

## Coping Strategies of Greek 6th Grade Students: Their Relationship with Anxiety and Trait Emotional Intelligence

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**Abstract.** The aim of this study was to investigate children's coping strategies and explore their relationship with anxiety and trait emotional intelligence using a sample of 245 Greek 6th Grade students. Coping strategies are estimated with "*Kidcope - Children version*" (Spirito, Stark, & Williams, 1988). Trait Emotional Intelligence is measured with the "*Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire-Adolescent Short Form*" (TEIQue-ASF) (Petrides, Sangareeau, Furnhum, & Frederickson, 2006) and anxiety is assessed with "*State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children*" (STAIC; Spielberg, 1973). Students reported "wishful thinking" and "positive coping" as their most frequently used coping strategies, while "blame and anger" is the least used strategy. The results, also, show that trait emotional intelligence is positively correlated with "positive coping" and negatively correlated with "social withdrawal", "blame and anger", "passive acceptance/ distraction", and "wishful thinking". On the other hand, both trait and state anxiety were positively correlated with "social withdrawal", "wishful thinking", and "blame and anger", and positively correlated with "positive coping". The results are discussed in terms of their implications for future research and early adolescents' counselling.

**Keywords:** *Children's coping strategies, Trait Emotional Intelligence, State and Trait Anxiety*

### **Introduction**

Late childhood and early adolescence are associated with changes in almost all domains of life: social, physical, cognitive and educational. These changes are often the cause of heightened stress. There are also other issues that contribute to children's everyday stress, for example, negative events in their

environment and exposure by the media (economic crisis, refugee crisis, crimes, wars, etc.), family issues (financial problems, marital problems, divorce, illness, etc.), and school issues (peer interactions, academic achievements, bullying, etc.). Transition to Junior High school is a significant source of potential stress (Elias et al., 1992; Munsch & Wampler, 1993). This transition is accompanied with major changes in both social and academic contexts. Junior High school is much more demanding and complex than Primary Education School, while parents' demands for academic success increase (Eccles et al. 1993). At the same time children will have to enter a new learning and social environment, start developing a new peer network and adjust to the demands of the new teachers.

In Greece, the economic crisis has affected all major sectors of Greek social and economic life. According to Eurostat (10/2016) unemployment has reached an extremely high rate of over 23% while in the same period of 2008 it was reported as being under 8%, with an estimated 44% of the population living below the poverty line. Apart from the decrease of employment rates, the quality of employment has also deteriorated, as many individuals who remain employed are often forced to accept reduced working hours, and/ or lower salaries and benefits. An up to 40% reduction in salaries and pensions has forced Greeks to change their life style and adjust to a new reality within a very short period of time. These changes reflect an increase in psychological problems (Economou et al, 2011; Giotakos, 2010; Giotakos, Karampelas, & Kafkas, 2011); and have various negative effects on family life. As stressed by Takeuchi, Williams, & Adair (1991) long-term financial difficulties have often major effects on parents. They often exhibit symptoms of stress such as deterioration in physical health, and marital problems, while their parental behavior declines. The aforementioned issues are often felt by the children, thus increasing their own feelings of anxiety and stress (Wagner *et al.*, 2015).

### *Anxiety and stress*

The various stressful situations that children face may lead to feelings of anxiety. Anxiety can be defined as feelings of unease, worry, tension, and stress (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2011). Anxiety is not directly caused by stressors, but it is rather the reaction to the perception of stressors. Cattell and Scheier (1958, 1961) proposed a distinction between state and trait anxiety, based on factor analytic studies. Trait anxiety refers to a relatively stable and permanent characteristic of an individual, while state anxiety refers to a transient condition that may vary from day to day. In the same concept of ideas Spielberger and his colleagues (1970) conceptualized trait anxiety as an acquired behavioral disposition that reflects stable individual differences in anxiety proneness; and state anxiety as a temporary emotional state. Anxiety and stress may manifest with both physical symptoms and emotional and behavioral changes. Physical symptoms may

include headaches, fast heartbeat, muscle tension, upset stomach, back pain, cold or sweaty hands and feet, chest pain, dry mouth, upset stomach, digestive difficulties, and sweating (Frank, 2003). Emotional and behavioral changes may include: changes in appetite, trouble sleeping, feeling of frustration, loss of interest in previously interesting activities, poor self-esteem and self-efficacy, concentration problems, excessive worry, fatigue, reduced school productivity, self-medicating (abuse of drug or alcohol), hyperactivity, difficulty concentrating, disturbing dreams/ nightmares, irrational anger, and outbursts.

