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Coping strategies and psychological well-being among teachers experiencing victimization

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Introduction: Teacher victimization is an important occupational stressor that can undermine educators' psychological functioning and professional sustainability. Guided by stress–coping theory, this study examined the relationships among multiple forms of victimization, coping strategies, and psychological well-being.
Methods: A nationwide sample of Lithuanian teachers ($N = 1{,}044$) completed validated measures assessing exposure to victimization, coping responses, and psychological well-being, including indicators of flourishing and emotional experiences. Structural equation modeling was used to examine direct and indirect relationships among variables.
Results: Victimization was associated with poorer psychological well-being, particularly reduced flourishing and increased negative emotional experiences. Adaptive coping strategies–such as active coping, positive reframing, and religious coping–were related to higher well-being, whereas maladaptive strategies, including self-blame, behavioral disengagement, and substance use, were associated with poorer outcomes. Structural equation modeling indicated a small but significant indirect effect ($\beta \approx .02$), suggesting that coping partially mediated the relationship between victimization and well-being. A substantial direct association between victimization and well-being remained ($\beta \approx -.25$, $p < .001$).
Discussion: These findings suggest that strengthening teachers' coping skills may help mitigate the emotional consequences of victimization; however, individual coping alone is insufficient. Supporting teacher well-being requires not only individual-level interventions but also organizational and policy-level efforts aimed at preventing workplace victimization in educational settings.

KEYWORDS
coping strategies, flourishing, Lithuania, psychological well-being, teacher victimization

Introduction

In the contemporary academic environment, higher education faculty are increasingly exposed to diverse and complex stressors arising from institutional expectations, pedagogical responsibilities, and personal circumstances (Vieira et al., 2024). Research indicates that teachers often experience varying levels of emotional

distress, encompassing a wide range of negative emotions such as anger, frustration, disappointment, sadness, helplessness, and emotional exhaustion (Tarantul and Berkovich, 2025). Violence perpetrated against teachers represents a pervasive challenge across educational settings, affecting teachers' safety, well-being, and professional functioning (McMahon et al., 2022; Reddy et al., 2024). Despite growing awareness of teachers' workplace victimization and its potential consequences, school violence research has insufficiently examined teachers' perceptions of safety and risk (Berkowitz et al., 2022; Stilwell et al., 2025). In a meta-analysis done by Longobardi et al. (2019) it was found, that the prevalence of any type of teacher reported victimization within a two-year period ranged from 20% to 75%, with a pooled estimate of 53%. The evidence indicates that teacher victimization is a global issue, underscoring the need for policy and practice to be addressed within an international framework while remaining sensitive to local contexts (Astor et al., 2024). However, although teacher victimization has been consistently linked to poorer psychological well-being (McMahon et al., 2020; Moon et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2022), the mechanisms explaining this relationship remain insufficiently examined. In particular, limited research has investigated coping as a mediating process through which victimization affects teachers' well-being, and empirical evidence from educational contexts remains scarce (Barnová et al., 2023; Longobardi et al., 2019).

To better understand how victimization influences teachers' well-being, it is necessary to consider the role of coping processes. While teaching remains stressful across situations, teachers who engaged in coping strategies experienced higher job satisfaction (Woods et al., 2023). Teachers employ a range of personal coping strategies to manage stress, including physical activities such as exercise and nature walks, maintaining healthy lifestyles through balanced nutrition, and engaging in spiritual practices like prayer (Nwoko et al., 2024). In a study conducted by Yulinda et al. (2024), a regression model demonstrated that 45.8% of the variance in teachers' psychological well-being was explained by both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies, confirming that balanced coping behaviours substantially enhance mental health and performance among educators. Evidence suggests that teachers demonstrate varying coping patterns that reflect their unique personal strengths, competencies, and preferred strategies for managing occupational stress (Shukla et al., 2016). For example, emotional intelligence, as a psychological resource, helps buffer the negative impact of perceived stress on teaching professionals' attitudes when facing student misconduct (Mérida-López and Extremera, 2022). Teachers who rely on adaptive coping strategies tend to respond more proactively to bullying situations. These insights highlight the importance of considering coping styles in efforts to strengthen teachers' capacity for effective intervention (Kahn et al., 2012). Understanding how teachers cope with emerging stressors during times of crisis is crucial for anticipating their responses to traumatic events and for identifying the factors that shape coping processes, thereby enabling the development of tailored interventions that promote functional coping strategies and support both their psychological well-being and the quality of educational outcomes (Ghasemi et al., 2023; Nwoko et al., 2024; Vieira et al., 2024).

Victimization of teachers

Workplace victimization among teachers represents a significant concern, as it has been consistently linked to a range of adverse occupational and health-related outcomes (Ghadban et al., 2023). Teachers endure significant social, emotional, and psychological strain, impairing their capacity to fulfill their roles and contributing to heightened anxiety about the school environment (Venketsamy et al., 2023). Evidence indicates a high prevalence of violence and aggression directed toward educators. A survey conducted in 2022 with 11,814 educators and school staff from across the United States and Puerto Rico found that 22%–80% of respondents experienced verbal or threatening aggression and 2%–56% reported physical violence within a year, depending on their role and the source of aggression (McMahon et al., 2024). Similarly, 43.7% of teachers in a national survey reported at least one incident of verbal threat, physical assault, or property damage, with verbal threats being the most frequent form of victimization (Reddy et al., 2024). In another study, 38.5% of teachers experienced bullying from school staff, while 33.9% reported verbal victimization from students' parents (Dirzyte et al., 2024). These findings highlight that violence and aggression toward educators represent a widespread occupational hazard across schools.

In regard to the sources of teacher victimization, research consistently shows that students and parents are the most frequent perpetrators, followed by colleagues and administrators (Chirico et al., 2023; McMahon et al., 2024). Consistent with this pattern, Dirzyte et al. (2024) reported that students were the most common perpetrators (65.8%), most often through verbal and social aggression, while bullying by school staff and verbal aggression from parents were also frequently reported. Some findings further revealed that principals may act as perpetrators of bullying, typically in psychological rather than physical forms (De Vos and Kirsten, 2015). However, physical aggression also occurs: in a study of 789 elementary and middle school teachers, 8.4% reported experiencing aggression involving weapons within the past year. Poor work conditions, such as insecure contracts and teaching in multiple schools, significantly increased the risk of victimization, and younger teachers were more vulnerable (Melanda et al., 2018). Different forms of victimization frequently co-occur: bullying by school staff is associated with aggression from parents and multifaceted victimization by students (Dirzyte et al., 2024), and higher exposure to physical violence is linked to non-verbal sexual harassment and increased work-related stress (Gråstén and Kokkonen, 2021).

As a result of victimization, teachers report experiencing a range of physical, psychological, and social health issues (Ghadban et al., 2023; McMahon et al., 2020; Moon and McCluskey, 2020; Moon et al., 2019, 2023). Such experiences undermine emotional and physical well-being and are negatively associated with life satisfaction and emotional well-being (Dirzyte et al., 2024; Moon et al., 2021; Reddy et al., 2024). Teachers with higher levels of victimization exhibit greater post-traumatic stress and somatic symptoms, elevated psychological distress, and increased depressive symptoms (Ghadban et al., 2023; Moon et al., 2015). These problems may reflect broader psychiatric conditions such as depression or post-traumatic stress disorder (De Vos and Kirsten, 2015). At the individual

level, teacher victimization is positively associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Yang et al., 2022). However, strong social support from school leadership can buffer these negative effects and promote greater well-being (Kollerová et al., 2023).

Teacher victimization not only undermines well-being but also compromises motivation, job satisfaction, and the capacity to foster positive learning environments. It impairs job performance, weakens teachers' attachment to the school community, and contributes to higher attrition rates (Moon et al., 2015, 2019, 2021; Reddy et al., 2024). Repeated exposure to victimization is associated with elevated work-related stress, reduced job performance, and stronger intentions to leave the profession (Moon et al., 2024). Violence against teachers was also found to predict adverse physical and emotional outcomes and impaired teaching-related functioning, with fear acting as a partial mediator (Wilson et al., 2011). Consistent with these findings, ongoing exposure to violence is linked to lower job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and disconnection from the school community (Moon et al., 2023). In this context, teacher job satisfaction becomes particularly important, as teacher job satisfaction plays a pivotal role in shaping teaching quality and student outcomes. When teachers feel valued and supported, they are more motivated to invest additional effort and create positive learning environments, whereas low job satisfaction reduces engagement and negatively influences student achievement (Hoque et al., 2023). To mitigate these effects, both teacher training for managing disruptive behaviors and organizational strategies addressing workplace bullying, supportive leadership, and fairness are essential for sustaining a healthy teaching workforce (Ghasemi et al., 2023; Kollerová et al., 2023).

Self-Help and coping strategies

It is well established that when individuals encounter challenging or demanding circumstances, they engage in coping strategies designed to understand, manage, and adapt to psychological and practical pressures (Algorani and Gupta, 2023). Coping is broadly defined as the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals employ to manage internal and external demands appraised as stressful (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004). According to Folkman et al. (1986) transactional model, stress arises from the ongoing interaction between the individual and the environment and is shaped by cognitive appraisal, through which individuals evaluate whether an event is threatening and assess their ability to cope. Coping is therefore viewed as a dynamic process involving cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage internal or external demands, typically through problem-focused or emotion-focused strategies. Problem-focused coping includes active problem-solving, planning, and seeking instrumental support, whereas emotion-focused coping involves seeking emotional support, positive reappraisal, acceptance, or denial (Carver et al., 1989; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). In addition to these strategies, individuals may also rely on social and spiritual coping mechanisms, such as community support or faith-based practices, to buffer the effects of stress and promote resilience (Acoba, 2024; Chirico et al., 2020; Graça and Brandão, 2024; Ozbay et al., 2007). Coping has also been described as a process that encompasses multiple aspects of human functioning, including cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological components, while also unfolding within broader relational and contextual environments. It is a multilayered and dynamic process that involves diversity, choice, and the continuous negotiation of possibilities as individuals respond to the demands of particular life situations (Pargament, 1997). In other words, coping can be defined as the cognitive and behavioral efforts mobilized to regulate and adapt to stressful circumstances (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004).

Coping strategies are broadly categorized into adaptive and maladaptive forms, each exerting distinct influence on psychological well-being. Adaptive coping strategies are generally linked to lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression by promoting effective emotional regulation and problem-solving. In contrast, maladaptive strategies often exacerbate these difficulties, contributing to greater psychological distress and impaired emotional adjustment (Ghasemi et al., 2023). In addition to adaptive and maladaptive forms, researchers have identified positive coping as a strategy representing a constructive and proactive approach to managing stress, emphasizing personal growth, goal attainment, and adaptive self-regulation. By viewing challenges as opportunities rather than threats, individuals employing positive coping strategies enhance their well-being, resilience, and overall psychological health. In contrast, avoidant or reactive coping tends to correlate with negative emotional outcomes such as stress, anxiety, and sadness, underscoring the importance of active, future-oriented coping in promoting emotional stability and post-traumatic growth (Chaaya et al., 2025; MacIntyre et al., 2020; Meng and D'Arcy, 2015; Qiu et al., 2025). To comprehensively examine the coping mechanisms employed by teachers, it is first necessary to develop a detailed understanding of the different types of coping mechanisms.

Problem-focused coping

Problem-focused coping is understood as an active approach to managing stress that involves addressing the source of difficulty directly and implementing strategies to resolve or mitigate it (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). It is understood as deliberate and goal-oriented efforts aimed at addressing and managing the source of stress through active engagement (Landy et al., 2022). Problem-focused coping has also been linked to lower levels of overall burnout and reduced symptoms of cognitive impairment (Spaan et al., 2023). Findings from meta-analytic research show that problem-oriented coping is associated with lower levels of burnout, particularly through its link to greater personal accomplishment. By actively addressing and resolving stressors, individuals who employ problem-focused coping are better able to maintain a sense of control and efficacy, thereby reducing the negative impact of work-related stress and enhancing overall psychological resilience (Shin et al., 2014). It is known that problem-focused coping plays a vital role in mitigating emotional vulnerability and promoting adaptation during personal and environmental transitions in later life (Cho and Choi, 2024). Individuals who

effectively employ problem directed strategies may be better equipped to exert a positive influence over situations that demand cognitive engagement and performance (Spaan et al., 2023).

