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Coping with Emotions among Pre-Service Teachers: An Empirical Study on Emotional Awareness, Regulation, and Support Needs

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Abstract

Teaching is an emotionally demanding profession that requires educators to regulate emotions effectively while maintaining pedagogical competence, classroom discipline, and positive student relationships. Emotional competence is particularly important for pre-service teachers who are in the process of developing their professional identity and instructional confidence. The present study investigates emotional awareness, emotional challenges, emotional regulation, coping strategies, and support needs among pre-service teachers.

The study employed a descriptive correlational survey design involving 67 pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education programmes. Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of 20 Likert-scale items measuring five dimensions of emotional competence. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation analysis were utilized to examine relationships among the variables. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha = 0.64$) indicated moderate internal consistency acceptable for exploratory educational research.

The findings revealed that participants demonstrated high emotional awareness ($M = 4.09$) and strong coping strategies ($M = 4.02$), while experiencing moderate emotional challenges ($M = 2.85$) during teaching practice. Correlation analysis showed significant positive relationships between emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and coping strategies, whereas emotional challenges demonstrated negative correlations with these dimensions. The results further highlighted a strong perceived need for emotional management training and structured institutional support.

The study underscores the importance of integrating emotional intelligence development, reflective practices, emotional resilience training, and mentorship support within teacher education programmes to strengthen emotional competence and professional well-being among future educators.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Pre-Service Teachers, Emotional Regulation, Coping Strategies, Emotional Well-Being, Teacher Education, Emotional Competence.

1. Introduction

Teaching is not merely an intellectual and instructional activity but also an emotionally intensive profession requiring continuous interpersonal engagement, emotional regulation, and professional adaptability. Teachers are expected to manage complex emotional experiences while simultaneously maintaining pedagogical effectiveness, classroom discipline, and supportive relationships with learners. Consequently, emotional competence has emerged as a critical component of teacher effectiveness and professional development.

In recent years, growing scholarly attention has been directed toward emotional well-being, teacher resilience, and social-emotional competence within educational contexts. Contemporary educational reforms, including the National Education Policy 2020, emphasize holistic teacher development, reflective practice, and learner-centered pedagogy, thereby recognizing the significance of emotional and psychological preparedness in teacher education.

Emotional intelligence refers to the capacity to recognize, understand, regulate, and manage emotions effectively in oneself and others. According to Daniel Goleman (2020), emotional intelligence significantly influences professional effectiveness, interpersonal relationships, leadership abilities, and stress management. Within educational settings, emotionally competent teachers are more likely to establish positive classroom climates, demonstrate empathy toward students, and cope effectively with professional challenges.

Pre-service teachers often encounter considerable emotional stress during teaching practice and internships. Situations such as classroom management, observation by supervisors, lesson delivery anxiety, workload pressure, and student behavioral challenges frequently generate emotional tension among novice educators. Since pre-

service teachers are still developing pedagogical competence and professional identity, the ability to cope with emotional challenges becomes essential for successful teaching practice.

Teacher education institutions have therefore increasingly emphasized the integration of emotional intelligence, social-emotional learning (SEL), and reflective teaching practices within teacher preparation programmes. Developing emotional awareness, coping strategies, and emotional resilience can support future educators in maintaining professional well-being and enhancing instructional effectiveness.

The present study examines emotional coping among pre-service teachers by investigating emotional awareness, emotional challenges, emotional regulation, coping strategies, and support needs. It further explores the relationships among these emotional dimensions and their implications for teacher education and professional development.

2. Review of Literature

The study of teacher emotions and emotional competence has gained substantial importance in educational research over the past two decades. Researchers increasingly acknowledge that teachers' emotional experiences significantly influence classroom climate, instructional effectiveness, student engagement, and professional well-being.

The theoretical foundation of emotional intelligence was initially proposed by Mayer and Salovey, who conceptualized emotional intelligence as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and utilize emotions effectively. Later, Goleman (2020) popularized the concept by emphasizing its role in professional success, interpersonal competence, and leadership.

