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## Research Article

### Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Needs Satisfaction, and Stress of Teachers Amidst Pandemic

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#### ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic posed unprecedented challenges to the education sector, placing elementary teachers under sustained psychological and emotional strain due to increased workload, shifting instructional demands, and limited support systems. This study examined the relationships among emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress among elementary teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic as a basis for proposing a school-based mental health program. Employing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and integrated during interpretation. Quantitative data were gathered from 253 elementary teachers using standardized measures of emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress and were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests, and Pearson product-moment correlation. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with five (5) purposively selected teachers and analyzed using thematic analysis to explore lived experiences, perceived stressors, coping strategies, support systems, and personal growth.

Findings revealed a moderate level of emotional intelligence ( $M = 2.80$ ), generally satisfactory fulfillment of psychological needs, and occasional experiences of stress ( $M = 3.09$ ). Correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological need satisfaction ( $r = .521, p < .001$ ), while emotional intelligence ( $r = -.413, p < .001$ ) and psychological need satisfaction ( $r = -.367, p < .001$ ) were significantly and negatively associated with stress. Qualitative findings reinforced these results by demonstrating that emotional regulation, collegial and family support, acceptance, spirituality, and collaborative coping served as important protective mechanisms against work-related stress during crisis conditions. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings informed the development of the CARE-TEACH Program, a school-based mental health initiative designed to strengthen teachers' emotional intelligence,

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enhance psychological need satisfaction, and promote effective stress management. The findings underscore the importance of holistic and preventive mental health interventions in supporting teacher well-being and sustaining educational effectiveness during and beyond crisis situations.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 pandemic, Emotional intelligence, Mixed-methods research, Psychological need satisfaction, Teacher stress, Teacher well-being

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## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly transformed the educational landscape, creating unprecedented challenges for elementary teachers. Rapid shifts in instructional delivery, increased workload, and heightened accountability demands required teachers to adapt quickly to unfamiliar teaching conditions while balancing personal and family responsibilities. These circumstances placed considerable pressure on teachers' well-being and professional functioning, particularly in contexts where access to mental health support remained limited. Banal and Ortega-Dela Cruz (2022) noted that teachers' resilience was continually challenged by increased workload demands and changing professional expectations during this period.

In response to these challenges, researchers have increasingly emphasized the role of individual psychological resources in promoting adaptation and well-being. One such resource is emotional intelligence, which refers to the ability to perceive, understand, regulate, and utilize emotions effectively (Brackett et al., 2019). Teachers with stronger emotional intelligence are generally better equipped to manage emotional demands, maintain positive interpersonal relationships, and respond constructively to workplace challenges. These competencies contribute to resilience and sustained professional effectiveness, particularly during periods of uncertainty and change.

Beyond emotional intelligence, teachers' well-being is also influenced by the extent to which their fundamental psychological needs are fulfilled. Psychological need satisfaction, grounded in Self-Determination Theory, encompasses the fulfillment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These needs serve as

important foundations for motivation, engagement, and overall well-being. While emotional intelligence enables individuals to regulate emotional experiences, psychological need satisfaction provides the supportive conditions necessary for maintaining motivation and positive functioning. Consequently, the two constructs are conceptually interconnected and may jointly influence how teachers experience and manage occupational stress.

Previous studies have shown that unmet psychological needs can negatively affect well-being and increase vulnerability to stress. Cahapay and Bangoc II (2022) reported that hope and resilience mediated the relationship between stress and life satisfaction among Filipino teachers, highlighting the importance of psychological resources in sustaining well-being. Likewise, Kim et al. (2022) found that teachers experienced declines in well-being when confronted with prolonged professional demands and limited support. These findings suggest that teachers' stress experiences are shaped not only by external pressures but also by the interaction of emotional competencies and psychological need fulfillment.

Although existing studies have independently examined emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and teacher stress, limited research has explored the relationships among these variables within a single framework, particularly among elementary teachers in the Philippine context. Understanding how these factors interact may provide valuable insights for developing responsive mental health interventions that support teachers' well-being and professional effectiveness.

Guided by these concerns, the present study examined the relationship among emo-

tional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress of elementary teachers amidst the pandemic. Specifically, it sought to:

- (i) describe the profile of the elementary teacher respondents in terms of sex, age, civil status, educational attainment, years in service, grade level handled, and teaching position;
- (ii) determine the level of emotional intelligence of the elementary teachers;
- (iii) determine the level of psychological need satisfaction of the elementary teachers;
- (iv) identify the level of stress experienced by the elementary teachers;
- (v) test whether there are significant differences in emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress when respondents are grouped according to their profile variables;
- (vi) examine the significant relationships among emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress of elementary teachers;
- (vii) explore teachers' lived experiences, perceived stressors, support systems, coping strategies, and personal growth in managing emotional demands, psychological needs, and work-related stress during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- (viii) develop a proposed mental health program for school districts aimed at enhancing teachers' emotional intelligence

and psychological need satisfaction while reducing their stress levels.

