

# Emotion Regulation in Education in Chaotic Era of COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract:** *The world has been severely threatened by an unexpected outbreak of COVID-19 and the consequent lockdown followed by harsh measures of quarantine, social distancing, alienation, isolation, and travel restrictions. These disappointingly harsh challenges and the socio-economic and psychological impacts of this chaotic era on teachers and learners in terms of negative emotions of fear, panic, stress, anxiety, and depression have been shockingly huge and needed a thorough study. Raising awareness about the strategies of emotion regulation that teachers and learners in education can utilize to smoothly and efficiently cope with demanding situation has been regarded as a prominent necessity and prompted this research. Sixty newly published papers (after the year 2020) in the context of COVID-19 were reviewed for the way regulatory emotion strategies can modify the adversely unfavorable conditions and mitigate the dire psychological and behavioral consequences of distress and functional impairment. In many of these studies, Gross and Koole’s models of regulating arousal and release of emotions by four factors of “situation, attention, appraisal, and response” were discussed. Mindfulness techniques were also found beneficial for teachers’ emotion regulation, whose potential can effectively impact learners’ success or failure and the system as a whole. Mindfulness develops the ability to focus on the present moment and observe the very current experiences through alertness and components of novelty seeking, novelty creating, plasticity, and engagement. This research can benefit curriculum planners, syllabus designers, teachers and students, and all other people involved in education*

**Keywords:** *Covid-19, Education, Emotion Regulation, Gross, Koole Mindfulness*

## 1. Introduction

The globe has faced an unprecedentedly sudden misery from the coronavirus pandemic of 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak of and its rapidly transmissible infection leading to constant disease and shockingly numerous deaths (Giannis et al., 2020). The disaster, in a very short time, wreaked havoc worldwide and led to ongoing unprecedented fatalities. Consequently, the lockdown has been followed by the harsh measures of social distancing and subsequent economic catastrophe, financial disaster, job loss, and severe challenges leading to poverty (Cluver et al., 2020; Velavan & Meyer, 2020; Ahmed et al., 2020). These hazardous settings of fear, panic, anxiety of isolation, alienation, quarantine, and distancing inflicted people various mental health issues and led to the higher rate of expression and lower resilience (Wang et al., 2020; Torales et al., 2020; Qiu et al., 2020). The infection outbreaks unsettled and disturbed normal educational activities and impede appropriate learning and teaching acts (Fernando & Mckibbin, 2022). The waning in prospects for teachers and students for social mingling, cooperation, and travelling steered towards the amplified awareness of health threats of an uncertain future (Brooks et al., 2020; Ornell et al., 2020). However, curriculum planners attempted to bring hope and facilitate healing with various coping strategies and interventions across the world.

In the education system, the socio-economic and psychological impacts of this chaotic era on teachers and learners in terms of emotions were huge and needed a thorough study. There felt a necessity in informative

scientific papers for psychological awareness and enlightenment with a deeper concentration on regulatory strategies in response to the traumatic circumstances (Pirkkalainen et al., 2019) as the result of the stressors linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence from these sixty recently published research papers (after 2020) reveals how emotion regulatory strategies can mitigate the dire psychological and behavioral consequences of COVID-19 of depression, distress, functional impairment, and anxiety.

## 2. Review of Recent Studies

Many researchers across the world focused on psychological problems in COVID era. Ahmed et al. (2020) talked about the harsh situation of COVID-19. Brooks, et al. (2020) discussed the mental impacts of confinement and isolation and proposed ways of reducing them. Di Blasi et al. (2021) investigated the psychological sufferings inflicted by the COVID-19 lockdown. Fernando & McKibbin (2021) investigated the macroeconomic policy adjustments due to COVID-19. Torales et al. (2020) examined the pandemic and its bearings on well-being. Qiu et al. (2020) investigated mental distress in the dire era of epidemic.

Many other researchers aimed to explore more about emotion regulation in education and other related psychological factors. Amaral et al. (2018) investigated the part of emotion control in sleep difficulties in college students with stress. Alipour et al. (2021) argued the validating factor structure of emotion regulation strategies inventory. Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak (2020) examined language teachers' inter and intrapersonal student-teacher regulatory strategies. Bing, et.al (2022) focused on self-efficacy and regulating of emotions as conjecturers of EFL teacher burnout. Coiro et al. (2017) delved into the issue of how college students cope with interpersonal stress. Derakhshan et al. (2020) examined the roles of professional requirements, necessities, observations, and interpretations in teachers' accomplishments.

