

A Study on Emotion Management and Burnout Mitigation Strategies for College Teachers from the Perspective of Emotional Labour

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Abstract

The emotional labour of teachers is a critical determinant in enhancing educational quality; yet, prolonged emotional strain and excessive emotional labour may ultimately result in teacher burnout. Teacher burnout at higher education institutions significantly hinders the professional advancement of both schools and educators. This study integrates theories of emotional management and burnout, grounded in the concept of emotional labour, to comprehensively examine the pressures of emotional labour encountered by college teachers during teaching practice and assess its effects on their emotional well-being and burnout levels. The study concurrently suggests pragmatic strategies for regulating emotional management and expression, intending to furnish theoretical support and practical avenues for enhancing the emotional labour of college teachers, elevating educational quality, and fostering the sustainable advancement of college teachers' careers.

Keywords

Emotional labour; emotion regulation; burnout; educator development; expressive techniques

1. Introduction

Emotional labour in teacher development transcends mere surface displays of passion and affection; it necessitates professional competencies and profound self-awareness. Teachers must adeptly identify their own emotions and implement effective self-regulation to sustain a positive working environment and stable emotional output amidst high-intensity teaching tasks, intricate interpersonal relationships, and dynamic educational settings. Nonetheless, the reality is that certain college teachers frequently opt to repress or disregard their emotional requirements when confronted with pressure and challenges, resulting in a prolonged state of

emotional depletion that ultimately culminates in burnout, emotional desensitisation, and even physical and mental imbalance. Consequently, investigating how college teachers can adeptly manage their emotions, appropriately articulate their feelings, and achieve self-preservation and professional development through strategic interventions has emerged as a significant subject in educational research.

This study examines the interplay between emotional labour, emotion management, and burnout, while proposing practical strategies for regulating emotion management and expression. Its objective is to offer theoretical support and actionable pathways for enhancing college teachers' emotional labour, improving educational quality, and fostering the sustainable development of their careers.

2. Theoretical foundation

The term "emotional labour," introduced by Hochschild (1983), denotes "the process through which individuals generate overtly visible facial or bodily expressions via emotional grooming, necessitating the evocation or suppression of personal feelings to sustain an appropriate expression that elicits a suitable mental state in another individual." Emotional labour entails the regulation of one's emotions for specific objectives. It encompasses two dimensions of emotional expression and experience, which include the protocols for emotional display, the depth of emotional behaviour, and strategies for emotional regulation. The emotional labour of educators manifests not only in their interactions with students but also in their communications with colleagues, parents, and school administration. Educators must tailor their emotional expressions to various teaching contexts and student requirements to foster a conducive learning atmosphere. Nonetheless, the burdensome demands of emotional labour can result in emotional exhaustion and burnout among teachers.

Emotional management refers to an individual's capacity to regulate the experience and expression of emotions. Salovey and Mayer's (1990) theory of emotional intelligence, along with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) proposed strategies for emotional regulation (Problem Orientation and Emotional Orientation), offers educators a structured framework for emotional management. The emotional intelligence and regulation skills of teachers significantly influence their professional development and the learning outcomes of students. Educators must exhibit flexibility in employing various emotion management strategies to effectively address diverse teaching challenges and emotional stressors.

Maslach et al. (1997) characterised burnout as a triadic construct comprising emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and diminished sense of accomplishment. The antecedents of burnout are intricately linked to the individual's emotional labour demands. A sustained state of burnout may result in diminished commitment among educators, a decline in pedagogical innovation, and potentially incite intentions to resign, thereby jeopardising the stability and quality of the educational system. Im-

plementing suitable interventions can mitigate occupational stress and emotional distress.

3. The present condition of educators' emotional labour

3.1. High-intensity instructional tasks induce emotional weariness in higher education instructors

High-intensity teaching tasks are like a double-edged sword, which, while shaping college teachers' sense of professional fulfillment, also quietly erodes some college teachers' emotional energy and becomes an important trigger for emotional exhaustion. Specifically, high-intensity teaching tasks mean that some college teachers need to face overloaded working hours, in which case routine tasks such as lesson preparation, lecturing, and correcting assignments take up most of the time of some college teachers, compressing their personal leisure space, leading to an imbalance between work and life, and triggering burnout. In addition, high-intensity teaching tasks often go hand in hand with programmed and repetitive work content, and this professional experience, which lacks creativity and a sense of accomplishment, is likely to lead to emotional detachment and numbness among some college teachers, ultimately leading to emotional exhaustion. It can be seen that high-intensity teaching tasks are not simply about workload, but also about the autonomy, sense of achievement and emotional experience that college teachers get from their work, and the lack of these factors is the key to the emotional exhaustion of college teachers.