The results also indicate that problem-focused coping contributes to lower levels of depression, partly through increased self-esteem, suggesting that actively confronting stressors may enhance self-worth and protect against depressive symptoms (Chao, 2011; Cho and Choi, 2024; Cong et al., 2021). Evidence further suggests that problem-focused coping can buffer the effects of cumulative life stressors on depression, although the strength of this protective effect may vary by gender (Chen and Sun, 2019). The use of proactive coping strategies also enables individuals to maintain psychological well-being and achieve higher levels of professional satisfaction (Yulinda et al., 2024). The benefits of problem-focused coping are well recognized in contexts involving workplace bullying and victimization, where individuals face ongoing interpersonal stressors that threaten their well-being and sense of control. Such coping strategies enable individuals to take active, goal-directed steps to address or mitigate the source of distress, fostering a greater sense of empowerment and resilience. In the workplace—particularly within higher education institutions—these approaches have been shown to play a crucial role in managing the adverse effects of bullying, helping individuals reduce psychological strain and maintain performance despite challenging environments (Muazzam et al., 2020).

Emotion-focused coping

Another major category of coping strategies is emotion-focused coping, which involves efforts to regulate emotional responses to stress rather than addressing the stressor itself. Gross (1998) defined emotion regulation as the conscious and unconscious processes through which individuals shape their emotional experiences—determining which emotions they experience, when they occur, and how they are expressed and felt. Emotional coping involves strategies such as emotional processing, which entails actively acknowledging and understanding one's emotions, and emotional expression, which focuses on communicating or releasing those emotions (Stanton et al., 2000). Emotional regulation serves as a key mechanism for maintaining psychological balance and resilience. It enables individuals to recognize, understand, and manage their emotional responses to stressors, thereby fostering well-being and adaptive functioning (Djernis et al., 2023). To further elucidate the role of emotion-focused coping, it is essential to examine specific strategies that enable individuals to manage emotional experiences more effectively.

Cognitive reappraisal

The way an individual interprets or evaluates an emotional event plays a crucial role in shaping their emotional response, meaning that thoughts and appraisals directly influence how emotions are experienced and expressed (Ray et al., 2008). Cognitive reappraisal is a commonly employed emotion regulation strategy that entails modifying one's interpretation of an emotional event in order to influence and manage subsequent emotional responses (Troy et al., 2013; Wang and Yin, 2023). Rather than eliminating prior emotional reactions, this process establishes new cognitive associations supported by contextual cues and environmental feedback, enabling individuals to develop more adaptive emotional responses and apply them flexibly across situations (Wang and Yin, 2023). Accordingly, cognitive reappraisal functions as a protective mechanism that helps individuals manage stress and adversity and strengthens resilience and adaptive capacity (Stover et al., 2024). Research has shown that cognitive reappraisal is associated with reductions in anxiety symptoms in cognitive-behavioral therapy and with decreased subjective responses to stress in both meta-analytic and systematic review findings (Hagen and Hjemdal, 2023; Liu et al., 2019; Smits et al., 2012).

Within the framework of cognitive appraisal, positive appraisal style can be understood as a constructive re-evaluation of potentially threatening circumstances. Positive appraisal involves interpreting stressors in a balanced and realistic way, avoiding exaggerated negativity such as catastrophizing or helplessness while also avoiding unrealistic optimism (Petri-Romão et al., 2024). Positive cognitive reappraisal moderates the relationship between stressors and negative outcomes and has been identified as a key resilience mechanism and protective factor for mental health (Petri-Romão et al., 2024; Riepenhausen et al., 2022). Consistent with this, cognitive restructuring has been associated with lower levels of aggression and hostility (Spaan et al., 2023), improvements in emotional exhaustion and leisure satisfaction over time (Bodensteiner et al., 2025), and less negative mood together with improved emotional well-being (Johnson et al., 2016; LeBlanc et al., 2020). In this way, reappraisal appears to buffer the emotional impact of stressful experiences and support overall psychological adjustment.

The relevance of cognitive coping extends across cultural contexts, as similar mechanisms for managing distress are recognized not only in Western psychological frameworks but also within Eastern traditions. A comparable perspective appears within Tibetan Buddhist practice, where mental distress is understood as arising primarily from the mind rather than external conditions, and lojong (mind-training) techniques are used to examine and reframe negative experiences and reduce suffering (Lewis, 2013). Lojong employs structured contemplative reflection and meditation practices that encourage individuals to reinterpret adversity, recognize the transient nature of thoughts and emotions, and cultivate mental flexibility and compassion. Through these practices, habitual emotional reactions are gradually interrupted and replaced with more balanced and adaptive responses, supporting emotional regulation and adaptive functioning (Locke, 2018). This perspective parallels cognitive reappraisal in Western psychology, where adverse experiences are reinterpreted to foster resilience and adaptive coping.

Mindfulness

Another recognized self-regulatory approach is mindfulness. Originating from Buddhist contemplative traditions, mindfulness

is a meditation practice focused on cultivating present-moment awareness, nonjudgmental observation, and acceptance of thoughts and emotions (Zhang et al., 2021). In contemporary psychology, it has become a central component of several third-wave cognitive-behavioral therapies, including Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (Churchill et al., 2010). Commonly defined as intentional awareness of present-moment experiences, mindfulness involves observing thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations with openness and without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2023). It is understood as a form of mental training that supports emotional regulation and stress reduction through meta-awareness, self-regulation of attention and emotion, and the cultivation of empathy and compassion, thereby contributing to psychological balance and well-being (Vago and David, 2012).

Empirical and neurophysiological research highlights mechanisms underlying mindfulness-based interventions. The Monitor and Acceptance Theory proposes that mindfulness operates through two complementary processes: attention monitoring and acceptance. Monitoring enhances awareness of internal and external experiences, whereas acceptance promotes a nonjudgmental and open stance toward them. When practiced together, these components reduce emotional reactivity and stress-related outcomes (Lindsay and Creswell, 2017). Mindfulness can be cultivated through meditation practices such as body scan, sitting meditation, mindful movement, and everyday awareness exercises that encourage curiosity and nonjudgmental observation of experience (Crane et al., 2023; Goldberg et al., 2023; Nelson, 2017; Teut et al., 2013).

A substantial body of research demonstrates that mindfulness supports emotion regulation by enabling individuals to respond to negative emotions with greater clarity and composure (Pruessner et al., 2024). Through improvements in attention regulation and emotional acceptance, mindfulness enhances self-regulation, reduces stress, and promotes psychological resilience. Neurophysiological evidence further suggests strengthened cognitive control and reduced affective reactivity, and numerous studies report reductions in stress, anxiety, and depression (Alhawatmeh et al., 2022; Argyriadis et al., 2024; Lindsay and Creswell, 2017; Sparacio et al., 2024; Vago and David, 2012).

Physical activity

Another form of emotion-focused coping is physical exercise, which serves as an effective strategy for managing emotional distress and enhancing psychological functioning (Al-Wardat et al., 2024; Hu and Liu, 2025; Sharma et al., 2006; Tse, 2020). Physical exercise is defined as structured and purposeful bodily activity intended to improve both physical fitness and mental well-being (Atherton et al., 2024; White et al., 2024). Engagement in exercise positively influences mental health directly and indirectly by enhancing self-efficacy and emotion regulation, thereby contributing to better psychological well-being and emotional balance (Al-Wardat et al., 2024; Hu and Liu, 2025; Sharma et al., 2006; Tse, 2020). Evidence suggests that physical activity exerts its beneficial effects through multiple psychological, social, and physical pathways, including improved self-esteem, resilience, social connection, and physical health (White et al., 2024), and may protect against sustained negative emotional states by strengthening self-regulation and adaptive responses to emotional change (Bernstein et al., 2019).

Notably, different forms of physical activity uniquely contribute to psychological well-being. Aerobic exercise is associated with improved mood and cognitive functioning, strength training with reduced depressive symptoms and greater self-efficacy, and participation in team sports with increased social connectedness and belonging (Li et al., 2024). Aerobic activities have been shown to reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression and promote mental well-being (Guszkowska, 2004). Mind–body practices such as yoga support stress management and emotion regulation and are associated with healthier emotional and cognitive responses (Menezes et al., 2015).

Nature contact for emotional regulation

Within the spectrum of emotion-focused coping strategies, engagement with natural environments—such as parks, forests, and other green spaces—has been recognized as a beneficial approach for regulating emotions, reducing stress, anxiety, and depression, and enhancing psychological well-being (Bratman et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2025; McMahan and Estes, 2015; Ríos-Rodríguez et al., 2024). These effects are explained by two prominent theoretical frameworks. Stress Reduction Theory (Ulrich, 1983) proposes that exposure to natural settings elicits positive emotional responses and reduces physiological arousal, promoting recovery from stress. Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989) suggests that natural environments restore cognitive resources through effortless "soft fascination", allowing directed attention to recover and supporting positive emotional states (Ríos-Rodríguez et al., 2024).

Consistent with these explanations, frequent engagement with nature is associated with improved emotional well-being and reduced psychological distress (Bratman et al., 2024; Ma et al., 2025; McMahan and Estes, 2015). From an environmental self-regulation perspective, individuals may use their surrounding environment to influence emotional states (Ríos-Rodríguez et al., 2024). A meta-analysis found that exposure to natural environments increased positive affect and decreased negative affect (McMahan and Estes, 2015). Importantly, contact with nature has also been linked to greater use of adaptive emotion regulation strategies, particularly cognitive reappraisal, and lower reliance on maladaptive strategies, partly through increased connectedness to nature (Gu et al., 2023). In addition, emotional benefits appear to increase with time spent in nature until reaching an optimal level of exposure (Bratman et al., 2024). Overall, contact with nature appears to support emotion regulation, mood improvement, and psychological well-being (Gu et al., 2023; McMahan and Estes, 2015; Ríos-Rodríguez et al., 2024).

Spiritual coping

Within the process of coping, individuals often rely on a guiding framework that helps them interpret and manage

stressful experiences. Pargament (1997) conceptualizes this framework as an orienting system and defines religious coping as the use of cognitive or behavioral techniques grounded in religion or spirituality to deal with stressful life events. Religious coping typically operates within organized systems of belief and practice, such as prayer, worship, and reliance on perceived divine support, providing individuals with meaning and emotional reassurance. In contrast, spiritual coping encompasses a broader and more individualized set of strategies that may function independently of formal religious institutions and include practices such as meditation, reflection, and meaning-making (Gall et al., 2005; Graça and Brandão, 2024). While religiosity is often expressed through collective ritual and doctrine, spirituality emphasizes personal transcendence and internal interpretation of experience (Aggarwal et al., 2023). Together, these approaches enable individuals to reappraise stressors, derive meaning, and restore emotional balance in the face of adversity.

Empirical evidence supports the theoretical foundations of religious and spiritual coping, demonstrating their role in psychological adjustment and well-being across diverse contexts. Although examined in a different population, a systematic review by Nagy et al. (2024) showed that spirituality and religion support cancer patients' psychological well-being. Across 53 studies involving more than 13,000 participants, higher spiritual well-being and religious coping were associated with better quality of life, lower distress, and more adaptive coping. Interventions incorporating mindfulness, yoga, and faith-based strategies also enhanced emotional resilience, suggesting that spiritual meaning-making may help individuals manage highly stressful experiences. Similarly, a study of female aid workers found that spiritual coping fostered grounding, resilience, and a sense of belonging in demanding humanitarian settings (Ozcan et al., 2021). Overall, religious and spiritual coping appear to function as psychological resources that support emotional adjustment and resilience across stressful life circumstances, including interpersonal adversity.

