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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Predictive Role of Teacher Emotions in Curriculum Fidelity: A Descriptive Study of English Language Instructors

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What is already known on this topic?

- *Teacher emotions, including joy, pride, love, anger, exhaustion, and hopelessness, have been shown to influence instructional engagement, classroom practices, and professional well-being in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and broader educational contexts.*
- *Curriculum fidelity (CF) is shaped by institutional expectations, professional beliefs, and contextual factors; however, its relationship with teachers' emotional experiences remains largely underexplored.*

What this study adds on this topic

- *This study examines the relationship between positive and negative teacher emotions and CF among EFL instructors in university preparatory programs.*
- *The findings show that the composite positive emotion index is significantly and positively associated with CF in this sample, whereas negative emotions are not significantly related.*
- *The study contributes to the literature by linking teacher emotion research with curriculum implementation, offering insights into the emotional foundations of faithful curriculum enactment in EFL classrooms.*

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between English as a Foreign Language instructors' emotional experiences and their curriculum fidelity in Turkish university preparatory programs using a descriptive correlational design. Data were gathered from 71 English as a Foreign Language teachers employed in Turkish university preparatory programs in İstanbul. Data were collected online using the Curriculum Fidelity Scale and the Teacher Emotion Questionnaire, which assesses six emotional dimensions: joy, pride, love, anger, exhaustion, and hopelessness. Descriptive statistics were used to determine levels of emotional experiences and curriculum fidelity of instructors. Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between these variables. In addition, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate the predictive role of teachers' emotional experiences. For regression analysis, the emotional dimensions were grouped into positive emotions and negative emotions. Results indicated that the composite positive emotion index (joy, pride, and love) was significantly and positively associated with curriculum fidelity whereas negative emotions (anger, exhaustion, and hopelessness) showed no significant relationship in this sample. These findings suggest that, in this sample, teachers' positive emotional experiences may be associated with more faithful curriculum implementation, highlighting the potential role of emotional well-being in instructional practice.

Keywords: Curriculum fidelity, curriculum implementation, EFL instructors, teacher emotions, teacher engagement

Introduction

The education system is organized around a fundamental and unified construct: the curriculum. Curriculum can be defined as both a prescriptive plan emphasizing what ought to be taught, such as the organized learning experiences planned by schools to achieve educational goals (Tyler, 1957, as cited in Glatthorn et al., 2018), and a descriptive reality, including all the learning experiences that actually occur under the guidance of teachers in real classrooms (Caswell & Campbell, 1935 as cited in Glatthorn et al., 2018; Ellis, 2004, as cited in Glatthorn et al., 2018). Thus, it embraces both the intended design and the experiences of learners within educational environments (Ebert et al., 2014). A well-designed curriculum encompasses the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that a particular society considers indispensable for learners to internalize and apply. Apart from its instructional function, the curriculum also serves as a tool for socialization and a mechanism for reform in order to achieve broader social change and human development (Macdonald, 2003). Consequently, curriculum design and curriculum practice together construct the pillar of educational quality and reform.

The curriculum enables educational processes to progress in a more systematic and organized manner within schools. An effective curriculum is based on a well-studied and well-documented action plan (Kuloglu & Tutus, 2022). The curriculum design, the context, and the teachers as the practitioners are crucial aspects of successful curriculum implementation (Öztürk, 2012). The curriculum and teachers together play a crucial role in ensuring that education is structured according to learners' needs and systemic goals (Karakuyu, 2023). Curriculum frameworks indicate what is to be taught, whereas teachers deliver these frameworks, including learning outcomes, content, pedagogical process, and assessment elements, while taking into account the interests and needs of learners (Yeşilpınar Uyar & Eti, 2023). This transmission of curriculum policy into teaching practice determines the success of educational reforms. Teachers are not only those who follow rules; they are also individuals who make the curriculum come to life in their classrooms (Bumen et al., 2014; Arslan-Çelik & Gelmez-Burakgazi, 2024).

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It is unrealistic to expect all teachers to follow the curriculum exactly as designed (Bumen et al., 2014). Curricula are specifically designed road maps that guide teachers through the teaching and learning process and determine the proper way and time to perform activities (Ertürk, 2013). Since teachers may prioritize certain aspects, such as content or teaching methods, over learning outcomes, variations in implementation are likely to occur. Teachers have significant responsibilities and duties when delivering curricula. Therefore, understanding teachers' implementation practices through the lens of curriculum fidelity (CF) is essential for evaluating the overall success of the curriculum. It has long been recognized as a cornerstone of understanding how educational programs translate from design to practice. It is the extent to which a curriculum or educational innovation is implemented (Dusenbury et al., 2003). In other words, it refers to how much what has been planned in the curriculum matches what has been enacted (Furtak et al., 2008). CF is also associated with the success or failure of programs and reveals differences between curriculum design and classroom realities. Additionally, CF can affect the achievement of programs and improve program implementation when needed (Arslan-Çelik & Gelmez-Burakgazi, 2024). However, such a strict fidelity perspective disregards differences in teachers' practices, institutional infrastructures, and students, which then influence teachers' actual practices (Ocak & Olur, 2019). That is, despite its importance, strict fidelity can be perceived as a burden on teacher autonomy and local relevance (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006). Conversely, Anteneh and Anshu (2024) claimed that an increased percentage of fidelity correlates with enhanced curriculum implementation.

