



What Makes Them Happy?: Happiness of Teachers in the National Capital Region during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the education systems worldwide because of the sudden shift to online learning. In the Philippines, particularly in the National Capital Region, teachers faced enormous pressures to adapt to the new classroom environment. Using the Gross National Happiness framework, this preliminary pilot study evaluated the level of happiness and well-being of 53 teachers through an online questionnaire adapted from the Happiness Alliance's Happiness Index. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were used to examine the relationship between happiness and the ten well-being domains in the Happiness Index. Results showed that all ten domains had a statistically significant relationship with happiness, while material well-being, governance, and health emerged as dominant predictors. These baseline findings suggest that teacher well-being during a crisis extends beyond classroom concerns and may inform teacher-support policies, institutional crisis response, post-pandemic recovery planning, and future crisis preparedness.

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Introduction

The Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has affected all aspects of human life. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (n.d.) described it not only as a health crisis, but also as a human, economic, and social crisis. There is a global threat to employment, social well-being, and mental health. Due to the high number of cases every day

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in different countries, governments have decided to implement quarantine policies to lessen the cases.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education implemented a continuity plan to ensure the safety and well-being of students, teachers, and other stakeholders without compromising education (Montemayor, 2020). However, teachers are concerned due to a lack of certainty. They were unsure whether they would continue their jobs online or in physical settings. Teachers are also experiencing increased workload since the needs for an online teaching learning environment contrasts with conventional classroom settings. The additional need to learn new technology and delivery modes to make sure that students are getting the quality of education they should get puts a pressure on teachers too (Anderson et al., 2021). As mentioned also by Thomas et al. (2021), there were two more features that brought stress to teachers during the pandemic: teachers were constantly uncomfortable being under parents' eyes since incidents of parents posting unwanted comments online about teachers have surfaced, and lastly, the new environment of teaching and new materials to learn.

In the Philippines, a study by Oducado et al. (2021) described another stressor of teachers, which was the lack of knowledge about the virus when it was first reported in our country. In connection, due to the uncertainty about the virus, teachers felt fear and frustration of being infected with something that they were not certain about yet (Al-Sabbah et al., 2021). Oducado et al. (2021) also mentioned that gender has played a role, which demonstrated that female teachers were more prone to higher levels of stress associated with the pandemic due to hormonal and biological changes, which was also similar to previous research (AlAteeq et al., 2020; di Fronso et al., 2020; Limcaoco et al., 2020; Qiu et al., 2020). This is an aspect that other researchers have to focus on since the majority of teachers in the Philippines are female. In 2018, 87.45% of teachers were female in primary education alone (The World Bank, 2020). Moreover, Oducado et al. (2021) found that teachers' perceived risk of contracting the virus was associated with stress, indicating that higher perceived risk corresponded with higher stress levels.

A phenomenological study (Robosa et al., 2021) conducted in the Philippines showed lack of resources, handling of students, and the submission and workloads as the main reasons for public teachers' stress and burnout during the pandemic. Although these issues were already experienced by the teacher-participants before the pandemic, experiencing it in another teaching environment was even harder for teachers thus raising the stress levels of teachers. The lack of certainty, resources, knowledge and skill in using new materials, the shift to a new teaching environment, and most especially the lack of student-teacher interaction and the social isolation are the most frequent reasons that raise the stress levels of teachers, just like other people. The aforementioned literature suggests that teachers' well-being should also be prioritized to ensure the continuity of quality education. Teachers should be provided with enough support to adapt to these changes (Oducado et al., 2021).

In education, teacher happiness and well-being are important because they influence how teachers respond to work demands, institutional changes, and crisis conditions. In this study, teacher happiness is examined through a multidimensional well-being lens rather than only through stress or burnout. The study uses the Happiness Alliance's Happiness Index, which measures psychological well-being, health, time balance, community, social support, education, arts and culture, environment, governance, material well-being, and work. These domains properly grasped the experiences of teachers during the pandemic when it comes to school-related concerns and even the outside influences, such as social relationships, work conditions, health risks, economic security, and institutional trust.

