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SEMing EFL Teachers' Management Strategies and Coping Styles in relation to Learners' Ultimate Achievement

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ABSTRACT

The capability of choosing appropriate coping strategies while attempting to manage classroom context seems to determine learning satisfaction ratings and, therefore, achievement by university learners. However, it is still not clear whether coping style (CP) is a strong mediator of classroom management (CM). Additionally, the degree of relationship among the three variables (CP and CM and learners' achievement), and the path of relationship is not known yet. The present study was, thus, an attempt to identify the classroom management practices and coping styles (CS) of 152 Iranian EFL instructors and the causal relationship between the two regarding 375 EFL learners' ultimate achievement. To this end, Classroom Management Techniques Scale and Coping Styles Scale (Lewis, 2001) were administered to teacher-participants. Results indicated that teachers reported use of positive strategies of involvement and recognition; and social problem solving and relaxation compared to the rather negative categories of classroom management and coping styles. In addition, the results of structural equation modeling highlighted the positive effect upon the learners' end of year (2016-2017) language achievement of classroom management and coping styles. However, coping styles did not mediate the relationship between teachers' classroom management and the learners' ultimate achievement. Findings are discussed in relation to effective teacher classroom management leading to learners' better academic performance and their prospective consequences for future research.

Keywords: classroom management; coping style; EFL teachers; learner achievement

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Introduction

Classroom environment, with learners' and teachers' constant involvement in discussions, interactions, and writing constitutes a complicated learning context. Both physical (e.g., form of the room) and psychological characteristics of the classroom potentially influence teachers' and learners' techniques and communications inside the classroom (Martin, 2004). This collaboration can be considered as a pivotal factor in teaching and learning process with the teachers' dominant role, in the meantime, as agents for proper *classroom management* which is believed to have all the earmarks of being a fundamental condition for setting up a viable teaching and facilitated learning environment (Emmer & Evertson, 2016; Marashi & Asgar, 2019; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2017).

Teachers' classroom management strategies including *punishment, recognition and reward, hinting, discussion, and aggression* may be potentially affected by stressful situations. Teachers may face an occasion or circumstance as unpleasant and anxiety-provoking with which they should cope. Coping is a procedure used to manage needs and demands that are thought to be intimidating in light of the fact that they surpass the individual's resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). It necessitates continually changing intellectual and behavioral endeavors to deal with these demands and resources and calls for diverse activities in light of various stressors (Aloe, Amo, & Shanahan, 2014; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These distinctive management methods are alluded to as *coping styles* (CS). The capability of choosing appropriate coping strategies while attempting to manage classroom context seems to determine learning satisfaction ratings and, therefore, achievement by learners (Lightsey, Maxwell, Nash, Rarey & Mckinny, 2011). In other words, in order to achieve a well-managed classroom, coping styles of *social problem solving, passive avoidant coping, and relaxation* can act as buffers to either decrease or increase the effect that classroom management techniques have on stress levels in teachers (Hoots, 2014), with its pay-offs for student achievement.

Review of Literature

The relationship among classroom management, coping styles and learning achievement has been exploited from different perspectives. Lewis, Roache and Romi (2011), for instance, report the relationship between coping styles of teachers and the classroom-based management techniques they use to cope with student misbehavior. Based on their findings, coping styles are used for preventing and intervening student's behavior problems. In addition, teachers who are more worried about student misbehavior, use more aggressive (i.e. punishment and aggression) classroom management. Lewis et al. conclude that coping styles operate as mediators of teachers' classroom management techniques, but literature still lags behind in terms of the effect of these two variables on academic achievement of students.

As regards the relation between classroom management and students' achievement, in a study carried out in ten randomly selected secondary schools in Shomolu, Adeyemo (2012) examined the relationship between effective classroom management and students' academic achievement in physics. Findings demonstrated that effective classroom management skills that may be in direct relationship with coping styles have strong and positive influence on student achievement in physics.

