

## Article

# Coping Strategies for Stress Used by People Working in Managerial Positions in Schools and Educational Establishments during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract:** Although the ability to deal with stress is one of the key competences of people working in managerial positions in schools and educational establishments, principals in this area are very poorly diagnosed. The aim of this study was to consider the coping strategies used by headmasters and deputy headmasters of schools and educational establishments during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose, Mini-COPE was used. The respondents ( $N = 159$ ) obtained a higher mean for “active coping”, “planning”, “positive reframing”, “acceptance”, “use of instrumental support”, “venting”, and “problem-focused strategies” than the normative value. Compared to deputy headmasters, headmasters obtained higher mean results for “planning” and “religion”, and lower results for “behavioral disengagement”. Respondents with longer job seniority in a managerial position, obtained a higher mean for “use of instrumental support” and lower for “religion”. Compared to respondents employed in private schools, people in the public education sector are more likely to use “behavioral disengagement” and less their “sense of humor”. The respondents working in primary schools scored higher on average for “use of instrumental support” and “problem-focused strategies”. It would be advisable to compare the results with the teachers and the persons holding managerial positions in institutions and organizations not related to education.

**Keywords:** stress; COVID-19; headmaster; deputy headmaster; school; education; manager



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## 1. Introduction

Stress is one of the most common problems of the modern world, viewed as a disease of the century [1]. It is also observed that occupational stress is a very frequent issue among employees and its detrimental impacts on human wellbeing are increasing rapidly nowadays as compared to previous decades [2]. In Europe, work stress problems rank second after musculoskeletal disorders [3]. It is indicated that occupational stress leads to absenteeism, low job satisfaction, decreased work productivity and quality decline, retirement intentions, interpersonal difficulties, poor organizational performance and illnesses such as depression, insomnia, and heart disease [4,5]. Clipa [6] showed that Romanian teachers experience high levels of stress, almost half of them being tempted to give up this profession. According to a recent report by the Education Support in Partnership (ESP) [7], 78% of all educational specialists experience behavioral, psychological, or physical symptoms due to work. Senior leaders reported the highest levels of stress in 2019 (84%) compared to 80% in 2018 and 75% in 2017 [7]. Furthermore, 57% of education staff admitted that they had considered leaving the educational sector in the last two years [7]. The results of the survey are not surprising, as numerous authors have identified as many as a dozen stressful areas in the teaching profession, especially for people in managerial positions in schools and educational establishments [8–10]. The findings revealed that heads of schools were occupationally stressed in their workplace and that the factors most associated with causing occupational stress were poor compensation, work overload, lack

of effective advancement and promotion policy, poor implementation of education policy, lack of basic facilities, political interference, and under-participation [5]. Furthermore, the stress experienced by a teacher or a headmaster goes far beyond the individual and affects other members of the educational community who are in close contact with this person. In addition, a recent study found differences in a biological indicator of stress (salivary cortisol) in elementary school students in classrooms with teachers who reported higher symptoms of burnout [11]. Schonert-Reichl [12] indicate that teachers who are not coping well may be less effective in modeling important social emotional competencies for the students in their classrooms. Likewise, when teacher coping is low, they may not be able to provide important relational qualities or effectively structure their classrooms in ways that young people need for healthy development. Teacher stress can also interfere with teacher–parent relationships. Teacher perceptions of parents can have a major influence on parent involvement in education [13]. Additionally, a separate study found that teachers who reported higher stress and burnout with low coping had students with higher levels of disruptive behaviors and lower academic achievements [13].

There is no doubt that the recent pandemic constituted an acute, large-scale, and uncontrollable stressor with a long-term impact [14,15]. For example, compared to the stress levels before the previous SARS epidemic, the levels of perceived stress during the SARS [16] and COVID-19 [17–20] pandemics profoundly increased. Kar et al. [21] note that there are various factors that contributed to this: a lack of effective treatment and preventive methods, a large number of deaths in various countries, including those with excellent health services, the vulnerability of health care workers, and massive impacts on economies are some of them. The authors mentioned above add that mental health problems may continue to linger as the pandemic progresses and secondary stress from bereavements and economic hardships builds up. Kar et al. [21] suggest that there may be more varied issues such as increased substance use and suicides. Recently, numerous studies, mostly using questionnaires, have been developed to identify possible relationships between psychosocial, psychological, and behavioral changes [22,23]. There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic is a major problem affecting the mental health of millions of people, including teachers and people working in managerial positions in schools and educational establishments. The extreme conditions caused by the coronavirus pandemic resulted in unprecedented actions in the area of education: many schools around the world have been temporarily closed and teachers had to teach their students and pupils from home. Headmasters are expected to introduce ready-made solutions and provide teachers, parents and students all kinds of support. Principals have an active and critically influential role in most of the problems related to the needs of education personnel, teachers, and students in the school. The headmaster has a responsibility to continue education through way of implementing a comprehensive level of school administration [5,24–27]. In addition, in the COVID-19 pandemic, principals are responsible through the implementation of management and leadership functions, ensuring students' quality of learning at home [28]. There is no doubt that understanding how different coping styles can be effective for mitigating poor mental health enables better, more-tailored psychological support.

It might seem that, due to the social importance of the problem and the potential negative impact of a stressed and burned-out headmaster on the work of a school or educational establishment, the issues of coping with stress will often be addressed by researchers. It turns out that this is not the case. Teachers are one of the most-researched professional groups in terms of stress and burnout [6,11,13,29–37]. Unfortunately, although occupational stress is given due importance, and it is emphasized simultaneously that the ability to cope with stress is one of the key competencies of those in managerial positions, in educational institutions, headmasters are very poorly researched in this regard. Bridging this gap in research is undoubtedly the direct inspiration for the authors' analysis. In addition, it is indicated that understanding psychosocial responses, including beneficial coping strategies, are crucial for optimally managing the current COVID-19 situation, as well as developing mental health response plans for future pandemics [14]. It was assumed

that the findings of our study would present important practical implications for improving the mental health and well-being of headmasters and deputy headmasters.

The aim of this study was to consider the coping strategies used by people working in managerial positions in schools and educational establishments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Analyses were made regarding gender, job seniority in a managerial position, function held, and the kind and type of educational establishment where the respondent was employed. The following research questions were formulated:

1. Are there statistically significant differences between the respondents' scores and the normative value?
2. Does the use of particular coping strategies depend on the position held in the school or educational establishment?
3. Does job seniority in a managerial position in an educational establishment determine the results obtained by the respondents?
4. Does the use of individual coping strategies depend on the gender, kind or type of school or educational establishment where the respondent was employed?
5. In this paper, an exploratory rather than a verification variant of the research model was used.