Eginli & Mutlu (2022) probed collective efficacy beliefs and interpersonal emotion regulation to EFL teachers' job stress. Fathi et.al (2021) checked self-efficacy, reflection, and burnout through the mediating role of emotion regulation. Greenier et al. (2021) probed emotion regulation and psychological well-being in teacher educational work involvement and commitment. Heard (2010) investigated the relationship and effects of mindfulness on comfort, work satisfaction, and burnout. Jacobs & Gross (2014) examined emotion regulation in education. Khodami et al. (2022) probed perceived stress, emotion regulation and quality of life during the Covid-19 outbreak. Lee & Jang (2021) investigated the intervening bearings of emotion regulation between mindfulness and accomplishment emotions. Morris & King (2018) explored teacher frustration and emotion regulation in language teaching. Ngo (2021) inspected EFL teachers' emotion regulation in response to online teaching.

Ornell et al. (2020) studied mental health burdens and strategies in COVID time. Preece et al. (2021) focused on the emotion regulation questionnaires. Preuss et al. (2021) probed the cognitive reappraisal and self-compassion as emotion regulation strategies during COVID-19. Rodas et al. (2022) studied the cognitive emotion regulation strategies and psychological stresses during quarantine due to COVID - 19. Roohani & Moosavi (2019) explored the effect of self-evaluation techniques on teachers' reflective teaching. Santos Alves Peixoto et al. (2021) examined emotion regulation, stress, and well-being in academic education. Schutz et al. (2006) searched the reflections on investigating

emotion in educational activity settings. Talbot & Mercer (2018) explored teachers' emotional well-being and emotional rulation. Taxer & Gross (2018) inspected emotion regulation in teachers.

Teixeira et.al (2021) investigated academic anxiety, coping, emotion regulation, and psychosomatic signs in higher education. Taghdiri et al. (2021) compared the effectiveness of motivational model based on progress and emotion regulation techniques on learning self-regulation in students with learning disabilities. Wang & Ye (2021) checked teachers' emotion regulation in students' academic commitment and involvement. Yang et al. (2020) focused on social broadcasting undertakings and emotion regulation strategies with interfaces on people's well-being in COVID-19 era. Yu et al. explored (2022) language learning motivation and burnout with the moderating role of maladaptive emotion regulation strategies. Zhang et al. (2021) concentrated on language

learners' enjoyment and emotion regulation in online collaborative learning. Wang & Ye (2021) checked teachers' emotion regulation in students' academic engagement.

### **3. Emotion Regulation in Education**

After the Pandemic trauma, psychologists started unprecedentedly to pay more attention to emotion and its processes and effects in educational settings. Psychologists formerly tended to perceive emotions as unobservable and inexplicable phenomena leading to obstructions to decision making, attention, and concentration focusing on tasks, whereas Maslow (1943) conceived it as influential and pertinent and integral to education, logic, and understanding for conveying valuable information that can enhance cognitive progressions. However, now emotions are seen as aspects of cognition affecting learning, attention, retention, motivation, and social performances and rationality skills where it can be associated with favourable education outcomes. The rapport between emotion and cognition (thought processing) in education is substantiated.

Emotions are inevitable phenomenon in life, but they should be regulated so they are more constructive not destructive (Gross, 2002). This can be taught in educational contexts where rules to appropriate social conducts are transmitted. Teachers and students both might encounter situations that may make them feel annoyed, irritated, furious, exasperated, repulsed, and offended (Hargreaves, 2000); therefore, people in education need to learn strategies to cope with stressors that erupt intense emotions (Sutton, 2004).

Students' ability in regulating their emotions are reported to have less depression. Yildiz (2017) found that inability in emotion regulation can cause problems in decision making, problem-solving, and behavioral circumvention. Adaptive emotion regulation strategy can be considered as cognitive reappraisal and maladaptive emotion regulation strategy as suppression. Students with more issues of mental health enjoy less engagement managing techniques and more disengagement regulating techniques (Coiro et al. 2017). Furthermore, studies reveal that emotion regulation plays as fundamental contrivance in associating alleged distress to happiness and sleep disorders (Amaral et al., 2018).

Students vary in emotion regulation strategies for the different experiences they have. Ability to regulate emotions reveal teacher efficacy and learner accomplishment. Fried (2010) used Gross's taxonomy system and found that students applied plenty of pre-response emotion regulation strategies of self-report and internal monologue strategies while they face challenges in recognizing what regulation strategies they utilized.