Similarly, Tran (2015) studied the relationship between teachers' use of various coping styles with student misbehavior and the extent to which these relate to their classroom management techniques- punishment, recognition and reward, hinting, discussion, and aggression- of over 397 junior high school teachers in Vietnam. He reported that teachers who use passive avoidant strategies use more aggression and punishment techniques towards student misbehavior. On the other hand, teachers who use more social problem solving and relaxation strategies prefer more

inclusive management techniques such as recognition and reward, discussion, and hinting. However, Tran fails to connect these behaviors to student achievement.

Salkovsky, Romi and Lewis (2015) attempted to explore the relationship between the coping styles of teachers who were worried about the disparity between their favored and implemented approach to classroom management. Salkovsky et al., also, probed the components prohibiting teachers from practicing their own perceptions of proper classroom management. The major research idea in their study was that when teachers consider this gap between their comprehension of real and preferred classroom management practices important, they look for methods of coping. These methods included elements that they regard as prohibiting them from regarding their perceptions as best practice. For this purpose, 294 secondary-school teachers participated in their study. The results indicated that the coping styles which consist of strategies such as self-blame and wishful thinking had a stronger relationship with the identification of both personal inhibitory factors (e.g., time and work demands), and general components (e.g., accountability to parents). Unexpectedly, however, teachers' application of socially embedded problem solving did not have a significant correlation with the perceived significance of inhibitors to preferred management practice.

Coping behaviors of teachers and their classroom management techniques have been documented in a number of studies without any clear relational pattern, though (Kingsbury, Liu, Coplan, Chen & Li, 2015). Examining the possible interrelation and effect of these two teacher attributes more specifically in relation to learners' achievement seems to yield beneficial results. Accordingly, this study extended research on EFL teachers' classroom management styles in relation to learners' achievement, and how coping buffers the relationship between classroom management and achievement. We attended to the topic by adopting a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach which would allow for the identification of cause-effect relations with a better understanding of the interaction across these three constructs.

Following the above lines of inquiry, four research questions guided data collection:

- 1) What classroom management techniques do Iranian EFL instructors use?
- 2) What coping styles do Iranian EFL instructors use?
- 3) Is there any relationship between teachers' classroom management techniques, coping styles and students' ultimate achievement?
- 4) What is the pattern (degree and path) of relationship among teachers' classroom management techniques, teachers' coping styles and students' ultimate achievement?

Method

Participants

A non-random-convenient sample of one-hundred fifty-two English language teachers from different schools in Urmia, Tabriz, Ardabil and Bonab took part in this study. The teacher-participants who had over three years of teaching experience were qualified in teaching different branches of English studies, i.e. Teaching of English as a foreign language, Translation, and English Literature. Participants with BA (39%), Masters' (48%), or PhD (13%) degrees included both male ($n = 63$) and female ($n = 89$) teachers whose age varied between 22-38 years. They

have been teaching to EFL learners of different levels of English proficiency and had the experience of handling classes with different students.

In addition to the teacher-participants, student-participants ($n = 375$) included 25% (due to manageability issues) of the beginner, intermediate and advanced students of both genders to whom the relevant participant-teachers were teaching English.

Instruments

Two likert scale questionnaires, namely, Classroom Management Techniques scale and a Coping Style scale both developed by Lewis (2001) were administered to teacher-participants. The former ($r = 0.89$) that included 24 items assessed classroom management techniques, namely, *hinting, discussion, involvement, recognition and reward, punishment and aggression*. Teacher coping style questionnaire ($r = 0.77$), on the other hand, measured three coping styles, that is, *Passive Avoidant Coping, Social Problem Solving and Relaxation*. Passive avoidant coping is related to the feelings of vulnerability and disappointment to deal with the stress sources and depending on others to provide a solution to the stressful event or situation (Zeidner & Endler, 1996). According to Zeidner et. al., individuals that apply the passive coping strategy submit to others the control of the stressful context and of their response to that event, or permit other aspects of their life to be adversely influenced by the stressful event or context. The items of the questionnaire in the first section, encompassing seven strategies, measured the participants' degree of using these types of coping techniques. The second coping style category, namely, Social Problem Solving, comprises five strategies. The items of this part capture the ways an individual tries to find out adjustable ways of coping with routine contexts deemed to be problematic. The third coping style, Relaxation, comprises four strategies aiming to measure the extent to which the teachers try to employ more positively oriented strategies for dealing with problematic situations. And the final section asked teachers to answer two open-ended questions to reveal more or less about the strategies they use in their own classroom.