## 2. Material and Methods

### 2.1. Participants

The survey was conducted electronically from November to December 2020. Teachers were recruited for the study by advertising the survey on homepages of associations of different special educational needs and social networks (e.g., Facebook). The respondents were headmasters and deputy headmasters of both sexes, employed in kindergartens, combined primary school and kindergarten units, and primary and secondary schools. The respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and electronically gave her/his voluntary informed consent to participate in the study and for the research results to be published in a scientific journal. Some questionnaires were not fully completed, and thus were excluded from further analysis. With the above criteria and conditions of participation in the study and the lack of complete documentation, the results of 159 respondents were used in the final analysis. Based on the data obtained from the Polish Educational Information System, it was found out that about 45,721 people were working in managerial positions in schools and educational establishments. Therefore, it was calculated (<http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html> (accessed on 12 December 2021)) that 381 was the recommended size for the study. At the same time, it turned out that for the sample of 159 respondents, the margin of error was 7.76%. It should be added that, in the case of 219 people participating in their own research, a confidence level above 79.3% was obtained. Among the respondents, women constituted the vast majority ( $N = 151$ ), i.e., 94.97% of the total sample with a mean age of 47.27 years ( $SD = 6.98$ ); male respondents ( $N = 8$ ) accounted for 5.03% of the study population, with a mean age of 40.25 years ( $SD = 6.52$ ). Of the total respondents, 90 were headmasters, and 82 had at least 5 years of job seniority in a managerial position. Of the total sample, the vast majority, i.e.,  $N = 142$ , were employed in public schools or educational establishments. There were 21 respondents working in kindergartens, 18 respondents working in combined primary school and kindergarten units, 34 respondents in secondary schools, and the remaining respondents (86) worked in primary schools. Their mean job seniority in a managerial position was 7.51 years ( $SD = 6.70$ ). During the analyses, the respondents were divided into two groups in relation to the above independent variable, i.e., into those with at least 5 years of job seniority as a headmaster or deputy headmaster in a school or educational establishment and those with shorter job seniority in managerial positions.

### 2.2. Measures

A methodology of a diagnostic survey with a questionnaire technique was employed in the study. A standardized research tool was used, i.e., Mini-COPE (Coping Orienta-

tion to Problems Experienced) by Carver [38], in a Polish adaptation by Ogińska-Bulik and Juczyński [39].

The tool consists of 28 statements. Respondents indicate the extent to which they agree with each statement using a 4-point scale where 0 means “I almost never do that”, 1 means “I rarely do that”, 2 means “I often do that”, and 3 means “I almost always do that”. The questionnaire was used to measure 14 coping strategies, which included active coping, planning, using instrumental support, using emotional support, self-blaming, turning to religion, positive reframing, venting, acceptance, denial, self-distraction, behavioral disengagement, substance use, and sense of humor. Each of the 14 identified strategies was assessed separately using the weighted average, i.e., adding together the points scored by the respondent and then dividing the obtained number by 2, as there were 2 diagnostic questions per strategy. The duration of the test was approximately 10 min. Based on the factor analysis and reliability analysis, as well as publication, individual dependent variables of the questionnaire were assigned to one of the three coping strategies distinguished by Endler and Parker [40]. Problem-focused strategies included “planning”, “use of instrumental support”, “active coping”, and “positive reframing”. Five variables were assigned to emotion-focused strategies: “use of emotional support”, “venting”, “self-blaming”, “religion”, and “denial”. Avoidance-focused strategies, on the other hand, included “self-distraction”, “acceptance”, “alcohol use”, “sense of humor”, and “behavioral disengagement”.

The questionnaire also included a respondent data section with data on age, gender, job seniority in a managerial position, and the kind and type of school or educational establishment where the respondent was employed.

### 2.3. Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistics for the entire sample, and by gender, job seniority in a managerial position, and kind and type of school or educational establishment in which the respondent was employed, were used to conduct basic analyses. Mean (*M*), standard deviation (*SD*), median (*Me*), mode (*Mo*), coefficient of variation (*V*), and skewness (*As*) were calculated. The measure of concentration used in the study was the kurtosis index (*Ku*). The normality of the distributions of the variables was verified with the Shapiro–Wilk *W* test, Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, and Lilliefors test. Levene’s test was used to verify the homogeneity of variance. The tool reliability was assessed based on Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. For the whole sample, Cronbach’s alpha for 28 items was 0.79. Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  coefficients for subscales were acceptable, ranging from 0.72 for “Problem-focused coping”, 0.67 for “Emotion-focused coping” to 0.62 for “Avoidant coping”. Factor analysis using the principal component method (with orthogonal Varimax rotation) was used to confirm the three coping strategies distinguished by Endler and Parker [40]. The obtained results are presented in Table 1.

One-way analysis of variance was used to verify the significance of differences between the variables studied. A multivariate ANOVA was used only when considering job seniority in a managerial position. Two types of post hoc tests were chosen, i.e., Games-Howell test and Dunnett’s test. A significance test (“difference between two means”), available in the Statistica program, was applied to compare the obtained results with the normative values developed by Ogińska-Bulik and Juczyński [39]. For each of the above tests, the significance level was assumed at  $p < 0.05$ . Microsoft Office Excel 2010 and Statistica w.13 by StatSoft were used for analysis, whereas IBM SPSS Statistics 27 was used for post hoc testing. The effect size was calculated in each case, where statistically significant differences were found between the variables studied. Hedges’ *g* was used for results obtained using the “difference between two means” test. The effect size was assumed small when its value ranged between 0.2 and 0.49, moderate between 0.5 and 0.79, and large above 0.79 [41]. A calculator available at <https://www.socscistatistics.com/effectsize/default3.aspx> (accessed on 12 December 2021) was used to calculate Hedges’ *g*. Furthermore, eta-squared was calculated for univariate and multivariate analysis of variance. The effect size was assumed

to be small when the value of  $\eta^2$  was between 0.01 and 0.05, medium between 0.06 and 0.13, and large above 0.14 [42]. Eta-squared was calculated using the IBM SPSS Statistics 27 program.