Research conducted by Brackett, Rivers, and Salovey (2019) highlights that emotionally intelligent teachers are more capable of managing stress, maintaining positive interpersonal relationships, and creating emotionally supportive classroom environments. Emotional awareness and regulation further contribute to reduced occupational stress and improved teacher resilience.

Jennings and Greenberg (2009) proposed the Prosocial Classroom Model, which emphasizes that teachers' social-emotional competence directly influences classroom management, emotional support, and student learning outcomes. According to the model, emotionally competent teachers are better equipped to respond constructively to classroom challenges and maintain positive teacher-student relationships.

Studies by Sutton and Wheatley (2003) indicate that teachers frequently experience emotions such as anxiety, frustration, enthusiasm, stress, and satisfaction within instructional settings. Effective emotional regulation enables teachers to sustain professional performance

despite emotional fluctuations and stressful classroom experiences.

Contemporary research on emotional labor further suggests that teachers often suppress or regulate emotional expressions to conform to professional expectations. Yin (2021) emphasized that emotional labor can contribute to emotional exhaustion and burnout if teachers lack adequate coping strategies and institutional support.

Recent studies on teacher well-being and social-emotional learning (SEL) also highlight the importance of emotional resilience training within teacher education programmes. Mercer and Gregersen (2020) argue that teacher well-being is closely associated with emotional competence, reflective practice, and supportive institutional environments.

Despite increasing recognition of emotional competence within teacher education, limited empirical studies specifically examine emotional coping dimensions among pre-service teachers within the Indian educational context. The present study seeks to address this gap by exploring emotional awareness, emotional challenges, emotional regulation, coping strategies, and support needs among pre-service teachers.

3. Conceptual Framework

The present study is grounded in the framework of emotional intelligence and teacher emotional competence. The conceptual framework integrates five interrelated dimensions:

- Emotional Awareness
- Emotional Challenges
- Emotional Regulation
- Coping Strategies
- Support and Training Needs

The framework proposes that emotional awareness positively influences emotional regulation and coping strategies among pre-service teachers. Emotional challenges are expected to negatively affect emotional regulation and emotional well-being, whereas effective coping strategies can reduce emotional stress and improve professional adaptability.

Support and training needs function as enabling mechanisms that strengthen emotional competence and professional readiness. The framework further assumes that emotionally competent pre-service teachers are better equipped to manage classroom stress, maintain professional composure, and engage effectively in teaching practice.

The relationships among these dimensions collectively contribute to emotional well-being and sustainable professional development within teacher education.