Finally, achievement in English was established based on the formal grades students received in English at the end of the academic year 2016-2017, obtained from the district's office of education upon official request.

Procedures

The two CM and CS questionnaires were attached together and were coded with a number to prevent any later confusion. The questionnaires were taken home by the teachers who filled out the sections and brought them back to school within 7 days. Out of the 200 questionnaires returned to the researchers only 152 were considered suitable for a final analysis since they were unanswered or partially answered.

As for statistical analysis, a structural equation model of three latent variables (classroom management, coping styles, and learner achievement) was developed. Classroom management and coping styles were speculated to be independently related to learners' language achievement. Therefore, direct paths from classroom management and coping styles to learner achievement were hypothesized. In addition, the model tested the prediction that coping styles mediated the teachers' management of their classroom practice leading to learners' achievement. Following this, paths from classroom management with the mediation of coping style were added.

Results

Prior to carrying out SEM as the main method of analysis, the researchers applied descriptive statistics to answer the first two research questions.

Research question 1

As for the first research question that probed the most dominant CM strategies acknowledged by EFL teachers as their instructional approach, Table 1 summarizes the findings.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for CM

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
Involvement	3.55	.58	-.192	-.243	2.11	4.67
Punishment	2.98	.89	-.142	-.656	1.00	4.75
Recognition	3.74	.78	.103	-.668	2.00	5.00
Aggression	2.24	.86	.431	-.894	1.00	4.00
Discussion	2.80	.92	.376	-.430	1.00	5.00

N=152

According to Table 1, EFL teachers had a rather high mean score in 'involvement' (M=3.35, SD=.68), and 'recognition' (M=3.74, SD=.78) compared to the other categories of CM. 'Aggression' (M=2.24, SD=.86) turned out to be preferred the least by the teacher-participants.

Research question 2

In addition to classroom management strategies used by the teachers, we were also interested in finding out the pattern of coping styles exercised by the EFL teachers. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the coping style.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for CS

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
Passive avoidant coping	2.19	.55	.479	-.063	1.00	3.57
Social problem solving	3.32	.63	.190	-.106	1.50	4.83
Relaxation	3.53	.75	.307	-.509	2.00	5.00

N=152

As depicted in Table 2, 'Social Problem Solving' (M = 3.32, SD = .63) and 'Relaxation' (M = 3.53, SD = .75) attained the highest mean, whereas, 'Passive avoidant coping style' was observed to be preferred the least by the teachers.

Research question 3

As the third research question dealt with the relationship between the three variables, the summary descriptive statistics presented in Tables 1 and 2 and those presented below in Table 3 were used for analysis. The results of descriptive statistics for the learner achievement that was established based on formal grades students received in English at the end of the academic year 2016-2017, appear in Table 3.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Learner Achievement

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Minimum	Maximum
Student Achievement	375	14.99	2.30	.028	-.892	10.35	19.56

Structural education modeling

Our third and fourth research questions were developed to pattern the relationship among the three main aforementioned variables and, in case of any relationship, the path and degree of relation among the categories were to be examined. Having ensured, through Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, that all the obtained scores are normally distributed ($p > .05$), we performed model specification for each variable as explained in detail below.

Specifying the model of classroom management techniques

Initially, based on our observed variables, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was executed in order to reduce the number of variables and come up with factors (latent variables) which explain most of the variance in the 'classroom management' model. The five discovered factors based on the pattern matrix developed through EFA, i.e., discussion, aggression, recognition, punishment, and involvement accounted for most of the variance in our model. However, specifying a model is not sufficient as there is a need to confirm the model. In other words, there is need to indicate that our model is not significantly different from the ideal one. The following figure illustrates our model built in AMOS.

