

A Relationship between Emotional Regulation and Peace of Mind among Teachers and Head Teachers in Elementary Schools, Pakistan: A Public and Private Sector Comparison

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind among teachers and head teachers in elementary schools in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The study investigates whether there are significant differences between public and private sector schools. The OECD framework of the Big Five model explained the importance of emotional regulation, which comprises stress resistance, emotional control and optimism. The concept is conceptualised as the independent variable, whereas peace of mind serves as the dependent variable reflecting psychological wellbeing. A quantitative, cross-sectional comparative study was designed. The sample consists of 400 participants (160 male and 240 female), teachers and head teachers from public (84) and private (316) schools in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Skills were assessed on 6 Likert scales ranging from 'almost never' to 'expert level'. Later, Pearson's correlation and independent-samples t-tests were used for analysis. The research findings indicated that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind ($r = [0.62]$, $p < .05$). Additionally, the results have shown significant sector-based differences found in emotional regulation, with public sector teachers reporting higher scores. No significant difference was found in either sector regarding peace of mind. These findings underscore the importance of social and emotional development training and programs in the Pakistani elementary education system and contribute cross-cultural evidence to the global discourse on the psychological well-being of teachers and head teachers.

Keywords: Emotional Regulation, Peace of Mind, OECD, Teachers' Well-being.

Introduction

Teachers are generally considered the backbone of an educational system. In addition to their classroom roles, they work in an intricate environment of emotional demands, negotiating classroom dynamics, meeting institutional expectations, developing relationships with students, parents, and the community, and maintaining psychological stability throughout the duration of demanding professional careers (Abacioglu et al., 2020). In Pakistan, where elementary schools operate under diverse conditions in both government and non-government schools, the psychological well-being of teachers remains a concern at the individual, institutional, and structural levels (Barlas et al., 2021; Ahmed & Khan, 2024).

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Emotional regulation is one of the competencies that determine a teacher's ability to develop professionally and personally. Emotional regulation, as defined within the OECD Big Five Social and Emotional Skills (SES) framework, is the capacity of an individual to manage affective reactions in an adaptive, constructive, and professionally appropriate manner (OECD, 2021). Emotionally regulated teachers are better equipped to deal with workplace stressors, remain equanimous and calm under pressure, and maintain positive professional relationships, which are prerequisites for successful teaching and personal satisfaction (Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2023). The Big Five framework consists of 6 domains, of which emotional regulation is the key domain, comprising three sub-domains: emotional control, optimism, and stress resistance. The OECD reports have highlighted the importance of emotional regulation, and findings reveal that this skill enhances life satisfaction and mental health, thereby directly affecting an individual's professional growth (OECD, 2024).

Although well-known constructions, including subjective well-being and psychological resilience, have been studied extensively, peace of mind, as an outcome measure in educational studies, is rather under-researched (Jennings, 2015). The simultaneous existence of severe resource constraints and a heterogeneous, market-oriented society places teachers in working conditions where meeting psychological needs is equally important. How emotional regulation is associated with peace of mind, and whether these associations and levels vary between the two sectors, has direct policy, teacher training, and school leadership development implications (Oliveira et al., 2021). The concept of peace of mind as psychological well-being is a state of inner calm, the absence of constant worry, satisfaction with the current state of life, and harmony in the psyche (Halim, 2023). The difference is particularly acute in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where cultural and religious values tend to give the construct greater salience in teachers' life experiences (Corthorn et al., 2024).

The current research paper focuses on three particular objectives, the first being to investigate the relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind in elementary school teachers and head teachers; the second objective is to examine whether there are any significant differences in the levels of emotional regulation between the public sector and the private sector; and the third objective is to find whether there is a significant difference between the peace of mind in the two sectors. This research aims to make a valuable contribution to the emerging international literature on teacher psychological health and social and emotional competence by combining the internationally established OECD model with an under-researched well-being measure and situating the analysis in the context of dual-sector Pakistani education.