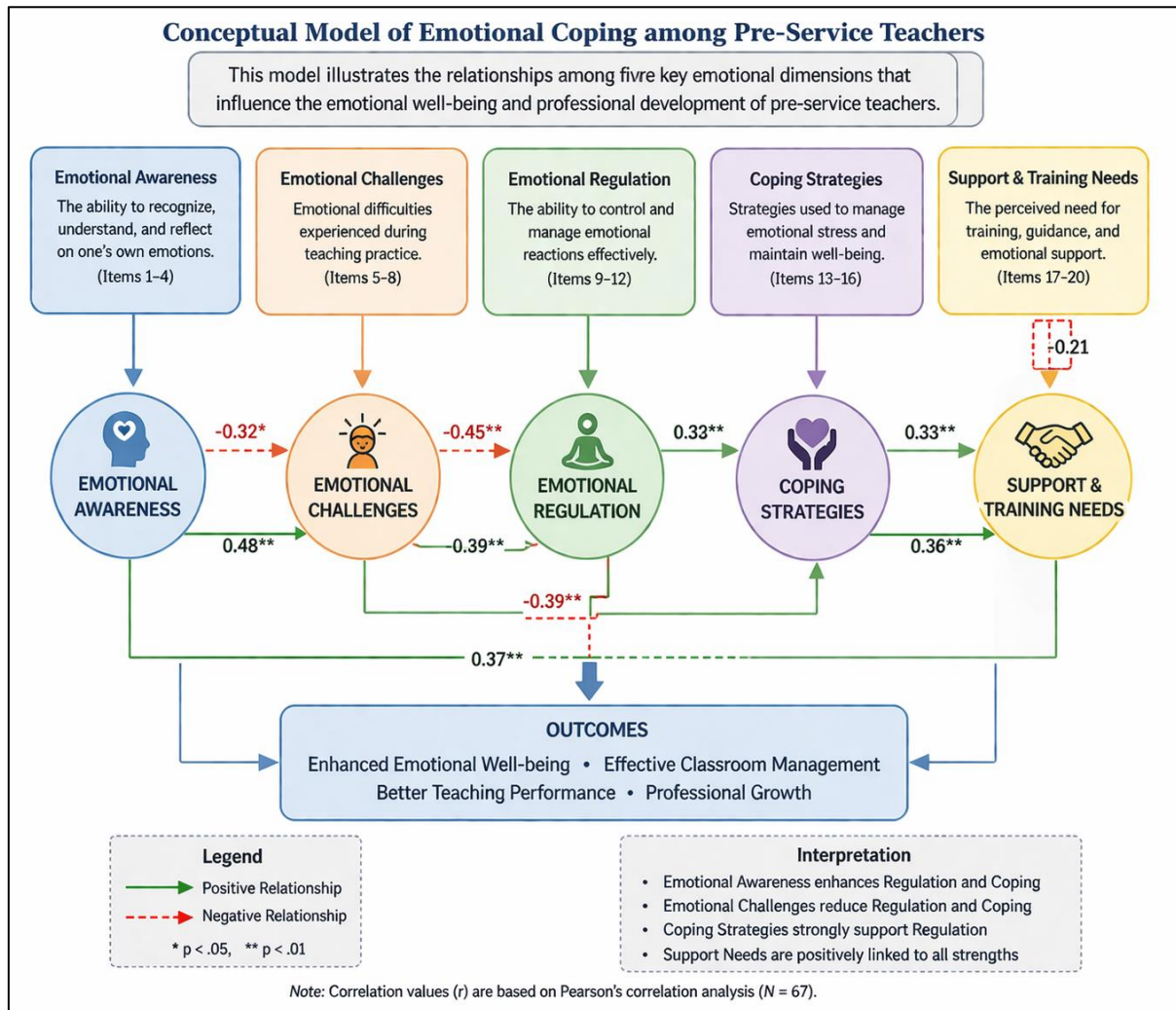


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of Emotional Coping among Pre-Service Teachers

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine emotional awareness among pre-service teachers.
2. To identify emotional challenges faced during teaching practice.
3. To analyze emotional regulation strategies used by pre-service teachers.
4. To explore coping strategies adopted for emotional stress.
5. To determine the need for emotional management training.
6. To examine relationships among emotional awareness, emotional regulation, coping strategies, and emotional challenges.

5. Hypotheses

- H1: Pre-service teachers demonstrate a high level of emotional awareness.
- H2: Emotional regulation is positively related to coping strategies.
- H3: Emotional challenges are negatively related to emotional regulation and coping strategies.
- H4: Pre-service teachers perceive emotional training as important for professional development.

6. Methodology

6.1. Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive correlational survey research design to examine emotional dimensions among pre-service teachers and explore relationships among the variables.

6.2. Sample

The sample consisted of 67 pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education programmes. Participants were selected using convenience sampling based on accessibility and voluntary participation.

6.3. Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of 20 Likert-scale items. The response scale ranged from:

1 = Strongly Disagree

- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

The questionnaire measured five dimensions:

- Emotional Awareness (4 items)
- Emotional Challenges (4 items)
- Emotional Regulation (4 items)
- Coping Strategies (4 items)
- Support and Training Needs (4 items)

6.4. Validation and Reliability of the Tool

The research instrument underwent expert validation to ensure content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the objectives of the study. Necessary modifications were incorporated based on expert suggestions.

Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach’s Alpha.

Measure	Value	Interpretation
Cronbach’s Alpha	0.64	Moderate reliability acceptable for exploratory research

Inference

The obtained Cronbach’s Alpha value indicates moderate internal consistency among questionnaire items. Although the reliability coefficient is comparatively lower than highly standardized instruments, it remains acceptable for exploratory educational research involving emotional and behavioral constructs.

6.5. Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed regarding the academic purpose of the study, and voluntary participation was ensured. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were maintained throughout the research process.

6.6. Statistical Techniques Used

The following statistical techniques were employed:

- Descriptive statistics (Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation)
- Pearson’s Correlation Analysis

7. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Dimension-wise mean scores are presented below.

Dimension	Mean Score
Emotional Awareness	4.09
Emotional Challenges	2.85
Emotional Regulation	3.97
Coping Strategies	4.02
Support and Training Needs	4.09

Interpretation

The findings indicate that pre-service teachers demonstrate relatively high emotional awareness and strong coping strategies. Participants reported the ability to recognize emotional responses and manage stressful situations through various coping mechanisms.

The comparatively lower mean score for emotional challenges suggests that although emotional stress exists during teaching practice, participants are moderately capable of handling such challenges. Furthermore, the high score related to support and training needs reflects strong demand for structured emotional competence development within teacher education programmes.

8. Correlation Analysis

To examine relationships among emotional dimensions, Pearson’s correlation analysis was conducted.

Table: Correlation Matrix among Emotional Dimensions (N = 67)

Variables	Emotional Awareness	Emotional Challenges	Emotional Regulation	Coping Strategies	Support & Training Needs
Emotional Awareness	1.00	-0.32*	0.48**	0.41**	0.37**
Emotional Challenges	-0.32*	1.00	-0.45**	-0.39**	-0.21

Emotional Regulation	0.48**	-0.45**	1.00	0.52**	0.33**
Coping Strategies	0.41**	-0.39**	0.52**	1.00	0.36**
Support & Training Needs	0.37**	-0.21	0.33**	0.36**	1.00

*Significant at $p < .05$

**Significant at $p < .01$

9. Interpretation of Correlation Results

Emotional Awareness and Emotional Regulation

A moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.48, p < .01$) indicates that pre-service teachers who are more aware of their emotions are better able to regulate emotional responses during stressful classroom situations.

Emotional Awareness and Coping Strategies

The positive relationship ($r = 0.41, p < .01$) suggests that emotionally aware individuals tend to adopt more effective coping mechanisms to manage stress and emotional pressure.

Emotional Challenges and Emotional Regulation

A significant negative correlation ($r = -0.45, p < .01$) indicates that stronger emotional regulation contributes to reduced emotional difficulties during teaching practice.

Emotional Challenges and Coping Strategies

The inverse relationship ($r = -0.39, p < .01$) suggests that effective coping mechanisms may buffer emotional distress experienced during teaching practice.

Emotional Regulation and Coping Strategies

The highest positive correlation ($r = 0.52, p < .01$) indicates that coping strategies significantly contribute to emotional regulation and emotional well-being.

Overall, the findings confirm that emotional competence plays a critical role in managing teaching-related stress and promoting professional adaptability among pre-service teachers.

10. Discussion

The present study examined emotional coping among pre-service teachers by analyzing emotional awareness, emotional challenges, emotional regulation, coping strategies, and support needs. The findings reveal that pre-service teachers generally demonstrate positive emotional competence and recognize the importance of emotional management in teaching practice.

The high level of emotional awareness observed among participants aligns with the work of Goleman (2020), who emphasized emotional awareness as a foundational component of emotional intelligence and professional effectiveness. Emotionally aware teachers are more capable of understanding their emotional reactions and responding constructively to stressful situations.