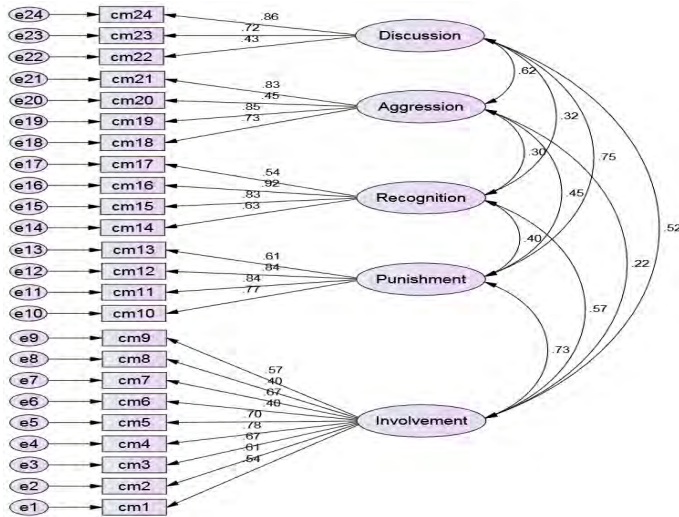


Figure 1. Measurement Model of Classroom Management Techniques

Running a preliminary visual inspection, we clearly see that most of the factor loadings regarding our variables are quite acceptable and above the threshold of 0.5. However, the loading of CM 22 is 0.43 on 'Discussion'; CM-20 a .45 loading on 'Aggression'; and CM8 a .40 loading on

'Involvement', which might or might not cause trouble with model fit. In addition, the covariances regarding the factors seem acceptable. However, initially we did not attempt to remove these variables, as the model might be a good fit, despite some rather low correlations. Accordingly, before inspecting the data pertaining to the model fit indices, it is worth observing that whether the variables, i.e., classroom management techniques are significantly loading on their underlying latent variables (factors). Table 4 given below, provides the necessary information on the significance of the regression weights (loadings) of each variable on its related factor.

Table 4
Estimation of Regression Weights in the Management Techniques

Independent variable (or item)	Dependent variable (or Index)	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Standardized Estimate
cm1	Involvement	.791	.146	5.435	.001	.542
cm2	Involvement	.932	.157	5.954	.001	.614
cm3	Involvement	1.235	.196	6.310	.001	.669
cm4	Involvement	1.308	.188	6.948	.001	.782
cm5	Involvement	1.175	.180	6.521	.001	.704
cm6	Involvement	.570	.135	4.214	.001	.395
cm7	Involvement	1.088	.172	6.333	.001	.673
cm8	Involvement	.612	.143	4.289	.001	.404
cm9	Involvement	1.000			.001	.574
cm10	Punishment	1.702	.228	7.472	.001	.770
cm11	Punishment	1.577	.200	7.876	.001	.836
cm12	Punishment	1.654	.209	7.924	.001	.844
cm13	Punishment	1.000			.001	.611
cm14	Recognition	1.119	.193	5.802	.001	.627
cm15	Recognition	1.427	.211	6.758	.001	.828
cm16	Recognition	1.683	.243	6.927	.001	.922
cm17	Recognition	1.000			.001	.537
cm18	Aggression	.762	.082	9.319	.001	.726
cm19	Aggression	.873	.080	10.877	.001	.851
cm20	Aggression	.555	.103	5.376	.001	.449
cm21	Aggression	1.000			.001	.828
cm22	Discussion	.435	.087	4.995	.001	.427
cm23	Discussion	.815	.093	8.770	.001	.721
cm24	Discussion	1.000			.001	.862

Clearly the p -values of all the variables underlying the extracted factors, are below .05; this indicates that all 24 management techniques significantly affect the five extracted factors.

As concerns the model fit, Table 5 provides the fit indices which are employed as a means to decide whether our model is confirmed or that there is a need for re-specification using modification indices.