**Table 1.** Factor analysis.

Tested Coping Strategies	Problem-Focused Coping	Emotion-Focused Coping	Avoidant Coping
Active coping	0.55	0.02	−0.36
Planning	0.81	0.06	−0.04
Use of instrumental support	0.57	0.47	0.01
Use of emotional support	0.43	0.52	0.07
Self-blame	−0.21	0.43	−0.34
Religion	0.21	0.05	0.21
Positive reframing	0.50	−0.11	0.62
Venting	−0.12	0.68	0.12
Acceptance	0.72	−0.07	0.25
Denial	−0.43	0.46	0.20
Self-distraction	0.07	0.57	−0.23
Behavioral disengagement	−0.65	0.35	−0.06
Substance use	−0.24	0.48	−0.13
Sense of humor	−0.02	0.05	0.78

### 3. Results

In the first step of the analyses, the results obtained by the respondents were compared with the normative values developed by Ogińska-Bulik and Juczyński [39] (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Comparison of the author's research results with the normative values.

Tested Variable	Own Research N = 159		Normative Value N = 590		p Value	Hedges' g Value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Active coping	2.07	0.69	1.87	0.79	0.004	0.26
Planning	2.24	0.55	1.89	0.79	<0.001	0.47
Use of instrumental support	1.89	0.67	1.67	0.77	0.001	0.29
Use of emotional support	1.97	0.64	1.78	0.77	0.004	0.26
Self-blame	0.93	0.55	0.82	0.78	0.10	
Religion	0.95	0.96	0.85	0.85	0.20	
Positive reframing	1.76	0.69	1.66	0.91	0.20	
Venting	1.75	0.65	1.56	0.93	0.02	0.22
Acceptance	1.38	0.70	1.34	0.84	0.58	
Denial	0.69	0.62	0.63	0.71	0.33	
Self-distraction	1.30	0.57	1.01	0.69	<0.001	0.57
Behavioral disengagement	0.36	0.65	0.37	0.65	0.86	
Substance use	0.54	0.55	0.58	0.60	0.45	
Sense of humor	1.11	0.66	1.20	0.76	0.17	
Problem-focused coping	7.96	1.71	6.99	3.28	<0.001	0.32
Emotion-focused coping	5.81	1.81	5.35	3.92	0.15	
Avoidant coping	5.18	1.41	4.89	3.64	0.33	



It turned out that headmasters and deputy headmasters obtained a statistically significant higher mean for “active coping” ( $p = 0.004$ ), “planning” ( $p < 0.001$ ), “positive reframing” ( $p = 0.001$ ), “acceptance” ( $p = 0.004$ ), “use of instrumental support” ( $p = 0.02$ ), “venting” ( $p < 0.001$ ), and “problem-focused strategies” ( $p < 0.001$ ). A moderate effect size was reported for the variable of venting. Hedges’  $g$  value was 0.57. In other cases, the effect size was small.

Analyses were also conducted taking into account the managerial positions occupied by the respondents in schools or educational establishments (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Comparison of results between headmasters and deputy headmasters.

Tested Variable	Headmasters		Deputy Headmasters		$F$	$p$ Value	$\eta^2$
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$			
Active coping	2.11	0.65	2.02	0.73	0.58	0.45	0.02
Planning	2.32	0.54	2.14	0.56	3.83	0.05	
Use of instrumental support	1.81	0.68	1.67	0.59	1.77	0.19	
Use of emotional support	1.81	0.76	1.71	0.58	0.75	0.39	
Self-blame	1.07	0.66	1.16	0.66	0.68	0.41	0.03
Religion	1.09	0.94	0.76	0.95	4.85	0.03	
Positive reframing	1.88	0.68	1.91	0.67	0.04	0.84	
Venting	1.27	0.63	1.33	0.48	0.45	0.51	
Acceptance	2.04	0.56	1.87	0.73	2.92	0.09	0.05
Denial	0.68	0.59	0.70	0.65	0.03	0.86	
Self-distraction	1.37	0.77	1.39	0.61	0.05	0.83	
Behavioral disengagement	0.43	0.46	0.68	0.62	8.35	0.004	
Substance use	0.33	0.64	0.41	0.67	0.48	0.49	
Sense of humor	0.90	0.58	0.96	0.52	0.52	0.47	
Problem-focused coping	8.12	1.64	7.75	1.78	1.84	0.18	
Emotion-focused coping	5.92	1.88	5.66	1.71	0.82	0.37	
Avoidant coping	5.08	1.40	5.31	1.41	1.08	0.30	

Compared to deputy headmasters, headmasters obtained statistically significantly higher mean for two variables, i.e., “planning” ( $p = 0.05$ ) and “religion” ( $p = 0.03$ ), while at the same time, they declared that they were less likely to use “behavioral disengagement” ( $p = 0.004$ ) in stressful situations. The eta-squared value indicates that for the latter coping strategy, the effect size was moderate. In contrast, in the other two cases, it was small.

Further analyses focused on job seniority in a managerial position at a school or educational establishment (Table 4).

It was noted that those who had worked in managerial positions for less than 5 years, obtained a statistically significantly higher mean in relation to the strategy of “use of instrumental support” ( $p = 0.05$ ) and lower in relation to “religion” ( $p = 0.002$ ). For the strategy involving “use of instrumental support”, the eta-squared value was small ( $\eta^2 = 0.03$ ). A medium effect size ( $\eta^2 = 0.06$ ) was observed for “religion”.

Then, the kind of school/educational establishment where the respondent was employed was taken into account (Table 5).

**Table 4.** Comparison of results by job seniority in a managerial position.

Tested Variable	More than 5 Years of Experience		Less than 5 Years of Experience		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i> Value	$\eta^2$
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Active coping	2.11	0.66	2.03	0.72	0.59	0.44	0.03
Planning	2.24	0.55	2.25	0.56	0.01	0.92	
Use of instrumental support	1.65	0.66	1.86	0.62	4.06	0.05	
Use of emotional support	1.74	0.68	1.79	0.70	0.15	0.70	
Self-blame	1.02	0.71	1.20	0.59	2.89	0.09	0.06
Religion	1.17	1.04	0.71	0.80	9.49	0.002	
Positive reframing	1.90	0.71	1.89	0.63	0.00	0.95	
Venting	1.30	0.61	1.29	0.53	0.02	0.89	
Acceptance	1.92	0.62	2.02	0.67	0.94	0.33	
Denial	0.71	0.62	0.66	0.61	0.35	0.56	
Self-distraction	1.40	0.73	1.36	0.67	0.12	0.73	
Behavioral disengagement	0.51	0.55	0.58	0.54	0.68	0.41	
Substance use	0.35	0.67	0.38	0.63	0.12	0.73	
Sense of humor	0.88	0.59	0.97	0.51	1.05	0.31	
Problem-focused coping	7.90	1.65	8.02	1.78	0.21	0.65	
Emotion-focused coping	5.96	1.99	5.65	1.59	1.15	0.29	
Avoidant coping	5.05	1.46	5.31	1.35	1.33	0.25	