Curriculum fidelity is shaped not only by teachers' professional knowledge, beliefs, and contextual conditions, but also by their emotional experiences throughout the teaching process. Teaching is increasingly recognized as an emotional profession rather than a purely technical one. Schools are full of positive and negative emotions (Hargreaves, 1998, as cited in Yurtseven, 2020). Teachers are not mechanical implementers of policy; they are human beings whose emotions shape their sense of being valued, their motivation, and their sense of belonging to their school community (Argon, 2015). When teachers feel supported, respected, and emotionally safe, they are more likely to invest in their work, sustain effort, and engage more positively with students and colleagues. Conversely, when their emotional experiences are mainly negative, this can minimize their well-being and undermine the quality of teaching and learning.

Teaching involves practices in which emotions are ever-present; learning and teaching both require understanding and managing emotions (Hargreaves, 1998, as cited in Yurtseven, 2020). Research shows that taking teachers' feelings into account can contribute to increased teacher performance (Argon, 2015), higher-quality relationships with students (Brown et al., 2018), greater student achievement, and overall improved quality of teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2025). Teachers experience a broad spectrum of emotions, from happiness, love, and pride to anger, anxiety, shame, and guilt, depending on classroom events, student behaviors, and institutional demands (Li et al., 2024; Yurtseven, 2020; Pi et al., 2022). These emotions influence classroom management, classroom climate, and instructional behaviors, making them an inseparable part of the teaching process (Yurtseven, 2020).

The emotional dimension of teaching is particularly noticeable in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Teaching EFL is often described as one of the most demanding and emotionally difficult areas of education, involving heavy workloads, linguistic and cultural mediation, classroom management challenges, and sometimes low learner motivation (Chen, Lin, & Lin, 2024; Liu et al., 2021). Burnout among EFL teachers has been documented as a serious concern, given its negative impact on teacher well-being, the classroom atmosphere, and student learning (Castillo-Gualda et al., 2019; Maor & Hemi, 2021). It is important to recognize that teacher emotion is an inevitable aspect of educational transformation (Yang et al., 2022). Teacher emotion can affect their professional practices (Saunders, 2013). This highlights the potential influence of teacher emotions on curriculum implementation. This body of research emphasizes that teachers' emotional lives are not isolated. They are integrated with student experiences, classroom climate, and ongoing patterns of interaction, all of which have implications for how teaching and learning unfold daily.

From a theoretical standpoint, positive emotions may support CF through several mechanisms. According to Pekrun's (2006) control–value theory, positive emotions such as joy and pride emerge when individuals perceive both value in and control over their professional tasks, and these emotions in turn foster persistence, sustained effort, and goal-directed behavior. In the context of curriculum implementation, teachers who experience positive emotions may therefore be more likely to remain professionally committed to curricular expectations, invest consistent effort in faithful enactment, and align their instructional practices with intended learning outcomes. This emotional investment may manifest across several of the fidelity dimensions identified by Dusenbury et al. (2003), including closer adherence to curriculum design, fuller delivery of intended content, and higher quality of program implementation. In contrast, negative emotions may have a comparatively limited effect on CF. Unlike positive emotions, which appear to actively motivate adherence, negative emotions may be constrained by external factors such as institutional accountability systems, standardized course materials, and professional obligations, which may compel teachers to follow prescribed curricula regardless of their emotional state (Anteneh & Anshu, 2024). In other words, while positive emotions may serve as internal drivers of faithful curriculum enactment, the structural features of the educational context may act as external buffers that limit the disruptive influence of negative emotions on implementation practices.

Despite this rapidly growing literature on teacher emotions, emotion regulation, burnout, and emotion transmission, relatively little is known about how these emotional processes relate to CF. Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by investigating the relationship between EFL teachers' CF and their emotions, with a particular focus on the role of emotion dimensions and related emotional resources. Building on contemporary conceptualizations of teacher emotions (Frenzel et al., 2021; Schutz et al., 2006), emotional labor and regulation (Wang, et al., 2025; Aldrup, et al., 2024), and psychological resources in EFL teaching (Chen et al., 2024; Li, 2023), this study examines how EFL teachers' emotions may support or hinder faithful curriculum implementation. By situating CF within the broader field of teacher emotion research, the study aims to offer a more holistic understanding of the emotional foundations of curriculum implementation in EFL classrooms and to inform professional development efforts that attend to both teachers' emotional well-being and curricular enactment.

Research Questions

1. What is the CF level of EFL instructors?
2. What is the level of emotional experience of EFL instructors?
3. Is there a significant relationship between EFL instructors' emotions and their CF?
4. To what extent do EFL instructors' positive and negative emotional experiences predict their CF?

Literature Review

This section reviews the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the present study. It first discusses research on teacher emotions

and CF and then examines previous studies exploring the relationship between teachers' emotional experiences and instructional practices.

Curriculum Fidelity

Some teachers are flexible in implementing the curriculum into action. They apply some parts of the planned program and omit others. But this selective implementation could make it harder for students to learn and for curriculum developers to figure out how well the program works (Superfine, et al., 2015). On the other hand, certain educators implement the curriculum as mandated by strictly following the official framework (Cobanoglu & Capa-Aydin, 2015). Two opposing viewpoints dominate the conversation about fidelity. The pro-fidelity approach stresses strict adherence to set goals, methods, and evaluation procedures (Bumen et al., 2014). The adaptation approach acknowledges the necessity for flexibility, enabling educators to modify and contextualize curriculum elements in response to local and learner requirements (Berman & McLaughlin, 1976, as cited in Yeşilpınar-Uyar & Eti, 2023; Hall & Loucks, 1977, as cited in Yeşilpınar-Uyar & Eti, 2023). Adherence at a high level is often encouraged (Pandey, 2018); however, it has also been criticized for limiting higher-order thinking, professional autonomy, and decision-making in the classroom, which makes teachers more like technicians than reflective practitioners (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2006).