Table 5
Model Fit Indices

	Model fit Indices	Value	Threshold Criteria	Interpretation
Overall	CMIN/DF	3.901	Below 5	Acceptable
Comparisons	p-value χ^2	.000	Above .05	Significant/ No Fit
	GFI	.868	Above .9	Tolerable
Baseline	TLI	.821	Above .9	Tolerable
Comparisons	CFI	.908	Above .9	Acceptable Fit
Parsimony-	RMSEA	.072	Below .08	Acceptable Fit
Adjusted Measures	PNFI	.530	Above .5	Acceptable Fit

The CMIN/DF tests the null hypothesis that our model is not significantly different from the default or perfect model. Thus, we do not want to reject this hypothesis, leading to a preferably non-significant p-value. However, the p-value regarding our model is less than .05, indicating that we do not have a good fit.

Simulation studies show that the chi-square is too sensitive and rejects models way more often than it should. More importantly, it is tied to sample size. As sample size increases, the likelihood of a significant chi-square increases. There is a very high Type I error rate, and it gets worse as sample size increases. Thus, we need alternative indices that account for this.

Inspecting other fit indices, it is observed that both the goodness of fit (GFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) are merely tolerable as they are not above the 0.9 threshold, whereas the Confirmatory Fit Index (CFI) is on the borderline, indicating a good fit.

It is worth mentioning that the most important fit index is the Root Mean Square Approximation of Error (RMSEA) as it deals with error terms and offers a penalty for complexity. The RMSEA is an absolute measure of fit and is defined as the standardized difference between the observed correlation matrix and the predicted correlation matrix which preferably should be lower than .08. Thus, judging by the table, both RMSEA and PNFI as the Parsimony-Adjusted Measures, indicates an acceptable fit. Since it has been established that the model is not significantly different from the default (perfect) model, there is no need to take the modification indices into account.

Specifying the model of coping styles

The same procedure carried out regarding the previous model, is applied for 'coping styles'. Based on exploratory factor analysis (EFA), three factors, i.e., Relaxation, Social Problem Solving, and Passive Avoidant Coping were discovered and labeled through the pattern matrix. The following figure illustrates our model:

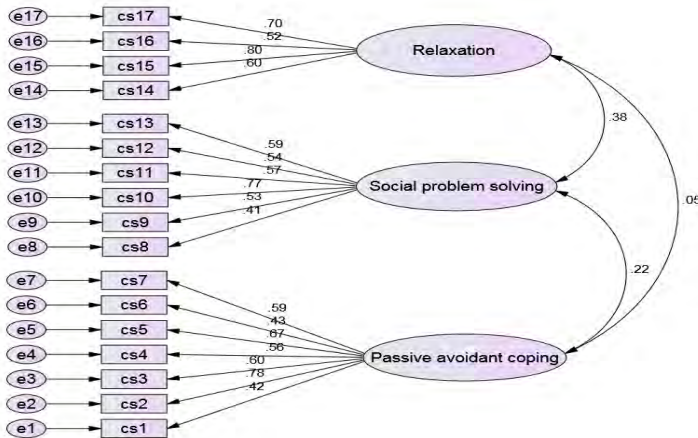


Figure 2. Measurement Model of Coping Styles

Through an initial visual inspection, we clearly see that most of the factor loadings regarding our variables are quite acceptable and above the threshold of 0.5. However, CS8 has a loading of 0.41 on 'Social Problem Solving'; CS1 and CS6 have a .42 and .43 loading on 'Passive Avoidant

Coping', respectively. In addition, the covariances regarding the factors are extremely low revealing that discriminant validity issues are non-existent. However, the model might be a good fit, despite these low correlations. Table 6 below, provides the necessary information on the significance of the regression weights (loadings) of each variable on its related factor.

Table 6
Estimation of Regression Weights

Independent variable (or item)	Dependent variable (or Index)	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Standardized Estimate
cs1	PAC	.770	.179	4.304	.001	.422
cs2	PAC	1.059	.160	6.606	.001	.777
cs3	PAC	.929	.163	5.689	.001	.603
cs4	PAC	.904	.167	5.415	.001	.564
cs5	PAC	.953	.156	6.127	.001	.674
cs6	PAC	.694	.158	4.405	.001	.434
cs7	PAC	1.000			.001	.594
cs14	R	.738	.122	6.058	.001	.597
cs15	R	1.149	.166	6.935	.001	.799
cs16	R	.754	.141	5.364	.001	.518
cs17	R	1.000			.001	.697
cs8	SPS	.577	.141	4.080	.001	.410
cs9	SPS	1.132	.226	5.006	.001	.532
cs10	SPS	1.217	.198	6.161	.001	.771
cs11	SPS	1.203	.228	5.269	.001	.572
cs12	SPS	1.018	.201	5.070	.001	.542
cs13	SPS	1.000			.001	.588