**Table 5.** Comparison of results by the kind of school/educational establishment where the respondent was employed.

Tested Variable	Public School		Private School		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i> Value	$\eta^2$
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Active coping	2.04	0.68	2.35	0.68	3.31	0.07	
Planning	2.22	0.54	2.44	0.63	2.48	0.12	
Use of instrumental support	1.74	0.64	1.82	0.73	0.24	0.63	
Use of emotional support	1.76	0.68	1.82	0.77	0.14	0.71	
Self-blame	1.13	0.66	0.97	0.65	0.85	0.36	
Religion	0.95	0.95	0.97	1.07	0.01	0.92	
Positive reframing	1.91	0.68	1.76	0.64	0.69	0.41	
Venting	1.32	0.57	1.15	0.55	1.35	0.25	
Acceptance	1.94	0.63	2.24	0.71	3.32	0.07	
Denial	0.69	0.62	0.65	0.58	0.07	0.79	
Self-distraction	1.38	0.70	1.32	0.71	0.11	0.74	
Behavioral disengagement	0.58	0.56	0.24	0.36	6.11	0.01	
Substance use	0.38	0.66	0.26	0.62	0.45	0.50	0.02
Sense of humor	0.90	0.54	1.18	0.58	3.92	0.05	
Problem-focused coping	7.90	1.68	8.38	1.92	1.19	0.28	
Emotion-focused coping	5.84	1.81	5.56	1.88	0.36	0.55	
Avoidant coping	5.17	1.39	5.24	1.60	0.03	0.86	

Compared to respondents employed in private schools and educational establishments, those in managerial positions in the public education sector are statistically

significantly more likely to use “behavioral disengagement” in stressful situations ( $p = 0.01$ ), while they are less likely to use their “sense of humor” when faced with life difficulties ( $p = 0.05$ ). However, for both variables indicated above, the effect size was small ( $\eta^2 = 0.04$  and  $\eta^2 = 0.02$ ).

Next, it was verified whether gender was a differentiating factor in the respondents’ results (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Comparison of results by gender of respondents.

Tested Variable	Women		Men		F	p Value
	M	SD	M	SD		
Active coping	2.06	0.69	2.25	0.53	0.58	0.45
Planning	2.24	0.55	2.25	0.60	0.002	0.97
Use of instrumental support	1.75	0.66	1.88	0.35	0.31	0.58
Use of emotional support	1.76	0.70	1.75	0.46	0.004	0.95
Self-blame	1.11	0.68	1.13	0.23	0.004	0.95
Religion	0.95	0.97	0.94	0.78	0.001	0.97
Positive reframing	1.89	0.69	1.94	0.32	0.04	0.85
Venting	1.31	0.57	1.13	0.69	0.78	0.38
Acceptance	1.96	0.64	2.13	0.69	0.50	0.48
Denial	0.69	0.62	0.69	0.53	0.0001	0.99
Self-distraction	1.37	0.71	1.44	0.62	0.06	0.80
Behavioral disengagement	0.54	0.55	0.50	0.46	0.05	0.83
Substance use	0.34	0.62	0.75	1.07	2.99	0.09
Sense of humor	0.92	0.56	1.13	0.35	1.07	0.30
Problem-focused coping	7.94	1.73	8.31	1.41	0.36	0.55
Emotion-focused coping	5.82	1.83	5.63	1.60	0.09	0.77
Avoidant coping	5.14	1.36	5.94	2.06	2.47	0.12

It was found that gender did not differentiate the results of the respondents.

The type of school or educational establishment where the respondent was employed was also analyzed (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Comparison of results by the type of school/educational establishment where the respondent was employed.

Tested Variable	SS Effect	df	MS Effect	F	p Value	$\eta^2$
Active coping	1.49	3	0.50	1.06	0.37	0.06
Planning	1.32	3	0.44	1.45	0.23	
Use of instrumental support	3.64	3	1.21	3.02	0.03	
Use of emotional support	0.95	3	0.32	0.66	0.58	
Self-blame	0.55	3	0.18	0.42	0.74	
Religion	4.95	3	1.65	1.82	0.15	
Positive reframing	1.76	3	0.59	1.30	0.28	
Venting	1.55	3	0.52	1.60	0.19	
Acceptance	2.76	3	0.92	2.27	0.08	
Denial	0.35	3	0.12	0.30	0.82	
Self-distraction	1.30	3	0.43	0.88	0.45	0.06
Behavioral disengagement	1.00	3	0.33	1.11	0.35	
Substance use	0.46	3	0.15	0.36	0.78	
Sense of humor	0.28	3	0.09	0.30	0.83	
Problem-focused coping	26.22	3	8.74	3.11	0.03	
Emotion-focused coping	4.98	3	1.66	0.50	0.68	
Avoidant coping	11.88	3	3.96	2.04	0.11	



As can be seen from the data in the table above, differences at the  $p = 0.03$  level were observed for the variables of “use of instrumental support” and “problem-focused strategies”. A moderate effect size ( $\eta^2 = 0.06$ ) was found in both cases.

Considering the above results, two post hoc tests (Games-Howell test and Dunnett’s test) were conducted. It was revealed that, compared to those in managerial positions in secondary schools, headmasters and deputy headmasters working in primary schools scored statistically significantly higher on average for the coping strategies of “use of instrumental support” and “problem-focused strategies”.

In the next step of the considerations, the stepwise multiple regression analysis was employed to investigate which of the independent variables can be used to predict dependent variables. In this case, the independent variables were gender of respondent, job seniority in a managerial position, function held, and the kind and type of educational establishment where the respondent was employed, while the dependent variables were 17 coping strategies. Table 8 summarized the stepwise multiple regression for the whole model.

**Table 8.** The stepwise multiple regression summary for whole model.

Tested Coping Strategies	Multiple R	Multiple R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F (5.153)	p Value	Std.Err. of Estimate
Active coping	0.18	0.03	0.00	0.99	0.43	1.41
Planning	0.12	0.01	−0.02	0.43	0.83	1.83
Use of instrumental support	0.15	0.02	−0.01	0.71	0.62	1.72
Use of emotional support	0.22	0.05	0.02	1.56	0.17	0.55
Self-blame	0.15	0.02	−0.01	0.75	0.59	0.65
Religion	0.28	0.08	0.05	2.57	0.03 *	0.54
Positive reframing	0.09	0.01	−0.02	0.26	0.93	0.71
Venting	0.09	0.01	−0.02	0.27	0.93	0.62
Acceptance	0.21	0.04	0.01	1.38	0.23	0.64
Denial	0.13	0.02	−0.02	0.50	0.78	0.58
Self-distraction	0.07	0.00	−0.03	0.15	0.98	0.68
Behavioral disengagement	0.28	0.08	0.05	2.52	0.03 *	0.94
Substance use	0.19	0.04	0.00	1.15	0.34	0.66
Sense of humor	0.08	0.01	−0.03	0.21	0.96	0.70
Problem-focused coping	0.22	0.05	0.02	1.56	0.17	0.64
Emotion-focused coping	0.19	0.03	0.00	1.11	0.36	0.55
Avoidant coping	0.19	0.03	0.00	1.09	0.37	0.68

\* significant values ( $p < 0.05$ ).