Dusenbury et al. (2003) propose a widely cited framework for understanding CF and identify five key dimensions of implementation. The first dimension, adherence, captures how closely teachers follow the curriculum design when selecting activities and instructional methods, ensuring alignment with developers' intentions. The second dimension, dose or exposure, reflects how much of the intended content is delivered. The third dimension, quality of program delivery, concerns how well teachers implement the curriculum, including their instructional skills, enthusiasm, and use of interactive strategies. The fourth dimension, participant responsiveness, focuses on learners' engagement and active participation in curriculum activities. Finally, program differentiation examines whether the distinctive features of the curriculum are clearly identifiable and distinguishable from other programs. This ensures that the program that is put into action can be reliably told apart from other programs and that its main parts stay the same. These five dimensions work together to provide a complete framework for judging how well a curriculum is being used and for figuring out what makes a program work. Understanding these dimensions is essential for evaluating not only whether teachers implement the curriculum but also how the quality and consistency of that implementation may be shaped by factors such as teacher emotions.

Several studies indicate that numerous educators utilize this method due to pressures of accountability, apprehension of straying from prescribed standards, or insufficient curriculum knowledge. For example, Cobanoglu and Capa-Aydin (2015) found that early childhood teachers who strongly believed in constructivism closely followed the curriculum. On the other hand, teachers who demonstrated weaker commitment to constructivist principles tended to follow prescribed plans more strictly and uncritically, which minimizes the risk of making mistakes. Gürbüz and Şen (2023) similarly found that elementary teachers reported high levels of CF, particularly in adherence-related components, indicating that strict implementation remains a common practice across schools. They also examined how strictly the curriculum was followed in different subject areas (classroom teaching, Turkish, math, and science) and found that there were no significant differences between branches. This suggests that strict adherence is stable across disciplines and is more influenced by general system expectations than by the culture of a specific subject. The teachers in their study appeared to rely heavily on the prescribed curriculum structure, reinforcing the idea that maintaining strict fidelity is often considered the safest and most expected approach to instruction. These findings suggest that institutional context and professional orientation play a central role in shaping fidelity, raising the question of what additional factors may further explain variation in implementation practices.

Various studies highlight the advantages of strict implementation. Teachers frequently state that strict implementation enhances curriculum coherence, guarantees the accomplishment of learning outcomes, and elevates the probability of achieving system-wide standards. Bay et al. (2017) observed that when educators strictly adhere to the curriculum, particularly in environments where content is centrally mandated, it can improve instructional uniformity across classrooms and elevate student achievement by guaranteeing that all learners have equitable access to essential competencies. Gürbüz and Şen (2023) additionally indicated that high fidelity correlated with teachers' favorable views on curriculum clarity and usability, implying that stringent adherence may be reinforced when educators perceive the curriculum as comprehensible and feasible. However, strict adherence is controversial. Opponents critique that treating the curriculum as a set of scripts limits teachers' freedom to teach in their own way, makes it harder for them to adapt lessons to different types of students, and makes them look like implementers instead of experts (Hall & Hord, 2015; Superfine, et al., 2015). The literature cautions that inflexible fidelity may obstruct the cultivation of higher-order thinking skills, as it constrains educators' capacity to modify instructional strategies, incorporate inquiry-based approaches, or adapt responsively to students' requirements. In Bay et al. (2017), educators indicated that excessively prescriptive curricula resulted in inadequate time for student-centered activities, resulting in superficial coverage rather than profound learning.

Many teachers take a flexible or adaptive approach instead of strict fidelity. In this approach, teachers change the content, teaching methods, and materials to better fit the needs of the classroom. Studies show that teachers' beliefs, experiences, and the situation they are in all affect how much they adapt. For instance, Yeşilpınar Uyar and Eti (2023) noted that preschool teachers often implemented superficial adjustments, such as choosing or slightly altering activities, to address time constraints, classroom diversity, or institutional expectations. The study found that teachers sometimes misinterpreted the concept of curriculum flexibility, which results in modifications that did not necessarily enhance students' deeper learning. Gürbüz and Şen (2023) also found differences between fidelity dimensions. They found that teachers scored high on adherence-based components but lower on areas that required deeper instructional decision-making, like changing how they teach or how they test students. This pattern, along with their finding that fidelity levels did not vary significantly across subject fields, indicates that the manner in which teachers determine fidelity and adaptation is predominantly shaped by systemic and contextual factors rather than by disciplinary area. Bay et al. (2017) and Süer & Demirkol (2023) also said that teachers change the curriculum due to lack of enough resources, intense content, or the pressure from tests and crowded classrooms. Teachers often change the pace of lessons, make activities easier, or replace tasks based on the curriculum with ones that are more focused on tests. Such adjustments can allow teachers to respond to students' needs better. Nonetheless, when these changes are not based on a clear understanding of the curriculum, they might fail to support students in achieving the intended learning outcomes.