Literature Review

Emotional Regulation: Conceptual and Theoretical

Daniel Goleman elaborately explained emotional intelligence in his book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. He defined emotional intelligence as a set of skills that enable individuals to recognise, manage and understand their emotions when effectively navigating their relationships with others. He identifies five major components of emotional intelligence: self-regulation, self-awareness, motivation, empathy, and social skills. His framework has significantly influenced educational and organisational psychology, emphasising that developing emotional skills among teachers and head teachers enhances both personal wellbeing and professional effectiveness (Goleman, 2020). In this context, emotional regulation plays a very crucial role. Teachers are required to manage their emotions and respond to the emotional needs of students, peers, and parents. Studies conducted across different national contexts confirm that teachers with

strong emotional regulation strategies have lower levels of burnout, greater job opportunities, greater job satisfaction, and higher psychological wellbeing than those with low levels of emotional regulation (Abacioglu et al., 2020).

Social and emotional skills are important for fostering school culture and school community relationships and for enhancing educational outcomes. For this, teachers and head teachers play an important role in creating a supportive environment that fosters the teaching and learning process, engagement with others, emotion management, performance of responsibilities, collaboration, and the use of critical thinking skills for timely decision-making (Oliveira et al., 2021). Yet very limited research has been conducted to assess teachers' skill levels, particularly in the public and private sectors.

In the OECD Big Five SES, the closest dimension is emotional regulation, which is related to the Big Five personality characteristic of emotional stability, the positive end of neuroticism (OECD, 2021). It includes three individual sub-skills: (1) stress resistance, (2) optimism, and (3) emotional control. Evidence-based practice repeatedly shows that emotional stability skills, such as emotional regulation, are among the most effective predictors of mental health and life satisfaction among professionals (OECD, 2025).

Conceptual Framework (Peace of Mind)

Research over the past several years has shown that teachers' peace of mind and psychological well-being play a crucial role in their professional effectiveness and in improving the quality of education delivery. Teachers' well-being comprises the emotional, social, and psychological aspects of mental health, which are directly linked and influence job satisfaction, teaching quality, and interactions with students, colleagues, parents, and the community. Research also highlighted that fulfilment of psychological needs and supportive school climate are significant predictors of teachers' well-being, focusing on organisational factors that play an important role in enabling peace of mind among teachers (Jennings, 2015). Research highlighted that head teachers' mental health and well-being are equally important and affect not only their personal health but also the school environment (Hargreaves, 2000). Research indicates that high occupational stress, including workload, classroom management, and administrative demands, and low autonomy negatively affect teachers' well-being, which directly or indirectly increases the risk of burnout, low job performance, and higher attrition rates (Mudin et al., 2023).

In the Pakistani context, studies show a strong correlation between job satisfaction and emotional support, with stronger teachers' well-being, suggesting cultural and systemic effects on psychological health in the educational context (Iqbal et al., 2023).

The construct and framework of peace of mind is developed by Lee et al. (2013). This scale was developed to accurately assess the construct of peace of mind as an effective well-being measure sensitive to cultural values regarding happiness. The items are conjoined with internal harmony and internal happiness.

Peace of mind is equally important for head teachers and school leaders, as their well-being also influences leadership effectiveness, the capacity to support teachers, the maintenance of school culture, and the improvement of school climate. Head teachers are more responsible for decision-making, resource management, and providing emotional and moral support to their teams to ensure the effective and timely completion of targets. Emerging evidence from leadership and professional development research suggests that when head teachers and school administrators or managers maintain better mental and psychological health and resilience, schools are more likely to foster a positive climate, enhance engagement, and reduce teacher stress (Brackett et al., 2023).

These findings underline the importance of professional support, well-being interventions, and institutional policies that prioritise peace of mind for teachers and head teachers to ensure and maintain sustainable, high-quality teaching and leadership practices.

Relationship between Emotional regulation and psychological well-being

Evidence and growing research in the field of emotional regulation and psychological well-being link emotional regulation to diverse indicators of psychological well-being among teachers and head teachers. Emotional regulation positively influences wellbeing of teachers, with self-efficacy beliefs serving as a mediating mechanism (Gross, 2015). Government of Ireland (2019) confirmed that emotional intelligence, which includes emotional regulation, is a major component that significantly correlated with psychological well-being (Xiyun et al., 2022) confirmed through a structural modelling involving 276 Iranian teachers that emotional regulation was a significant predictor of psychological well-being.

