

BEHIND THE SMILE: INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL LABOR ON CLASSROOM DYNAMICS AND STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

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Abstract

Emotional labor, defined as the process of regulating emotions to meet professional demands, plays a critical yet often overlooked role in educational settings. The study explores various dimensions of emotional labor and their impact on student emotions and academic success. Using a review method, 25 studies were selected from a total of 164 publications, spanning from 2000 to 2024, sourced from multiple databases. The findings indicate that teachers who effectively manage their emotions foster an inclusive and engaging classroom. Recognizing the complexities of emotional labor can help educators develop strategies to balance emotional demands while maintaining an effective teaching environment. This research underscores the critical role of emotional regulation in teaching effectiveness.

Keywords: *Teacher Emotional Labor, Classroom Dynamics; Student Involvement, Review Method*

Introduction

Emotional Labor (EL) involves the effort, regulation, and control required to express emotions that align with organizational expectations during interpersonal interactions (Hochschild, 1983). This process can be a source of stress, as employees must manage their emotions to meet organizational goals (Grandey, 2000). To regulate their emotions, individuals typically use three EL strategies: surface acting (SA), deep acting (DA), and genuine emotional expression (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). As research on EL has expanded, its significance across various service industries has gained attention (Grandey, 2000). Teachers, as a distinct group within this sector, engage in EL in unique ways due to the prolonged and multifaceted nature of their interactions (Yin, 2016).

Teachers' EL extends beyond classroom instruction, encompassing long-term interactions with students, parents, and colleagues (Yin, 2016). Their emotions play a crucial role in fostering student engagement and creating a positive classroom environment that supports effective learning (Grandey, 2000). Teachers must carefully manage emotional expressions to maintain student motivation and ensure smooth classroom functioning. Consequently, they invest significant emotional effort in their profession (Zhu & Zhou, 2022). With growing societal expectations placed on teachers, EL has become an increasingly important aspect of teaching (Yin, 2016). Moreover, teachers' emotional expressions not only influence their own behavior but also impact students' attitudes, engagement, and academic outcomes both within and beyond the classroom (Yao et al., 2015). Understanding teachers' EL is essential for improving the quality of education.

EL strategies affect multiple stakeholders, including teachers, students, and school organizations (Yin, 2016). While much research has focused on how EL influences teachers, particularly in relation to job burnout, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Yao et al., 2015), the complexity of the teaching profession suggests these factors are deeply interconnected (Grandey, 2000). A more holistic examination of EL is necessary to understand its broader implications.

This review synthesizes research on the effects of teachers' EL over the past decade, emphasizing teacher development, student outcomes, and organizational impact (Zhu & Zhou, 2022; Yin, 2016). By exploring these dimensions, it aims to provide researchers and educators with deeper insights into EL's consequences, ultimately contributing to the professional growth of teachers and the academic success of students (Lee and Van Vlack (2018).

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the influence of emotional labor on teachers from different dimensions.
2. To assess the influence of emotional labor on students from different dimensions.

Methodology

This study utilized a review method to analyze research on teachers' emotional labor, selecting 25 from 164 publications. Studies published between 2000 and 2024 were sourced from databases such as SAGE Publications, Taylor and Francis, Scopus, Springer, ResearchGate, and Google Scholar. The literature search focused on emotional labor among school teachers, using search terms like "emotional labor," "classroom dynamics," and "student involvement." After screening the retrieved articles, only those relevant to the study's objectives were included, while studies unrelated to school teachers or not aligning with the research focus were excluded.

Results and Discussion

A. Multidimensional Impact of Teachers' Emotional Labor on Teachers

Emotional labor, recognized as the third form of labor after mental and physical work, is vital in teaching. Examining its impact from various perspectives helps educational leaders support teachers in managing emotions effectively. This review explores EL's effects on teachers' well-being across cognition and emotion.

1. Influence of Emotional Labor on Teachers' Cognition

Teacher cognition includes educators' beliefs, perceptions, and understanding of their roles. Awareness of responsibilities enhances teaching effectiveness, but emotional regulation is essential as teaching involves managing emotions through various emotional labor strategies. (Grandey, 2000). Examining the impact of EL on teacher cognition provides valuable insights for improving teacher education and professional growth. Research has identified four cognitive areas influenced by EL: professional responsibilities, self-efficacy, career aspirations, and professional identity (Yin, 2016).

Firstly, EL is essential in helping teachers manage their professional duties, including lesson planning, classroom management, and communication with stakeholders. Through EL, teachers create structured and supportive learning environments that contribute to student success. A study

by Brown et al. (2023) involving 329 K-12 teachers in the U.S. found that EL enhances educators' ability to guide students, maintain a positive classroom climate, and foster collaboration within schools, underscoring its critical role in professional responsibilities.