It turned out that, either for “religion” and “behavioral disengagement”,  $p$  value was  $<0.05$ .

The table below presented regression summary for the dependent variable: “religion” (Table 9).

**Table 9.** Regression summary for the dependent variable: “religion”.

Regression Summary $R^2 = 0.04$ ; $F (1.157) = 6.11$ ; $p < 0.01$						
	b	Std.Err.	B	Std.Err.	t (157)	p Value
Kind of school	−0.19	0.08	−0.34	0.14	−2.47	0.01

B—BETA; b—regression coefficient.

It was shown that the kind of school explained only 0.4% of the variance of the dependent variable: “religion”. The obtained values of the regression coefficient indicate

that the higher the level of education the respondent works in, the less often she/he will use “religion” as a coping strategy for stress. It was also observed that the Durbin–Watson test results confirm that there is a positive autocorrelation between the residuals of the model ( $DW = 1.97$ ), indicating that there is no autocorrelation detected in the sample. The consistency of the residuals with the normal distribution was negatively verified using the Shapiro–Wilk test ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

The table below presents a regression summary for the dependent variable: “behavioral disengagement” (Table 10).

**Table 10.** Regression summary for the dependent variable: “behavioral disengagement”.

Regression Summary	$R^2 = 0.06$ ; $F(1,157) = 9.49$ ; $p < 0.002$					
	b	Std.Err.	B	Std.Err.	t(157)	p Value
Job seniority in a managerial position	0.24	0.08	0.46	0.15	3.08	0.00

B—BETA; b—regression coefficient.

It was also revealed that job seniority in a managerial position explained 0.6% of the variance of the dependent variable: “behavioral disengagement”. The obtained values of the regression coefficient indicate that the longer the job seniority in the position of headmaster or deputy headmaster, the more likely the respondent will use “behavioral disengagement”. However, Durbin–Watson test results confirm that there is negatively autocorrelation between the residuals of the model ( $DW = 2.03$ ) indicates there is no autocorrelation detected in the sample. The consistency of the residuals with the normal distribution was negatively verified using the Shapiro–Wilk test ( $p \leq 0.05$ ).

It should be emphasized that in both cases R-square, as well as adjusted R-square were very low (less than 0.10). There is no doubt that, in some fields, R-square is typically higher because it is easier to identify complete, well-specified models. However, in social sciences, where it is hard to specify such modes, low R-square values are often expected. It should be remembered that, even with a low R-square value, statistically significant  $p$  values continue to identify relationships, and coefficients have the same interpretation. However, low R-squared values can warn of imprecise predictions, as is the case with this paper. It should be emphasized that in our own research the multi regression cannot be used for predictive modeling.

Therefore, it seems that coping strategies for stress used by people working in managerial positions in schools and educational establishments are closely related to her/his kind of personality. It may suggest that different personalities may cause the differentiation of headmasters and deputy headmasters to deal with stress and difficult situations.

#### 4. Discussion

There is no doubt that workplace stress has negative effects on workers’ and organizations’ psychological and physical health [43]. It is of great importance for people suffering from work-related stress to learn how to recognize it and easily cope with it for the purpose of maintaining good mental health and efficient work. The current study aimed to close the gap between what is already known about coping strategies used by headmaster and deputy headmaster practices, and how people working in managerial positions in schools and educational establishments actually deal with stress during the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be emphasized that our own research data were collected when the most restrictive policies were in place to prevent the spread of the virus, including the closure of primary and secondary schools, the cancellation of recreational team sports and activity classes for people, and the closure of public parks and playgrounds. Moreover, our own research was conducted after almost six months of online schooling.

#### 4.1. Comparison of the Author's Research Results with the Normative Value

Findings revealed that, compared to the normative value [39], headmasters and deputy headmasters participating in our study obtained a statistically significant higher mean in the case of “active coping”, “planning”, “positive reframing”, “acceptance”, “use of instrumental support”, “venting”, and “problem-focused strategies”. The moderate effect size was only reported for the variable of “venting”. In other cases, it was small. The results obtained are not consistent with those obtained during other analyses, which showed that 60% of teachers were characterized by the prevalence of less adaptive coping strategies such as emotion-focused strategies or substance use as opposed to using active coping or positive reframing [44]. However, our own results are partly in line with another study which showed that teachers used more problem-focused and social support seeking coping strategies [32]. Our own results are hopeful in that a meta-analysis demonstrated that emotion-focused coping strategies are positively correlated with the three dimensions of burnout, while problem-focused coping strategies are negatively correlated with them [45], suggesting that the latter are more effective. Moreover, taking into account the report entitled “Teacher wellbeing Index 2021” [46], our own results can be considered quite optimistic. In the document mentioned above, it was revealed that, in the United Kingdom, 44% of education staff declared that they would turn to family and friends for support when experiencing problems at work. It also showed that the top three coping strategies used by education staff to handle workplace stress or anxiety are food or eating (46%), physical exercise (41%), and alcohol (29%). However, the respondents declared that they used less frequently coping strategies, such as meditation/mindfulness (23%), unnecessary spending (21%), self-medication (16%), therapy/counselling (12%), drugs (3%) and gambling (2%) [46]. It is indicated that strategies such as over-eating, using drugs, and drinking alcohol might briefly alleviate distress under the situation of self-isolation but are harmful in the longer term [47]. It is worth mentioning that a meta-analysis, conducted in 2017, suggested that mindfulness interventions have significant positive effects on teachers' emotional exhaustion and personal achievement [48]. It was also found that after a four-week mindfulness-based group therapy designed for emerging adults during the COVID-19 pandemic, participants reported a greater mindfulness and self-compassion, as well as less stress, anxiety and sleep problems than the control group [49].