Teacher Emotion in Curriculum Fidelity

Han et al. (2023) explicitly view teacher emotions within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, offering a clearer link between emotions and curriculum. The study focuses on five core emotions, such as joy, love, anger, fear, and sadness, and uncovers how each is shaped by influences operating at the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-system levels. At the microsystem, daily interactions with

students, colleagues, school leaders, and family are primary sources of emotional experiences, with student engagement generating joy and administrative conflict often evoking anger or frustration. At the mesosystem, challenges in maintaining work–family balance frequently trigger stress and negative emotions. At the exosystem, institutional structures such as performance evaluation systems, research expectations, and teaching assessments strongly influence teachers' emotions, and they often produce fear, pressure, or sadness when demands feel misaligned with teachers' realities. Most importantly for curriculum research, the macrosystem reveals that large-scale curriculum implementation in tertiary foreign language education plays a significant emotional role. This ecological perspective suggests that teachers' emotional experiences are systematically linked to the curricular context in which they work, implying that emotions may either support or undermine faithful curriculum enactment depending on how teachers perceive and relate to the curriculum they are expected to implement.

Yip et al. (2022) investigated EFL teachers' emotions during the English curriculum reform in China. They found that teachers experienced a wide range of emotions as reform demands intensified. These emotional responses directly influenced their implementation behaviors. Positive emotions supported more engaged and innovative enactment whereas negative emotions led to superficial compliance, resistance, or withdrawal from reform expectations. Teachers who felt overwhelmed by increased workload, ideological requirements, and shifting identities struggled to implement the curriculum faithfully, demonstrating that emotions are not peripheral but central drivers of CF. This finding is particularly relevant to the present study, as it suggests that the emotional valence teachers bring to their work may be a meaningful predictor of how faithfully they implement prescribed curricula.

Another study conducted by Yang et al. (2022) explores how China's foreign-language curriculum reform reshaped English teachers' professional identities. It highlights that these identity shifts are deeply intertwined with curriculum implementation. Teachers reported that navigating new curricular requirements created significant identity tensions. These tensions produced emotional struggles that directly influenced how teachers implement the curriculum. As teachers attempted to reconcile their personal beliefs, teaching philosophies, and professional values with the reform's demands, many experienced uncertainty, pressure, and conflict, which led to uneven curriculum implementation. The study shows that curriculum reform is not merely a technical change but an emotional and identity-driven process. Teachers who felt aligned with the new curricular vision enacted it more confidently, whereas those who felt isolated or overwhelmed engaged in partial, selective, or symbolic implementation. Taken together, these studies suggest that teacher emotions are not merely peripheral to curriculum implementation; rather, they are integral to how teachers perceive, interpret, and enact curricular expectations. The present study seeks to examine this relationship empirically within the context of EFL preparatory schools in Türkiye.

Methodology

This section describes the methodology employed in the study. It outlines the research design, participants, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures used to investigate the relationship between EFL instructors' emotional experiences and their CF. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee (Decision No: 02/2026; Protocol No: E.52730751-204.01.07-280) on January 20, 2026. The study was conducted between November 2025 and February 2026. Prior to this approval, all research activities were strictly limited to preparatory tasks required for the ethics application. Specifically, between November and December 2025, the research topic was identified and the scope was defined. During this period, the necessary permissions for the instruments were also obtained from the scale authors as part of the ethics application process. Between December 2025 and January 2026, the introduction, literature review, and theoretical framework sections were drafted in order to fulfill the requirements of the ethics committee application report. Neither phase involved any participant contact or data collection of any kind. Data collection started only after formal ethics committee approval was granted. The instruments were administered to participants via Google Forms, and all data collection and analysis procedures were carried out in full accordance with the approved protocol.

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive quantitative design to examine the relationship between teachers' CF and their emotions. The aim of this design is to describe existing levels of CF among EFL instructors and to explore how their emotional experiences relate to their implementation of the curriculum. The study did not involve any manipulation or intervention; rather, it aimed to provide empirical evidence about naturally occurring relationships between teachers' emotions, their understanding of the curriculum and their implementation practices within English language instruction.

Setting and Participants

The participants include English language instructors working in various university preparatory schools across İstanbul, Türkiye. A total of 71 EFL instructors participated in the study. Participants were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling via professional networks and institutional contacts. Of the participants, 43 were female and 28 were male. In terms of age, the majority of the instructors were aged 29 and below ($n=29$), followed by those between 30 and 39 years old ($n=22$), 40 and 49 years old ($n=15$), and 50 years and above ($n=5$). Regarding educational qualifications, most participants held a master's degree ($n=43$), while 22 participants held a bachelor's degree and 6 held a doctoral degree. The participants also represented a broad range of teaching experience. 17 instructors had 1–3 years of teaching experience, 11 had 3–5 years, and 15 had 5–10 years of experience. In addition, 19 participants reported having 11–20 years of experience, whereas 8 had more than 21 years of teaching experience. Because this approach relies on voluntary participation and personal networks, it constitutes a non-probability sampling method**,** which may limit the representativeness of the sample and the generalizability of the findings beyond the participating instructors. Therefore, the results could be interpreted with caution and viewed as indicative of trends within the participating sample rather than fully representative of all EFL instructors. To be eligible for participation, instructors had to be currently teaching in a prep-school program and have at least one year of teaching experience. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants at the beginning of the scale on the Google Forms link. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, and no personally identifiable data were collected.