In addition to empirical findings, cross-cultural perspectives further help explain how spiritual coping processes operate. From a broader cultural perspective, different traditions offer distinct approaches to understanding the relationship between spirituality, health, and psychological well-being. Western psychosocial care models, grounded in biomedical traditions, typically emphasize targeted interventions aimed at modifying thoughts, behaviors, or emotions, whereas Eastern traditions adopt a more holistic perspective that views individuals as interconnected with social, environmental, and spiritual contexts (Chan et al., 2006). A representative example of this holistic perspective is Traditional Tibetan Medicine (TTM), emphasizing mind–body balance, preventive care, and personal transformation (Dorjee and Morse, 2009; Oshoe et al., 2024). Within this perspective, self-help is understood as an ongoing process of self-regulation and harmony maintained through daily behavioral and reflective practices rather than a reactive response to illness (Donden, 2003; Loizzo et al., 2009).

In coping with distress, Eastern traditions highlight acceptance of suffering, personal responsibility, and reinterpretation of adversity through compassion and self-awareness (Yangdon and Sutar, 2024). Ethical conduct and contemplative practices are viewed as practical strategies for maintaining emotional balance and fostering resilience (Gonpo et al., 2008; Wright, 2009), encouraging gratitude, hope, and adaptive meaning-making (Chan et al., 2006). Findings further indicate that compassion-based meditation improves emotion regulation and physiological responses to negative stimuli by engaging cognitive control processes related to attention and cognitive reappraisal (Gao et al., 2022). Taken together, these perspectives indicate that coping strategies grounded in religious belief, spirituality, and contemplative practice function as mechanisms for meaning-making and emotional regulation, supporting resilience and psychological well-being (Pargament, 1997).

Social and relational coping

Experiencing challenging situations can create feelings of being overwhelmed and insufficiently equipped to cope, thereby increasing stress. Nevertheless, social support—providing emotional comfort, practical help, advice, and companionship—serves as an important buffer that mitigates the impact of stressors and fosters psychological resilience (Acoba, 2024). Social support refers to the social resources available to an individual, including the support received, satisfaction with that support, and the extent to which it is utilized, encompassing both structural and functional aspects of social networks (Li and Yu, 2025). It is commonly conceptualized as a multidimensional construct including instrumental, informational, and emotional support. Instrumental support involves tangible assistance with practical needs, informational support provides advice or guidance for problem-solving, and emotional support offers empathy, care, and understanding during times of difficulty (Cohen, 2004; Cohen and Syme, 1985; Cyranowski et al., 2013).

Beyond its structural characteristics, social support also functions as a relational coping mechanism that shapes how individuals appraise and respond to stress. Coping in this context is not solely individual but interpersonal, as emotional regulation, meaning-making, and problem-solving are facilitated through social interaction (Lakey and Orehek, 2011). Supportive relationships enhance perceived control, belonging, and validation, thereby reducing psychological threat (Thoits, 2011). Social connectedness has additionally been associated with improved physiological functioning and recovery from illness (Uchino et al., 2018) and contributes to life satisfaction and subjective well-being (Nguyen et al., 2015; Siedlecki et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2022). Thus, social support operates not only as a buffer against distress but also as a promotive factor supporting resilience and positive affect.

Consistent with these relational processes, research further demonstrates that social support plays a central role in promoting mental health and emotional well-being (Aflakseir, 2010; Akbar and Aisyawati, 2021; Cao et al., 2024). Support from family and significant others reduces perceived stress, enhances positive affect, and mitigates symptoms of anxiety and depression (Acoba, 2024). Moreover, perceived social support increases psychological flexibility and reduces reliance on avoidant coping while encouraging approach-oriented coping strategies (Tindle et al., 2022). Through providing reassurance,

guidance, and shared problem-solving, supportive relationships help interpret stressful situations as more manageable and less threatening. Individuals who perceive greater support are therefore more likely to engage in adaptive coping behaviors and maintain emotional stability when managing stress and adversity (Li and Yu, 2025).

Maladaptive coping

While various forms of coping have been identified across theoretical and cultural frameworks, their effectiveness in promoting psychological well-being can vary considerably. Adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanisms demonstrate distinct psychological outcomes, particularly when individuals face repeated or cumulative adversities, yet these differential impacts remain insufficiently explored in existing research (Chaaya et al., 2025). Maladaptive forms of coping are consistently associated with heightened psychological distress, manifesting as increased anxiety, depression, and intolerance of uncertainty. Rather than alleviating stress, these strategies often perpetuate negative emotional states and hinder effective adaptation, thereby contributing to poorer overall mental health outcomes (Chaaya et al., 2025; Karunarathna and Vidanagama, 2024). These unhelpful coping patterns typically involve behaviors such as rumination, withdrawal, denial, avoidance, expressive suppression, disengagement, substance use, and disordered eating—all of which are linked to ineffective stress regulation and greater emotional strain (Aloka et al., 2023; Carver et al., 1989; Guadalupe and DeShong, 2025). More specifically, strategies such as self-blame, behavioral disengagement, and substance use have been shown to correlate negatively with well-being and positively with stress, reinforcing the cycle of psychological distress rather than alleviating it (García et al., 2018).

Among the various maladaptive coping patterns, avoidance-based coping has been particularly associated with heightened psychological vulnerability. This strategy has been strongly linked to greater psychological vulnerability, including heightened risks of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and major depressive disorder. Individuals who predominantly rely on avoidance mechanisms often amplify and sustain their symptoms over time, increasing the likelihood of chronic emotional strain and maladaptive adjustment (Karunarathna and Vidanagama, 2024). However, it is important to recognize that in the face of acute adversity or life-altering circumstances, emotion-focused strategies such as avoidance, distraction, or emotional release may initially serve an adaptive purpose. These responses can provide temporary relief, helping individuals regulate overwhelming emotions and gradually accept their situation. When used flexibly, such coping can function as a transitional phase that enables individuals to restore psychological balance and mobilize the emotional resources necessary for more constructive, problem-focused coping—for example, by learning new skills, seeking support, or planning for future challenges. Over time, this adaptive progression can facilitate a shift from distress toward recovery, growth, and adjustment (Kristofferzon et al., 2018).

Teachers' coping strategies

To contextualize coping within the teaching profession, it is important to recognize that educators routinely navigate multifaceted stressors—ranging from student aggression and administrative pressures to emotional labor—requiring flexible coping strategies to sustain effectiveness and well-being (Kahn et al., 2012; MacIntyre et al., 2020; Oquendo et al., 2025; Sigad, 2024). Coping processes in educational settings are multidimensional, encompassing social, cognitive, and intrapersonal domains, and are strongly influenced by the extent to which teachers perceive their professional environments as supportive. At the individual level, teachers display diverse coping tendencies, ranging from defensive strategies such as deflecting responsibility to constructive approaches that reinforce professional identity and pedagogical commitment (Sigad, 2024). Research further indicates that coping responses to student aggression vary according to the nature of behavior, student gender, and teacher characteristics (Kahn et al., 2012). Empirical evidence shows that teachers employ a wide array of coping strategies, including both adaptive and maladaptive responses (Levy and Khoury-Kassabri, 2022), and effective coping often requires balancing social, pedagogical, and personal resources (Oquendo et al., 2025). Adaptive strategies commonly include accepting responsibility, seeking social support, and engaging in restorative activities such as exercise, whereas maladaptive behaviors—avoidance, withdrawal, or uncontrolled anger—intensify emotional strain (Arikewuyo, 2004; Austin et al., 2005). Qualitative findings further identify coping patterns such as cognitive perspective-taking, relational investment with students, emotional regulation, professional beliefs, and self-relaxation strategies (Levy and Khoury-Kassabri, 2022).

In terms of the specific coping approaches teachers tend to use, research consistently indicates frequent reliance on adaptive coping, particularly social support, leisure activities, and problem-focused strategies (Hidalgo-Andrade et al., 2021; Nusser, 2021). Although it was found that preservice teachers similarly demonstrate a preference for problem-solving approaches (Olson et al., 2024), coping in teachers involves both cognitive and emotional regulation processes (Levy and Khoury-Kassabri, 2022). Cognitive coping mechanisms are central to adaptive functioning, as teachers facing adversity use strategies such as active coping, planning, and seeking instrumental support alongside reflective practices, self-care, and optimism (Williams et al., 2023). Self-talk and cognitive reappraisal—particularly perspective-taking—help regulate negative emotions and maintain professional composure (Levy and Khoury-Kassabri, 2022), highlighting the role of cognitive coping in sustaining resilience and well-being. Emotion-focused coping also plays an essential role in stress regulation. Exposure to aggression and stressful classroom interactions evokes strong emotional reactions that teachers manage through acceptance, emotional suppression, or self-relaxation (Levy and Khoury-Kassabri, 2022; Tarantul and Berkovich, 2025). Strategies such as acceptance, reframing, and emotion regulation are associated with greater adaptability and resilience (Yulinda et al., 2024). Effective emotion regulation contributes to teacher motivation, classroom relationships, and professional fulfillment, indicating that strengthening emotional skills can improve well-being and

educational climate (Aldrup et al., 2024; Frenzel et al., 2021; Qiu et al., 2025).

Beyond individual coping skills, teachers' coping is also shaped by broader personal and contextual resources. The increasing use of mindfulness-based interventions in schools reflects their value for teacher well-being. Meditation improves emotional stability and resilience (Valosek et al., 2021), and dispositional mindfulness predicts stronger well-being and teacher–student relationships (Maoz et al., 2025). Training programs enhance mindfulness, personal growth, and emotion regulation while reducing rumination (Matiz et al., 2025). Controlled studies demonstrate reductions in burnout, stress, fatigue, and depression together with increased resilience (Valosek et al., 2021), and frequent meditation practice is associated with stronger problem-solving orientation as well as positive emotional self-efficacy (Perasso and Di Giuseppe, 2024). Interpersonal and organizational resources further shape coping. Teachers may maintain well-being after workplace violence when strong social support is present (De Cordova et al., 2019). Educators commonly seek guidance from colleagues and school staff (Levy and Khoury-Kassabri, 2022; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2021), and supportive school climates characterized by trust and collaboration reduce stress and enhance job satisfaction (Ben-Hayun and Zysberg, 2024; De Cordova et al., 2019; Kollerová et al., 2023). Social support is also associated with post-traumatic growth and improved emotional processing following victimization (Ben-Hayun and Zysberg, 2024; Sigad, 2024). In a study conducted by Ben-Hayun and Zysberg (2024), it was found that social support plays a crucial role in fostering teachers' post-traumatic growth following experiences of victimization. The findings demonstrated that social support moderated the relationship between exposure to violence and emotional outcomes, reducing negative emotions and enhancing positive emotional processing. Further evidence from Türküm (2011) shows that teachers' sources of social support differ by gender and professional seniority when responding to violence at school. Male teachers tended to seek support primarily from colleagues, whereas female teachers relied more on their spouses or families. Moreover, teachers with different levels of experience showed variation in their support-seeking patterns, though notably, school administrators and counselors were rarely approached for help. These findings highlight the need for comprehensive school support systems (Ghasemi, 2022; Yang, 2022).

However, not all coping strategies used by teachers are beneficial. Despite the prevalence of adaptive coping, many teachers continue to rely on maladaptive strategies such as self-blame, denial, disengagement, and substance use, which are associated with higher stress and poorer well-being (Savage and Woloshyn, 2022). In a study conducted by Herman et al. (2020), the majority of middle school teachers (66%) were classified within a "high stress/high coping" group, whereas 28% were identified as belonging to a maladaptive "high stress/low coping" cluster. Notably, teachers who frequently depend on maladaptive coping tend to experience worse outcomes regardless of their use of adaptive strategies, and avoidance-based coping is considered one of the least effective approaches to managing teaching-related stress (Yang, 2022). Collectively, these findings highlight the need for interventions aimed at reducing maladaptive coping patterns and promoting resilience-enhancing strategies among educators (Herman et al., 2020; Savage and Woloshyn, 2022).