Our own results are also quite optimistic because they showed that coping style moderated the stress–emotional distress relationship, i.e., individuals who mainly adopted positive coping strategies suffered fewer symptoms of depression, compulsion anxiety, and neurasthenia under stress, while negative coping strategies aggravated emotional distress [15]. Recently, a web-based survey of mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that coping style was one of the influencing factors for psychological distress [50]. Moreover, there is no doubt that taking appropriate remedial actions based on proper planning are the key to the efficient and effective functioning of any institution [51]. Suleman et al. [5] affirmed that occupational stress can be controlled through planned problem-solving, lifestyle, self-controlling, accepting obligations, and time management. Hagger et al. [52] emphasized that it is the good organization of one's actions that is the hallmark of effective leaders, managers, and leaders. A close relationship was also shown between student accomplishments and certain behaviors and tasks implemented by the headmaster of a school or educational establishment [53] (pp. 41–61). It turned out that order, avoiding chaos and uncertainty in the school environment, and the functioning of an educational institution based on planned events, rules, and procedures promoted success not only for the students but also for teachers [53] (pp. 41–61).

As mentioned above, respondents obtained a higher mean for “acceptance” than the normative value [39]. Although “acceptance” is classified as an avoidance strategy [40], it seems that respondents wanted to express that they were alien to the behaviors and reactions that are potentially destructive because they are based on the transfer of anger and frustration to the environment, and do not accept reality [54]. It may be assumed that the respondents do not try to deny the reality and the problems encountered but,

by accepting the existing situations, they undertake effective ways to cope with them. “Acceptance” is, therefore, in their case a certain intrapsychic process that is a remedial action, a defense mechanism, rather than evasion. According to Hobfoll [54], changes, transitional states or demands are not stressful in themselves if they do not lead to a loss of resources; they even lead to their multiplication in the form of a “stress vaccine”. Kohl et al. [55] notice that “acceptance” is “intended to disrupt the link between thoughts and behaviours to tolerate painful stimulation”. The “acceptance” strategy involves a coping method that resolves into accepting the stressor in question. This pandemic is a health crisis that is beyond one’s control. Thus, the respondents perceive that there is nothing that can be done to overcome the pandemic other than to protect themselves from the risk of and exposure to the virus, thus accepting the current situation. It is worth adding that research conducted during Finland’s COVID-19 lockdown among the country’s population revealed that the most common emotion-focused coping method “adopted among the youth was acceptance” [56]. Furthermore, another study revealed that more than half of the respondents reported that they cannot perceive themselves as capable of coping with pandemic-related stress [20]. However, the most of teachers participating in the study during the lockdown of schools in Germany declared that they felt able to cope functionally with the stress [17]. In turn, in a study carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia the coping strategies associated with better mental health were reported as positive reframing (strategies focused on positive emotions) and “acceptance” and “humor”, whereas the coping strategies of self-blaming, venting, behavioral disengagement, and self-distraction are associated with poor mental health [14]. Gurvich et al. [14] noticed that positive-emotion-focused coping strategies may be effective for reducing psychological symptoms. In addition, in the study conducted among Pakistan university students during the COVID-19 pandemic, four coping strategies—“seek social support”, “acceptance”, “mental disengagement”, and “humanitarian”—were tested [57]. The findings showed that “seeking social support” seemed to be the least preferred coping strategy and that female students “seek social support”, “humanitarian”, and “acceptance” coping strategies more than male students. Therefore, it turned out that students used both emotion-based and problem-based coping strategies [57]. It should be mentioned that “seeking social support” was adopted more frequently by participants with poor mental health than those with good mental health [58]. In addition, it is indicated that, owing to the lockdown and confinement measures implemented to limit the spread of the pandemic, social networking site (SNS) use surged worldwide [59,60]. Islam et al. [59] suggest that negative emotional response, namely “COVID-19 obsession” is an adverse emotional response to the stressors brought about by the pandemic and that seeking emotional support through SNS as a coping strategy. The findings revealed by the authors mentioned above [59] indicate that: (1) the threat of the COVID-19 disease and unemployment drive “COVID-19 obsession”; (2) “COVID-19 obsession” contributes to emotional support seeking through SNS; (3) emotional support seeking through SNS exerts a positive effect on SNS exhaustion; (4) SNS exhaustion contributes to the intention to reduce SNS use. Therefore, a high level of emotional support seeking through SNS can result in adverse psychological consequences [60]. On the other hand, Tahara et al. [58] emphasize that when infectious diseases are still emerging, it is difficult to obtain accurate information, and using the internet for this purpose may be counterproductive. It was also shown that prolonged internet usage may increase depression and psychological distress [61] and using the internet as an avoidance coping strategy may increase anxiety [62]. Furthermore, it is indicated that the incidence of major depression and psychological disorders increased with the rise in the ownership of smartphones and the use of digital media and social networks [63].

As mentioned above, respondents obtained a higher mean than the normative value for “use of instrumental support”. These results are not surprising. Clipa [6] noted that in order to cope with the accumulated stress at their job, teachers call for some solutions: discussing problems with their family members, friends or colleagues. Olurotimi [34]

showed that analyzing problems to understand them better is the most applied method used by teachers. The next most-popular methods were watching television, using social media, avoiding overthinking, peer advice, physical exercise, drinking alcohol and smoking, and receiving professional counselling help [35]. Those who believed in using drugs and medication and avoiding people were few in number, and the lowest used method was drinking alcohol [34].

Our own results are partly in line with another study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which showed that teachers applied, on average, more functional (e.g., planning or seeking social support) than dysfunctional coping strategies (e.g., planning or seeking social support) [17]. It was also found that the more stress experienced, the more coping strategies were applied to control the situation [17]. However, it was noticed that although many teachers preferred functional over dysfunctional strategies, almost all of them also used dysfunctional strategies, such as, for instance, watching more TV or abandoning personal goals [17]. Furthermore, teachers were more likely to use functional rather than dysfunctional coping strategies when they attributed the causes of their constraints to external factors, such as parents' low motivation or the school's low level of organization [17]. However, when they internalized the constraints, e.g., when they complained about their own level of organization or the low level of digital competence, they preferred dysfunctional over functional coping strategies [17].

Our own results can also be considered optimistic when taking into account the findings of other authors. For example, Tahara et al. [58] showed that over 70% of their study participants adopted the escape-avoidance strategy for coping with stress. In turn, Chew et al. [64] found that mental health effects vary depending on the selected stress coping strategy, and the escape-avoidance strategy could worsen mental health and increase psychological distress and depression.

In addition, our own results do not coincide with the outcomes obtained by Kar et al. [21], which showed that wishful thinking ("hoping for the best") was the most frequent way of coping, followed by "remaining busy". Around one third coped through religious faith, trying to deal with the issues as they faced them, sharing feelings, and talking to others.