Note. PAC (Passive Avoidant Coping), R (Relaxation), SPS (Social Problem Solving)

As was the case with the previous model, the p-value of all the variables underlying the extracted factors, is below .05, thus, indicating that all 13 coping styles items significantly affect the three extracted factors. As for model fit, the following table provides the fit indices which are employed as a means to decide whether our model is confirmed or that there is a need for re-specification using modification indices.

Table 7
Model Fit Indices of Coping Style

	Model fit Indices	Value	Threshold Criteria	Interpretation
Overall	CMIN/DF	3.619	Below 5	Acceptable
Comparisons	p-value χ^2	.000	Above .05	Significant/No Fit
	GFI	.872	Above .9	Tolerable
Baseline	TLI	.902	Above .9	Acceptable Fit
Comparisons	CFI	.935	Above .9	Acceptable Fit
Parsimony-	RMSEA	.069	Below .08	Acceptable Fit
Adjusted Measures	PNFI	.583	Above .5	Acceptable Fit

The probability level of CMIN/DF test which should be non-significant (above 0.05) is less than .05, indicating that we do not have a good fit. However, as previously discussed, we are dealing with a large sample size. Inspecting alternative indices, it is observed that the goodness of fit (GFI) is tolerable while the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) being higher than .9, lends support to the acceptability of the fit. The same is observed regarding the Confirmatory Fit Index (CFI).

Furthermore, RMSEA as the most important fit index is .069, which is below .05 indicating a good fit, thus, rendering the non-necessity of catering for modification indices.

Specifying the effects of management strategies on student achievement mediated by coping styles

Path analysis as part of the structural model, alongside the measurement model accounting for the relationship between observed variables and the latent factors, are deemed necessary. The following figure illustrates this combinatory model:

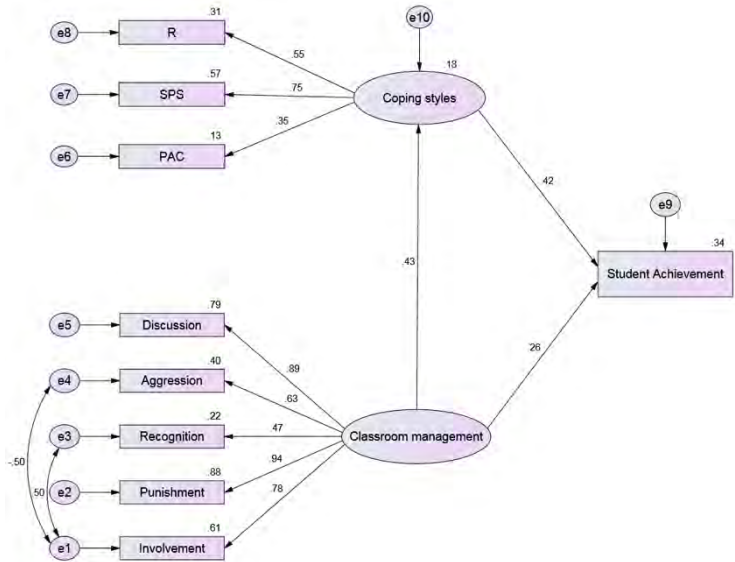


Figure 3. Structural Model mediated through Coping Styles

Through an initial visual inspection, we clearly see that most of the factor loadings regarding our variables are quite acceptable and above the threshold of 0.5, with two exceptions, that is, Recognition with a loading of 0.47 on 'Classroom management' and PAC with a loading of .35 on 'Coping Styles'. However, Table 8 provides support regarding the acceptability of this model.