Instruments

Two scales adapted into Turkish were utilized to identify the levels of CF and the emotional experiences of English language instructors. "Curriculum Fidelity Scale" developed by Yaşaroğlu and Manav (2015) and "The Teacher Emotion Questionnaire (TEQ), originally developed by Burić et al. (2018), was adapted into Turkish by Yurtseven (2020). The CF Scale developed by Yaşaroğlu and Manav (2015) is a single-dimensional instrument consisting of 20 items as a five-point Likert-type scale. Item factor loadings range from 0.355 to 0.757, indicating acceptable construct validity. In the original validation study, the scale demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.892. TEQ is a 35-item, five-point Likert-type instrument

measuring joy, pride, love, anger, exhaustion, and hopelessness dimensions. The validity analyses showed strong construct validity; item factor loadings ranged from 0.49 to 0.85. Reliability analyses demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's α values between 0.71 and 0.92 across the subscales. Test-retest reliability coefficients, ranging from 0.81 to 0.88, further indicated that the scale yields stable scores over time.

Internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha. The CF scale demonstrated acceptable reliability in the present sample (α=0.72). TEQ subscales showed good to excellent internal consistency: joy (α=0.90), pride (α=0.86), love (α=0.82), anger (α=0.84), exhaustion (α=0.91), and hopelessness (α=0.88). These values are consistent with the reliability coefficients reported in the original validation studies, suggesting that the scales demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency in this context.

The scales were administered online via Google Forms. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and confidential as stated in the Google Forms.

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27. Prior to analysis, the dataset was screened for coding accuracy and missing values. Examination of the data indicated that no missing responses were present at either the item or scale levels. Consequently, all descriptive, correlational, and regression analyses were conducted using the full sample of 71 instructors. Since there were negatively worded items in the CF Scale, 6th, 8th, 12th, and 14th statements were reverse-coded before the analysis, and mean scores were calculated for all scales and subscales. CF was operationalized as the overall mean score of the CF Scale while instructors' emotional experiences were represented by mean scores computed separately for each emotional dimension (anger, hopelessness, exhaustion, love, pride, and joy). To address the first research question, which aimed to determine the overall level of CF among EFL instructors, descriptive statistics were computed for CF. Measures of central tendency and dispersion, including the mean, median, and standard deviation, were examined to provide an overall summary of instructors' reported adherence to the curriculum. This descriptive approach allowed for an initial characterization of CF levels within the sample. Similarly, the second research question, which focused on the level of emotional experience among EFL instructors, was addressed using descriptive statistical analyses. Mean scores were calculated for each emotional subdimension, and the mean, median, and standard deviation for anger, hopelessness, exhaustion, love, pride, and joy were reported. Reporting emotion-specific descriptive statistics enabled a differentiated examination of both positive and negative emotional experiences, rather than treating teacher emotion as a single undifferentiated construct. The third research question examined whether instructors' emotional experiences were related to their CF. Spearman's correlation analyses were conducted between CF and each emotional subdimension to answer the question. Spearman's rank-order correlation was selected because preliminary screening indicated that a non-parametric approach was more appropriate. Correlation coefficients and corresponding significance values were used to assess the direction and strength of associations between emotional experiences and CF. Finally, the fourth research question investigated the extent to which instructors' emotional experiences predicted CF. A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to address the question. CF was entered as the dependent variable. The six emotional dimensions were combined into two indices to reduce the number of predictors in the regression model. The positive emotion index was computed by averaging the mean scores of the love, pride, and joy subscales, whereas the negative emotion index was computed by averaging the mean scores of anger, hopelessness, and exhaustion. This grouping is consistent with the TEQ's original factor structure (Burić et al., 2018), which distinguishes positive and negative emotion subscales. Prior to the regression analysis, assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were examined and no violations were detected.

Results

This section presents the results of the statistical analyses conducted to address the research questions of the study. First, descriptive statistics were used to examine EFL instructors' levels of CF and their emotional experiences. Next, Spearman's correlation analysis was performed to investigate the relationships between instructors' emotional experiences and CF. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which emotional experience variables predicted CF. All analyses were carried out using SPSS, and statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level.

Descriptive statistics for the CF Scale developed by Yaşaroğlu and Manav (2015) are presented in Table 1. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for each item of the CF Scale. Most items demonstrated relatively high mean scores, generally above 4.00, suggesting that participants reported a high level of agreement with statements reflecting CF. Among the positively worded items, the highest mean scores were observed for CF1 (M=4.66, SD=0.72) and CF17 (M=4.63, SD=0.68), followed by CF5 (M=4.59, SD=0.69) and CF18 (M=4.49, SD=0.75). These results indicate that instructors generally reported strong adherence to several aspects of the intended curriculum implementation. Most of the remaining items also showed high mean values ranging between 4.10 and 4.49, further supporting the overall tendency toward high CF. In contrast, the reverse-coded items (CF6_r, CF8_r, CF12_r, and CF14_r) displayed noticeably lower mean scores. These items also showed relatively higher standard deviations (SDs ranging from 1.18 to 1.35), indicating greater variability in responses compared to most positively worded items. Overall, the descriptive statistics suggest that EFL instructors reported consistently high levels of CF, with relatively low variability across

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics of Curriculum Fidelity Scale

