

# Educators Under Pressure: Lifestyle Changes, Stress, and Anxiety During COVID-19

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## INTRODUCTION & AIM

- The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education, forcing teachers to rapidly transition to remote teaching.
- This shift increased workload, technological demands, and work–life imbalance, contributing to higher stress, anxiety, and burnout.
- Pandemic restrictions also affected lifestyle behaviours, including sleep, physical activity, and daily routines.
- Understanding these impacts can help improve teacher well-being and workplace health, both during crises and beyond.

### Aims:

- Explore how COVID-19 affected teachers' stress, anxiety, and lifestyle
- Examine the link between lifestyle behaviors and mental health
- Provide insights for supporting teacher well-being during crises and beyond

## METHODS

- **Study design:** Cross-sectional, descriptive-correlational quantitative study conducted February–May 2022.
- **Participants:**
  - Teachers from school groups served by a Primary Care Unit (PCU) in Porto, Portugal
  - 105 included in final sample
  - Convenience sampling
- **Data collection:**
  - Anonymous online questionnaire (Google Forms)
  - Included sociodemographic, professional, lifestyle, and mental health questions
- **Instruments:**
  - DASS-21 – measures anxiety, depression, and stress
  - FANTASTIC Lifestyle Questionnaire – assesses 10 lifestyle domains
- **Statistical analysis:**
  - Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies)
  - t-tests and ANOVA using SPSS v20
  - Significance level  $p < 0.05$
- **Ethics:**
  - Approved by the University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro Ethics Committee
  - Anonymous participation and informed consent

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

- **Sample characteristics:** Most participants were female (88.6%), over 51 years old (60%), and had more than 15 years of teaching experience (86.7%).
- **Stress showed the highest mean score**, followed by depression and anxiety, indicating that the pandemic placed significant psychological pressure on teachers.
- **Teachers with  $\leq 15$  years of experience reported higher depression levels**, suggesting that less experienced educators may be more vulnerable to professional stress.

- Teachers who reported **difficulty falling asleep** showed significantly **higher levels of anxiety, depression, and stress**, highlighting the strong relationship between sleep quality and mental health.
- **More than half of the teachers were dissatisfied with remote teaching**, reflecting challenges related to workload, technological demands, and work–life balance.

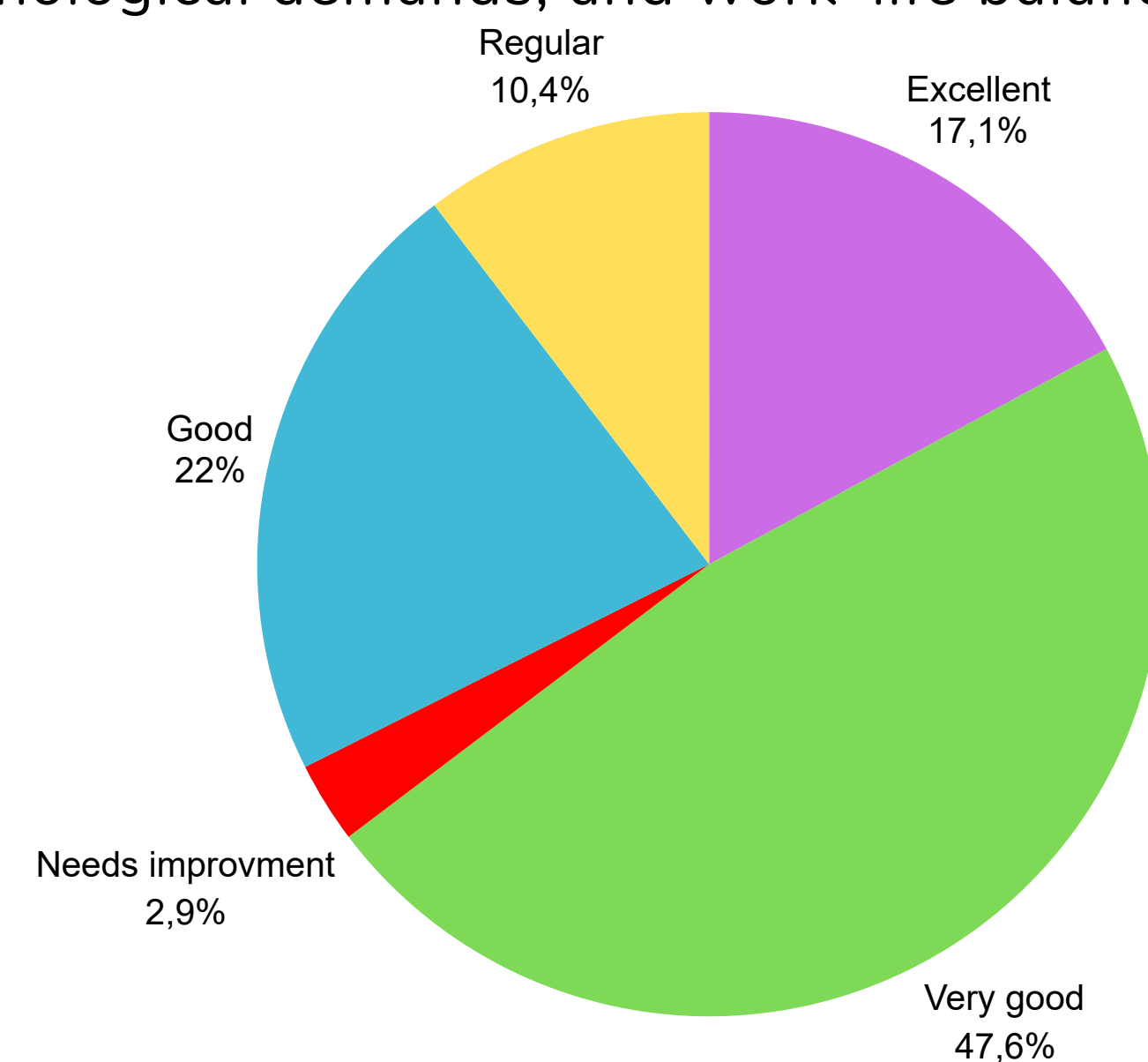


Figure 1. Overall Lifestyle Classification (FANTASTIC Questionnaire)

- Nearly half of participants (47.6%) reported a very good lifestyle, while 2.9% showed lifestyle patterns needing improvement (Figure 1).
- These findings suggest that teacher stress is influenced not only by crisis situations like COVID-19 but also by **structural challenges in the teaching profession**, emphasizing the need for **long-term institutional support and well-being strategies**.

## CONCLUSION

- The COVID-19 pandemic increased stress, anxiety, and depression among teachers, especially those with **less professional experience**.
- **Sleep difficulties** were strongly associated with higher psychological distress.
- **Adaptation to remote teaching** increased stress levels, while dissatisfaction with distance learning highlighted the challenges of **workload and work–life balance**.
- Supporting teacher well-being requires **long-term strategies**, including mental health programs, workload management, and lifestyle support.
- Interventions should aim to improve **both crisis and non-crisis professional well-being**, promoting a healthier, more resilient teaching workforce.

## FUTURE WORK / REFERENCES

- Conduct **longitudinal studies** to track teacher well-being over time.
- Include **qualitative research** to explore teachers' experiences and coping strategies.
- Test **interventions** such as mental health programs, flexible work policies, and lifestyle support to improve stress management.



FULL ARTICLE