### *Coping mechanisms*

Coping refers to thoughts and/or behaviors that an individual takes in order to minimize the negative effect that stressful events cause (Lazarus, & Folkman, 1984). The aforementioned definition of coping includes both changes that someone can impose on his/herself (e.g. cognitive restructuring) and changes that someone can impose on his/ her environment in order to minimize the negative emotional effects that he/she is experiencing. Attempting to categorize the various coping strategies, most authors recognize two broad types of coping: “approach” and “avoidant” strategies (e.g. Dempsey, Overstreet, & Moley, 2000; Rosario, Salzinger, Feldman, & Ng-Mak, 2003). Whilst approach strategies try to address the problem by managing the stressor, avoidant strategies attempt to assuage the negative emotions by evading the stressor.

Exploring coping strategies used by children in Greece is of major importance in order to design interventions for empowering them against the most serious stressful events, such as the effects of the economic crisis. Such an understanding necessitates an adequate measure of coping among children. Given the relatively small number of available measures for assessing children’s coping mechanisms, the present study will investigate the psychometric properties of Kidcope (Spirito, Stark, & Williams, 1988), which is an instrument which is utilized worldwide, for measuring coping. . To our knowledge, this is the first time that this measure has been used among a Greek population.

### *Trait Emotional Intelligence*

According to Coleman (2008) emotional intelligence (EI) is a complex ability that includes monitoring one’s own and other people’s emotions, differentiating the various emotions and identifying them, and exhibiting the appropriate thinking and behavior. People with high EI are able to link intelligence, empathy and emotions; and subsequently to better understand the dynamics of interpersonal relationships (Mayer, 2008). Nevertheless, there are still substantial disagreements for the operational definition of EI. Two different EI constructs were proposed by Petrides and Furnham (2000, 2001, 2003): (a) trait

EI (or “trait emotional self-efficacy”) and (b) ability EI (or “cognitive-emotional stability”). Trait EI can be defined as a constellation of emotion-related self-perceived abilities and dispositions and can be measured with the use of self-report techniques. On the other hand, Ability EI can be defined as a constellation of emotion-related cognitive abilities and can be measured with the use of maximum performance tests.

Emotional Intelligence is considered to be closely linked with effective coping (Matthew, & Zeidner, 2001; Snyder & Dinoff, 1999). As Furnham, Petrides, and Spencer-Bowdage (2002) have found, EI seems to be associated with healthy social coping styles. According to Gohm, Corse and Dalsky (2005) there is a negative correlation between EI and “avoidant” coping strategies, such as alcohol-drug engagement and behavioral disengagement, while there is a positive correlation between EI and “approach” coping strategies, such as seeking social support and religious coping styles. Siegling and his colleagues (2015) had similar findings, although their study was focusing on the psychometric characteristics of Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Adolescent Short Form rather than exploring Trait EI relationship with coping styles. Nevertheless, there have been some recent studies that showed no correlation between ability EI and coping styles (Zeidner, Matthews, & Shemesh, 2016), and further research is needed.

### *The present study*

The present study examines coping strategies that Greek 6<sup>th</sup> grade students adopt in order to reduce anxiety. Furthermore, the present study aims to investigate the level of student’s anxiety and trait emotional intelligence and to explore the possible correlations between coping strategies, anxiety and trait emotional intelligence.

## **Methodology**

### *Participants*

The sample included 245 6th Grade students, 107 (43.7%) of whom were boys and 138 (56.3%) were girls. All students were enrolled in Greek public schools. Schools that were selected to take part in the study were derived from various regions of Athens to ensure that families of diverse socioeconomic status were included in the sample. We chose to conduct this research among 6th grade students because within the Greek educational system, sixth grade is the final grade of Primary Education, whereby students need to prepare for their

transition to Junior High School where they will have to face new challenges. This upcoming transition might function as an extra stressor for children.