	Min	Max	Mean	SD
CF1	1.00	5.00	4.66	0.72
CF2	2.00	5.00	4.49	0.69
CF3	2.00	5.00	4.41	0.79
CF4	2.00	5.00	4.48	0.83
CF5	2.00	5.00	4.59	0.69
CF6_r	1.00	5.00	1.79	1.35
CF7	2.00	5.00	4.44	0.77
CF8_r	1.00	5.00	1.67	1.18
CF9	1.00	5.00	4.31	0.86
CF10	1.00	5.00	4.10	0.90
CF11	2.00	5.00	4.28	0.74
CF12_r	1.00	5.00	2.09	1.32
CF13	1.00	5.00	4.37	0.82
CF14_r	1.00	5.00	1.90	1.29
CF15	1.00	5.00	4.45	0.86
CF16	1.00	5.00	4.10	1.08
CF17	2.00	5.00	4.63	0.68
CF18	2.00	5.00	4.49	0.75
CF19	2.00	5.00	4.32	0.86
CF20	2.00	5.00	4.01	0.92

Note: CF=curriculum fidelity; SD=standard deviation.

most items, while reverse-coded items reflected lower mean scores as anticipated due to their scoring direction.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the six dimensions of the Teacher Emotion Questionnaire. Among the positive emotions, joy showed the highest mean score (M=4.74, Median=5.00, SD=0.50), indicating that instructors frequently experienced feelings of joy in their teaching context. This was followed by pride (M=4.52, SD=0.64) and love (M=4.10, SD=0.69), suggesting generally strong positive emotional experiences related to teaching. On the other hand, the negative emotions demonstrated considerably lower mean scores. Anger had the lowest mean (M=2.54, SD=0.97), followed by exhaustion (M=2.99, SD=1.03) and hopelessness (M=3.09, SD=0.96). These results indicate that negative emotional experiences were reported less frequently than positive emotions among the instructors. Standard deviation values indicate moderate variability across emotional dimensions, with slightly greater variability observed for negative emotions such as exhaustion and hopelessness compared to positive emotions. Overall, the findings indicate that EFL instructors in this sample tended to experience stronger positive emotions than negative emotions in their teaching practice.

Results of Spearman's rank-order correlation analyses are presented in Table 3. It was conducted to examine the relationships between EFL instructors' emotional experiences and CF. The findings indicate that positive emotions were significantly associated with CF. Specifically, joy was positively and significantly correlated with CF (r_s=.26, p=.029), indicating that instructors who reported higher levels of joy tended to demonstrate higher levels of CF. Similarly, pride showed a moderate positive correlation with CF (r_s=.38, p=.001). It represents the strongest relationship among the emotional dimensions examined. Love was also positively and significantly related to CF (r_s=.24, p=.045), although the strength of this relationship was relatively weak. On the contrary, negative emotions were not significantly associated with CF. The correlations for anger (r_s=.04, p=.751), exhaustion (r_s=.02, p=.850), and hopelessness (r_s=.02, p=.852) were very limited and statistically non-significant. Overall, these results show that positive emotional experiences, particularly pride, are related to higher levels of CF among EFL instructors, whereas negative emotions do not appear to have a meaningful relationship with curriculum implementation.

To conduct regression analysis and maintain adequate statistical power due to modest sample size, the six emotional dimensions were categorized into positive emotions and negative emotions. Unlike the correlational analyses conducted separately for each emotional dimension, the regression analysis examined two composite indices representing positive and negative emotions. According to Green's (1991) guideline for multiple regression ($N \geq 50+8m$), a minimum of 66 participants is required for a model with two predictors; therefore, the present sample (n=71) meets the recommended threshold. Reducing the number of predictors helps prevent instability in regression estimates when the sample size is limited. Table 4 presents the results of the linear regression analysis conducted to investigate the extent to which EFL instructors' emotional experiences are associated with CF. Prior to conducting the regression analysis, the assumptions of linear regression were examined. The histogram and normal P–P plot of standardized residuals indicated that the residuals were approximately normally distributed and no serious outliers were detected, suggesting that the data were suitable for linear regression analysis. CF was entered as the dependent variable, while positive and negative emotions were included as predictor variables.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics of TEQ (Teacher Emotions Questionnaire)

Emotional Dimension	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Joy	2.60	5.00	4.74	0.51
Pride	1.00	5.00	4.52	0.64
Love	1.00	5.00	4.10	0.69
Anger	1.00	5.00	2.54	0.97
Exhaustion	1.00	5.00	2.99	1.03
Hopelessness	1.00	5.00	3.09	0.96

Table 3.
Spearman Correlations Between EFL Instructors' Emotional Experiences and Curriculum Fidelity

Emotional Dimension	r_s with CF	p
Joy	.26	.029
Pride	.38	.001
Love	.24	.045
Anger	.04	.751
Exhaustion	.02	.850
Hopelessness	.02	.852

Note: CF=curriculum fidelity; EFL=English as a Foreign Language; r_s=Spearman rank correlation coefficient.