Present study

Teacher victimization, encompassing verbal, physical, social, and cyber aggression directed toward educators, has become an increasingly recognized occupational stressor that threatens teachers' psychological well-being, professional efficacy, and retention (Longobardi et al., 2019; McMahon et al., 2020; Moon et al., 2024; Reddy et al., 2013). While prior research has extensively documented the psychological toll of victimization, considerably less attention has been devoted to understanding how teachers respond to such experiences and the coping strategies that might mitigate their adverse effects (Barnová et al., 2023). Coping represents a critical adaptive process through which individuals regulate emotional distress and attempt to re-establish psychological equilibrium when faced with stressors (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). However, empirical evidence regarding which coping mechanisms are most effective—or potentially maladaptive—when educators confront victimization remains limited and inconsistent across cultural contexts.

The present study seeks to address this gap by examining the complex relationships among different forms of teacher victimization, coping strategies, and psychological well-being. Grounded in stress and coping theory, this research aims to identify which coping patterns are most strongly associated with positive psychological outcomes such as flourishing and emotional balance, and which strategies exacerbate distress. By integrating both adaptive and maladaptive coping dimensions, the study provides a nuanced understanding of teachers' psychological responses to occupational victimization.

Specifically, the study tests a structural model in which teacher victimization predicts psychological well-being directly and indirectly through coping. In this framework, victimization was operationalized as a higher-order construct composed of seven observed indicators—physical, social, verbal, cyber, sexual, property, and parental victimization—representing a comprehensive measure of both student- and parent-initiated aggression. Psychological well-being was modeled as a latent factor comprising flourishing, positive emotions, and negative emotions (reverse-scored to indicate distress). Coping was specified as a multifaceted construct, integrating both adaptive (e.g., active coping, planning, acceptance, positive reframing, religious coping) and maladaptive (e.g., self-blame, behavioral disengagement, substance use, self-isolation) strategies.

Based on stress and coping theory and prior research, the following hypotheses were tested:

H1. Higher levels of teacher victimization will be associated with lower psychological well-being.

H2. Higher levels of teacher victimization will be associated with greater use of maladaptive coping strategies.

H3. Adaptive coping strategies will be positively associated with psychological well-being, whereas maladaptive coping

strategies will be negatively associated with psychological well-being.

H4. Coping strategies will partially mediate the relationship between teacher victimization and psychological well-being.

To evaluate these hypotheses, a series of hierarchical regression and structural equation models (SEM) were conducted. The analyses first assessed descriptive and correlational patterns among all study variables, followed by the estimation of two structural models comparing broader vs. parsimonious representations of coping. The comparative modeling approach allowed for a more precise identification of the most salient coping pathways linking victimization and well-being.

By contrasting different coping dimensions within an integrated SEM framework, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers manage experiences of victimization. The findings aim to extend theoretical models of occupational stress and resilience in educational settings by clarifying which coping strategies serve protective vs. detrimental roles. Moreover, the study offers practical implications for designing professional development and intervention programs that strengthen adaptive coping capacities, promote teachers' psychological well-being, and enhance long-term professional sustainability in environments characterized by elevated risks of victimization.

Method

Study design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected between April 30, 2025 and August 24, 2025 using an anonymous online questionnaire administered via a secure survey platform. Data collection was facilitated in cooperation with the Lithuanian Association of Educational Centers, which distributed the survey invitation to schools and teachers through professional communication networks.

Participants were recruited using a probabilistic multistage sampling strategy designed to obtain a reliable and nationally representative sample of teachers in Lithuania. The procedure combined systematic and cluster sampling, and the target sample size was calculated based on the national teacher population to achieve a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error. To ensure proportional representation across educational levels, teachers were selected from primary (grades 1–4), lower secondary (grades 5–10), and upper secondary (grades 11–12) education. The number of participants from each municipality was determined according to its proportion of the total teacher population in the country, thereby reflecting the actual distribution of teachers across regions. Overall, this approach provided objective and proportional coverage of diverse geographical areas and school contexts.

Eligible participants were currently employed teachers working in primary or secondary educational institutions in Lithuania. No restrictions were placed on subject area, years of experience, or employment status. Respondents confirmed eligibility and provided informed consent electronically before accessing the questionnaire. To minimize duplicate responses, the survey accepted only one submission per device/IP address.

A total of 1,044 teachers provided usable responses and were included in the final dataset. Participants represented diverse regions and school types nationwide. The largest groups of respondents were from Vilnius City Municipality ($n = 111$), Kaunas District Municipality ($n = 102$), Klaipėda District Municipality ($n = 72$), Šalčininkai District Municipality ($n = 53$), Marijampolė Municipality ($n = 54$), and Anykščiai District Municipality ($n = 49$). In the remaining municipalities, the number of participants ranged from 1 to 47.

The sample

This study received ethical approval from the Scientific Committee of the Lifelong Learning Laboratory at Mykolas Romeris University (Protocol No. 10-79 2.25 E-403) on February 25, 2025, confirming adherence to established ethical research standards. The project formed part of a larger investigation examining Lithuanian teachers' experiences of victimization and their psychological well-being. Data were collected using a computer-assisted online questionnaire that required approximately 30 min to complete. Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous, with informed consent obtained from all respondents. No incentives were offered, and confidentiality was strictly ensured throughout the study.

A total of 1,044 teachers from educational institutions across Lithuania participated. The majority were women (90.1%, $n = 941$), while men comprised 9.3% ($n = 97$), and one participant (0.1%) identified as "other". Gender information was missing for five individuals (0.5%). Participants' ages ranged from 20 to 72 years ($M = 52.21$, $SD = 9.75$). In terms of teaching roles, 25.1% ($n = 262$) were primary education teachers, and 74.9% ($n = 782$) were subject teachers. Nearly half (44.0%, $n = 459$) had more than 30 years of teaching experience, while 25.9% ($n = 270$) had 21–30 years and 15.7% ($n = 164$) had 11–20 years, indicating a predominantly veteran cohort.

Most participants held either a bachelor's degree (53.1%) or a master's degree (43.6%), with a small proportion reporting a doctoral degree (0.4%) or other qualifications (3.0%). Regarding professional categories, 15.6% ($n = 163$) were teachers, 37.2% ($n = 388$) senior teachers, 42.3% ($n = 442$) methodologists, and 4.2% ($n = 44$) expert teachers, reflecting a highly qualified sample. Teachers were employed across various school types, including gymnasiums (46.5%), basic schools (35.3%), primary schools (7.8%), and other institutions (10.4%). In terms of location, 45.8% worked in cities, 32.3% in towns, 11.4% in major urban centers, and 10.5% in rural areas, representing diverse educational and geographic contexts.

Instruments

All instruments were administered in Lithuanian. For scales not originally developed in Lithuanian, a translation and back-translation procedure was applied. The items were first translated into Lithuanian by bilingual researchers and then independently back-translated into English by a second bilingual

translator. Discrepancies were reviewed and resolved by consensus within the research team to ensure semantic and conceptual equivalence. Internal consistency reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) for all subscales used in the present study are reported in Table 1.

Teachers' experiences of victimization were assessed using two complementary instruments. The first was the Multidimensional Teacher Victimization Scale (MTVS) (Yang et al., 2019), supplemented with additional items developed by the current research team to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant contexts. The MTVS includes a series of statements capturing various forms of victimization—physical, verbal, social, cyber, sexual, and property-related aggression—experienced by teachers in the workplace. Participants rated the frequency of each experience on a five-point Likert scale, enabling nuanced assessment of exposure levels. Prior studies have reported strong reliability and validity for the MTVS, confirming its suitability for examining victimization among educational professionals. In the present sample, internal consistency was acceptable to good across the MTVS victimization dimensions (Cronbach's $\alpha = .747–.908$).

Another validated scale developed by Prof. Aiste Dirzyte and colleagues (Dirzyte et al., 2024), was used to assess teachers' experiences of aggression and disrespect from parents within educational settings. The parental victimization scale also demonstrated good internal consistency in this study ($\alpha = .835$). The Dirzyte et al. (2024) items were included to capture specific forms of parent-initiated aggression that are not fully represented in the original MTVS. The instrument evaluates multiple forms of victimization, reflecting both direct and observed incidents involving parents. Responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = never to 5 = more than once a week, with higher scores indicating greater exposure. The scale has demonstrated strong validity and reliability in previous research and provided a comprehensive measure of teachers' victimization experiences in the present study. Together, the instruments provided a broader contextual assessment of teachers' victimization experiences.

Psychological well-being was assessed using two widely recognized measures. The Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2011) evaluates individuals' overall psychological functioning across core areas such as purpose, engagement, relationships, and

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics for victimization, well-being, and coping variables.

Variables	Mean	Std. deviation	Cronbach's α	*N*
Physical TV	10,805	29,394	.827	1,044
Social TV	13,776	64,194	.908	1,044
Verbal TV	13,242	55,032	.845	1,044
Cyber TV	10,656	30,965	.904	1,044
Sexual TV	11,454	35,542	.747	1,044
Property TV	11,027	31,489	.792	1,044
Parental TV	11,410	37,163	.835	1,044
Flourishing	61,934	81,145	.943	1,044
Positive emotions	38,706	66,880	.922	1,044
Negative emotions	21,375	72,019	.914	1,044
Self-blame	18,750	78,605	.771	1,044
Substance use	12,701	55,892	.848	1,044
Humor	22,328	91,799	.814	1,044
Self-isolation	17,950	86,291	.813	1,044
Religion	17,854	97,325	.875	1,044
Nature sport	20,709	92,880	.766	1,044
Specialists	13,006	48,798	.704	1,044
Self-distraction	28,204	82,598	.606	1,044
Active coping	29,866	83,592	.764	1,044
Denial	19,650	83,429	.604	1,044
Use of emotional support	23,898	90,266	.820	1,044
Behavioral disengagement	17,261	72,064	.530	1,044
Venting	25,465	81,424	.573	1,044
Instrumental support	25,963	93,641	.846	1,044
Positive reframing	25,867	87,875	.717	1,044
Planning	28,391	88,720	.782	1,044
Acceptance	27,950	84,693	.694	1,044

optimism. It consists of eight items rated on a Likert scale, with higher scores reflecting greater well-being and life satisfaction. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency in this study ($\alpha = .943$). In addition, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson et al., 1988) was used to capture teachers' emotional experiences. This instrument includes two 10-item subscales that measure the frequency of positive and negative emotions, providing a balanced view of affective states within a specified time frame. Internal consistency was high for both positive affect ($\alpha = .922$) and negative affect ($\alpha = .914$).

In order to evaluate the coping mechanisms employed by teachers in response to victimization and occupational stress, the Brief COPE Inventory (Carver, 1997) was utilized. This validated instrument measures a wide range of coping responses across 14 subscales, each represented by two items rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4. The subscales include self-distraction, active coping, denial, substance use, use of emotional support, use of instrumental support, behavioral disengagement, venting, positive reframing, planning, humor, acceptance, religion, and self-blame. Together, these dimensions capture both adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies encompassing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to stress. In the present sample, most subscales demonstrated good to very good internal consistency. A small number of subscales showed lower coefficients; however, this may be attributable to the fact that Brief COPE dimensions comprise only two items, and short scales often yield lower Cronbach's α estimates, which does not necessarily reflect inadequate measurement quality.

To obtain a more comprehensive picture of teachers' coping strategies, the questionnaire included additional context-specific items reflecting behaviors particularly relevant to the educational setting. Based on these items, three supplementary coping subscales were created (nature-sports coping, seeking specialists' support, and self-distraction). These items assessed behaviors such as seeking psychological or medical assistance, joining self-help groups, searching for information online, contacting school administration or governmental institutions for support, engaging in physical activity or spending time in nature, and other self-regulatory or avoidant behaviors (e.g., excessive work, social withdrawal, or seeking solitude or social contact). These subscales were included to complement standardized instruments and improve ecological validity by capturing coping responses specific to teachers' occupational experiences. Internal consistency for the additional subscales ranged from $\alpha = .606$ to $\alpha = .766$ in the present sample.

Statistical analysis

The online questionnaire required participants to answer each item before submission; therefore, no missing data were present in the final dataset, and all completed questionnaires ($N = 1{,}044$) were included in the analyses.