The relationships among the key variables examined in the study are illustrated in Figure 1. The conceptual framework positions emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and teacher stress as interrelated constructs while considering the possible influence of selected demographic characteristics. Emotional intelligence and psychological need satisfaction are viewed as important psychological resources that may influence teachers' experiences of stress. The framework assumes that teachers with stronger emotional competencies and greater fulfillment of their psychological needs are more likely to demonstrate positive psychological functioning and lower levels of stress.

The framework also serves as the analytical basis for examining the relationships among the study variables. Findings derived from these relationships are expected to provide empirical evidence that may guide the development of a school-based mental health program for teachers. By investigating these interrelated factors, the study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of teacher well-being and generate information that can inform future intervention planning and support mechanisms within educational settings.

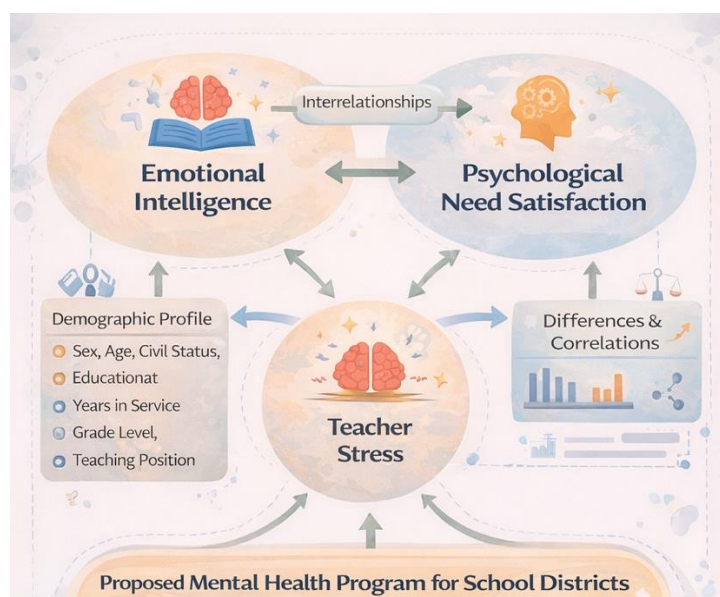


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

## Literature

### ***Emotional Intelligence of Teachers During Challenging Educational Contexts***

Recent empirical studies underscore the critical role of emotional intelligence in supporting teachers' psychological functioning and professional effectiveness. Geraci et al. (2023) demonstrated that teachers with higher emotional intelligence reported lower levels of burnout and higher levels of work engagement and self-efficacy, emphasizing emotional intelligence as an important personal resource for emotion regulation and workplace adaptation. Similarly, Barros et al. (2025) found that emotional intelligence moderated the relationship between psychosocial risk factors and burnout, reducing the adverse effects of stressful working conditions. These findings suggest that emotionally intelligent teachers are better equipped to manage professional demands, maintain motivation, and preserve well-being in demanding educational environments.

Additional evidence reinforces emotional intelligence as a protective factor against occupational stress. Iacolino et al. (2023) reported that higher emotional intelligence was associated with lower stress levels among teachers, with metacognitive abilities strengthening self-awareness and adaptive coping strategies. Likewise, a systematic review by Cervellione et al. (2025) identified emotional intelligence as a key psychological resource that promotes resilience, emotional regulation, and stress management across educational settings. The review further highlighted the effectiveness of interventions such as emotional skills training, reflective practices, and mindfulness-based programs in improving teacher well-being. Collectively, these studies support the relevance of emotional intelligence as an important factor in understanding teachers' psychological adjustment and occupational well-being.

While emotional intelligence primarily concerns the ability to recognize and regulate emotions, teachers' well-being is also influenced by the extent to which their fundamental psychological needs are fulfilled. Emotional competencies may help teachers establish positive relationships, develop a stronger sense of competence, and maintain autonomy in their professional roles. Consequently, emotional

intelligence and psychological need satisfaction may operate as complementary psychological resources that contribute to positive functioning and reduced stress.