Cognitive reappraisal strategies occur when students evaluate their interpretations of different things or tasks and associate them with constructive emotions; while inert strategies of distraction or circumvention associate them with negative emotions. Overemployment of specific strategies like suppression can hinder memory processing. Overemployment of suppression can lead to depression. Preresponse emotion regulation strategies outperform response strategies. Teachers try to help foster preresponse emotion regulation in students by some samples and models (fried, 2011) which aid teachers focus on both theirs and students' emotions. The importance of education regarding emotion regulation should be considered and teaching a model of strategies should be effectively implemented in pedagogy and curriculum.

In the online educational system, cyber emotions are created. Through some virtual networkings in Covid-19 situation, teachers and learners are connected in the cybernetic educational platform. No one can deny or disregard the incrementally intensified impact of virtual and media in education in pandemic, as Wang and Zhao (2020) discovered. Media had momentous psychological bearings on stress, worry, and despair. In the era of constantly assessing personal psychological health and quality for both teachers and learners who are actively engaged in both online and offline education, emotion regulation plays an important role. Studies have shown that students generally experience anxiety, doubt, tension, pessimism and other emotions in the process of learning. Now that the COVID-19 circumstances are adversely unfavorable, some small degrees of negative emotions can destructively impact their cognition and behavior tendency. Through critical reflection on emotions, people involved in education can assess their numerous aspects of thought processes and behavior in interaction with others.

Psychologists suggest emotion regulation for identifying, evaluating, and altering one's emotional involvement and manifestation (Gross 2014). There are emotion regulation strategies to aid others in hard situations and enjoy life to mend mood and solve problems. Adopting an inert and avoidance approach in dealing with challenges would not result well, whereas active, approach-focused strategies would lead to some beneficial results by actively managing emotions, observing feelings, and enhancing them. Students learn to deal with a variety of stressors (Teixeira, et. al 2021) through the cognitive and behavioral efforts as “the process by which individuals decide which emotions to have, when, where, and how to express them” (Gross 1998 p. 275). Individual’s understandings and evaluations of specific situations can direct the upcoming surge of emotions. A student under stress pressure faces brain shut down and needs to be supplied with the basic human needs of belonging, competence and autonomy.

Emotions serve as dominantly controlling means of improving or deterring learning by exerting a powerful influence on motivational processes, affecting reduced working memory for holding and manipulating information as memory capacity can improve with positive feelings and broaden thought-action repertoires, generating more creative ideas and strategies; cognitive, regulatory and thinking strategies for information, attention, and motivation processing.

#### **4. Models of Emotion Regulation by Gross and Koole**

Coping and regulatory mechanisms of moods and affects are developed by Gross (2007) and Koole (2009). Emotion regulation can occur in two arousal and release stages with factors of: “situation, attention, appraisal, and response” (Gross, 2007, p. 5). Gross (1998) defined this process as “the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions” (p. 275). This perceptive procedure of self-emotion regulation is better than trying to regulate the emotions of others. In revising his model, Gross (2007) suggests five stages of selection and modification of situation, attention, emotion evaluation in the context by thought changes and responses to a situation. Thought revision and variation of responses through cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression happen, when one alters the challenging situation whether by expressing or suppressing emotion (Gross, 2007).

Koole (2009) believes that people are commonly involved in the unregulated response of emotion. They alter their behavior only when they can overcome and take grasp of rush of emotions by reducing the intensity after evaluating the context of emotion release via body movements. Emotion regulation is based on need, personality, or goal. Gross (2007) sees emotion regulation strategies taking place prior to the emotion response much more important and effective than response strategies referring to behavioural, physiological, and bodily responses to an emotion. Emotions result in expression through verbal and non-verbal techniques of gesture. Strategy of distracting deals with attentional disposition. Koole (2009) found that muscle relaxation, breathing techniques, and meditation practices can effectually down-regulate stress; however, Fried (2011) found that response-focused emotion regulation strategies of breathing reduce social competency and academic involvement.

#### **5. Discussion Teacher/Student Emotion Regulation**

Emotion regulation is an essential talent and skillfulness that simplifies learning and advance outcomes. In their review, Martin & Ochsner (2016) discuss that the capacity to regulate emotion can enhance with age and maturity of operational functioning. They add that the regulation of both destructive and constructive emotions and giving directions to emotional responses can be applied to education. Facets of emotional competence are categorized as identifying, evaluating, interpreting, adapting, and adjusting. Students’ emotions can intensely shape their frame of thinking. Positive emotions can enhance learning processes of motivation, attention, and memory, while negative emotions can hinder learning by delaying these cognitive processes. A student’s potential in adaptively regulating emotions can foster optimal learning. The capacity to regulate, maintain, or change emotions as an urgently practical skill can positively affect educational outcomes.