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS (Version 29.0) and AMOS (Version 29.0). Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis, were calculated to examine the distributional characteristics of the study variables. Inspection of skewness and kurtosis indicated minor departures from normality; however, given the large sample size ($N = 1{,}044$) and the approximate continuity of the scale scores, Pearson's correlations were used to evaluate bivariate associations among teacher victimization, coping strategies, and psychological well-being.

To test the hypothesized structural relationships, structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed in AMOS using maximum likelihood (ML) estimation. Teacher victimization was specified as a second-order latent construct indicated by six first-order factors (verbal, social, physical, cyber, sexual, and property-related victimization). Coping strategies were modeled as a multidimensional construct including adaptive and maladaptive components. Psychological well-being was specified as a latent factor composed of flourishing, positive emotions, and negative emotions (reverse-coded).

Two structural models were estimated. Model 1 included the full set of coping indicators, whereas Model 2 incorporated only adaptive coping indicators to evaluate whether a more parsimonious representation improved model fit. Given the large sample size ($N = 1{,}044$), ML estimation was considered appropriate despite minor deviations from normality. Model fit was evaluated using multiple goodness-of-fit indices: chi-square (χ^2), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) with 90% confidence intervals, Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and Akaike Information Criterion (AIC). Following commonly recommended criteria, CFI and TLI values $\geq .90$ indicated acceptable fit ($\geq .95$ good fit), RMSEA values $\leq .08$ acceptable ($\leq .06$ good), and SRMR values $\leq .08$ acceptable. Competing models were compared by mentioned fit indices.

For all structural paths, unstandardized coefficients (B), standardized coefficients (β), standard errors (SE), critical ratios (CR), and *p*-values were reported. The proportion of explained variance (R^2) was calculated for each latent construct. Direct and indirect effects were estimated within the SEM framework to examine the mediating role of coping strategies. The statistical significance of indirect effects was evaluated using normal-theory standard errors and corresponding *z*-tests provided by AMOS. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$, and analyses followed recommended SEM practices (Kline, 2016; Rosseel, 2012).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations

All correlation analyses were conducted using the full sample ($N = 1{,}044$), as the dataset contained no missing values. Higher scores indicate more frequent victimization, greater coping use, or higher levels of well-being, depending on the scale. Descriptive analyses revealed that teachers, on average, reported low levels of victimization across six domains—physical, social, verbal, cyber, sexual, and property—indicating that severe or frequent aggression was relatively uncommon within the sample. Mean scores ranged from $M = 1.06$ to $M = 1.38$ across these indicators, suggesting that most teachers experienced such behaviors infrequently (see Table 1).

In terms of psychological well-being, participants demonstrated moderately high flourishing ($M = 6.19$, $SD = 0.81$), high positive emotion ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.67$), and low negative emotion ($M = 2.14$, $SD = 0.72$). These results indicate generally

positive emotional functioning and life satisfaction among teachers in the sample.

Regarding coping strategies, teachers showed moderate engagement across most coping dimensions, with the highest mean scores observed for active coping (M = 2.99), planning (M = 2.84), acceptance (M = 2.80), and self-distraction (M = 2.82). These findings suggest a preference for adaptive, problem-focused, and meaning-oriented coping approaches. In contrast, substance use (M = 1.27) and behavioral disengagement (M = 1.73) were the least frequently employed strategies, reflecting limited reliance on maladaptive coping mechanisms.

To explore relationships among teacher victimization, coping strategies, and psychological well-being, Pearson's correlations were conducted (see Table 2). Table 2 presents correlations between each form of teacher victimization and indicators of well-being and coping.

Victimization was negatively correlated with flourishing ($r = -.09$ to $-.15$, $p < .01$) and positive emotions ($r = -.09$ to $-.23$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher exposure to victimization was associated with lower psychological well-being and reduced positive affect. Conversely, victimization showed positive correlations with negative emotions ($r = .19$ to.33, $p < .001$), suggesting greater emotional distress among teachers experiencing more frequent or intense victimization. According to conventional guidelines (approximately $r = .10$ small, $r = .30$ moderate), associations between teacher victimization, flourishing and positive emotions were small, whereas the relationships between teacher victimization and negative emotions reached moderate magnitude. These findings indicate that victimization is reliably related to teachers' well-being, although the strength of the associations is modest.

Across coping variables, victimization showed consistent positive associations with maladaptive coping strategies, including self-blame ($r = .09$–$.18$), behavioral disengagement ($r = .09$–$.13$), substance use ($r = .11$–$.16$), and self-isolation ($r = .11$–$.22$) (all $p < .01$). Smaller positive associations were also observed with several adaptive coping responses, including active coping ($r = .08$–$.11$), planning ($r = .10$–$.18$), seeking professional or institutional help ($r = .13$–$.20$), and acceptance ($r = .10$–$.17$).

Finally, broader correlational patterns demonstrated that adaptive coping strategies were positively correlated with flourishing and positive emotions ($r = .20$–$.35$, $p < .001$) and negatively correlated with negative emotions ($r = -.15$ to $-.30$, $p < .001$). In contrast, maladaptive coping strategies showed the opposite pattern, being positively related to negative emotions and negatively related to indicators of well-being.

These findings suggest that increased exposure to victimization is associated with diminished psychological well-being, greater reliance on maladaptive coping strategies, and simultaneously higher engagement in adaptive coping strategies, which are positively correlated with flourishing and positive emotions and negatively correlated with negative emotions.

Hierarchical regression predicting flourishing

A hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to evaluate the predictive effects of teacher victimization and coping strategies on flourishing. In Model 1, the six types of teacher victimization were entered as predictors to assess their direct associations with flourishing. The model explained a small but statistically significant portion of variance in flourishing [$R^2 = .025$, $F(6, 1{,}037) = 4.47$, $p < .001$; see Table 3]. Among these predictors, verbal victimization emerged as the only significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.12$, $t = -2.19$, $p = .029$), indicating that teachers who more frequently experienced verbal aggression—such as ridicule or disrespect from students—reported lower levels of flourishing. None of the remaining victimization types (physical, social, cyber, sexual, or property) reached statistical significance (all ps > .19).

In Model 2, all 14 coping strategies from the Brief COPE were added to examine their incremental predictive contribution beyond victimization. The expanded model accounted for 12.0% of the total variance in flourishing ($R^2 = .120$, $\Delta R^2 = .095$, $p < .001$), representing a significant improvement in explanatory power. This increase indicates that coping strategies explained substantially more variance in flourishing than victimization variables alone. Additionally, after controlling for coping, verbal victimization remained a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.11$, $t = -2.03$, $p = .043$), confirming its negative association with well-being. All regression coefficients are presented in Table 4.

Among coping strategies presented in Model 2, several emerged as significant predictors. Self-blame ($\beta = -.16$, $t = -4.50$, $p < .001$), substance use ($\beta = -.08$, $t = -2.39$, $p = .017$), and behavioral disengagement ($\beta = -.11$, $t = -3.17$, $p = .002$) were associated with lower flourishing, underscoring their maladaptive nature. Conversely, religious coping ($\beta = .09$, $t = 2.87$, $p = .004$) and positive reframing ($\beta = .12$, $t = 2.74$, $p = .006$) predicted higher flourishing, suggesting that meaning-oriented and cognitively flexible coping enhanced well-being. None of the other coping strategies significantly contributed to the model (all ps > .05). These findings indicate that self-critical and avoidance-based coping behaviors undermine teachers' flourishing, whereas meaning-oriented strategies, including religious coping and positive reframing, were associated with higher well-being.

Structural equation model

To further investigate the structural relationships among teacher victimization, coping, and psychological well-being, structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted using AMOS (Version 29.0). Teacher victimization was specified as a second-order latent construct reflected by six first-order dimensions (physical, social, verbal, cyber, sexual, and property victimization). Coping was modeled as a latent factor encompassing both adaptive and maladaptive strategies, while psychological well-being was represented as a latent construct indicated by flourishing, positive emotion, and reverse-scored negative emotion.

Model 1, which incorporated the complete set of coping indicators, showed suboptimal model fit, as CFI and TLI were below recommended conventional cutoffs, although SRMR fell within the acceptable range {$\chi^2[227] = 2{,}739.82$, CMIN/df = 12.07, CFI = .78, TLI = .76, RMSEA = .103 [90% CI (.100–.106)], SRMR = .071; see Table 5}. Thus, the model should

TABLE 2 Pearson's correlations between teacher victimization types, coping strategies, and wellbeing indicators.

Variables	Physical TV		Social TV		Verbal TV		Cyber TV		Sexual TV		Property TV	
	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Flourishing	−.091**	.003	−.119**	.000	−.153**	.000	−.093**	.003	−.109**	.000	−.126**	.000
Positive emotions	−.128**	.000	−.220**	.000	−.228**	.000	−.088**	.005	−.177**	.000	−.151**	.000
Negative emotions	.208**	.000	.305**	.000	.325**	.000	.190**	.000	.245**	.000	.218**	.000
Self-blame	.088**	.004	.182**	.000	.158**	.000	.092**	.003	.119**	.000	.134**	.000
Substance use	.159**	.000	.108**	.000	.150**	.000	.159**	.000	.123**	.000	.160**	.000
Humor	−.005	.881	−.002	.957	−.020	.524	−.007	.822	.037	.229	.002	.954
Self-isolation	.114**	.000	.219**	.000	.190**	.000	.129**	.000	.176**	.000	.177**	.000
Religion	.122**	.000	.057	.063	.054	.080	.069*	.027	.078*	.011	.063*	.041
Nature sport	.034	.279	.066*	.033	.057	.067	.045	.149	.060	.052	.067*	.030
Specialists	.202**	.000	.147**	.000	.173**	.000	.165**	.000	.128**	.000	.162**	.000
Self-distraction	.053	.086	.126**	.000	.120**	.000	.052	.095	.103**	.001	.050	.108
Active coping	.080**	.009	.093**	.003	.107**	.001	.051	.102	.078*	.011	.054	.081
Denial	.060	.051	−.020	.512	−.040	.199	.025	.426	−.009	.779	.032	.303
Use of emotional support	.112**	.000	.104**	.001	.094**	.002	.071*	.022	.063*	.041	.079*	.011
Behavioral disengagement	.096**	.002	.130**	.000	.098**	.001	.126**	.000	.114**	.000	.135**	.000
Venting	.097**	.002	.122**	.000	.124**	.000	.058	.060	.109**	.000	.092**	.003
Instrumental support	.095**	.002	.102**	.001	.101**	.001	.037	.234	.078*	.011	.070*	.024
Positive reframing	.046	.139	.057	.066	.008	.784	.038	.219	.037	.236	.028	.359
Planning	.100**	.001	.181**	.000	.171**	.000	.062*	.044	.140**	.000	.099**	.001
Acceptance	.111**	.000	.181**	.000	.168**	.000	.096**	.002	.140**	.000	.124**	.000

Table 2 presents Pearson correlation coefficients (r) between each form of teacher victimization and coping and well-being variables. Columns represent victimization types and rows represent outcomes. TV, teacher victimization. Sig. (2-tailed) refers to the *p*-value testing whether the correlation differs from zero.

*$p < .05$.

**$p < .01$.

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TABLE 3 Summary of model 1 and model 2 fit indices for the flourishing regression model.

Fit index	Model 1	Model 2
R	.159	.346
R^2	.025	.120
Adjusted R^2	.020	.102
F	4.47***	6.95***
SE of estimate	.803	.769

***$p < .001$

TABLE 5 Global fit indices for SEM model 1 and model 2 predicting psychological wellbeing.

Fit index	Criterion	Model 1	Model 2
χ^2 (df)	–	2,739.82 (227)*	1,692.47 (132)*
CFI	≥.90	.783	.847
TLI	≥.90	.758	.823
RMSEA (90% CI)	<.08	.103 (.100–.106)	.106 (.102–.111)
AIC	lower = better	2,883.818	1,806.469

*$p < .001$.

TABLE 4 Hierarchical regression analyses predicting flourishing from victimization (model 1) and coping strategies (model 2).