Table 8
Model fit Indices of Coping styles

Model fit Indices		Value	Threshold Criteria	Interpretation
Overall	CMIN/DF	4.34	Below 5	Acceptable
Comparisons	p-value χ^2	.000	Above .05	Significant/No Fit
Baseline	GFI	.898	Above .9	Tolerable
Comparisons	TLI	.879	Above .9	Tolerable
Comparisons	CFI	.907	Above .9	Acceptable Fit
Parsimony-Adjusted Measures	RMSEA	.075	Below .08	Acceptable Fit
	PNFI	.524	Above .5	Acceptable Fit

Hypotheses

Having established the acceptable fit of the aforementioned models, we now move to the hypotheses of this study. The first hypothesis pertaining to the relationship between classroom management techniques and coping styles is confirmed by Table 9.

Table 9
Regression Weights of the Three Models

Standardized Estimate	P	C.R.	S.E.	Estimate	Dependent variable	Independent variable
.430	.001	3.525	.050	.177	Coping styles	Classroom management techniques
.424	.001	3.519	.791	2.785	Student Achievement	Coping styles
.260	.004	2.906	.243	.705	Student Achievement	Classroom management techniques

As can be seen from the first row, with a probability level of .001, classroom management techniques have a significantly positive effect (.177) on coping styles. The second hypothesis related to the effect of classroom management techniques on student achievement, can also be accounted for using Table 9. As revealed, with a probability level of .004, classroom management techniques have a significantly positive effect (.705) on student achievement.

The third hypothesis which was related to the effect of coping styles on student achievement is also confirmed. Thus, as disclosed through the second row, coping styles with a probability level of .001, have a significantly positive effect on student achievement. It is worth mentioning that coping styles with an estimation of 2.785, prove to be more effective on student achievement than classroom management techniques. As for the fourth hypothesis related to the mediating effect of coping styles regarding the relationship between classroom management techniques and student achievement, an attempt was made to bootstrap this mediating variable. In other words, the path coefficients related to coping styles were set to zero, as illustrated in the following figure.

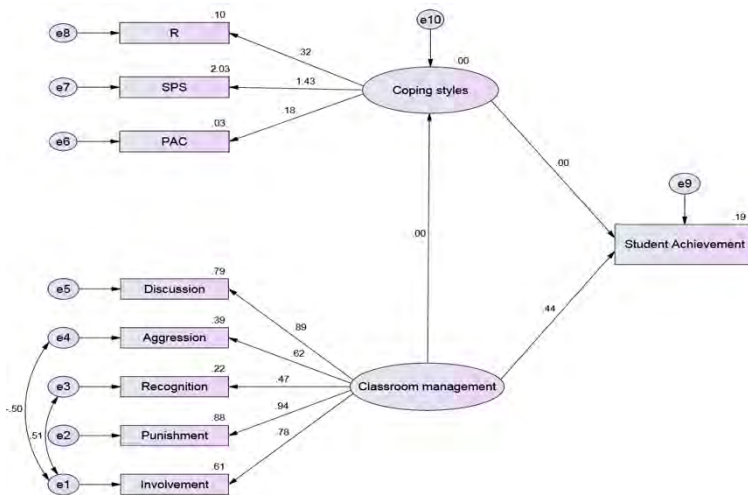


Figure 4. Bootstrapping Coping Styles in the Structural Model

Considering Table 10, it is revealed that classroom management techniques significantly impact student achievement even when coping styles are taken out of the equation.

Table 10
Regression Weights of Classroom Management Techniques on Student Achievement without the Mediating Coping Style

Standardized Estimate	P	C.R.	S.E.	Estimate	Dependent variable	Independent variable
				.000	CS	CM
				.000	SA	CS
.441	.001	5.668	.212	1.200	SA	CM

Table 10 shows that coping strategies independently had a significantly positive effect on achievement. Classroom management techniques were also significantly related to student achievement. It can, thus, be inferred that coping styles as a mediating variable has merely a subtle effect on the relationship between classroom management techniques and student achievement, thus, rejecting the fourth hypothesis.