### *Instruments*

*State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children* (STAIC; Spielberger, 1973) was used to measure children's distress. STAIC is a self-report psychometric tool which assesses state and trait anxiety of children aged between 8-18 years. STAIC provides two different scores: state anxiety and trait anxiety. Each scale consists of 20 items. Children are invited to report how they feel (e.g., calm, tense) at a particular moment in time (state scale) and how they feel in general (trait scale) rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale. STAIC was translated and adapted to Greek by Psychountakis (1995). Both STAIC-State and Trait scales have shown very good psychometric properties, and several studies with children support their reliability and validity. Evidence for the construct validity of the STAIC-State subscale has been presented (Spielberger, 1973). Additionally, STAIC-Trait scale exhibits relatively high correlations with other psychometric tools that assess similar constructs, which ensures its' concurrent validity. Internal consistency reliability coefficients in the present study were found to range from 0.82 (STAIC- trait scale) to 0.91 (STAIC- state scale).

*Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire – Adolescent Short Form* (TEIQue-ASF; Petrides, Sangareau, Furnhum, & Frederickson, 2006) was used to assess children's trait emotional intelligence. TEIQue is a self-report inventory that assesses emotion-related self-perceived abilities and dispositions. The adult full version of TEIQue encompasses four factors ("well-being", "self-control", "emotionality", and "sociability") that can be further divided into 15 subscales. It also provides a score for global trait EI (Petrides, 2009). The Adolescent Short Form is a more simplified version of the same questionnaire. It includes 30 short statements that assess the 15 trait EI facets, and can also provide an overall score for global trait EI. Although scores for the 15 subscales can be calculated, Petrides recommends the use of the global trait EI only for this version of the questionnaire. In our study internal consistency reliability coefficient is 0.86. According to its authors this form of the questionnaire can be addressed to children as young as 11 years old. It was translated and adapted to Greek by Petrides, Pita and Kokkinaki (2007). Several studies provided evidence regarding its incremental validity (e.g. Davis & Humphrey, 2012; Siegling et al., 2015).

*Kidcope – Children Version* (Spirito, Stark, & Williams, 1988) was used to assess children's coping strategies. KIDCOPE is a brief checklist that assesses both cognitive and behavioral coping strategies. There are two different versions of Kidcope: one for adolescents (aged 13 to 16 years) and one for younger children

(aged 5 to 13 years). The child version that was used in the present study is comprised of 15 items that measure the use of 10 coping mechanisms ("distraction", "social withdrawal", "cognitive restructuring", "self-criticism", "blaming others", "problem solving", "emotional regulation", "wishful thinking", "social support", and "resignation"). Although Kidcope is designed to assess both frequency (i.e. "How often did you do this?") and efficacy (i.e. "How helpful was it?") of the use of each strategy, in the present study only the frequency was measured. A four-point Likert-type scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "almost all the time" (4) is used. As there are few available instruments that assess children's coping strategies, Kidcope is widely utilised, although there are varying results regarding its psychometric properties and factor structure. Several different factor structures have been proposed. Among them, there are: a five-item single factor (Spirito, 1996), two factors (Cheng, & Chan, 2003; Spirito, 1996), three factors (Spirito, Stark, & Tyc, 1994; Vigna, Hernandez, Kelley, & Gresham, 2010), and four factors (Vernberg et al, 1996). It should be noted that even the studies with the same number of factors did not find the same factor structure. The aforementioned findings suggest that Kidcope's factor structure is not stable and may vary across diverse samples. Although the Kidcope measure has been used to measure coping strategies in a variety of populations, to our knowledge it is the first time that it has been used in Greece.

### *Procedure*

Special permission to conduct the research in Greek public Primary Education schools was granted by the Greek Ministry of Education. Subsequently, members of the research team explained the aim of the study to the school principals. The children that took part in the study were instructed to answer all questions with sincerity stressing that the questionnaires are anonymous, participation is voluntary, and the results will only be used for research purposes. Questionnaires were answered exclusively in class, while there were no time constraints.

### **Results**

As Kidcope's factor structure is not well established, factor analyses were performed in order to examine it. We chose to perform Exploratory factor analysis (instead of Confirmatory), as previous studies had presented a plethora of different factor structures in various populations.

EFA was performed to investigate Kidcope's internal structure. Factorability of the 15 items was checked with the use of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's test of sphericity. Both tests suggested reasonable factorability [KMO=0.62,  $\chi^2$  for the Bartlett's test of sphericity = 456,076 (df=105,  $p < .001$ )]. Factor analysis included 15 items for the 245 6<sup>th</sup> grade students. Multiple solutions with varying number of factors were examined using varimax and oblimin rotations as extraction methods. The final solution (using varimax rotation) revealed six (6) factors, to which 61.67% of the variance can be attributed; and was preferred because it provided the best interpretation of the factors. Internal reliability coefficients were rather low (Table 1), but it was expected due to the small number of items in each factor.