### ***Psychological Need Satisfaction and Teacher Well-Being***

Research grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) consistently shows that satisfaction of teachers' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness is a key predictor of well-being and adaptive functioning. When teachers perceive their work environments as supportive of these needs, they report higher job satisfaction, stronger work engagement, and lower emotional exhaustion. Harrison et al. (2025) found that psychological need satisfaction positively influenced teacher well-being through supportive school climates and positive relationships with students and colleagues. Similarly, Zhang and Yoon (2025) demonstrated that need satisfaction was positively associated with teachers' work engagement, with organizational identification and job satisfaction serving as important mediating mechanisms.

Recent studies further emphasize the role of psychological need satisfaction in promoting positive professional outcomes. Wei et al. (2024) reported that basic psychological need satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between teachers' strengths use and both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being at work. Likewise, El Aadmi-Laamech et al. (2025) found that fulfillment of basic psychological needs within online teacher communities enhanced self-efficacy and professional engagement. These findings affirm that psychological need satisfaction serves as a critical foundation for teacher motivation, effectiveness, and well-being.

Because emotional intelligence and psychological need satisfaction both contribute to adaptive functioning, examining their relationship provides a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences. However, despite their theoretical connection, both constructs may ultimately influence another important aspect of teachers' professional lives: their experience of occupational stress.

## **Teacher Stress and Its Psychosocial Determinants**

Teacher stress remains a significant concern because of its influence on professional effectiveness, well-being, and retention. Research consistently shows that elevated stress levels are associated with burnout, reduced coping capacity, lower job satisfaction, and stronger intentions to leave the profession. Reinke et al. (2025) identified workload pressure, role ambiguity, and emotional exhaustion as major contributors to teacher stress, while Sanchis-Giménez et al. (2024) reported that psychosocial risks such as work overload, role conflict, interpersonal tensions, and job insecurity were strongly associated with heightened stress and burnout. Similar evidence from the Philippine context was reported by Labrague and De los Santos (2021), who found that psychological distress was significantly associated with reduced work satisfaction and increased intentions to leave one's profession, highlighting the importance of psychological well-being in sustaining workforce resilience during periods of crisis and uncertainty.

Evidence from the Philippines supports these findings by showing that teacher stress is influenced not only by workload and role demands but also by the availability of psychological and social resources. Banal and Ortega-Dela Cruz (2022) reported that increased workload pressures challenged teachers' resilience and coping capacities, while Cahapay and Bangoc II (2022) found that hope and resilience significantly mitigated the negative effects of stress on teachers' well-being. These studies suggest that occupational stress is shaped by the dynamic interaction between workplace demands and teachers' internal psychological resources, reinforcing the importance of interventions that strengthen emotional and psychological well-being.

These findings suggest that occupational stress emerges from the interaction between workplace demands and available psychological resources. Teachers who possess stronger emotional competencies and experience greater fulfillment of their psychological needs may be better positioned to cope with professional challenges and maintain well-being. Consequently, investigating the relationships

among emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress may provide valuable insights for designing interventions that support teachers' mental health and professional sustainability.

Collectively, these studies indicate that emotional intelligence functions as a protective psychological resource that enhances teachers' capacity to regulate emotions, cope with occupational demands, and sustain professional well-being. Similar patterns have been observed in the Philippine context. Banal and Ortega-Dela Cruz (2022) found that Filipino teachers relied heavily on resilience and adaptive coping strategies to manage increased workload demands, while Cahapay and Bangoc II (2022) demonstrated that positive psychological resources such as hope and resilience significantly buffered the adverse effects of stress on teachers' life satisfaction. Taken together, international and Philippine-based evidence suggests that emotional competencies and related psychological resources play a crucial role in promoting teacher well-being and adaptation in demanding educational environments.

## **Materials and Methods**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a mixed-methods convergent parallel design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed independently, and integrated during interpretation to develop a comprehensive understanding of elementary teachers' emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This design is well suited to educational research conducted in crisis contexts, as it allows numerical trends to be examined alongside teachers' lived experiences, thereby enhancing the explanatory power of the findings. Recent pandemic-related studies have demonstrated the value of convergent mixed-methods approaches in capturing both measurable psychological outcomes and the contextual realities shaping educators' professional lives (Remmers de Vries & Gonzales-Wong, 2025).

The effectiveness of this design is further supported by studies that combined quantita-

tive surveys with qualitative interviews to explain how teachers interpret and respond to post-pandemic educational demands. For instance, Yani et al. (2023) employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to integrate statistical data with narrative accounts, enabling a deeper understanding of teachers' motivations and perceptions beyond what quantitative data alone could reveal. In the present study, the quantitative strand addressed objectives related to levels, group differences, and relationships among emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress, while the qualitative strand provided explanatory depth by clarifying how these psychological conditions were experienced in practice. The integration of both strands strengthened interpretive validity and ensured coherence between the research design and the study objectives.