It seems that our own results can be partly explained by referring to the study by Čech et al. [65]. These authors showed that headmasters have significantly higher self-esteem compared with secondary school teachers. In addition, they have a significantly better perception of the school climate than a group of regular teachers. In the same study, age was positively correlated with the monitored coping strategies. However, there were no statistically significant differences in any of the stress-coping strategies between secondary school headmasters and teachers [65]. Čech et al. [65] suggest that, with increasing age, teachers care more for themselves and their health, are able to resolve problems in a constructive way, and pay attention to their mental hygiene. Taking into account that in our own research, the average age of the respondents was 47.27 years, it seems that our study can corroborate the findings revealed by Čech et al. [65].

It is also worth referring to the study in which it turned out that there was no association between probable post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the reported coping strategies [21]. However, it was showed that moderate-to-severe anxiety was associated with avoiding to think about the issue, not being sure about the coping strategy, and those who reported struggling to cope [21]. In addition, persons with moderate-to-severe anxiety used humor as a coping strategy was significantly less frequently [21]. Similarly, moderate-to-severe depression was associated with avoiding thinking, not being sure about coping strategies, and struggling to cope [21]. It was noted that the school headmasters do not get enough support to cope with different work situations [5,24,26–28,51,65,66]. It is indicated that the failure to cope with too many professional responsibilities, accompanied by a deficiency of protective factors, such as social support, leads to severe stress, and in the long run, to occupational burnout [36,43,45,48,67]. Taking into account the above opinions, it seems that, similar to "planning", the coping strategy declared by the respondents is supposed to act as a "vaccine" against professional apathy.



It is worth mentioning that our own research revealed that, for most of the groups distinguished in terms of independent variables, the least used coping strategy was “substance use”. For males and for respondents employed in private schools or educational institutions, the lowest mean was recorded for “behavioral disengagement”. It is emphasized that drinking alcohol and using psychoactive substances are unhealthy activities; not only do they not reduce tension and stress, they are even an additional source of these factors in a relatively short-term perspective [39]. Our own findings are not consistent with the research conducted among British school headmasters, which showed that almost one in five respondents who experienced work-related stress admitted to drinking alcohol or smoking excessively, and one in three indicated experiencing panic attacks [68]. On the other hand, Sattler et al. [69] pointed out that the use of medications amongst academics with the purpose of lowering stress is visible as a potentially useful adaptation to problems in contemporary work settings.

#### *4.2. Comparison of Results between Headmasters and Deputy Headmasters*

Our own research also revealed that headmasters of schools and educational institutions obtained a statistically significantly higher mean than deputy headmasters for “planning” and “religion”, while having a lower mean for “behavioral disengagement”. The results seem hardly surprising. It can be assumed that occupying the position of a headmaster “forces” the acquisition of the ability to use the above-mentioned coping strategy. While the deputy headmaster can “afford” to use “behavioral disengagement” in difficult moments at work, the headmaster has not only the duty but also the legal responsibility to carry out the tasks entrusted to him or her. The fact that, in our own research, headmasters achieved a higher mean than deputy headmasters for the variable of “religion” can be considered a relatively surprising result. Such a result would be less surprising if the headmasters surveyed were significantly older than the respondents holding the position of a deputy headmaster. However, the descriptive statistics, i.e., mean, mode, and median for the two groups are very similar to each other and are not essentially different. Katić [70] indicate that religious people are more modest and humble, and that they express anxiety to a greater extent. In turn, people who want power, prestige, and respect in society show a lower level of anxiety, which confirms the connection between burnout and anxiety [70]. Mahamid and Bdier [71] noted that positive religious strategies may help improve resilience and well-being among affected populations.

#### *4.3. Comparison of Results by Job Seniority in a Managerial Position*

As could be expected, the analyses revealed that people with less than 5 years of managerial job seniority are more likely to apply the “use of instrumental support” in stressful situations. Quite surprisingly, on the other hand, respondents who worked in this position much longer used the emotion-focused strategy, i.e., they use “religion” during difficult life events. It is worth mentioning that the effect size for this variable was medium.

#### *4.4. Comparison of Results by the Kind of School/Educational Establishment Where the Respondent Is Employed*

It was also found that, compared to respondents employed in private schools and educational institutions, people in managerial positions in public educational establishments use “behavioral disengagement” statistically significantly more often in stressful situations, and they used “sense of humor” significantly less often. Although “sense of humor” is most often classified as an avoidance-focused strategy, there is no doubt that the ability to maintain a positive mood and reduce negative feelings allows one to maintain well-being and life optimism [72]. It was shown that teachers characterized by high levels of “sense of humor” were less likely to experience burnout, had significantly lower overall burnout scores, and nearly double the values for mental exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of a sense of achievement [73]. Such a view is supported by previous research, which showed that people with a sense of humor have a positive self-image and a significantly



higher level of self-esteem than those without it. Furthermore, it was observed that teachers with a strong “sense of humor” are much more likely to perceive stressful situations in terms of a challenge rather than a threat [74]. It was also shown that the teacher’s use of sense of humor during lessons promotes good interactions with students, facilitates their acquisition of knowledge and skills, reduces the level of tension and sleepiness they feel, and encourages active participation in classes [72,74].