Meta-analysis evidence further confirmed the relationship and synthesised findings from 87 studies, confirming that emotional regulation strategies were significantly associated with adverse well-being outcomes (Mudin et al., 2023). At the Broder level, OECD reports that emotional stability skills, including emotional regulation, show a stronger correlation with life satisfaction and mental health outcomes across all Big Five domains of the OECD SES framework (OECD, 2025). These findings provide strong theoretical grounds for hypothesising a positive relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind among Pakistani elementary school teachers and head teachers.

Sector-Based Differences in Teacher Psychological Well-Being

Comparative research on private and public sector teachers reveals meaningful differences in working conditions, institutional support, professional autonomy and psychological outcomes. In Pakistan, public sector educational institutions operate with a more centralised approach characterised by high job security, incentives, and established policies and acts. Whereas private-sector institutes contrast with a decentralised approach, often with greater performance accountability pressures, less job security, and higher professional growth opportunities (Asif & Huma, 2019).

International research confirms that school culture, administrative and management support and school environment significantly generate differences and moderate both emotional regulation and well-being outcomes among teachers (Jennings et al., 2017; Grissom et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2024).

Research hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework and evidence reviewed, the following hypotheses are proposed;

H1: There is a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind among teachers and head teachers in Elementary schools.

H2: There is a statistically significant difference in emotional regulation levels between public and private sector elementary school teachers and head teachers.

H3: There is a statistically significant difference in peace of mind between public and private sector elementary school teachers and head teachers.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design adopted in this study is quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive-comparative, and correlational. The philosophical paradigm of the study is post-positivism, which confirms that reality can be objectively measured using valid and reliable tools and subjected to statistical tests (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The cross-sectional design is suitable for this study, as the aim is to investigate the association and group differences at a single point in time. Such a design is common and well-developed in comparative educational psychology studies (Cohen et al., 2018).

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised teachers and head teachers employed in public and private elementary schools in Rawalpindi District, Pakistan, during the academic year (2024- 2025). (School Education Department, 2026). Elementary schools are defined as institutions that offer instruction from Grade 1 to Grade 5 in accordance with the Pakistan National Educational Classification System. The Private sector constituted a substantially larger proportion of the total population compared to the public sector.

A stratified random sampling technique is used, and the sector (Public and Private) serves as the primary stratification variable. A sample of 400 participants was determined using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique to ensure a representative distribution across sectors. Based on proportional allocations, 21% (n=84) public sector schools and 79% (n=316) private sector schools reflected the relative population sizes. This method ensured the sample accurately reflected the sectoral composition of the overall population. The gender composition of the sample was 40% males and 60% females. The use of a proportionate stratified sampling technique enhanced the representativeness of the sample and strengthened the generalizability of the findings within the defined population.

Table 1: Sample Distribution by sector

Sector	Population proportion	Sample Allocated	Percentage of Total Sample
Public Sector	21%	84	21%
Private Sector	79%	316	79%
Total	100%	400	100%

Instruments

Two standardized instruments were used to measure and test the hypotheses of the study. Emotional Regulation was measured using the relevant subscale from the educators' social and emotional learning questionnaire instrument (Hemi & Kasperski, 2023) adapted for teachers' and head teachers' population. This subscale captures three dimensions: stress resistance (tolerance), optimism (self-reflecting and empowering) and emotional control (empathy). Items are rated on a 6 Likert scale ranging from almost never to expert level with 28 items. Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.77$, indicating good internal capacity.

Peace of mind was measured using Peace of mind scale developed by Lee et al. (2013). The scale contains 7 items assessing the dimensions of inner peace and calm, contentment, happiness, freedom from worry rated on 5 Likert scale. The instrument has demonstrated adequate validity and reliability in prior research with Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.85$.

Data Collection Procedure

Formal permission was obtained from school education department authority prior to data collection. School heads were contacted and explained about the need and purpose of the study along with explanation of voluntary and confidentiality protocols. Informed consent was obtained from the participants. Researchers collect data online and in person visits through paper-based format. While in person visits, to minimize disruption to instructional time, scheduled availability of teachers in their free time. Data collection took place over of 12 weeks during the (2024-2025).

Data Analysis

The data was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27. The analysis proceeded through the following stages.