Integration was planned from the outset of the study and implemented through a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed independently, and merged during the interpretation phase using a side-by-side comparison approach. This process involved examining areas of convergence, complementarity, and divergence between the two datasets to develop a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress.

Quantitative findings were contextualized through participants' lived experiences, while qualitative narratives were used to validate, explain, and expand statistical results. Through this integration process, the study strengthened interpretive validity, enhanced the depth of analysis, and ensured coherence between the research design, study objectives, and overall conclusions.

**Participants and Sampling**

The quantitative participants consisted of 253 permanent elementary teachers from two public school districts in a municipality in the MIMAROPA Region. Teachers represented diverse grade levels and teaching positions, ranging from Teacher I to Master Teacher II. For the qualitative strand, five (5) elementary teachers were purposively selected from the quantitative participants based on their survey results, particularly those who demonstrated relatively low emotional intelligence and psychological need satisfaction and high stress levels. These participants were considered information-rich cases capable of providing meaningful insights into work-related challenges, coping mechanisms, support systems, and psychological experiences during the pandemic. The interview participants varied in terms of sex, age, years of teaching experience, grade level assignment, and teaching position to capture diverse perspectives and experiences.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Qualitative Interview Participants

Participants Code	Gender	AAge	Marital Status	Length of Service	Grade Level Handled	Position	Educational Attainment
A	Female	48	Married	17	I	Teacher I	No Masteral unit
B	Female	42	Married	30	VI	Teacher I	With Masteral Unit
C	Female	35	Married	25	III	Teacher 3	With Masteral Unit
D	Female	55	Married	35	III	Teacher I	No masteral Unit
E	Female	30	Married	35	II	Teacher 1	No masteral unit

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the five qualitative interview participants. All participants were female and married, with ages ranging from 30 to 55 years and teaching experience ranging from 17 to 35 years. They represented different grade-level assignments, teaching positions, and educational backgrounds. The diversity of their professional experiences provided varied perspectives on

emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress during the pandemic, thereby enriching the qualitative findings of the study.

**Instruments and Data Collection**

Data were gathered using standardized self-report instruments administered online to ensure accessibility and health safety.

Emotional intelligence was measured using the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory, which assesses intrapersonal, interpersonal, stress management, adaptability, and general mood dimensions. Psychological need satisfaction was measured using the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale, grounded in self-determination theory and widely used in occupational contexts to assess autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The theoretical relevance of these needs in workplace functioning and well-being is well established (Van den Broeck et al., 2021).

Teacher stress was measured using the Teacher Stress Scale, a multidimensional tool capturing workload, interpersonal, time-related, and emotional stressors. The use of self-report measures is consistent with teacher research in which subjective psychological experiences are central to understanding occupational well-being (Kim et al., 2022).

The instruments selected for this study have demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity in previous research. The Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory demonstrated excellent internal consistency ( $\alpha = .97$ ), while the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction and Frustration Scale reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .64 to .89 across its subscales. The Teacher Stress Scale, adapted from the Wilson Stress Profile for Teachers (WSPT), demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency with a reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .83 (Rosenberg, 2010). Content validity was

established through expert development and prior validation studies, while construct validity was supported by the extensive application of these instruments in educational and occupational research settings.

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews focusing on teachers' emotional experiences, perceived needs, support systems, coping strategies, and stressors during the pandemic.

### Data Analysis and Integration

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and Pearson product-moment correlation to address objectives related to levels, group differences, and relationships among variables. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving systematic coding, categorization, and theme development. Integration occurred at the interpretation stage, where qualitative themes were used to explain, validate, and expand quantitative results, ensuring coherence between statistical patterns and lived experiences.

### Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was secured from the appropriate education authorities. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. All data were handled in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

## Result and Discussion

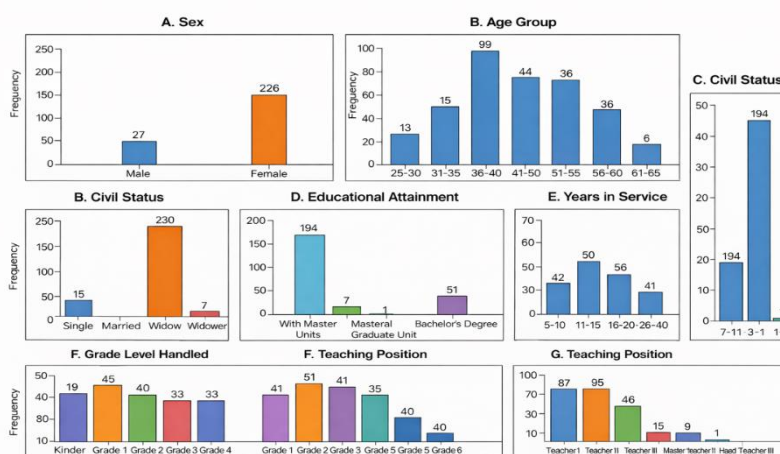


Figure 2. Demographic Profile of Elementary Teacher respondents (n=253)