The findings also support the research conducted by Brackett et al. (2019), which highlighted that emotionally intelligent educators are better able to manage stress, maintain interpersonal relationships, and create emotionally supportive classroom environments.

Despite relatively high emotional awareness, respondents reported moderate emotional challenges during teaching practice. Situations involving classroom management, supervisor observation, and instructional pressure emerged as notable sources of emotional stress. This

finding is consistent with Sutton and Wheatley (2003), who observed that teachers frequently experience anxiety, frustration, and emotional tension during instructional activities.

The positive relationship between emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and coping strategies indicates that emotional competence contributes significantly to stress management and professional adaptability. Participants who demonstrated stronger emotional regulation abilities also reported greater use of coping strategies such as peer support, reflective thinking, relaxation techniques, and recreational engagement.

The negative correlations between emotional challenges and emotional regulation further suggest that emotional competence functions as a protective factor against emotional stress. These findings are closely related to emotional labor theory, which proposes that teachers frequently regulate emotional expressions to maintain professional expectations and classroom harmony.

Another important finding is the strong agreement regarding the need for emotional management training and institutional support. Participants recognized the importance of emotional intelligence development, mentorship guidance, and structured support systems within teacher education programmes. This observation aligns with Mercer and Gregersen (2020), who emphasized that teacher well-being and professional sustainability are closely connected to emotional resilience and institutional support.

Overall, the findings highlight the necessity of integrating emotional intelligence, social-emotional learning (SEL), reflective teaching practices, and emotional resilience training within teacher education programmes. Strengthening emotional competence among pre-service teachers can contribute significantly to professional well-being, classroom effectiveness, and sustainable teacher development.

11. Educational Implications

The findings of the study have important implications for teacher education institutions, curriculum developers, policymakers, and mentor educators.

- Emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning (SEL) should be integrated within teacher education curricula.
- Workshops focusing on emotional regulation, stress management, mindfulness, and emotional resilience should be organized regularly.
- Internship and practicum programmes should incorporate mentorship support to help pre-service teachers manage emotional challenges.

- Reflective teaching practices, journaling, and peer-sharing sessions should be encouraged to strengthen emotional awareness.
- Counseling and psychological support services should be made accessible within teacher education institutions.
- Teacher educators should model emotionally supportive and empathetic instructional practices.

12. Recommendations

1. Introduce structured emotional intelligence modules within teacher education programmes.
2. Integrate reflective journaling and self-assessment activities to enhance emotional awareness.
3. Conduct mindfulness and emotional resilience workshops for pre-service teachers.
4. Establish peer mentoring and emotional support groups during teaching practice.
5. Strengthen mentorship systems involving experienced educators and supervisors.
6. Provide counseling and well-being support services within teacher education institutions.
7. Incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies within pedagogical training.

13. Limitations of the Study

- The study was limited to a relatively small sample of pre-service teachers.
- Convenience sampling limits the generalizability of the findings.
- The study relied primarily on self-reported responses, which may be influenced by subjective perceptions.
- The research focused mainly on quantitative analysis and did not include extensive qualitative exploration.

14. Conclusion

The present study explored emotional coping among pre-service teachers and highlighted key dimensions of emotional awareness, emotional challenges, emotional regulation, coping strategies, and support needs. The findings indicate that pre-service teachers generally possess positive emotional awareness and effective coping mechanisms; however, they continue to experience emotional stress during teaching practice.

Correlation analysis confirmed significant relationships among emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and coping strategies, demonstrating that emotional competence plays an essential role in professional adaptability and teaching effectiveness. The study further emphasizes that emotional challenges can be reduced through structured coping mechanisms, mentorship support, and emotional intelligence development.

The findings contribute to the growing discourse on teacher emotional well-being and highlight the importance of integrating emotional intelligence, social-emotional learning, and emotional resilience training within teacher education programmes. Strengthening emotional competence among future educators can significantly enhance professional sustainability, classroom effectiveness, and teacher well-being.

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