Several published studies during the pandemic are largely stress-centered as they emphasized the psychological distress, shift to workload, fear of infection, and burnout experienced by teachers. Only a few studies have examined the well-being of teachers through a multi-dimensional happiness framework.

Hence, this study contributes baseline evidence for post-pandemic recovery and future crisis preparedness by identifying which domains can predict teachers' happiness and what can be associated with it. Lastly, this study was administered at the National Capital Region (NCR), which is a significant setting as it was heavily affected by security restrictions and urban education disruptions.

Literature Review

Well-being of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic

The well-being of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic has been generally associated with stress, burnout, and prompt adjustment to the emergency teaching conditions. In the Philippines, the studies of Oducado et al. (2021) and Robosa et al. (2021) showed how the pandemic-related stress experienced by teachers includes pandemic-related stress, fear of infection, lack of resources, concerns about workload, and especially, burnout. Their studies are necessary as they showed the psychological and occupational pressures that teachers faced during this sudden disruption. On the other hand, evidently, a lot of local literature was stress-centered. Thus, teacher well-being is often approached through the challenges that teachers experience, instead of analyzing and evaluating how, in these conditions, their happiness and well-being were highlighted.

Foreign studies showed a similar picture. In the study of Pressley (2021), he associated the burnout of teachers during COVID-19 to pandemic anxiety, communication and surveillance of parents, and school administration support. In addition, Sokal et al. (2020) presented that teacher efficacy, attitude towards the prompt change, admin support, and burnout were interconnected during the early period of pandemic teaching. Moreover,

Kim and Asbury (2020), König et al. (2020), and MacIntyre et al. (2020), pointed out that the unforeseen and abrupt adjustment to online distance teaching, digital readiness, and emotional strain of school closures heavily affected the teachers' well-being. Altogether, these studies demonstrated that teacher well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic was not just shaped by psychological stress only, it was also extensively affected by work demands, administrative and institutional support, new teaching conditions, and the accessibility of resources.

Related constructs in teacher well-being and shift to happiness-centered lens

To understand the well-being of teachers strongly, it requires a clearer differentiation of its related constructs. Happiness, life satisfaction, stress, burnout, and quality of work life are all connected, but they do not have the same position. Happiness, according to Diener, Sapyta, & Suh (1998), refers to one of the most important pursuits of humans, and in order to achieve it, we need to increase the emotions that we desire (Tamir et al., 2017). On the other hand, life satisfaction pertains to how a person evaluates life wholly (Diener et al., 1985). Additionally, stress refers to a complex phenomenon that affects how our body reacts to pressure that threatens our stability (Solo, 2025). Burnout, according to Maslach and Jackson (1981) and Maslach et al., (2001), refers to the persistence of exhaustion, detachment, and diminishing accomplishments. Lastly, quality of work life is related to the conditions of a person in relation to their professional satisfaction, autonomy, compensation, and development (Sirgy et al., 2001).

These distinctions are necessary because having a stress-centered approach may show what constitutes teachers' struggles, but it will not fully explain the conditions that are associated with the happiness of teachers. On the contrary, a happiness-centered lens will allow the study to examine the well-being of teachers beyond stress, burnout, or even their coping mechanisms. It allows us to explore other domains such as material well-being, health, governance, social support, time balance, work, and accessibility of resources. This move is consistent with the well-being of teachers' literature that views well-being as formed by professional, emotional, and systemic conditions (Acton & Glasgow, 2015; Hascher & Waber, 2021).

Multidimensional approaches to teacher well-being

The Happiness Alliance's Happiness Index consists of the framework that is needed to examine these domains because it includes psychological well-being, health, time balance, community, social support, education, arts and culture, environment, governance, material well-being, and work (Happiness Alliance, 2014). Furthermore, the framework by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2020), recognizes that well-being consists of several areas of life that include the following: income, health, social connections, education, environment, civic engagement, and life satisfaction.

Hence, these frameworks acknowledge that the use of a multidimensional approach in evaluating the happiness of teachers is important, as it clarifies why this study uses

domains that extend beyond classroom instruction. Teacher happiness during the pandemic may be linked not only to psychological well-being but also to health risks, workload, material resources, relationships, institutional communication, and trust in governance. A multidimensional approach, therefore, allows the study to examine teacher well-being as a condition shaped by both personal and institutional factors.