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	*t*	Sig.
		B	Std. error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.568	.106		62.202	.000
	Physical TV	−.003	.124	−.001	−.023	.982
	Social TV	−.009	.060	−.007	−.148	.882
	Verbal TV	−.180	.082	−.122	−2.193	.029
	Cyber TV	.017	.124	.006	.137	.891
	Sexual TV	.026	.111	.011	.233	.816
	Property TV	−.154	.119	−.060	−1.291	.197
2	(Constant)	6.385	.144		44.362	.000
	Physical TV	−.063	.120	−.023	−.519	.604
	Social TV	.010	.058	.008	.165	.869
	Verbal TV	−.161	.079	−.109	−2.027	.043
	Cyber TV	.060	.120	.023	.503	.615
	Sexual TV	−.006	.108	−.002	−.052	.958
	Property TV	−.073	.115	−.029	−.641	.521
	Self-blame	−.163	.036	−.158	−4.495	.000
	Substance use	−.114	.048	−.079	−2.387	.017
	Humor	.020	.031	.023	.647	.517
	Religion	.077	.027	.092	2.874	.004
	Self-distraction	.011	.041	.012	.280	.779
	Active coping	.080	.042	.082	1.881	.060
	Denial	.000	.034	.000	.004	.997
	Use of emotional support	−.011	.045	−.012	−.245	.807
	Behavioral disengagement	−.124	.039	−.110	−3.173	.002
	Venting	.017	.047	.017	.370	.712
	Instrumental support	.020	.047	.023	.420	.675
	Positive reframing	.110	.040	.119	2.741	.006
	Planning	.009	.044	.010	.198	.843
	Acceptance	−.024	.045	−.025	−.523	.601

B, unstandardized coefficient; SE, standard error; β, standardized coefficient. Standardized coefficients allow comparison of the relative importance of predictors within the model. Significant predictors ($p < .05$) indicate variables that uniquely contribute to explaining variance in flourishing when other variables are held constant.

TABLE 6 Structural path estimates and factor loadings for the SEM model.

Path			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	*P*
Coping	<—	Victimization	.396	.085	4.635	***
Wellbeing	<—	Coping	.065	.023	2.805	.005
Wellbeing	<—	Victimization	−.434	.065	−6.641	***
Flourishing	<—	Wellbeing	1.000			
Positive emotions	<—	Wellbeing	1.543	.114	13.566	***
Negative emotions	<—	Wellbeing	−1.153	.074	−15.620	***
Property TV	<—	Victimization	1.000			
Sexual TV	<—	Victimization	1.205	.043	28.268	***
Cyber TV	<—	Victimization	.961	.038	25.500	***
Verbal TV	<—	Victimization	1.807	.066	27.230	***
Social TV	<—	Victimization	1.803	.079	22.706	***
Physical TV	<—	Victimization	.869	.036	24.077	***
Active coping	<—	Coping	1.000			
Self-distraction	<—	Coping	.909	.043	21.074	***
Humor	<—	Coping	.659	.048	13.611	***
Use of emotional support	<—	Coping	1.055	.047	22.451	***
Venting	<—	Coping	1.056	.042	25.002	***
Instrumental support	<—	Coping	1.200	.049	24.684	***
Positive reframing	<—	Coping	.990	.046	21.599	***
Planning	<—	Coping	1.162	.046	25.254	***
Acceptance	<—	Coping	1.083	.044	24.622	***

The upper portion of the table reports structural path coefficients describing relationships among the latent constructs (victimization, coping, and well-being). The lower portion reports factor loadings, indicating the strength with which each observed indicator reflects its latent construct. The column "Estimate" presents unstandardized coefficients, S.E. represents standard errors, and C.R. (critical ratio) corresponds to the z-value used to test statistical significance.

be interpreted cautiously and primarily as an exploratory representation of the relationships among victimization, coping, and well-being.

Detailed parameter estimates for both the structural relations among latent variables and the measurement loadings of observed indicators are presented in Table 6. The structural paths revealed that teacher victimization was negatively associated with psychological well-being ($\beta = -.25$, $p < .001$) and positively associated with coping ($\beta = .17$, $p < .001$), indicating that teachers reporting higher victimization also reported greater engagement in coping responses. The path from coping to well-being was positive but weak ($\beta = .07$, $p = .032$), producing a statistically significant but small indirect effect ($\beta = .012$), while the direct path from victimization to well-being remained substantially larger, indicating weak partial mediation.

Within the well-being construct, flourishing ($\beta = .52$) and positive emotions ($\beta = .96$) loaded positively and negative emotions ($\beta = -.67$) loaded negatively on the latent factor, indicating that the latent well-being variable appropriately captured a continuum from psychological distress to positive functioning, supporting the construct's internal coherence.

As illustrated in Figure 1, teacher victimization shows a direct association with psychological well-being, whereas the indirect pathway through coping is comparatively weaker. The figure indicates that coping contributes to the relationship between victimization and well-being, although the magnitude of this pathway is modest, supporting a pattern of partial mediation.

To improve model parsimony and reduce redundancy among coping indicators, a second model was estimated (see Figure 2). Model 2 retained only coping indicators with factor loadings greater than 0.45 in the initial SEM. By excluding weakly loading indicators, the model provided a more concise representation of the coping construct.

The revised model demonstrated improved fit relative to Model 1, $\chi^2(132) = 1{,}692.47$, CMIN/df = 12.82, CFI = .85, TLI = .82, RMSEA = .106 [90% CI (.102–.111)], SRMR = .059. Although CFI and TLI remained below recommended thresholds and RMSEA was elevated, SRMR fell within the acceptable range and overall fit improved compared to Model 1. The model is therefore best interpreted as an approximate representation of the relationships among victimization, coping, and psychological well-being.

The structural pathways were consistent with those observed in Model 1. Teacher victimization remained negatively associated with well-being ($\beta = -.25$, $p < .001$) and positively associated with coping ($\beta = .16$, $p < .001$), while coping showed a small positive association with well-being ($\beta = .10$, $p = .005$). The indirect effect ($\beta = .015$) again indicated partial mediation, suggesting that coping accounted for a limited portion of the association between victimization and well-being.

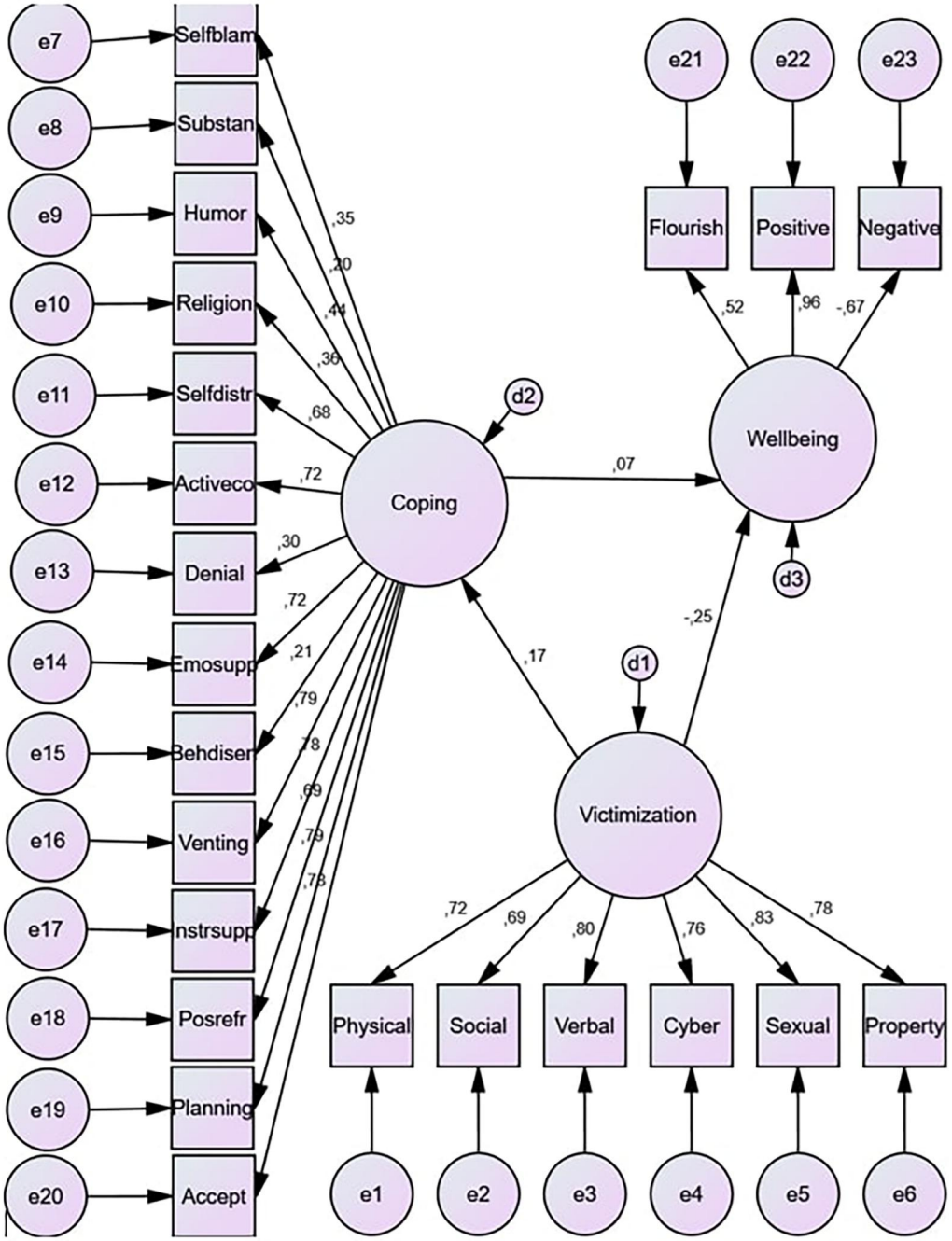


FIGURE 1
Structural equation model of associations among victimization, coping strategies, and psychological wellbeing. Teacher victimization was negatively associated with well-being and positively associated with coping, while coping showed a small positive association with well-being, indicating partial mediation. Flourish, flourishing; Positive, positive emotions; Negative, negative emotions; Physical, physical victimization; Social, social victimization; Verbal, verbal victimization; Cyber, cyber victimization; Sexual, sexual victimization; Property, property victimization; Activeco, active coping; Selfdistr, self-distraction; Humor, humor; Emosupp, emotional support; Venting, venting; Instrsupp, instrumental support; Posrefr, positive reframing; Planning, planning; Accept, acceptance; Selfbalm, self-blame; Substan, substance use; Religion, religion; Denial, denial; Behdisen, behavioral disengagement.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the overall pattern of associations remained similar to Model 1: victimization showed the strongest direct association with well-being, whereas the pathway through coping was smaller. In contrast to Model 1, Model 2 includes only coping indicators with stronger loadings, yielding a more parsimonious measurement structure while preserving the substantive relationships among the latent variables. A comparison of standardized path coefficients between the two models is presented in Table 7.