Discussion

The study was carried out with the purpose of determining the management strategies and coping styles that EFL teachers used in their classroom and the causal relationship between the two regarding learners' EFL achievement. The results demonstrated that, overall, teachers reported the use of empirically validated classroom management strategies of 'hinting', 'discussion', 'involvement', 'recognition and reward', 'punishment', and 'aggression'. However, further analysis of the results obtained from descriptive statistics unveiled teachers' main use of positive classroom management techniques in an attempt to enhance their learners' achievement. Involvement' and 'recognition' strategies were used more often compared to the rather negative strategies such as 'punishment', 'aggression' and 'discussion'. In the meantime, similar to Adeyemo (2012), and Tran (2015), the results of SEM pinpointed a causal relationship between teachers' use of classroom management techniques and learners' achievement; accordingly, it can be inferred that the use of positive CM techniques potentially affect EFL learners' achievement. This finding implies that these strategies are closely connected to and embedded in positive teacher-learner interaction and overall achievement (Macfarlane, 2006; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2017).

The same pattern of results can also be described as regards the second attribute of the teachers, i.e., coping style/s. As evident from the descriptive statistics, teacher-participants made use of positive coping strategies of 'social problem solving' and 'relaxation' compared to the 'passive avoidant coping'. This reflects the power of positive inclination to cope with the raising challenges in the classroom in alleviating the problem/s, which may in turn, lead to enhanced performance by the learners. Otherwise stated, teachers mostly made use of the two coping styles of 'social problem solving' and 'relaxation', which could positively establish a relationship with the overall learner achievement compared to 'passive avoidant strategy'.

The findings, however, were unexpected in the sense that although both classroom management and coping style/s were effectively used by the teachers in the classroom, the latter, contrary to what Lewis et.al. (2011) reported, could not mediate the relationship between classroom management and learners' achievement. In other words, according to the statistical analysis, management led to positive outcomes with the absence of coping style use. This finding seems to imply that teachers considered themselves to be expertly managing behavior and learning in the classroom with negligible reliance on the scaffolding effect of coping styles in problematic situations.

Conclusion

The findings of the current study advocate research depicting that positive (proper) behavioral interventions and supportive learning environments can lead to change in learning behavior (Jones & Jones, 2004; Nasey, 2012). In other words, viable classroom management, more specifically the positive side, is an essential element for a fruitful learning environment and according to Kazemi and Soleiman (2017) contribute to successful teaching and learning. The correct strategies for managing students can improve and upgrade the odds of classroom management, increasing the path between management and achievement (Alomar, 2006). Accordingly, teachers who strive to enhance their learners' achievement by improving their teaching practices are suggested to gear their selection of classroom management style/s based on their experience, research outputs and screening learners' academic achievement. Teachers are recommended to use various classroom management techniques, inspired by many models based on the contextual requirements. For instance, according to Magableh and Hawamdeh (2007), teachers can use Assertive Discipline Model that suggests use of rewards to promote good behavior and prevent bad behavior. Alternatively, for those teachers seeking to produce desirable language learning results with learners, in line with Wheatley et al. (2009), one can propose classroom management strategy that uses the PRAISE note system to promote appropriate behaviors. This strategy which seems appropriate for Iranian EFL context can promote good behavior and learning through natural actions and behaviors in a classroom setting. Paciotti's (2010) description of a classroom management technique, namely, Caring Behavior Management that pertains to the caring aspect, also, seems appropriate. Paciotti's strategy makes use of positive reinforcement to create a positive learning environment.

This study was a preliminary investigation of teachers' use of classroom management strategies, coping styles and the results have been reported based on only one level of analysis, i.e. the interactional effects of CM, CS and learner achievement. A close scrutiny of the interconnections across the components of each variable may provide clearer picture. Besides, classroom management strategies are influenced by a large number of variables; therefore, a broader perspective could permit generalization to other educational contexts. Thus, future research should treat teacher variables such as gender, qualifications and education backgrounds as important factors that may affect the results. Further research could explore other dimensions of teacher practice, such as the distinctions in classroom management practices in different educational contexts in Iran, i.e., primary and secondary schools; among experienced and less experienced or beginning teachers; qualified, practicing teachers and non-qualified, trained professionals.

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