**Table 1.** Factor loadings based on PCA with varimax rotation for the 15 items of the Kidcope

<u>Items</u>	<u>Factors</u>					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
"Try to sort the problem out by doing something or talking to someone"	<b>.75</b>	-.27	-.05	-.11	-.01	-.04
"Try to sort out the problem by thinking of answers"	<b>.71</b>	-.19	.16	.26	.04	.02
"Try to see the good side of things"	<b>.55</b>	.31	-.34	.14	-.13	-.18
"Do nothing because the problem cannot be sorted anyway"	-.06	<b>.79</b>	.05	-.10	-.02	.02
"Keep quiet about the problem"	-.26	<b>.57</b>	.18	-.29	-.19	-.21
"Try to forget the problem"	.00	<b>.47</b>	-.16	.21	-.01	.12
"Do something like watch TV or play to forget it"	-.13	<b>.44</b>	.17	-.32	.42	.04
"Wish I could make things different"	.05	-.16	<b>.78</b>	-.15	-.11	.09
"Wish the problem never happened"	-.03	.17	<b>.75</b>	.14	.01	-.09
"Blaming someone else for causing the problem"	-.03	-.01	-.02	<b>-.78</b>	-.05	.02
"Shout, scream and get angry"	-.07	.06	.03	<b>-.75</b>	.02	-.07
"Stay on my own"	-.11	.21	.36	-.05	<b>-.65</b>	-.06
"Try to feel better by spending time with others"	.53	.15	.04	.03	<b>.60</b>	.09
"Try to calm down"	-.13	.01	.08	.12	.12	<b>.85</b>
"Blaming myself for causing the problem"	-.26	-.14	.25	.19	.48	<b>-.56</b>
Percentage of Variance explained (total: 61.67%)	12.84	11.35	10.87	10.70	8.12	7.79
Internal Consistency Coefficients	.52	.47	.55	.49	.40	.39

Based on the content of the items that constitute each component, they were correspondingly labeled:

Component 1, labeled *Positive Coping*, consisted of items that refer to behaviors focusing on solving the problem and on cognitive restructuring (e.g., “try to sort the problem by thinking of answers”, or “try to see the good side of things”).

Component 2, labeled *Passive acceptance/ Distraction*, included items that refer to behaviors of avoidance of the problem such as distraction and resignation (e.g., “Try to forget the problem”, “do nothing because the problem cannot be sorted anyway”).

The third component, labeled *Wishful Thinking*, included items pertaining to wishful thinking (e.g. “wish the problem never happened”).

The fourth component, labeled *Blame and anger*, consisted of items pertaining to behaviors like blaming others and to emotional outburst (e.g. “Blaming someone else for causing the problem”, “Shout, scream and get angry”).

Component 5, labeled *Social withdrawal*, consisted of items pertaining to behaviors such as seeking loneliness, and not spending time with others (e.g. “Stay on my own”, “try to feel better by spending time with others”). One item that had a reversed factor loading was reverse scored.

Component 6, labeled *Emotional Regulation*, included items pertaining to behaviors of remaining calm and not blaming one-self (e.g. “try to calm down”, “blaming myself for causing the problem”). One item that had a reversed factor loading was reverse scored.

Descriptive statistics were calculated for all variables (trait Emotional Intelligence, trait Anxiety, state Anxiety and the 6 coping factors). Means and standard deviations for each gender are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Means and standard deviations for each gender for all measures

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Total</i>		<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>		
Trait EI	144.86	27.23	143.14	25.98	143.81	26.43	63.00	203.00
Trait Anxiety	32.35	6.81	35.51	8.23	34.14	7.79	20.00	55.00
State Anxiety	30.71	6.47	32.37	7.90	31.63	7.33	20.00	54.00
<i>Coping factors</i>								
Positive Coping	2.98	0.64	2.91	0.70	2.94	0.67	1.00	4.00
Passive acceptance/Distraction	2.50	0.96	2.18	0.65	2.32	0.82	1.00	4.00

Wishful Thinking	2.82	0.83	3.18	0.81	3.02	0.84	1.00	4.00
Blame and Anger	1.85	0.86	1.72	0.70	1.77	0.77	1.00	4.00
Social Withdrawal	2.15	0.80	2.18	0.85	2.17	0.83	1.00	4.00
Emotional Regulation	2.60	2.22	2.43	0.85	2.50	1.60	1.00	4.00

Note. "Anxiety (State)": Min possible: 20, Max possible: 60. "Anxiety (Trait)": Min possible: 20, Max possible: 60, "Trait Emotional Intelligence": Min possible: 30, Max possible: 210, "Coping factors": Min possible: 1, Max possible: 4.