First, Descriptive Statistics includes means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values were computed for both variables. Second, internal consistency reliability of the questionnaires was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha for both scales. At Third stage, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the nature and strength of the relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind (H1). Finally, independent Samples T-test was performed to determine whether public and private sector teachers differed significantly in their emotional regulation scores (H2) and peace of mind scores (H3). Effect sizes were reported as Cohen's d to reflect significance alongside statistical significance. The significance threshold for all analyses was set at $p < 0.05$ (two tailed).

Ethical considerations

This research study was conducted with considering ethical principles of the declaration and institutional research ethics guidelines. Participants were entirely voluntary and informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. All data was kept anonymized prior to analysis and are stored securely in accordance with institutional data protection protocols. No personal information or data is revealed or reported in this paper.

Results

Participation Characteristics

Table 2: Demographic composition of the Sample by sector, Role and Gender

Category	Male	Female	Total (N)	Percentage
Public (n=84)				
Head Teacher	5	7	12	14.3%
Teacher	30	42	72	85.7%
Total	35	49	84	21%
Private (n= 316)				
Head Teacher	18	27	45	14.2%
Teacher	108	163	271	85.8%
Total	126	190	316	79%
Grand Total	161	239	400	100%
Percentage	40%	60%	100%	

Table 2 shows the gender distribution across both sectors which is broadly consistent with national patterns in Pakistani elementary education. Female teachers constitute the major portion of the teaching workforce (School Education Department, 2026). The ratio of head teachers to teachers

(approximately 1:6 in both sectors) reflects school staffing structure at elementary level. Inclusion of both teachers and head teachers enables comparative analysis across professional roles, adding a leadership dimension to research findings.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for emotional regulation and peace of mind for the total sample by sector are presented in table 3. Both instruments show satisfactory internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.77$ and 0.85). Normality testing indicates normal distribution for both variables across groups.

Table 3: Relationship between Emotional Regulation and Peace of Mind

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Emotional Regulation					
Total sample	400	3.68	0.51	2.10	4.89
Public	84	3.73	0.48	2.10	4.89
Private	316	3.49	0.54	2.15	4.70
Peace of Mind					
Total sample	400	3.63	0.54	2.05	4.80
Public	84	3.64	0.53	2.12	4.80
Private	316	3.60	0.56	2.05	4.72

H1 Relationship between Emotional Regulation and Peace of Mind

Variable	ER	POM
Emotional Regulation	-	
Peace of Mind	0.62**	-

Note: M= Mean; SD= Standard deviation.

To examine the correlation between emotional regulation and peace of mind, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. The results showed that there is a significant positive correlation between emotional regulation and peace of mind, $r(400) = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$.

The correlation indicates a strong association and relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind, suggesting that higher level of emotional regulation are associated with and linked with high; level of peace of mind among elementary school teachers and head teachers. The results indicated that positive direction of the relationship demonstrates greater stress resistance, emotional control and optimism tend to report greater psychological calmness and inner stability. Thus, the findings support the hypothesis of the study that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind.

Sector wise differences in emotional regulation and Peace of Mind (H2 & H3)

To test the H2 and H3 independent samples t-Test were conducted comparing public and private sector teachers and head teachers on emotional regulation and peace of mind respectively.

Table 4: Independent Sample T test; Public vs Private Sector comparison on emotional regulation and peace of mind

Variables	Sector	N	M	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Emotional regulation	Public	84	3.73	0.48	3.83	398	.000	0.48
	Private	316	3.49	0.54				
Peace of Mind	Public	84	3.64	0.53	0.63	398	.521	0.07
	Private	316	3.60	0.56				

An independent sample T-test was used to test the difference in the sector regarding emotional regulation and peace of mind.

Emotional Regulation: the result shows that there was a significant difference between the teachers and head teachers of public and private schools. $T(398) = 3.84$, $p < .001$. The teachers and head teachers in public schools with $M = 3.73$ and $SD = 0.48$ had higher emotional regulation skills than teachers and head teachers in the private sector schools with $M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.54$. Considering the moderate level of effect (Cohen $d = 0.48$), hence, it is proved that Hypothesis 2 is supported and verified.

Peace of mind: the results show that there was no significant difference between the public and private sector schoolteachers and head teachers $t(398) = 0.64$, $p = .521$. Though peace of mind of teachers and head teachers in the public sector schools with $M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.53$ was slightly higher than private school teachers with $M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.56$, there was slight difference of (Cohen's $d = 0.07$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not accepted and rejected.