Secondly, Emotional labor is linked to teachers' self-efficacy, as deep and surface acting help them align emotions with professional expectations, enhancing their confidence in teaching effectiveness (Buric & Mornar, 2023). A longitudinal study conducted by Buric and Mornar (2023) with 3,010 Croatian teachers found that those who used DA to transform negative emotions into positive ones reported greater self-efficacy. Similarly, Lee and Van Vlack (2018) studied 127 Korean English teachers and found that DA was linked to increased positive emotions, further reinforcing their self-confidence.

Thirdly, EL significantly influences teachers' career aspirations and professional development. Yin (2016) found that DA strategies, which promote positive emotions, contribute to career goal achievement. While SA—where teachers suppress or fake emotions—may provide short-term benefits in meeting professional objectives, excessive reliance on SA can lead to emotional exhaustion. Yin's (2016) research also indicated that authentic emotional expression positively impacts career progression.

Lastly, Emotional labor (EL) significantly influences teachers' professional identity, shaping their values, roles, and sense of belonging. A study by Brown et al. (2014) involving 486 K-12 teachers in 22 U.S. schools found that EL impacts self-perception. Deep acting helps align teachers' self-image with the ideal "good teacher," while surface acting exposes gaps between reality and expectations, making EL essential for sustaining professional identity amid emotional challenges.

2. Influence of Emotional Labor on Teachers' Emotions

Teachers continually perform emotional labor, balancing knowledge delivery with emotional regulation to create a productive learning environment. While EL has both benefits and challenges, it requires significant psychological and physical effort, affecting well-being. This section examines EL's impact on teachers, focusing on emotional exhaustion, job burnout, teaching satisfaction, and overall well-being.

Firstly, EL strategies significantly influence teachers' emotional exhaustion, which refers to mental fatigue caused by prolonged emotional demands. Teaching is an emotionally intensive profession, and research has established a strong link between EL and emotional exhaustion. Yao et al. (2015) analyzed survey data from teachers across three provinces in China, highlighting that surface acting was a major contributor to emotional exhaustion, whereas deep acting (DA) had a protective effect by reducing emotional strain. Previous studies also suggest that DA requires fewer psychological resources than SA, making it a more sustainable strategy for conserving emotional energy and preventing exhaustion (Yao et al., 2015).

Secondly, Emotional labor (EL) significantly affects teachers' experiences of job burnout, a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged stress. Given the emotional challenges of teaching, EL strategies influence teachers' well-being. Research has explored their impact on burnout among educators and administrators. Silbaugh et al. (2023) found that surface acting (SA), where displayed emotions do not match internal feelings, led to emotional dissonance and burnout in a Pennsylvania school principal, while deep acting (DA) reduced stress. Similarly,

Ntim et al. (2023) and Tsang et al. (2021) confirmed that SA increased burnout, whereas DA and natural emotional expression enhanced resilience, reducing burnout risk.

Thirdly, Emotional labor (EL) plays a vital role in teaching satisfaction, which reflects the positive emotions teachers experience when their work feels meaningful. Research shows that deep acting (DA) and natural emotional expression enhance satisfaction, whereas surface acting (SA) negatively affects it. Yin et al. (2023) found that among 491 kindergarten teachers in Hong Kong, SA lowered job satisfaction, while DA and authentic emotional expression improved it. Similarly, Zhu and Zhou (2022) observed that English-as-a-foreign-language teachers who balanced SA with high DA and genuine emotional expression reported greater satisfaction. Huang et al. (2019) and Yin et al. (2023) further emphasized the strong positive impact of natural emotional expression.

Lastly, EL also significantly affects teachers' overall well-being, which depends on balancing job demands with available resources. Different EL strategies influence well-being differently. Wu et al. (2020) found that DA directly and indirectly improved well-being by fostering teachers' professional commitment. Likewise, Peng et al. (2023) studied 803 junior high school English teachers in China and discovered that only DA positively predicted well-being. Additionally, Zhao and You (2021) emphasized that teachers with high psychological resilience managed EL more effectively, leading to better well-being.

In summary, EL plays a critical role in shaping teachers' emotional states, influencing exhaustion, burnout, satisfaction, and overall well-being. While DA and natural emotional expression tend to have positive effects, excessive reliance on SA can lead to emotional strain. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for supporting teachers in managing EL effectively.