Workload, institutional trust, and teacher-support systems

Workload, institutional trust, and teacher-support systems are especially important in crisis conditions. During the pandemic, teachers needed clear communication, manageable workloads, access to teaching resources, health protection, and responsive school leadership. Studies on pandemic teaching show that teachers' adjustment was shaped by uncertainty, online teaching demands, professional competence, and digital readiness (Kim & Asbury, 2020; König et al., 2020). These findings suggest that teacher well-being should not be treated only as an individual responsibility. Schools and education systems also shape teacher well-being through the resources, guidance, communication, and support they provide.

This is directly related to the present study because the Happiness Index includes domains such as material well-being, governance, health, and work. These domains capture conditions that schools and education systems can address through resource allocation, workload management, health protection, transparent communication, and responsive leadership. With this, the framework of this study is relevant because it not only helps in describing the happiness of teachers. It also helps identify where teacher-support systems can be strengthened if there are ever any disruptions in the future.

Relevance of Gross National Happiness to education

Gross National Happiness is relevant to this shift because it treats well-being as multidimensional rather than purely economic or individual. In education, this perspective is useful because teachers' ability to sustain teaching depends not only on instructional skill but also on health, psychological functioning, time balance, social relationships, working conditions, institutional trust, and material resources. In the study conducted by Schuelka and Maxwell (2016), they presented how the education in Bhutan was examined through the lens of their culture, education, and Gross National Happiness (GNH). Furthermore, Ura (2016) pointed out the role of values education in bridging the principles of GNH with education. Their studies suggest that education is not solely focused on academic instruction. Education is also a place where well-being, values, social responsibility, and an environment that values growth matter.

We can clearly see the relevance of GNH to education when we connect the ten domains to the pandemic experiences of teachers. Psychological well-being and health can be associated with the emotional and physical capacity of teachers to continue their work. Time balance and work, on the other hand, blur the line between home and school when it comes

to online or distance learning. Community and social support relate to the relationships of teachers with their families, co-teachers, students, students' parents, and the whole community as a whole. Governance indicates trust in government and school administration. Material well-being pertains to the accessibility of resources that is needed for teaching. All of these domains are hypothetical factors; they all answer to the actual conditions that shape the well-being of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The literature presented how the well-being of teachers is often explained through the lens of stress, burnout, anxiety, coping mechanisms, and how teachers adjusted to online distance learning. The literature also emphasized the different difficulties of teachers psychologically and professionally. Thus, a multidimensional framework is significant to further consider the different aspects of teachers' well-being that are often missed or disregarded. The present study responds to this gap by using the Happiness Alliance's Happiness Index to the teachers in National Capital Region.

Research objectives and questions

This research study aimed to:

1. describe the level of happiness and well-being of teachers in the National Capital Region during the COVID-19 pandemic;
2. examine the relationship between the overall happiness and the well-being domains; and
3. identify which domains significantly predict the overall happiness of teachers.

It also sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of happiness and well-being of teachers in the National Capital Region during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What is the relationship between overall happiness and the well-being domains?
3. To what extent do specific well-being domains predict teachers' overall happiness?

Methodology

This study used a descriptive-causal design to examine the happiness of teachers and its relationship with multiple domains of well-being. Fifty three teachers from the National Capital Region were the respondents of this study. Convenience sampling, specifically snowball sampling, was done for this study because it was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. A collection of data through Google Form was administered from July 25, 2021 to July 31, 2021. The survey link was shared through face-to-face sharing of the link, Facebook groups, Messenger, and invitations via email. Due to the small, non-probabilistic sample, the

study is treated as a preliminary pilot study, and thus, the findings are interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive or generalizing all teachers in the National Capital Region.

The Happiness Alliance's Happiness Index was used as an instrument because it is the most suitable for this study, since it measures happiness as a multidimensional construct that goes beyond assessing teachers' stress, burnout, or any classroom-related concerns or problems.