The results showed that the composite positive emotion index was significantly and uniquely associated with CF, while the composite negative emotion index was not significant. Specifically, the positive emotion index showed a positive and statistically significant association with CF (B=0.227, SE=0.085, β=0.316, t=2.66, p=.009, 95% CI [.058, .396]). This suggests that higher levels of positive emotional experiences among instructors are associated with higher levels of CF. The tolerance (0.959) and VIF (1.043) values presented in Table 4 confirmed the absence of multicollinearity concerns. On the other hand, negative emotions were not significantly associated with CF. The effect of negative emotions on CF was small and not statistically significant (B=0.026, SE=0.053, β=0.058, t=.49, p=.625, 95% CI [−0.079, 0.131]). It indicates that negative emotional experiences do not meaningfully contribute to explaining variation in CF. As presented in Table 5, the overall regression model explained 9.6% of the variance in CF (R^2=.096, Adjusted R^2=.069, p=.033), and the model reached statistical significance (F(2, 68)=3.603), with a standard error of the estimate of 0.354. This indicates that positive and negative teacher emotions account for a statistically significant yet modest portion of the variability in CF. Overall, this suggests that, in this sample, higher levels of positive emotions are statistically associated with higher CF, whereas negative emotions do not make a significant additional contribution.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the instructors' CF, their emotional experiences, the extent to which these emotional experiences are associated with and predictive of CF. The findings contribute to the research on teacher emotions and instructional processes by demonstrating that emotional experiences are meaningfully associated with CF. This offers important implications for both theory and practice.

First, the descriptive results showed that EFL instructors reported consistently high levels of CF across all scale items. This finding aligns with previous research, suggesting that teachers tend to report strong adherence to curriculum guidelines. For example, Gürbüz and Şen (2023) found that teachers demonstrated high levels of CF in Turkish public schools and that fidelity levels were positively related to teachers' understanding of the curriculum and their professional preparation. Their findings suggest that when teachers have adequate curriculum knowledge and institutional support, they are more likely to implement curricular guidelines consistently. The high level of CF observed

Table 4.
Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Examining Emotional Predictors of Curriculum Fidelity

Variable	B	SE	β	*t*	*p*	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	Tolerance	VIF
Positive Emotions	0.227	0.085	0.316	2.66	.009	0.058	0.396	0.959	1.043
Negative Emotions	0.026	0.053	0.058	0.49	.625	−0.079	0.131	0.959	1.043

Note: β = standardized coefficient; B = unstandardized coefficient; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; SE = standard error; UL = upper limit; VIF = variance inflation factor.

in the present study may also reflect institutional and structural characteristics of EFL programs of prep schools in Türkiye. Research on curriculum implementation has shown that teachers often adopt a fidelity-oriented approach when curricula are tightly structured and closely monitored by institutions. Anteneh and Anshu (2024) explain that curriculum implementation approaches of teachers are frequently shaped by institutional expectations and policy requirements. In their study of ELT teachers in Ethiopian universities, the authors found that many instructors followed closely to the curriculum due to institutional pressures, standardized course materials, and expectations from educational authorities.

The descriptive findings regarding emotional experiences revealed that instructors reported high levels of positive emotions, particularly joy, pride, and love, alongside lower levels of negative emotions such as anger, exhaustion, and hopelessness. This emotional profile aligns with findings from large-scale studies which have shown that teachers frequently experience enjoyment and pride in their professional roles, especially when they perceive their teaching as meaningful and effective. Recent studies in teacher emotion research emphasize that positive emotions play an important role in sustaining teachers' professional engagement and instructional commitment. For example, Burić and Moè (2020) demonstrated that teachers' positive emotions are strongly associated with higher levels of work engagement and professional well-being. Similarly, Frenzel et al. (2021) argue that positive emotions in teaching contexts are linked to greater instructional enthusiasm, classroom engagement, and effective teaching practices. At the same time, the presence of moderate levels of negative emotions such as exhaustion and hopelessness reflects the demanding nature of the teaching profession. Teaching is widely recognized as an emotionally intensive occupation requiring continuous emotional regulation and interpersonal interaction with students, colleagues, and institutional structures. Recent research highlights that teachers often experience emotional pressure due to workload, classroom management challenges, and institutional accountability systems (Chen, 2021). Therefore, the coexistence of positive and negative emotions observed in this study reflects the complex emotional landscape of teaching rather than indicating contradictory emotional states.

The correlational analyses provided further insight into the relationship between emotional experiences and CF. Among positive emotions, pride demonstrated the strongest relationship with CF, indicating that instructors who experience greater professional pride tend to report higher levels of adherence to curriculum implementation. On the other hand, the correlations between CF and negative emotional dimensions were extremely weak and statistically non-significant. These findings indicate that negative emotional experiences do not appear to meaningfully influence instructors' adherence to curriculum guidelines. This pattern aligns closely with Pekrun's (2006) control–value theory of achievement emotions, which suggests that positive emotions emerge when individuals perceive both value in and control over their tasks, and that such emotions support engagement, persistence, and adaptive behavior. In the context of EFL instruction, instructors who experience joy and pride may be more likely to perceive curriculum implementation as aligned with their professional goals and values, thereby fostering consistent and faithful enactment of curricular guidelines. Empirically, similar associations between positive teacher emotions and adaptive instructional outcomes have been documented in prior research. Keller et al. (2014) demonstrated that teachers' emotional experiences are systematically related to their instructional functioning and well-being. More recent work by Zhang (2023) also indicates that positive teacher emotions contribute to higher levels of teaching engagement and pedagogical commitment among EFL instructors. Because CF requires sustained instructional effort and adherence to planned learning objectives, teachers who experience positive emotions may be more motivated to implement the curriculum as intended. However, it is important to note that these findings diverge from a body of implementation research reporting a stronger negative role for emotional strain and burnout. For example, research conducted by Garwood (2022) showed that negative associations between teacher burnout and implementation fidelity, suggesting that emotional exhaustion may undermine sustained and high-quality program delivery.