B. Influence of Teachers' Emotional Labor on Students from Different Dimensions

Teachers' emotional labor (EL) not only influences their well-being but also significantly impacts students. Research has shown that teachers' emotions shape student experiences, as teaching is an emotionally driven profession (Brown et al., 2018; Buric, 2019). Since teachers encounter various emotions in different situations, they regulate their emotional expressions through EL to maintain professionalism. These emotional displays provide key signals about their attitudes and motivations, influencing students' behaviors and emotional responses. Ultimately, teachers' EL plays a vital role in student development. This section examines its effects from two key perspectives: academic growth and emotional development, highlighting its importance in shaping student outcomes.

1. Influence of Teachers' Emotional Labor on Students' Academics

Academic development is a priority for all students, and classroom engagement is closely linked to academic success. Teachers use EL to regulate their emotions and create a learning environment that fosters student participation and achievement. This section focuses on two key aspects of academic development: classroom participation and academic performance.

Teachers' emotional labor (EL) strategies play a crucial role in student engagement. Student participation is strongly influenced by their perception of the classroom environment and their teacher's enthusiasm. Buric (2019) found that teachers employing deep acting (DA) and surface acting (SA) often display positive emotions, which enhance student engagement. When students perceive enthusiasm in their teacher, they are more likely to adopt similar emotional regulation strategies and actively participate in class. Brown et al. (2018) also identified a strong connection

between EL and teacher-student interactions, noting that SA contributes to a negative classroom climate, while DA improves behavior management, productivity, and concept development, fostering engagement. Interestingly, Buric et al. (2021) found that while DA did not directly predict teaching strategies or engagement, classrooms where teachers frequently displayed faked emotions still experienced increased student participation in learning activities.

EL also plays a role in shaping students' academic performance. Research suggests that DA and SA are essential for expressing enthusiasm, which can positively influence students' learning outcomes (Buric, 2019). Other studies indicate that even when teachers use faked emotions as part of their EL strategies, the display of enthusiasm can enhance their teaching effectiveness, leading to improved student performance. This suggests that teachers' ability to manage and regulate their emotions contributes significantly to students' academic success.

2. Influence of Teachers' Emotional Labor on Students' Emotions

Teachers' EL has a profound effect on students' emotional development. Emotions involve an individual's response to experiences, encompassing both positive and negative feelings. Research has shown that teachers' EL can shape students' emotional responses through various mechanisms. Xie et al. (2022) examined the emotional labor of educators, including principals, assistant teachers, and childcare teachers, in Chinese kindergartens. Their study found that EL influences children's emotions in different ways depending on the educator's role.

For principals, expressing genuine emotions through DA had an indirect effect on children's competence, motivation, attention, persistence, and anxiety levels. In contrast, SA was directly associated with increased anger and aggression in children (Xie et al., 2022). When examining assistant teachers, the study found that their natural emotional expressions influenced children's competence, motivation, and anxiety levels indirectly. This suggests that students respond positively when assistant teachers express authentic emotions.

Childcare teachers also play a critical role in shaping children's emotional responses. According to Xie et al. (2022), when childcare teachers expressed genuine emotions, it directly enhanced children's competence, motivation, attention, persistence, and cooperative sensitivity. Furthermore, the study found that SA had a direct negative impact on children's sensitivity and cooperation, whereas DA positively affected children's persistence, attention, and cooperative behaviors. These findings highlight the importance of teachers' EL strategies in shaping students' emotional and social development.

Conclusion

This study presents a comprehensive review of existing research on the impact of teachers' emotional labor on both educators and students across multiple dimensions. Teachers engage in EL as part of their daily responsibilities, employing various strategies to regulate emotions and maintain professionalism (Brown et al., 2018; Buric, 2019). The review is structured into two primary areas: the effects of teachers' EL on their cognition and emotions, and its influence on students' academic and emotional development.

The cognitive dimension examines EL's impact on teachers' professional responsibilities, self-efficacy, career goals, and professional identity (Yin, 2016; Buric & Mornar, 2023). Meanwhile, the emotional dimension focuses on emotional exhaustion, job burnout, job satisfaction, and overall

well-being (Silbaugh et al., 2023; Ntim et al., 2023). Research findings suggest that different EL strategies lead to varied outcomes. For instance, deep acting has been associated with higher self-efficacy and job satisfaction, while surface acting is linked to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Yao et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the study explores how teachers' EL contributes to a more positive classroom environment, fostering student engagement and academic achievement (Brown et al., 2018; Buric et al., 2021). However, the influence of EL varies depending on the teacher's role and teaching context (Xie et al., 2022). Given that research on teachers' EL is still developing, gaps remain in the literature, emphasizing the need for more experimental studies to validate current findings (Zhao & You, 2021). Expanding research in this area will provide deeper insights into the complexities of teachers' EL and its broader implications for teacher development and student learning.

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