As shown in Figure 2, Demographic Profile of Elementary Teacher Respondents, the teaching workforce is predominantly female, largely married, and composed mainly of mid-career educators. This pattern reflects the everyday realities of elementary teaching, where professional responsibilities often overlap with family roles. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these overlapping demands intensified emotional strain, as teachers were required to adjust to changing instructional conditions while managing household and caregiving responsibilities. Research on teachers' subjective well-being during the pandemic indicates that emotional fatigue and stress were closely linked to the pressure of balancing work and personal life under prolonged uncertainty (Syukroni et al., 2022). The demographic distribution illustrated in Figure 2 therefore provides important context for understanding teachers' stress and well-being.

Although many respondents demonstrate substantial teaching experience and higher educational attainment, these factors alone do not ensure psychological well-being. As reflected in Figure 2, most teachers remain in classroom-based positions where sustained emotional and relational demands are present. Psychological well-being is shaped less by tenure or qualifications and more by the extent to which teachers feel supported, competent, and connected within their work environments (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2013). In diverse and evolving school contexts, supportive climates strengthen teachers' confidence and emotional adjustment, enabling them to cope more effectively with stress (Ulbricht et al., 2022). These patterns highlight the relevance of examining emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress as interconnected dimensions of teachers' professional well-being.

Table 2. Emotional Intelligence of the Participants (n=253)

Sub-variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Interpretation
Emotional Self-Awareness	3.19	0.65	3	Occasionally
Assertiveness	2.89	0.7	8	Occasionally
Intrapersonal Self-Regard	2.9	0.7	7	Occasionally
Self-Actualization	2.65	0.72	9	Occasionally
Independence	2.12	0.78	14	Seldom
Empathy	2.64	0.63	10	Occasionally
Interpersonal Relationship	3.03	0.67	5	Occasionally
Social Responsibility	3.06	0.8	4	Occasionally
Problem Solving	3.56	1.1	1	Very Often
Reality Testing	2.62	0.8	11.5	Occasionally
Flexibility	2.43	0.71	13	Seldom
Stress Tolerance	2.98	0.78	6	Occasionally
Impulse Control	1.98	0.8	15	Seldom
Happiness	2.62	0.65	11.5	Occasionally
Optimism	3.4	1.2	2	Occasionally
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.80</b>			<b>Occasionally</b>

As presented in Table 2, the overall emotional intelligence of the elementary teachers was rated at the Occasionally level, with a grand mean of 2.80, indicating a moderate level of emotional intelligence. Among the sub-variables, problem solving and optimism obtained the highest mean scores, suggesting that teachers generally demonstrated the ability to approach challenges constructively and maintain

a positive outlook. These findings support the assertion of Geraci et al. (2023) that emotional intelligence contributes to teachers' work engagement, self-efficacy, and effective professional functioning.

In contrast, independence, flexibility, and impulse control obtained the lowest ratings and were interpreted at the Seldom level.

These results indicate limitations in self-regulation and adaptability, suggesting that some teachers may experience difficulty managing emotions and adjusting to changing professional demands. Similar findings were reported by Iacolino et al. (2023), who found that lower levels of emotional regulation were associated with increased vulnerability to occupational stress. Likewise, Barros et al. (2025) emphasized that deficiencies in emotional regulation may heighten susceptibility to burnout and other adverse workplace outcomes.

The findings suggest that while teachers possess strengths in problem solving and optimism, certain emotional regulation competencies require further development. Consistent with the review of Cervellione et al. (2025), emotional intelligence serves as an important psychological resource that supports resilience, well-being, and professional effectiveness. The results therefore highlight the value of interventions that strengthen self-regulation, adaptability, and emotional management skills among teachers.