Summary of Hypothesis testing

Table 5: Summary of Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Test	Result	Decision
H1	Pearson Correlation	$R = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$	Supported
H2	Independent T-test	$T(398) = 3.84$	Supported
H3	Independent T-test	$T(398) = 0.64$	Not supported

Discussion

This research study evaluated the relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind between 400 teachers and head teachers working in Pakistani elementary schools and evaluated the sector differences on the two constructs. The study has shown three major findings that there is a positive significant relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind. Second finding revealed that there is sector difference in emotional regulation, but third findings indicated that there is no sector difference in peace of mind.

Emotional Regulation and Peace of Mind: A positive significant correlation

Theoretically, the significant relationship can be explained through OECD Social and emotional skills framework (OECD, 2025), (which highlighted emotional regulation skills and categorized it with sub contents which are stress resistance, optimism and emotional control. It shows that these domains are very much predictive for like satisfaction and mental health across all five dimensions of Big five model. Teachers who effectively regulate their emotions are more likely to interpret

professional stressors and can be able to maintain demanding interactions and cultivate their inner peace that describes peace of mind (Goleman, 2020). Process models of emotional regulation further support this relationship as cognitive reappraisal and a strategy which helps in reducing psychological and physiological arousals through creating the conditions where inner peace can be sustained.

Sector differences in emotional regulation: Public vs Private

The research findings revealed that emotional regulation levels are different in both public and private sector schoolteachers. Hypothesis 2 is supported and reflected that the differential occupational conditions can be reasons of each sector in Pakistan. Public sector schoolteachers reported higher scores of emotional regulations than private sector schools. Through evidence it is confirmed that Greater job security, standardized structures and incentives may provide a stable psychological foundation from which emotional regulation are cultivated and maintained over time. These findings are consistent with the results of meta-analysis by (Mudin et al., 2023). confirmed the importance of emotional regulation skills that significantly shapes the development and expression of emotional regulation in teachers and produces positive outcomes inform of stable teacher student relationship, students output and improving school environment. The education system may initiate the interventional training programs tailored according to occupational cultures and stressors of public and private sector elementary schools in Pakistan.

Absence of sector Difference in Peace of Mind: An interpretive Discussion

The interesting finding of the study is that despite significant sector difference in emotional regulation, public and private sector schoolteachers and head teachers do not differ significantly in their peace of mind. Means of both sectors are at average, which reveals that there is a suboptimal inner calm in both sectors. The pattern of having significant difference on the predictor which is emotional regulation whereas no significant difference on the outcome which is peace of mind suggests that peace of mind may be associated with the factors which are commonly affected by both sector respondents including fair community belongings, family support and inter and intrapersonal peace, burnout, student teacher modelling or acceptance that become occupational stressors for both sector school teachers (Oliveira et al., 2021). Another explanation of the result may be understood through different pathways of achieving peace of mind. There could be different emotional regulation levels that ultimately help in increasing wellbeing (Xiyun et al., 2022). This convergence hypothesis warrants further investigation through mediation analysis for factors which influence peace of mind in both sectors.

Limitations and future directions

The variables were measured through self-report instruments which could create social desirability bias, in future research should consider supplementary instruments with observational and peer related assessments for emotional regulation. The geographic scope of the study limits the generalizability to other districts and provinces in Pakistan. The study dint does not account the potential variables such as experience, school size and qualification level. Further studies should employ the moderation and mediation frameworks to examine the cause of complexities.

Conclusion

This research study investigated the relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind among 400 teachers and head teachers in public and private sector elementary schools of

Rawalpindi, Pakistan. It utilized the OECD Big five Social and emotional skills framework and peace of mind construct to examine the relationship. The findings show that there is a significant positive relationship between emotional regulation and peace of mind along with the findings, it shows that there is a significant difference in teachers of both sectors with respect to emotional regulation. While level of peace of mind in both sectors is not significantly different across both sectors. These findings collectively underscore the importance of emotional regulation as a teachable and relevant teaching competency which helps in increasing peace of mind and well-being. The investment in social and emotional learning of teachers within Pakistan teacher education and school leadership development is recommended.

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