Emotion regulation serves many purposes like increasing emotional arousal or positive potency for learning, descending emotional responses that impede information encoding. There are strategies to aid regulate emotions like reappraisal where a student can cognitively change the thoughts about the stimulus that can bring about floods of emotions. Explicit emotion regulation, like reappraisal, maintains effortful control processes and implicit one hold unconscious and automatic processes. Reappraisal is useful for affective responding. Negative emotions develop attention to potential pressures, while positive ones expand the attentional range to smooth learning and memory.

Students' reward circuitry is responsive to prizes and positive emotions. Feedbacks in the classroom can activate students' neural circuitry; teachers know that students' progress can be influenced by the feedback they receive from others in a social context. Since emotions can affect learning, the strategies of emotion regulation can smooth effective educational outcomes (Martin & Ochsner, 2016). Emotion-cognition interaction aids in directing negative and positive emotions. Stressors can increase emotional reactivity. Understanding how students regulate emotions can assist teachers in boosting students' attention, motivation, memory and learning as cognitive components.

Teachers, like many other human beings with the undeniable gamut of emotions during the lifetime, in educative acts, repeatedly face a sudden rush of emotion when encountering many various conflicting issues in the educational context (Katz et al., 2018). The way teachers deal with their emotions in class (Taxer & Gross, 2018) is an example of her emotion management and control in the online/offline educational system when trapped in the chaotic COVID 19 situation, which makes it even far more adversative. Teachers are influential figures with potential potency on learners' success or failure and the whole system (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Their beliefs toward teaching, context, themselves and students affect their performance (Greenier et al., 2021). Undesirable beliefs decrease work efficiency, emotion collapse, and depersonalization in face of stressors (Maslach & Leiter, 2016) that COVID-19 multiplied its effect.

The procedures teachers adopt to understand their emotions and manage them in the classroom context has repercussions in the effectiveness of their relation with students (Taxer, & Gross, 2018). Cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression are both employed by teachers to modify their disparaging emotions (Bielak & Mystkowska Wiertelak, 2020), so they experience smaller number of destructive emotions and more constructive emotions. They learn to amend nerve-wracking conditions by changing outlooks and subsequent interpretations that affect behavior. These strategies aid them to develop better interpersonal functioning leading to mental well-being, satisfaction, achievement, and self-concept. Suppressing and whacking emotions constrict the demonstration of feelings within.

When teachers practice more cognitive regulatory strategies to control emotions, they gradually develop more self-efficacy. Higher degrees of self-efficacy in a teacher bring about less nervousness, exhaustion, and anxiety. By reflecting, speculating, and monitoring their thoughts, they enhance teaching competence and quality. Therefore, they can develop an interest in their job, and feel attached and empowered, which builds inner motivation to perform a better job. They know well how to solve problems, overcome obstacles, and reach the objectives they set in their lives, teaching careers, and interpersonal communication. This capability would lead to professional and personal accomplishment with no sense of depersonalization or burnout.

## **6. Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic crisis has long been threatening people's mental health across the world and spawning challenges to people's psychological well-being. Harsh governmental measures and the mitigation strategies of social distancing, home containment, and travel restrictions exacerbate adverse psychological difficulties and pervasive consequences for the mental health of people engaged in the educational system. Lockdowns imposed by the government deplete cognitive and emotional resources; therefore, to ameliorate the negative inter-related circumstances during the pandemic and alleviate destructive impacts for teachers and students, psychologists advocate emotion regulation. The regulatory strategies of emotions can assist people

involved in education act appropriately with higher resourcefulness to meet the numerous demands of classrooms. It brings a sense of security, safety, and mental well-being in the process of action-taking. Emotions are intertwined with many cognitive processes of learning in social educative contexts. Both students and teachers, as two significant sides of education, are advised to identify, analyze, and regulate their emotions for the enhancement of communication in all kinds, such as flipped, cooperative, and collaborative education. They need to be aware of the various conditions, situations, needs, rules, and mechanisms involved in deploying emotion regulation strategies which mediate many other influences. In this paper, the review of the findings of freshly published research (after v2020) in the era of disastrous COVID-19 where the whole world and education witnessed a chaotic condition could benefit all people engaged in the educational system, especially teachers and students. It can help them foster a more advantageously peaceful interaction where learning can be processed smoothly despite all the psychologically dire impacts the whole world has experienced since 2019. It can aid teachers in training programs to develop adaptive strategies in emotion regulation to overcome burnout, stress, low self-efficacy, and other related psychological issues.

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