Taken together, the SEM analyses indicated meaningful associations among teacher victimization, coping, and psychological well-being. Victimization showed a consistent

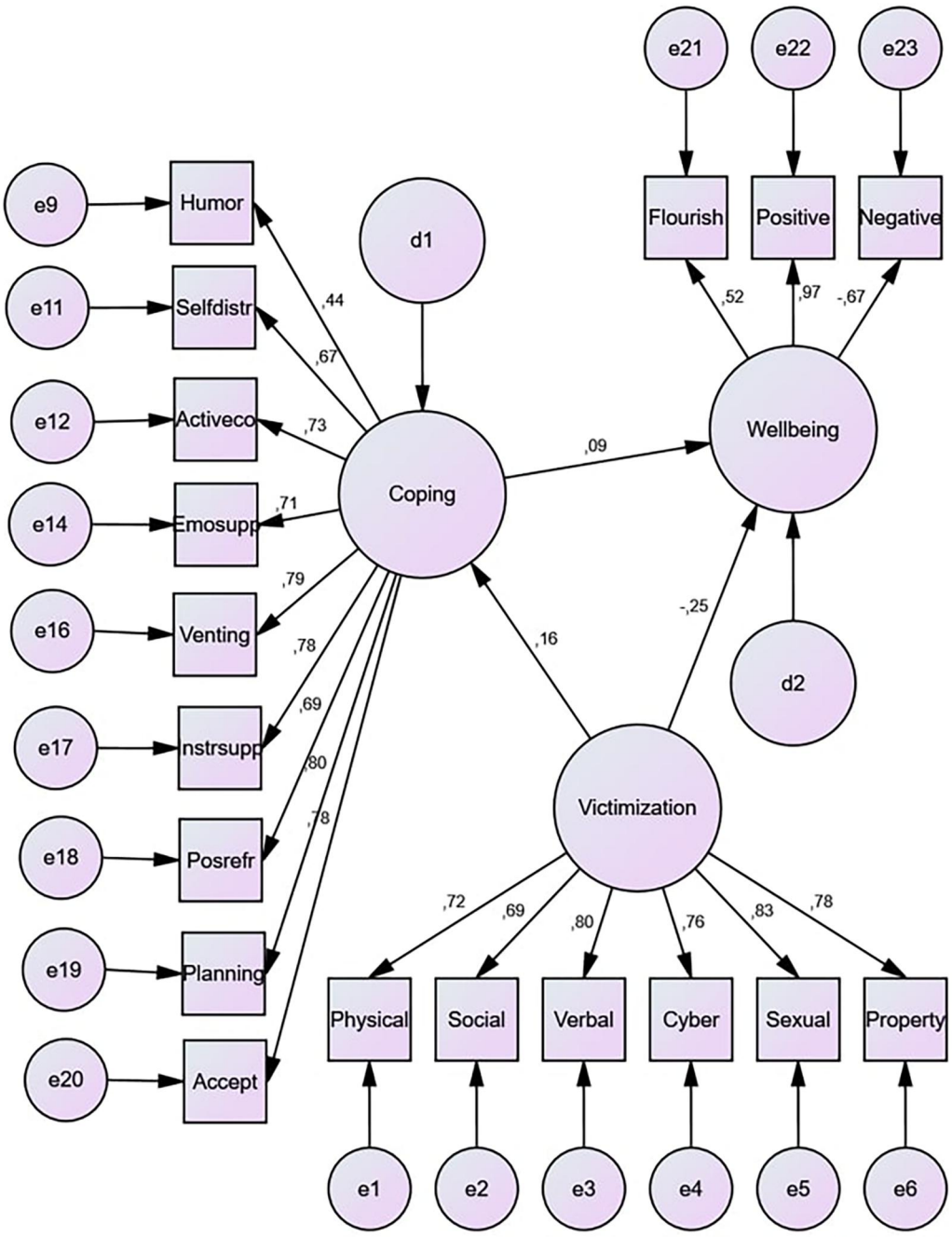


FIGURE 2
Improved structural equation model of associations among victimization, coping strategies, and psychological wellbeing. Figure 2 presents the second structural model, in which only coping indicators with stronger factor loadings from the initial SEM were retained. The structural pattern remains similar to Model 1, with victimization showing the strongest association with psychological well-being and coping accounting for a smaller, indirect portion of this relationshi. Flourish, flourishing; Positive, positive emotions; Negative, negative emotions; Physical, physical victimization; Social, social victimization; Verbal, verbal victimization; Cyber, cyber victimization; Sexual, sexual victimization; Property, property victimization; Activeco, active coping; Selfdistr, self-distraction; Humor, humor; Emosupp, emotional support; Venting, venting; Instrsupp, instrumental support; Posrefr, positive reframing; Planning, planning; Accept, acceptance.

negative association with well-being and was also related to greater coping engagement. Coping demonstrated a small but significant association with well-being, suggesting partial mediation. However, given the suboptimal model fit and the small magnitude of indirect effects, coping appears to account for only a limited portion of the relationship between victimization and well-being.

Mediation analyses

Following the SEM analyses, additional mediation analyses were conducted at a variable level to test indirect pathways through specific coping strategies. Direct and indirect effects were estimated using the delta method for standard errors and normal-theory confidence intervals under the maximum

likelihood (ML) estimator. The direct associations between each form of victimization and the three well-being indicators (flourishing, positive emotions, and negative emotions), along with the corresponding confidence intervals are summarized in Table 8. For flourishing, none of the victimization forms except verbal victimization reached significance: [$\beta = -0.198$, SE = 0.097, z = –2.048, $p = .041$, CI (–0.388, −0.009)].

For positive emotions, significant direct effects emerged for social victimization [$\beta = -0.130$, SE = 0.065, z = –2.004, $p = .045$, CI (–0.257, −0.003)], cyber victimization [$\beta = 0.439$, SE = 0.133, z = 3.291, $p < .001$, CI (0.177, 0.700)], and sexual victimization [$\beta = -0.245$, SE = 0.120, z = –2.046, $p = .041$, CI (–0.481, −0.010)]. For negative emotions, social victimization [$\beta = 0.125$, SE = 0.062, z = 2.033, $p = .042$, CI (0.005, 0.246)] and verbal victimization [$\beta = 0.284$, SE = 0.084, z = 3.384, $p < .001$, CI (0.120, 0.449)] were significant predictors. These variable-level results complement the SEM findings by identifying verbal and social victimization as the primary contributors to wellbeing variance components.

The mediation analysis further quantified indirect effects through specific coping strategies. Most indirect paths were nonsignificant, but a small number achieved significance at $p < .05$. For example, Physical victimization → Religion → Flourishing produced an indirect effect of $\beta = 0.044$, SE = 0.021, z = 2.130, $p = .033$, 95% CI [0.004, 0.085]. Social victimization → Self-blame → Flourishing had an indirect effect $\beta = -0.037$, SE = 0.014, z = –2.602, $p = .009$, CI [–0.064, −0.009]; Social victimization → Behavioral disengagement → Flourishing $\beta = -0.021$, SE = 0.010, z = –2.003, $p = .045$, CI [–0.041, −0.0004]. These small but statistically significant indirect associations indicate that some of the relationship between victimization and flourishing was statistically accounted for by specific coping strategies. All other indirect effects had p-values exceeding.05, confirming limited mediation through the tested coping strategies.

In summary, the mediation analyses indicated that verbal and social victimization were most consistently associated with lower

TABLE 7 Direct, indirect, and total standardized effects in the structural equation model.

Path	Effect type	Model 1 (β)	Model 2 (β)
Victimization → Wellbeing	Direct	–.253	–.254
	Indirect (via Coping)	.012	.015
	Total	–.241	–.239
Victimization → Flourishing	Direct	–	–
	Indirect via Wellbeing	–.1305	–.1310
	Indirect via Coping → Wellbeing → Flourishing	.0062	.0078
	Total	–.124	–.123
Coping → Wellbeing	Direct	.072	.095
Coping → Flourishing	Indirect via Wellbeing	.037	.049
Victimization → Positive emotions	Indirect via Wellbeing	–.231	–.231
Victimization → Negative emotions	Indirect via Wellbeing	.160	.160

TABLE 8 Direct effects of victimization forms on wellbeing outcomes in the variable-level mediation analysis.

Victimization type	Outcome	β	SE	z	p	95% CI
Physical	Flourishing	−0.077	0.147	−0.524	.600	[−0.365, 0.211]
	Positive emotions	n.s.	–	–	–	–
	Negative emotions	n.s.	–	–	–	–
Social	Flourishing	0.012	0.071	0.167	.868	[−0.127, 0.151]
	Positive emotions	−0.130	0.065	−2.004	.045	[−0.257, −0.003]
	Negative emotions	0.125	0.062	2.033	.042	[0.005, 0.246]
Verbal	Flourishing	−0.198	0.097	−2.048	.041	[−0.388, −0.009]
	Positive emotions	−0.228	–	–	–	–
	Negative emotions	0.284	0.084	3.384	<.001	[0.120, 0.449]
Cyber	Flourishing	0.074	0.146	0.508	.611	[−0.212, 0.360]
	Positive emotions	0.439	0.133	3.291	<.001	[0.177, 0.700]
	Negative emotions	n.s.	–	–	–	–
Sexual	Flourishing	−0.007	0.131	−0.053	.958	[−0.264, 0.251]
	Positive emotions	−0.245	0.120	−2.046	.041	[−0.481, −0.010]
	Negative emotions	n.s.	–	–	–	–
Property	Flourishing	−0.091	0.140	−0.648	.517	[−0.365, 0.183]
	Positive emotions	n.s.	–	–	–	–
	Negative emotions	n.s.	–	–	–	–

n.s., non significant.

well-being, particularly lower flourishing and higher negative emotions. Several indirect pathways through coping strategies, such as religious coping, self-blame, and behavioral disengagement, reached statistical significance, although their magnitudes were modest. Overall, the findings are consistent with partial mediation, suggesting that coping processes are related to the association between victimization and well-being, while a direct association between victimization and well-being remains predominant.

Discussion

The present study examined how Lithuanian teachers' experiences of victimization relate to their psychological well-being and the coping strategies they employ in professional environments. The model was partially supported, revealing that victimization negatively influences teachers' emotional functioning directly and indirectly through coping, although the mediation effects were modest. These findings contribute to the growing body of research addressing occupational victimization among teachers and demonstrate patterns that both align with international scholarship and extend stress–coping theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Importantly, the relatively small indirect effects indicate that coping may regulate emotional reactions to aggression but does not substantially reduce the overall psychological impact of victimization.

Consistent with the first hypothesis (H1), teachers who experienced more frequent victimization reported significantly poorer psychological well-being—including reduced flourishing and positive affect alongside heightened negative affect. Verbal victimization emerged as the most detrimental form, demonstrating the strongest associations with emotional distress. This aligns with consistent evidence identifying verbal aggression—such as ridicule, intimidation, insults, and disrespect—as the most prevalent and emotionally harmful form of teacher-directed violence (Dirzyte et al., 2024; McMahon et al., 2022; Moon et al., 2023; Reddy et al., 2024). Unlike physical attacks, which may be less common, verbal victimization often occurs in subtle, repetitive, and public ways that directly target teachers' dignity and professional identity. Such relational hostility may therefore undermine teachers' sense of competence and belonging, factors central to teacher motivation and psychological functioning (Yang et al., 2022). The prominence of verbal aggression in the present study further suggests that psychological forms of violence may have a stronger impact on teachers' well-being than the less common physical incidents, reinforcing the need to conceptualize teacher victimization primarily as a relational and professional threat rather than only a safety issue.

Past research similarly suggests that recurring verbal abuse contributes to a cycle in which emotional exhaustion increases while professional commitment erodes (Olivier et al., 2021). Teachers who experience persistent disrespect often report feeling devalued, unsupported, and ineffective, heightening the risk of burnout and decisions to leave the profession (McMahon et al., 2022; Moon and McCluskey, 2020). Other studies have documented broader psychological harm associated with teacher victimization, including depressive symptoms, anxiety, and stress-related somatic complaints (Ghadban et al., 2023; Moon et al., 2015). Together, these findings indicate that even when aggression does not result in physical injury, its psychological consequences can be substantial and may affect both personal well-being and professional functioning. This suggests that one possible mechanism linking victimization to well-being may involve the erosion of professional identity and perceived social status within the school environment.

Aligned with H2, higher levels of victimization were associated with more frequent use of maladaptive coping strategies such as self-blame, substance use, self-isolation, and behavioral disengagement. Although maladaptive strategies were overall less common in the sample, victimized teachers relied on them more than non-victimized peers—a pattern reported in prior studies of teacher stress responses (García et al., 2018; Herman et al., 2020; Savage and Woloshyn, 2022). These strategies typically reflect avoidance or internalization, offering short-term emotional relief while preventing resolution of the stressor and maintaining psychological strain (Chaaya et al., 2025; Spaan et al., 2023). At the same time, victimization showed weak positive associations with certain adaptive strategies, including religion-based coping and positive reframing, suggesting that teachers employ mixed coping profiles when confronted with aggression (Ghasemi et al., 2023; Qiu et al., 2025). This pattern is consistent with the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), which proposes that coping strategies depend on the appraisal of controllability and available resources. Thus, teachers may attempt constructive emotional regulation while simultaneously engaging in less effective responses under heightened distress.

