, Switzerland and a doctoral candidate in Educational Science at the University of Bern, Switzerland. Her research focuses on inclusive education, the management of heterogeneity, and student well-being in school, drawing on international experience at the University of Eastern Finland and Tampere University.

Tina Hascher is Professor of Educational Science at the University of Bern (Switzerland) and Head of the Department of Research in School and Instruction. Her research addresses school learning, academic motivation, emotions and well-being, and teacher education. She is member of the board of the German Educational Research Association, member of the scientific boards of several teacher education institutions, and member of the Austrian Board for Quality Assurance in Teacher Education. She also serves as reviewer for national and international journals, book series and research organisations.

Authors and Affiliations

Isabelle Krummenacher¹  · Julia Mori¹  · Jakob Schnell¹  · Katja Saxer¹  · Tina Hascher¹ 

✉ Isabelle Krummenacher
isabelle.krummenacher@phbern.ch

¹ Department of Research in School and Instruction, Institute of Educational Science, University of Bern, 3012 Bern, Switzerland

Terms and Conditions

Springer Nature journal content, brought to you courtesy of Springer Nature Customer Service Center GmbH ("Springer Nature").

Springer Nature supports a reasonable amount of sharing of research papers by authors, subscribers and authorised users ("Users"), for small-scale personal, non-commercial use provided that all copyright, trade and service marks and other proprietary notices are maintained. By accessing, sharing, receiving or otherwise using the Springer Nature journal content you agree to these terms of use ("Terms"). For these purposes, Springer Nature considers academic use (by researchers and students) to be non-commercial.

These Terms are supplementary and will apply in addition to any applicable website terms and conditions, a relevant site licence or a personal subscription. These Terms will prevail over any conflict or ambiguity with regards to the relevant terms, a site licence or a personal subscription (to the extent of the conflict or ambiguity only). For Creative Commons-licensed articles, the terms of the Creative Commons license used will apply.

We collect and use personal data to provide access to the Springer Nature journal content. We may also use these personal data internally within ResearchGate and Springer Nature and as agreed share it, in an anonymised way, for purposes of tracking, analysis and reporting. We will not otherwise disclose your personal data outside the ResearchGate or the Springer Nature group of companies unless we have your permission as detailed in the Privacy Policy.

While Users may use the Springer Nature journal content for small scale, personal non-commercial use, it is important to note that Users may not:

1. use such content for the purpose of providing other users with access on a regular or large scale basis or as a means to circumvent access control;
2. use such content where to do so would be considered a criminal or statutory offence in any jurisdiction, or gives rise to civil liability, or is otherwise unlawful;
3. falsely or misleadingly imply or suggest endorsement, approval, sponsorship, or association unless explicitly agreed to by Springer Nature in writing;
4. use bots or other automated methods to access the content or redirect messages
5. override any security feature or exclusionary protocol; or
6. share the content in order to create substitute for Springer Nature products or services or a systematic database of Springer Nature journal content.

In line with the restriction against commercial use, Springer Nature does not permit the creation of a product or service that creates revenue, royalties, rent or income from our content or its inclusion as part of a paid for service or for other commercial gain. Springer Nature journal content cannot be used for inter-library loans and librarians may not upload Springer Nature journal content on a large scale into their, or any other, institutional repository.

These terms of use are reviewed regularly and may be amended at any time. Springer Nature is not obligated to publish any information or content on this website and may remove it or features or functionality at our sole discretion, at any time with or without notice. Springer Nature may revoke this licence to you at any time and remove access to any copies of the Springer Nature journal content which have been saved.

To the fullest extent permitted by law, Springer Nature makes no warranties, representations or guarantees to Users, either express or implied with respect to the Springer nature journal content and all parties disclaim and waive any implied warranties or warranties imposed by law, including merchantability or fitness for any particular purpose.

Please note that these rights do not automatically extend to content, data or other material published by Springer Nature that may be licensed from third parties.

If you would like to use or distribute our Springer Nature journal content to a wider audience or on a regular basis or in any other manner not expressly permitted by these Terms, please contact Springer Nature at

onlineservice@springernature.com