Table 3. Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction of the Respondents

Sub-Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Interpretation
Autonomy Satisfaction	3.69	0.6	3	Agree
Autonomy Frustration	3.00	0.66	4	Neither agree
Relatedness Satisfaction	4.01	0.66	1	Agree
Relatedness Frustration	2.16	0.73	6	Disagree
Competence Satisfaction	3.88	0.66	2	Agree
<b>Competence Frustration</b>	<b>2.26</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

The distribution of scores in Table 3 indicates that elementary teachers generally experienced adequate satisfaction of their basic psychological needs, with relatedness emerging as the most strongly fulfilled dimension, followed by competence and autonomy. This pattern suggests that, despite the constraints imposed by the pandemic, teachers were still able to maintain meaningful connections with colleagues and learners. Such interpersonal support is a central component of psychological well-being, particularly in crisis contexts where uncertainty and isolation are heightened. Consistent with this observation, Harrison et al. (2025) emphasized that positive relationships within the school environment play a critical role in sustaining teachers' well-being by meeting their need for relatedness.

Competence satisfaction was also relatively high, reflecting teachers' confidence in their ability to manage instructional demands even under disrupted conditions. This finding aligns

with Wei et al. (2024), who reported that fulfillment of competence needs enables teachers to draw on their strengths and experience both emotional and professional well-being. In contrast, autonomy satisfaction was comparatively lower, suggesting that pandemic-related policies and structured instructional requirements may have limited teachers' sense of choice and control. Nevertheless, the absence of pronounced need frustration indicates that these constraints did not severely undermine motivation or engagement. Similar conclusions were drawn by Zhang and Yoon (2025) and El Aadmi-Laamech et al. (2025), who noted that supportive organizational contexts can preserve teachers' motivation and well-being even when autonomy is partially restricted. Taken together, the results underscore the importance of fostering balanced psychological need satisfaction as a foundation for teacher well-being and sustainable professional functioning.

Table 4. Level of Stress of the Respondents

Sub-Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Interpretation
Teacher Stress Scale	3.09	0.77	1	Occasionally
Student Behavior	2.35	0.78	6.5	Occasionally
Employee and Administration	1.69	0.84	9	Occasionally

Sub-Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank	Interpretation
Teacher and Teacher Relations	1.60	0.80	10	Occasionally
Student-Teacher Relations	2.61	0.77	4	Occasionally
Time Management	2.65	0.89	3	Occasionally
Interpersonal Conflict	2.35	0.81	6.5	Occasionally
Physical Symptoms	2.55	0.98	5	Occasionally
Psychological Emotional Stress	2.03	0.89	8	Occasionally
<b>Stress Management Technique</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>0.70</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>

As shown in Table 4, Level of Stress of the Respondents, the overall stress level of elementary teachers was interpreted as *Occasionally*, with a mean score of 3.09, indicating the presence of stressors that were recurrent but not constant. Among the stress dimensions, *time management* and *stress management techniques* ranked highest, suggesting that teachers frequently struggled with balancing instructional demands and personal coping strategies during the pandemic. This pattern reflects the findings of Reinke et al. (2025), who identified workload pressure and emotional exhaustion as major contributors to elevated stress and reduced coping capacity among teachers in post-pandemic contexts.

Lower mean scores were observed in areas related to *administrative relations* and *teacher-to-teacher relations*, indicating that

interpersonal dynamics within the school environment were not the primary sources of stress for most respondents. Instead, stress appeared to be driven more by task-related and role-related demands than by social conflict. This aligns with Sanchis-Giménez et al. (2024), who emphasized that work overload, role ambiguity, and time pressure were more strongly associated with teacher stress than interpersonal tensions. The moderate yet persistent stress levels reflected in Table 4 highlight how intensified job demands, even in the absence of severe relational conflict, can accumulate and affect teachers' well-being. These findings underscore the importance of organizational measures that promote workload regulation, role clarity, and accessible stress management support to mitigate psychosocial strain during and beyond crisis situations.

Table 5. Significant Differences in Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Need Satisfaction, and Teacher Stress When Grouped According to Profile Variables

( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

Profile Variable	Emotional Intelligence	Psychological Need Satisfaction	Teacher Stress	Overall Interpretation
<b>Sex</b>	No significant differences across all EI domains	No significant differences	No significant differences	Male and female teachers exhibited comparable emotional intelligence, need satisfaction, and stress levels
<b>Age</b>	No significant differences	<b>Autonomy Frustration, Relatedness Frustration</b>	<i>Student Behavior</i>	Age-related differences emerged in need frustration and stress linked to student behavior
<b>Civil Status</b>	<b>Independence</b>	No significant differences	<i>Student Behavior</i>	Civil status influenced independence and stress related to student behavior