Supporting H3, coping strategies significantly predicted teachers' well-being. Adaptive strategies—particularly positive reframing, active coping, planning, and religious engagement—corresponded with more positive emotions and flourishing, reflecting evidence that proactive coping supports resilience and perceived efficacy in stressful environments (Cho and Choi, 2024; Landy et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2014; Spaan et al., 2023). Emotion-focused strategies such as acceptance and positive reappraisal also contributed to psychological balance, consistent with findings that effective emotion regulation supports motivation and professional fulfillment in teaching contexts (Aldrup et al., 2024; Levy and Khoury-Kassabri, 2022; Qiu et al., 2025). Regular use of cognitive restructuring techniques has likewise been associated with improved mood and reduced depressive symptoms (Johnson et al., 2016; Stover et al., 2024). Conversely, self-blame, behavioral disengagement, and substance use were linked to negative emotional outcomes, confirming that avoidance-based and self-critical responses undermine teachers' psychological functioning (García et al., 2018; Savage and Woloshyn, 2022). These maladaptive patterns are particularly problematic in interpersonal school stress, where internalization of responsibility may provide temporary relief but ultimately intensifies distress (Herman et al., 2020; Yang, 2022). Notably, teachers reported using adaptive strategies more frequently than maladaptive ones, consistent with research showing that educators commonly rely on cognitive coping, self-monitoring, and social support to maintain functioning in demanding environments (Ghasemi, 2022; Nalla, 2022; Williams et al., 2023).

In line with H4, coping partially mediated the relationship between victimization and well-being. Although coping strategies were significantly associated with psychological outcomes, the indirect effects were small, while the direct detrimental effect of victimization remained substantial. This indicates that coping accounts for only part of the association between victimization and well-being rather than fully explaining it. This finding is theoretically important because many stress–coping models emphasize the buffering role of coping; however, the present results suggest that this buffering effect may be constrained in situations involving repeated interpersonal aggression. Teachers appear able to regulate some emotional reactions to hostile interactions, yet coping efforts provide only partial relief. This pattern resonates with prior research indicating that coping strategies alone cannot offset the psychological burden of chronic occupational aggression (Kollerová et al., 2023). Victimization likely influences well-being through additional processes beyond coping, including threats to professional identity, reduced perceived classroom control, and heightened vigilance toward student behavior, factors previously linked to teacher stress, burnout, and emotional strain (Moon and McCluskey, 2020; Olivier et al., 2021; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2021; Yang et al., 2022). Consequently, coping represents one mechanism within a broader set of pathways through which victimization affects teachers' psychological functioning.

Individual coping strategies may also have limited effectiveness when institutional support is insufficient. If teachers perceive their concerns as minimized or ignored by school leadership, they may experience reduced perceived control, weakening adaptive coping and increasing reliance on maladaptive responses. Prior research similarly indicates that teacher well-being depends strongly on supportive school climates, fair leadership, and effective intervention systems (De Cordova et al., 2019; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2021). Within the Lithuanian educational context, where formal reporting and intervention procedures may be inconsistently implemented across schools, this may further reduce the practical effectiveness of individual coping efforts. Thus, coping should be viewed as one component of a broader resilience framework within educational settings rather than a standalone protective factor.

Altogether, the findings indicate that although Lithuanian teachers demonstrate frequent use of adaptive coping, victimization remains a substantial threat to emotional well-being. Positive reframing and active coping appear to function as partial protective factors, whereas maladaptive responses amplify vulnerability. However, the predominance of the direct effects suggests that coping can alleviate—but not eliminate—the harmful consequences of victimization. Consequently, improving teacher well-being requires not only strengthening individual coping skills but also addressing the school environment and institutional responses to aggression.

Practical implications

The findings of this study have several implications for educational practice, teacher preparation, and policy development. First, the results indicate that adaptive coping strategies—particularly active coping, positive reframing, and seeking support—are associated with higher psychological well-being, whereas maladaptive strategies such as self-blame, disengagement, and substance use are linked to poorer outcomes. Therefore, teacher professional development programs should include structured training focused on adaptive coping skills. Workshops and in-service training could incorporate stress management, emotional regulation, and cognitive reappraisal techniques, helping teachers respond constructively to experiences of aggression and interpersonal conflict in school environments.

However, the present findings also demonstrate that coping alone does not eliminate the negative impact of victimization on well-being. This suggests that interventions aimed solely at strengthening individual resilience are insufficient. Schools must complement individual-level support with organizational measures. Educational institutions should implement clear anti-violence and anti-bullying procedures, provide accessible reporting mechanisms, and ensure administrative follow-up when incidents occur. School leadership plays a critical role in creating a supportive climate; training for principals and administrators should therefore emphasize fair conflict resolution, teacher protection, and consistent responses to student and parent aggression.

The results also highlight the importance of school-based mental health support. Access to school psychologists, counseling services, and peer-support groups may help teachers process stressful experiences and reduce reliance on maladaptive coping. Structured collegial support systems, mentoring programs, and professional supervision may further strengthen teachers' sense of safety and professional efficacy.

At the level of teacher education, coping with workplace aggression should be integrated into preservice teacher training curricula. Future teachers should be prepared not only for classroom instruction but also for managing difficult interactions with students, parents, and colleagues. Training modules could include conflict management, communication strategies, and emotional self-regulation skills relevant to real school situations.

Finally, the findings carry implications for national education policy. Because teacher victimization represents an occupational risk factor affecting retention, well-being, and instructional quality, educational authorities should recognize teacher safety as a workplace health issue. National guidelines addressing violence against educators, systematic monitoring of incidents, and preventive school climate initiatives may reduce victimization and support sustainable teaching careers.

Limitations and future directions

Although the present study provides a comprehensive picture of how teacher victimization and coping strategies relate to psychological well-being, several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. First, the study relied on a cross-sectional design, which precludes any firm conclusions about causality. While the structural and mediation models are grounded in theory suggesting that victimization precedes coping and well-being outcomes, it is also plausible

that teachers with lower well-being perceive victimization more acutely or report different coping patterns over time. Longitudinal designs are needed to clarify the temporal ordering of victimization, coping, and psychological adjustment and to distinguish short-term from long-term adaptation processes. In addition, all variables were assessed using self-report questionnaires administered in a single online survey, raising the possibility of common-method bias, social desirability effects, and recall biases. Teachers may underreport certain coping strategies, such as substance use and avoidance or victimization experiences perceived as stigmatizing and overreport socially desirable coping. Future studies would benefit from incorporating multi-informant data as reports from colleagues, school leaders, or counselors and, where feasible, objective indicators, such as formal incident reports, to validate self-reported victimization and well-being.

Furthermore, although the sample was large and diverse in terms of experience, school type, and geographical location, it consisted of Lithuanian teachers only, with a predominance of women and highly experienced educators, which limits the generalizability of the findings to other cultural, educational, and occupational contexts. Norms surrounding aggression toward teachers, help-seeking, and coping—particularly religious coping and the use of professional support—may vary across countries and educational systems. Comparative cross-cultural research is therefore needed to examine whether the same coping strategies play adaptive or maladaptive roles in different sociocultural environments and whether patterns observed here replicate among male teachers, early-career teachers, or educators working in other regions.

Additional limitations relate to measurement and modeling choices. Although victimization and well-being were modeled as latent constructs, coping was treated as a broad multidimensional factor and then reduced to a subset of key strategies in the second SEM model. This approach allowed the identification of statistically robust indicators but may oversimplify the complexity of coping, as some strategies can be adaptive or maladaptive depending on context, timing, and intensity. Moreover, the overall fit of the SEM models, particularly the elevated RMSEA values, suggests that the proposed structure does not capture all relevant nuances in the data. Alternative modeling strategies—such as person-centered approaches (e.g., latent profile analysis of coping patterns), bifactor models, or multilevel models accounting for school-level influences—could provide a more nuanced understanding of how coping operates in relation to victimization. In addition, the effect sizes for mediation were modest: although coping partially mediated the relationship between victimization and well-being, the indirect effects were small and the direct effects of victimization remained substantial. Variable-level mediation analyses also identified only a few statistically significant indirect paths of limited magnitude. This suggests that coping, at least as measured in this study, explains only a portion of how victimization influences teachers' flourishing and emotional states. Other processes—such as perceived school climate, leadership support, emotion regulation skills, or personal resources like optimism and self-compassion—were not assessed and may explain further variance. The study also did not explicitly assess potential moderators that might shape the impact of victimization or the effectiveness of coping; for example, the same strategy may function differently depending on the availability of genuine support, institutional responsiveness, or the severity and chronicity of victimization. Without modeling these contextual and individual differences, the findings necessarily reflect average trends that may not fully represent subgroups of teachers with particularly high risk or resilience.

Despite these limitations, the findings suggest several important directions for future research. Longitudinal and prospective designs are needed to examine how victimization experiences develop over time, how coping patterns emerge or change, and which strategies are associated with sustained well-being vs. burnout, disengagement, or withdrawal from the profession. Intervention studies could test whether programs that strengthen adaptive coping and reduce self-blame or behavioral disengagement lead to measurable improvements in teachers' psychological well-being and functioning. Future research should also incorporate multi-informant and mixed-method approaches to reduce self-report bias; data from students, colleagues, or school administrators, as well as objective school incident records, could provide complementary perspectives, while qualitative interviews or diary methods may help capture how teachers interpret victimization and select coping responses in everyday school contexts. Person-centered approaches identifying coping profiles and incorporating contextual variables—such as school leadership style, collegial climate, student disciplinary policies, and access to psychological support—would further clarify how the school environment shapes coping processes and well-being. Cross-cultural replication across educational systems and inclusion of early-career teachers and educators from different educational levels would strengthen generalizability.

In sum, while the present study advances understanding of how teachers cope with victimization and how these responses relate to psychological well-being, it also indicates that coping represents only one component of a broader and multifaceted system, and future research integrating longitudinal designs, multi-informant data, mixed methodologies, and cross-cultural samples is essential for developing comprehensive prevention and intervention efforts supporting teachers' mental health and professional engagement.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that teacher victimization—across verbal, social, cyber, physical, sexual, property-related, and parent-perpetrated forms—is significantly associated with diminished psychological well-being. Educators who reported more frequent exposure to aggression exhibited lower flourishing, fewer positive emotions, and higher negative emotions, indicating a substantial emotional burden arising from hostile interactions within the school environment. Verbal and social victimization emerged as the most consistently detrimental forms, underscoring the particular impact of relational and psychologically intrusive aggression on teacher well-being.

Coping strategies were systematically related to both victimization and well-being. Teachers experiencing higher levels of victimization reported greater reliance on maladaptive coping responses, including self-blame, behavioral disengagement, and substance use, all of which were associated with poorer psychological functioning. In contrast, adaptive and meaning-oriented coping strategies—particularly positive reframing and religious coping—were linked to higher well-being, suggesting that cognitive and interpretive processes play an important role in teachers' emotional adjustment to stressful experiences.

Although coping functioned as a mediating mechanism between victimization and well-being the proportion of the association accounted for by coping strategies was limited. The direct relationship between victimization and teachers' psychological functioning remained substantial. These findings suggest that coping processes, while relevant, may be insufficient on their own to attenuate the emotional consequences of exposure to aggression in school settings.

Overall, the results highlight the pervasive impact of victimization on educators' mental health and emphasize the importance of understanding how teachers respond to these experiences. While strengthening adaptive coping and reducing maladaptive responses may provide some benefit, meaningful improvement in teacher well-being is likely to require organizational and systemic interventions aimed at reducing aggression and fostering safer, more supportive school environments.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

Ethics statement

Ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Committee for Educational Research of the Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work. The approval was issued at the committee meeting held on February 21, 2025 [Protocol No. 10-79 (2.25 E-403)]. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

RB: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Resources, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. AD: Conceptualization, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Software, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. NL: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. VI: Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing. VJ: Conceptualization, Data curation, Software, Writing – review & editing. OM: Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing. JP: Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing. RP: Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing. AR: Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing. DP: Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing. JS: Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared that this work was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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