#### *4.5. Comparison of Results by Gender of Respondents*

It turned out that gender was not a determinant of the results obtained by the respondents. Based on the available publications [72,75], it can be assumed that obtaining results from a much larger group of male participants would help demonstrate differences in coping strategies used by both women and male respondents. For example, Iwasaki et al. [75] found that female and male managers rely on a broad range of coping methods, including leisure-specific strategies such as life survival techniques. Although sharing a number of common stress-coping themes (e.g., socialization through leisure, deflecting stress-inducing thoughts through leisure, feeling rejuvenated through leisure, leisure as personal space, humor/laughter, spiritual coping, altruistic leisure coping, leisure travel), there were also themes unique to female managers (e.g., preventative role of leisure/exercise) and male managers (e.g., playing hard in leisure). These unique gender-based variations in stress-coping appear to be linked to differences in the life circumstances and stressors that women and men face in work, domestic, and leisure domains, and the gendered nature of women’s and men’s life experiences. Klapproth et al. [17] revealed that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, female teachers experienced significantly more stress, but coped with it more often in a functional way. The gender did not matter with regard to the execution of dysfunctional coping strategies [17]. Klapproth et al. [17] explain that female teachers may experience a higher workload for teaching and domestic tasks at the same time or a sharper conflict between work and family roles. However, it may also be that respondents who perceived greater stress from the responsibility for students’ achievements exerted more effort during lesson planning and remote teaching, and thus used more functional than dysfunctional coping strategies. On the other hand, another study showed that male teachers had a slightly higher level of stress than female teachers [34]. It was also revealed that analyzing problems for a better understanding of them was the best adopted method of stress reduction, but male teachers also indulge in relaxation methods of managing stress, as male teachers were glued to their televisions, hanging around in bars and going clubbing [34]. These findings could be partly explained by the fact that coping with stress is complex, highly dynamic and directed toward physical, social and emotional functioning [34]. It is also worth mentioning that Xhelilaj et al. [36] revealed differences in burnout, occupational stress and coping according to gender and age. It turned out that females referred to the lack of support as a source of stress more than males [36]. It was also showed that female teachers preferred distancing as a coping strategy more than male teachers [36]. In addition, emotional exhaustion indicated a positive correlation with escape avoidance and a negative correlation with self-controlling and distancing [36]. Furthermore, depersonalization indicated a positive correlation with escape avoidance and a negative correlation with distancing (low) and self-controlling (moderate) [36]. Personal accomplishment indicated a negative correlation with workload and school interest (low) and positive correlation with coping strategies (from low to moderate) [36]. In the same study, regarding age, differences were found in emotional exhaustion and escape avoidance. However, the older teachers expressed more emotional exhaustion and preferred escape avoidance more than the younger teachers [36]. There were no statistical differences in other factors of burnout, occupational stress and coping regarding age [36].

#### *4.6. Comparison of Results by the Type of School/Educational Establishment Where the Respondent Was Employed*

Our own research revealed that respondents working in primary schools were statistically significantly more likely to declare that, in stressful situations, they “sought instrumental support” and “focused on the problem” compared to those in managerial positions in secondary schools. Based on the data collected, it may be suggested that it is in the first and second stages of education that headmasters and deputy headmasters often experience the greatest problems and additional stress, primarily related to the great expectations of the parents or guardians of students. Conflict situations between teachers and students’ parents or guardians are less frequent in secondary schools. It is worth referring to the study in which Han and Tibet primary and middle schools headmasters were shown to be quite different in solving problems and self-accusation, while in the dimension of solving problems, the Han headmasters were more successful than the Tibet headmasters [76]. It also turned out that in the dimension of self-accusation, the Tibet headmasters were more successful than the Han headmasters.

Finally, our own research showed that respondents did not focus on their emotions in stressful situations, but applied effective coping strategies. Considering the feminization process [32] in the teaching profession, the results are hopeful. Stereotypically, it is women who are attributed with excessive sensitivity, empathy, and sentimentality. Despite the nobility of these qualities, they are rather unlikely to facilitate the alleviation of the responsibilities imposed on headmasters and deputy headmasters in various educational settings. Gaus and Ac [25] noticed that managerial aspects—such as the tasks of introducing change, developing an instructional vision, understanding planning and implementing change, creating the school vision, and working with the classified staff—contributed to the stress of headteachers. Referring to the headteachers’ responsibilities above, one can imagine how complicated and difficult the tasks are that headteachers carry out. There is no doubt that a physically and mentally healthy principal is important to guarantee the sustainable development of the school that she or he leads. It is important to refer to studies that showed that women have a specific repertoire of traits that allow them to perform efficiently at work [77]. However, there is a constant need to inform people about available resources and the practical methods to deal and cope with these emergent issues along with the continuing stress of COVID-19. Unfortunately, the weight of concerns may increase as the secondary stresses set in, related to economic hardships, job losses, and bereavements. Therefore, the effective use of coping can lead to more positive emotional outcomes, and thus coping is important to understand along with stress from a theoretical as well as a preventative perspective. Katić [70] emphasizes that the need for development in terms of the health of employees, and organizations are more prevalent than ever before. Achievements in the field of science regarding the emergence of the psychology of sustainability and sustainable development have contributed to the collection of evidence about modern organizations needing to work in a healthy way and the motivation of employees [70].

#### **5. Limitations of the Study**

In conclusion, it is necessary to point out some limitations of our research and draw conclusions to indicate possible areas for extending this scientific project. The results certainly cannot be approached as a final conclusion, but should be a starting point for further analyses. To continue the investigations of the problems addressed in the study, it is advisable to include more respondents in the research, especially male individuals. It is also worthwhile to conduct a longitudinal study using a cross-sectional sequential analysis design. The purpose of this would be to identify possible changes in the use of coping strategies by headmasters and deputy headmasters of schools and educational institutions, e.g., during a 5-year term in a managerial position. Furthermore, it is difficult to decide whether it is individuals with specific preferences relating to taking certain remedial actions who made the decision about the role and nature of their professional work, or whether there were changes in this regard as a result of taking up a managerial position. It would be

reasonable to include other psychological variables in further research, such as the level of emotional intelligence, individual behavioral regulations and perceived stress, the intensity of mood changes, and the intensity and direction of cognitive and somatic arousal. It would also be advisable to compare the results obtained for the control group, including persons holding managerial positions in institutions, organizations not related to education, and teachers. It seems that taking into account the place of residence (divided into urban and rural areas) in the results would also allow for more extensive analyses. A deeper insight into the problems discussed and the conclusions drawn could prove more complete and even more valuable.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the use of differently constructed questionnaires by other researchers (often of their own authorship) relating to coping strategies for stress, makes it impossible to precisely compare the results.

## 6. Conclusions

The following conclusions were formulated:

1. Compared to the normative value [39], headmasters and deputy headmasters who participated in the study are more likely to use coping strategies such as “active coping”, “planning”, “positive reframing”, “acceptance”, “use of instrumental support”, “venting”, and “problem-focused strategies”.
2. Headmasters were characterized by a higher mean than deputy headmasters for “planning” and “religion”, while they scored poorer for “behavioral disengagement”.
3. Respondents who had less than 5 years of job seniority in a managerial position in an educational establishment were more likely to resort to the “use of instrumental support” in stressful situations, and less likely to use “religion” than respondents with longer careers in working in the positions discussed.
4. Compared to headmasters and deputy headmasters of private schools and educational establishments, the respondents employed in the public education sector were more likely to use “behavioral disengagement” in stressful situations, and at the same time, less likely to use a “sense of humor”.
5. Gender was not found to be a determinant of coping strategies used by the respondents.
6. In stressful situations, headmasters and deputy headmasters in elementary schools are more likely to resort to the “use of instrumental support” and “focus on the problem” than those in managerial positions in secondary schools.
7. The multi regression analysis performed cannot be used to predict which coping strategies for stress will be used by people working in managerial positions in schools and educational establishments.

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