One-way MANOVA was conducted with gender as the independent factor and all measurements as depended variables. There was a statistically significant difference in measurements' scores based on students' gender,  $F(9, 193) = 3.08$ ,  $p = .002$ ; Wilk's  $\Lambda = 0.874$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .15$ . Gender has a statistically significant effect on trait anxiety ( $F(1, 201) = 7.46$ ;  $p < .01$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .04$ ), on passive acceptance/ distraction ( $F(1, 201) = 7.34$ ;  $p < .01$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .04$ ), and on wishful thinking ( $F(1, 201) = 9.45$ ;  $p < .005$ ; partial  $\eta^2 = .05$ ). With regard to trait anxiety, boys presented lower scores ( $M=32.35$ ,  $S.D.=6.81$ ) than girls ( $M=35.51$ ,  $S.D.=8.23$ ). Regarding coping strategies, boys had higher scores for passive acceptance/ distraction ( $M=2.50$ ,  $S.D.=0.96$ ) than their female classmates ( $M=2.18$ ,  $S.D.=0.65$ ), while girls had higher scores for wishful thinking ( $M= 3.18$ ,  $S.D.=0.81$ ) than boys ( $M=2.82$ ,  $S.D.=0.83$ ).

Subsequently, correlation coefficients (Pearson  $r$ ) among the 6 coping factors and Trait EI, Trait Anxiety and State Anxiety were calculated (Table 3). Trait EI has a moderate positive correlation with Positive Coping ( $r=.47$ ), a moderate negative correlation with Social Withdrawal ( $r=-.41$ ), and low negative correlations with Blame and Anger ( $r=-.36$ ), Passive acceptance/ Distraction ( $r=-.31$ ), and Wishful Thinking ( $r=-.14$ ). Trait Anxiety has a moderate positive correlation with Social Withdrawal ( $r=.45$ ), a low negative correlation with Positive Coping ( $r=-.25$ ), and low positive correlations with Wishful Thinking ( $r=.26$ ), and Blame and Anger ( $r=.15$ ). State Anxiety has a moderate positive correlation with Social Withdrawal ( $r=.44$ ), a low negative correlation with Positive Coping ( $r=-.31$ ), and low positive correlations with Wishful Thinking ( $r=.23$ ), and Blame and Anger ( $r=.20$ ).

**Table 3.** Correlation Coefficients (Pearson  $r$ ) among the 6 coping factors and Trait EI, Trait Anxiety and State Anxiety

Coping factors	Trait EI	Trait Anxiety	State Anxiety
Positive Coping	.47**	-.25**	-.31**
Passive acceptance/Distraction	-.31**	.07	.11
Wishful Thinking	-.14*	.26**	.23**
Blame and Anger	-.36**	.15*	.20**
Social Withdrawal	-.41**	.45**	.44**
Emotional Regulation	.02	-.02	.02

Note. \* $p < 0,05$ , \*\* $p < 0,01$ ,

## Discussion

The purpose of the present study was two-fold: to explore coping strategies of 6<sup>th</sup> grade Greek students, and to examine the relationship of coping strategies' with anxiety and trait emotional intelligence. Sixth grade students are preparing for the transition to Junior High School, and at the same time they are about to enter adolescence, both of which could function as major stressors.

In order to assess children's coping strategies, we used Kidcope, a widely accepted measurement of coping, and we examined its factor structure. Previous studies had suggested that Kidcope's factor structure is not stable and may vary across diverse samples (Cheng, & Chan, 2003; Spirito, 1996; Spirito, Stark, & Tyc, 1994; Vigna, Hernandez, Kelley, & Gresham, 2010; Vernberg et al, 1996). The EFA of Kidcope yielded 6 factors: Positive Coping, Passive Acceptance/ Distraction, Wishful Thinking, Blame and Anger, Social Withdrawal, and Emotional Regulation. The presence of 6 coping strategies might indicate that 6<sup>th</sup> grade students' coping strategies are quite differentiated. Although there were six clear factors, reliability coefficients were relatively poor, which might be attributed to the limited items that constitute each factor, and the children's young age (Altshuler, & Rumble, 1989).