Figure 1

Domains of Happiness Index and measured qualities



The instrument was composed of three parts. The first part gathered the socio-economic profile of the respondents. The second part used the Cantril Self-Anchoring Ladder to measure overall life satisfaction. The third part measured the different Happiness Index domains. The instrument was adopted from the Happiness Alliance's Happiness Index and organized according to the ten domains shown in Figure 1. Content coverage was addressed through the use of the published Happiness Index framework, whose domains correspond to the constructs measured in the study.

This study did not undergo Institutional Review Board review; therefore, it has no IRB approval code, approving office, or approval date. This is disclosed for transparency. Participation was voluntary, and responses were treated with confidentiality.

Reliability analysis showed that the full Happiness Index had good internal consistency, Cronbach's $\alpha = .875$. The analysis showed that the following negatively correlated with the total scale: Satisfaction 4, Community 6, Community 7, Economy 2, and Economy 3. Thus, it should be considered with caution in scoring.

Lastly, the data gathered were analyzed using jamovi statistical software. To summarize the profile and domain scores of the respondents, descriptive statistics were used. Pearson correlation analysis was also utilized to explore the interconnection between overall happiness and domains of well-being. Multiple regression was used to know which domains significantly predicted the overall happiness.

Results

The results are presented according to the objectives of the study: first, the socio-economic profile of the respondents; second, the relationship between happiness and well-being domains, and third, the domains that significantly predict the happiness of teachers.

Table 1 presents the socio-economic profile of the teacher-respondents in the National Capital Region.

Table 1

Socio-economic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency (N=53)	Percentage
Age		
24 years old and below	7	13
25 years old - 40 years old	33	62
41 years old - 56 years old	10	19
57 years old and above	3	6
Gender		
Female	25	47
Male	28	53
Marital Status		
Married	13	25
Single	40	75
Educational Attainment		
Bachelor's degree	24	45
Master's Degree	16	30
Doctoral Degree	13	25

Type of School		
Non-sectarian private	19	36
Sectarian Private	18	34
Public	16	30
Annual Household Income		
Less than Php 131,484.00	11	21
Between Php 131,484.00 to Php 262,968.00	12	23
Between Php 262,968.00 to Php 425,936.00	8	15
Between Php 425,936.00 to Php 920,388.00	8	15
Between Php 920,388.00 to Php 1,577,808.00	7	13
Between Php 1,577,808.00 to Php 2,629,680.00	2	4
At least Php 2,629,680.00	5	9
Class Being Taught		
Grade School	6	11
High School	28	53
College	13	24
Graduate School	4	8
Special Education	1	2
Senior High School	1	2
Eligibility		
Licensed	38	72
Not Licensed	15	28

These descriptive findings provide the background characteristics of the teachers who participated in the study.

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation results between overall happiness and the ten well-being domains.

Table 2

Pearson Correlations between Happiness and the Ten Well-being Domains

Domain	Happiness	
	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Psychological well-being	.604**	< .001
Health	.780**	< .001
Time-balance	.628**	< .001
Community	.298*	.015
Social Support	.271*	.025
Education, Arts and Culture	.653**	< .001
Environment	.441**	< .001
Governance	.838**	< .001
Material well-being	.846**	< .001
Work	.825**	< .001

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The results showed that psychological well-being, health, time balance, community, social support, education, arts and culture, environment, governance, material well-being, and work were significantly associated with happiness. These findings indicate that teacher happiness during the pandemic was related to multiple personal, social, institutional, and material conditions.

Table 3 presents the multiple regression results for the well-being domains predicting overall happiness.

Table 3

Regression Analysis Summary for Significant Domains Predicting Happiness

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.812	.371		4.883	< .001
Economy	.757	.179	.413	4.229	< .001
Governance	.779	.244	.331	3.193	.003
Health	.594	.206	.258	2.883	.006

a. Dependent variable: Happiness

b. Only significant predictors are displayed

Note: $R = .689$, $R^2 = .474$, $N = 53$. The full regression model included the ten well-being domains as predictors; only significant predictors are displayed.

The regression model explained 47.4% of the variance in teacher happiness. Among the ten domains included in the model, material well-being, governance, and health emerged as significant predictors of teacher happiness. Based on the R^2 value, the model showed a large overall effect size. However, given the small, non-probabilistic sample, the regression findings should be interpreted cautiously.