The regression findings of the present study revealed that the composite positive emotion index was significantly and positively associated with CF in this sample, whereas the composite negative emotion index was not. It should be noted that these regression predictors were composite indices, not individual subscale scores, and therefore these associations cannot be interpreted causally. However, these are correlational findings, and causal interpretations are not warranted. Positive emotions may support higher fidelity, but the reverse direction is equally plausible, and unmeasured variables such as school leadership quality may account for both. This finding highlights the importance of distinguishing between individual emotion subscale scores, as examined in the correlational analyses, and composite emotional indices as used in the regression model, where the combined positive emotion index was the unit of analysis. For instance, Burić and Moè (2020) used a longitudinal design to examine relations between teacher emotions and self-efficacy. It demonstrated that positive emotions were closely linked to self-efficacy and professional engagement. Additionally, although the overall model was statistically significant, it explained only a modest proportion of the variance in CF, suggesting that teacher emotions alone do not fully account for differences in curriculum implementation and that other contextual factors such as institutional support, curriculum literacy, and professional beliefs likely play an important role. This also aligns with sociocognitive and sense-making approaches to curriculum implementation. Spillane et al. (2002) argue that curriculum implementation is shaped by interpretation, beliefs,

Table 5.
Regression Model Summary for the Prediction of Curriculum Fidelity from Positive and Negative Teacher Emotions

Model	*R*	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error of the Estimate	R^2 Change	F Change	*df*1	*df*2	*p*
1	.310	.096	.069	.35388	.096	3.603	2	68	.033

Note: Adjusted R^2 = R^2 adjusted for the number of predictors; *df* = degrees of freedom; F = overall model F test; *R* = multiple correlation coefficient; *R*2 = coefficient of determination.

and interactions of teachers within institutional contexts. Emotions may influence how teachers make sense of curricular expectations, but they do so in conjunction with structural constraints, professional norms, and organizational cultures. Similarly, Frenzel et al. (2021) reported that teachers who frequently experience positive emotions demonstrate higher levels of enthusiasm, motivation, and engagement in their instructional practices. These findings support the present study's result that positive emotional experiences are associated with higher reported CF, as teachers who feel joy, pride, and satisfaction in their teaching may be more motivated to invest effort in implementing curriculum objectives effectively in this sample. However, the present findings diverge from some studies that emphasize the negative impact of teachers' emotional strain on instructional practices and program implementation. For example, Ransford et al. (2009) found that teacher burnout was negatively associated with the fidelity of implementation in school-based intervention programs. In contrast, the present study found that negative emotional dimensions such as anger, exhaustion, and hopelessness were not significantly associated with CF. One possible explanation is that curriculum implementation in many educational settings is strongly shaped by institutional expectations and accountability systems. Teachers may continue to follow prescribed curricula regardless of their emotional states due to professional responsibility, institutional monitoring, or standardized assessment requirements. It is also important to acknowledge that the correlational nature of this study precludes causal conclusions. Positive emotions might support higher CF, but higher fidelity could equally reinforce positive emotions, or a third factor such as supportive school leadership may account for both.

The findings of the present study indicate that positive emotional experiences are meaningfully related to CF and that, in this sample, a composite positive emotion index is significantly associated with CF whereas a composite negative emotion index is not. This distinction reinforces the importance of integrating emotional variables with contextual and organizational factors in future research. Rather than focusing solely on individual emotions, future studies may benefit from examining broader emotional patterns alongside institutional supports, leadership practices, and policy pressures to develop a more comprehensive understanding of curriculum implementation in EFL settings.

Conclusion

This study investigated EFL instructors' CF, their emotional experiences, and the relationships between these variables. The findings indicated that instructors reported generally high levels of CF alongside high levels of positive emotions, particularly joy, pride, and love, while negative emotions such as anger, exhaustion, and hopelessness were reported at lower levels. Correlational analyses revealed that CF was positively associated with positive emotional experiences, whereas negative emotions were not significantly related to CF. However, regression analyses using composite positive and negative emotion indices, rather than individual subscale scores, showed that the positive emotion index was significantly associated with CF in this sample, while the negative emotion index was not. These results suggest that teachers' emotional experiences are meaningfully yet modestly related to CF and may operate as part of a broader affective and contextual system rather than as isolated determinants of curriculum implementation.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the relatively small number of participants limits the generalizability of the findings and may have reduced the statistical power of the regression analyses. Because the sample consisted of 71 instructors from university preparatory programs in İstanbul recruited via convenience and snowball sampling, the findings should be interpreted cautiously and cannot be generalized to all EFL instructors in Türkiye. Second, the descriptive correlational design of the study does not allow causal inferences to be drawn. The direction of the relationship between teacher emotions and CF remains unclear; it is equally plausible that higher fidelity reinforces positive emotions, or that a third variable, such as school leadership quality or institutional support, influences both simultaneously. These variables have been shown in previous research to influence instructional practices and professional engagement and may help explain additional variance in curriculum implementation.

Recommendation

Future research could include larger and more diverse samples of EFL instructors from different institutional contexts. Furthermore, as the sample was drawn exclusively from university preparatory programs in İstanbul, the findings cannot be generalized to EFL instructors in other cities, institutional types, or national contexts.

Future studies may also consider examining other teacher-related variables, such as curriculum literacy, professional beliefs, and institutional support, alongside emotional experiences. In addition, longitudinal and mixed-methods designs could help capture how teachers' emotions and curriculum implementation evolve over time and across different instructional contexts. Such approaches may contribute to a deeper understanding of the affective and contextual factors shaping curriculum implementation in EFL settings.

Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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