The role of coping in child psychosocial adjustment has become the epicenter of several studies over the last decades. As various studies have shown, individuals who adopt active coping strategies, such as problem solving, are better functioning, in comparison to individuals who prefer coping strategies that are less active, such as social withdrawal (Endler & Parker, 1990; Peterson, 1989). According to our findings, Greek 6<sup>th</sup> grade students reported wishful thinking and positive coping as their most frequently used coping strategies. Emotional Regulation, Passive acceptance/ Distraction and Social Withdrawal are used less often, while Blame ad Anger is the least used strategy. These

findings suggest that Greek students use mainly functioning strategies that can result in reducing anxiety. Perhaps it would be interesting in future studies to examine whether different stressors (e.g. in the family, in school, etc.) result in the use of the same coping mechanisms.

Our hypothesis that children would demonstrate quite high levels of anxiety because of the effects of the economic crisis and the transition to high school and to adolescence was not supported. Students reported rather low levels of both State and Trait Anxiety. Although the role of parental attitudes in children's anxiety is undisputed (e.g. Bogels, & van Melick, 2004; Rapee, 1997; Sarason et al., 1960; Siqueland, Kendall, & Steinberg, 1996), further research is needed in order to explore the relationship between economic crisis and parental attitudes. It should be noted that the stressors adolescents experience may vary as they originate from different socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are preparing for the transition to high school, but the transition has not yet taken place, and they are still in a familiar environment. Perhaps the transition related stress will manifest within the next year, when the children actually begin attending high school. One of the possible explanations for the low levels of anxiety could be associated to the functioning coping strategies that are used.

There was no sex difference identified for State Anxiety, while for Trait Anxiety females reported higher levels than their male counterparts. There are several studies reporting preponderance of females in showing anxiety (e.g. Cole, Martin, Peeke, Seroczynski, & Fier, 1999; Lewinsohn, Gotlib, Lewinsohn, Seeley, & Allen, 1998). Multiple explanations have been proposed to explain this difference. McCauley Ohannessian and her colleagues (1999) associated anxiety with self-competence, and found evidence that the correlation between sex and trait anxiety decreased when the variance explained by self-competence was taken into account. Thus, these authors hypothesized that self-competence is a partial cause for the observed sex differences in depression and anxiety in early adolescents. Other studies (e.g. McLean, & Anderson, 2009) highlight the complexity of factors (biological influences, temperamental factors, cognitive factors, environmental factors) that might contribute to female predominance in anxiety.

The current study suggests that trait Emotional Intelligence levels were moderately high. This finding emerges in accordance to the low levels of anxiety, and the high frequency of using functioning coping strategies. As hypothesized, trait Emotional Intelligence was positively correlated with positive coping, and negatively correlated with social withdrawal, blame and anger, and Passive acceptance/ distraction. These findings are consistent with previous studies (e.g. (Matthew, & Zeidner, 2001; Snyder & Dinoff, 1999; Furnham, Petrides, and Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; Gohm, Corse and Dalsky, 2005)

that have suggested a positive relationship with “healthy” coping styles. The negative correlation of Emotional Intelligence with anxiety was expected because it is natural that trait emotional intelligence is not consistent with feelings of unease, worry, tension, and stress.

On the other hand, anxiety was expected to be positively correlated mainly to social withdrawal, which was the least frequently used coping strategy. This finding is consistent to previous studies that have shown that poor adjustment at the end of 6th grade was related to higher levels of school stress and less social support from family and teachers. Anxiety was also positively correlated to wishful thinking, blame and anger and negatively correlated to positive coping.

#### *Future research*

Our study highlights the necessity for further research in order to understand the coping mechanisms that Greek children use. Although, students reported the use of mainly functioning mechanisms, further investigation is needed to examine whether they exhibit the same mechanisms in different environments and stressors (e.g. school, family etc.). Students did not appear to exhibit high levels of stress as we hypothesized (due to their soon-to-be transition from Primary Education School to Junior High School). Future research should investigate whether increased stress appears in the first grades of Junior High School and whether students continue to have functioning coping mechanisms. Finally, further investigation should focus in the effects of Greece’s current economic situation in parental attitudes and subsequently in the effects of parental attitudes in their children’s anxiety levels and coping mechanisms.

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