Profile Variable	Emotional Intelligence	Psychological Need Satisfaction	Teacher Stress	Overall Interpretation
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	No significant differences	No significant differences	No significant differences	Psychological outcomes were consistent regardless of educational level
<b>Years in Service</b>	No significant differences	No significant differences	No significant differences	Length of teaching experience did not differentiate EI, need satisfaction, or stress
<b>Grade Level Handled</b>	No significant differences	<b>Competence Satisfaction</b>	No significant differences	Teaching assignment influenced perceived competence
<b>Teaching Position</b>	No significant differences	<b>Competence Satisfaction</b>	No significant differences	Higher teaching positions were associated with stronger competence satisfaction

Table 5 indicates that there were no statistically significant differences in emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and overall stress levels of teachers when grouped according to sex. This finding suggests that male and female teachers experienced comparable psychological conditions during the pandemic, reflecting a shared exposure to heightened work demands, uncertainty, and prolonged stressors. Similar patterns were reported by Decin et al. (2022), who found that teachers' quality of life and coping strategies during COVID-19 were influenced more by employment conditions and workload pressures than by sex-based differences. These results imply that the pandemic created a largely uniform psychological experience among teachers, regardless of gender.

The absence of significant sex-based differences is further supported by broader empiri-

cal evidence indicating that emotional intelligence and stress-related outcomes operate as relatively universal constructs across demographic groups. Doğru's (2022) meta-analysis demonstrated that emotional intelligence consistently predicts positive employee outcomes across diverse populations, underscoring its protective role irrespective of sex. Likewise, Wang et al. (2025) showed that teacher stress was more strongly shaped by societal and school-context factors, as well as coping resources, than by demographic characteristics in both the United States and the United Kingdom. Taken together, the findings in Table 5 reinforce the importance of inclusive, system-level mental health and psychosocial interventions for teachers, aligning with the Department of Education's (2021) emphasis on school-wide support mechanisms rather than sex-specific approaches.

Table 6. Correlation Matrix of Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Need Satisfaction, and Stress of the respondents

Correlations		Emotional Intelligence	Psychological Need Satisfaction	Stress
<b>Emotional Intelligence</b>	Pearson Correlation	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	—		
	N	253		
<b>Psychological Need Satisfaction</b>	Pearson Correlation	.521**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	—	
	N	253	253	

**Correlations**

		<b>Emotional Intelligence</b>	<b>Psychological Need Satisfaction</b>	<b>Stress</b>
<b>Stress</b>	Pearson Correlation	-.413**	-.367**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	—
	N	253	253	253

Legend: (Cohen, 1988); Values Interpretation: 10 - .29 = small/weak correlation; 30 - .49 = medium/moderate correlation; .50 - 1.0 = large/strong correlation

Table 6 shows statistically significant relationships among emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress among elementary teachers. Emotional intelligence demonstrates a strong positive correlation with psychological need satisfaction ( $r = .521, p < .001$ ), indicating that teachers who are more emotionally intelligent are more likely to experience higher levels of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their work environment. This finding aligns with evidence that emotionally intelligent educators are better able to regulate emotions, build supportive relationships, and maintain a sense of control and effectiveness in their roles, particularly during adverse conditions. Studies by Maharaj and Ramsaroop (2022, 2024) similarly reported that emotional intelligence significantly enhances educators' quality of life and well-being by fostering adaptive coping, emotional regulation, and alignment with personal and professional values during the COVID-19 period.

The table further reveals moderate negative correlations between emotional intelligence and stress ( $r = -.413, p < .001$ ), as well as

between psychological need satisfaction and stress ( $r = -.367, p < .001$ ). These results suggest that higher emotional intelligence and greater fulfillment of basic psychological needs are associated with lower perceived stress among teachers. This pattern is consistent with research indicating that emotional intelligence serves as a protective factor against stress by enhancing resilience and emotional coping, while need satisfaction buffers the impact of work-related pressures. Empirical support is provided by Villa and Valle (2025), who found that teachers with higher emotional intelligence exhibited greater resiliency, and by García-Álvarez et al. (2021), who emphasized the role of positive psychological resources in reducing stress and promoting well-being during and after the pandemic. Overall, the relationships presented in Table 5 underscore the interconnected roles of emotional intelligence and psychological need satisfaction in mitigating teacher stress, reinforcing their importance as key targets for school-based mental health and well-being interventions

Table 7. Matrix of Teachers' Lived Experiences, Stressors, Support Systems, Coping Strategies, and Personal Growth During the COVID-19 Pandemic