Discussion

The findings concluded that the happiness of teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic can be associated with different dimensions of well-being. The correlations between the ten domains showed that the happiness of teachers-respondents in the National Capital Region cannot be limited to personal emotions only or solely to their classroom concerns. Rather, it was evident that factors such as health, work, social support, governance, and material well-being can also be associated with it. Hence, it supports the use of a multidimensional happiness framework to further examine and analyze the well-being of teachers during an emergency crisis (Happiness Alliance, 2014; Jimenez et al., 2026; Ura et al., 2012).

With all the domains that were examined, the three domains that emerged were: material well-being, governance, and health. This result is essential since during the pandemic, economic pressure was heavily experienced by everyone, and it added emotional distress to teachers since they had to worry about it alongside their new teaching conditions. Household income, financial security, accessibility of resources, and the new expenses to adapt to the new learning modality influence the overall sense of well-being of teachers. This is connected to earlier literature by Easterlin (2003) and Filmer and Pritchett (2001), which suggests that material conditions and access to resources are related to the well-being and life satisfaction of people.

Another significant predictor of teacher happiness that was found was governance. This showed that the perception of teachers of the government is very relevant during the pandemic. Due to the period of uncertainty, changing quarantine policies, shift in educational landscape, clarity of COVID-19 guidelines, and confidence in institutional response all contributed to the overall well-being and state of happiness of teachers. It was then supported by the study of Kauffmann et al. (2005) and Van de Walle and Bouckaert (2003), which bridged governance, institutional performance, and perceptions of public systems that affect the well-being of everyone, particularly factors such as trust in government, accountability, and their effectiveness in leading and taking care of their citizens.

Health is another significant predictor of the happiness of teachers. This is expected since the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers faced concerns related to fear of infection, mental health, and, of course, the safety of their families and students. These health-related worries formed how they experienced their professional work and personal lives. This showed that the study by the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH (2017) and Ura et al. (2012) aligned with it since they revealed that health is a core component of happiness and well-being, alongside physical, mental, and social functioning.

Overall, the findings showed that teacher happiness was influenced by different conditions during the pandemic. Material well-being, governance, and health were especially essential since they reflect the current happenings of that time in relation to economic security, institutional trust, and safety during the COVID-19. This suggests that the well-being of teachers in crises should be understood as a broad institutional and societal concern, not only as a personal and classroom concern.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the teachers' happiness and well-being in the National Capital Region during the COVID-19 pandemic by using a multidimensional happiness framework. Specifically, it showed the happiness and well-being of teachers, examined the relationship between happiness and well-being domains, and identified the domains that significantly predicted the happiness of teachers.

The findings showed that all of the ten happiness domains were associated with happiness, where material well-being, governance, and health emerged as significant predictors. These findings suggest that teachers' happiness during crises is shaped by economic, institutional, and health factors, along with classroom-related experiences.

Based on these findings, school administrators, education policymakers, and teacher-support systems should strengthen crisis-responsive support mechanisms for teachers. These mechanisms should address not only education needs, but also economic, institutional, and health-related concerns that shape and influence teachers' well-being. They may prioritize financial and material support, promote easy access to educational resources, health protection measures, mental health services, workload management, transparent institutional communication, and mechanisms that strengthen trust in school and public governance.

Lastly, the findings should be interpreted as preliminary baseline evidence instead of being conclusive or generalized to all teachers in the National Capital Region. Future studies should use larger samples or mixed-methods designs and stronger validation of the adapted Happiness Index for teachers.



Statements and Declarations

1. Funding details

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2. Disclosure Statement

The authors report that there are no competing interests to declare.

3. Acknowledgment

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4. Ethical Approval

This study did not undergo Institutional Review Board review; therefore, it has no IRB approval code, approving office, or approval date. This absence of formal ethics review is disclosed for transparency. The study was nevertheless conducted with basic ethical safeguards, including voluntary participation and confidentiality of responses.

5. Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing

The authors used ChatGPT to assist in summarizing the literature review and suggesting grammar corrections, mistakes, and more appropriate language, specifically under the literature review, methodology, and discussion. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and took full responsibility for the publication's content.

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