<b>Analytic Dimension</b>	<b>Core Themes</b>	<b>Key Descriptions / Illustrative Experiences</b>	<b>Link to Study Variables</b>
<b>Lived Experiences</b>	Intensified work demands and blurred work-life boundaries	Teachers described experiencing double workload, overwhelming compliance requirements, and disorganized work-from-home arrangements, leading to fatigue and emotional strain	Increased <b>emotional demands</b> contributing to higher <b>stress levels</b>
<b>Perceived Stressors</b>	Workload pressure and role-related challenges	Repetitive reporting requirements, fear of miss-	Undermined <b>competence satisfaction</b>

Analytic Dimension	Core Themes	Key Descriptions / Illustrative Experiences	Link to Study Variables
		ing deadlines, limited internet access, and health-related anxiety were commonly identified stressors	and heightened <b>work-related stress</b>
<b>Support Systems</b>	Collegial, leadership, and family support	Teachers highlighted mutual assistance among colleagues, leaders who listened and provided guidance, and strong family support	Fulfillment of <b>relatedness needs</b> that buffered stress
<b>Coping Strategies</b>	Acceptance, spirituality, and collaborative coping	Teachers coped by accepting the situation, engaging in prayer, and learning collaboratively with peers	Reflects <b>emotional regulation</b> and adaptive <b>emotional intelligence</b>
<b>Personal Growth</b>	Resilience, ethical grounding, and peer empowerment	Teachers reported personal growth manifested through resilience, joy in helping others, ethical decision-making, and learning despite difficulties	Strengthened <b>emotional intelligence</b> and sustained motivation

Table 7 illustrates that teachers’ lived experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic were characterized by intensified work demands and blurred work-life boundaries, resulting in emotional fatigue and heightened stress. Narratives describing double workload, overwhelming compliance requirements, and disorganized work-from-home arrangements suggest that teaching responsibilities extended beyond instruction and required sustained emotional labor. These experiences support previous findings that teacher stress during crisis situations is often driven by increased workload, expanded professional responsibilities, and persistent uncertainty. Similarly, Decin et al. (2022) reported that work pressures and employment-related demands significantly influenced teachers’ quality of life, well-being, and coping capacity.

The findings further reveal that repetitive reporting requirements, fear of missing deadlines, limited internet access, and health-related concerns contributed to teachers’ stress experiences. These challenges undermined teachers’ sense of competence and intensified

work-related strain. Despite these difficulties, collegial, leadership, and family support emerged as important sources of assistance. Such support systems helped satisfy teachers’ need for relatedness and provided emotional resources that lessened the impact of workplace stress. This finding aligns with self-determination and occupational stress literature, which emphasizes the protective role of supportive interpersonal environments in maintaining psychological well-being during demanding circumstances (Van den Broeck et al., 2021).

Teachers also demonstrated adaptive coping strategies through acceptance, spirituality, and collaborative learning. These approaches reflect emotional regulation processes associated with emotional intelligence and enabled participants to manage challenges constructively. Consistent with Maharaj and Ramsaroop (2022), the use of adaptive coping strategies contributed not only to stress management but also to personal growth, resilience, and sustained motivation. Overall, the qualitative findings complement the quantitative results by

illustrating how emotional intelligence and psychological need satisfaction functioned as protective resources that helped teachers

navigate workplace demands and maintain psychological well-being during the pandemic.



Figure 3. CARE-TEACH: A School-Based Mental Health Program for Enhancing Teachers' Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Need Satisfaction, and Stress Management

## Limitations

This study relied primarily on self-report measures, which may be influenced by respondents' subjective perceptions and social desirability bias. The findings were also drawn from teachers in selected schools, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other educational contexts. Additionally, the cross-sectional design captured teachers' experiences at a single point during the pandemic and did not account for changes in emotional intelligence, psychological need satisfaction, and stress over time.

## Conclusions

This study demonstrated that emotional intelligence and psychological need satisfaction play critical roles in shaping teachers' stress experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings showed that teachers' emotional competencies and the fulfillment of their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are closely linked to their capacity to manage work-related stress under crisis conditions. The absence of significant differences across selected demographic variables further suggests that pandemic-related challenges were widely shared among teachers, highlighting the systemic nature of stress in the educational context.

The integration of quantitative results and qualitative insights provided a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' psychological experiences, revealing how emotional demands, limited support, and evolving work conditions affected their well-being. Based on these findings, the CARE-TEACH Program was proposed as a responsive, school-based mental health intervention aimed at strengthening teachers' emotional intelligence, supporting psychological need satisfaction, and reducing stress. Overall, the study underscores the importance of holistic and preventive mental health strategies in promoting teacher well-being and sustaining educational effectiveness during and beyond crisis situations.

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## Data Availability Statement

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author, [JF], upon reasonable request.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that no competing financial interests or personal relationships could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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