3.2. Complicated teacher-student dynamics and home-school interactions intensify emotional illnesses

The intricacy of teacher-student dynamics and home-school interactions heightens the likelihood of emotional dysregulation among college teachers. Variations in student characteristics, including personality traits, learning capabilities, and psychological maturity, complicate the implementation of a standardised educational approach and emotional expression strategies. Divergent familial educational styles also pose challenges to the emotional labour of college instructors. Conflicts and in-

3.3. Emotional strain resulting from the disparity between societal aspirations and the actualities of the teaching profession

Society positions teachers as moral exemplars, necessitating selflessness and dedication, which creates significant emotional pressure on college teachers. However, there exists a substantial disparity between idealised societal expectations and actual professional rewards. The salaries of college teachers do not correspond with the demanding nature of their roles, characterised by high workload, substantial responsibility, and inadequate compensation. This imbalance between remunera-

tion and recognition engenders feelings of injustice and deprivation, resulting in adverse emotional experiences such as burnout and emotional exhaustion, ultimately impacting the psychological well-being and professional growth of college teachers. This incongruence between societal expectations and tangible rewards is a critical source of emotional stress for college teachers that warrants attention.

3.4. Insufficient Emotional Management Strategies Intensifies Burnout Risk

The intrinsic emotional burden of the teaching profession, coupled with inadequate emotion management strategies, significantly contributes to burnout risk. While the teacher training framework prioritises the enhancement of professional competencies and subject expertise, it rarely addresses the critical domain of emotion management. This oversight leads to insufficient coping mechanisms for negative emotions in a high-intensity, high-pressure work environment, resulting in passive emotional deterioration. Concurrently, college teachers have yet to cultivate an awareness of the necessity to incorporate emotion management into their professional skill set and lack the impetus to actively pursue emotion regulation strategies, thereby exacerbating burnout risk. The deficiency of this training framework and the absence of self-awareness among educators render emotion management a pressing issue that requires immediate attention and resolution in the realm of teachers' professional development.

4. Strategies for Emotion Management and Burnout Regulation

4.1. Augmenting the Construction of Professional Identity

Professional identity plays an important role in teacher development by provoking a deeper understanding of the emotional rules of the organization and the emotional expression of needs, and it is possible to explore how the experience and expression of teachers' emotions carries out the teacher's professional identity, which is mainly manifested in the construction of the teacher's identity (AI, 2023). In constructing teacher identity, it is important to consider not only the roles that teachers play, but also their own emotional engagement. In essence, teachers' emotional expression is closely related to the construction of teacher identity. Positive emotional experience gained by teachers in the course of their work can not only bring them a sense of achievement and happiness, but also enable them to gain a sense of belonging in their work and feel their own value, thus continuously promoting the formation of their self-identity. This positive emotional experience can make its own teaching behavior to be a higher degree of recognition, but also will prompt it to constantly reflect on their own teaching behavior. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to enhance the professional identity, in order to enhance the teacher's emotional identity of the rules, teachers reasonable positioning of self, in order to resolve the conflict between the emotional rules and their own emotional experience, to better

serve the students.

4.2. Enhancement of emotional regulation and expression

Teacher burnout is often rooted in chronic emotional imbalance, and improving emotional regulation and expression skills provides an effective way to address this problem. First, teaching cognitive reappraisal skills and guiding teachers to positively interpret stressful situations is the starting point for reversing negative emotions. When teachers are faced with students' misbehavior in the classroom, they are guided to use cognitive reappraisal to interpret students' "misbehavior" as "eager for attention" and "energetic," and then they can understand students' behavior with a more tolerant mindset. By interpreting students' "misbehavior" as "desire for attention" and "high energy", teachers will be able to understand the motivation behind students' behavior with a more tolerant mindset, and then seek more effective ways to communicate and guide them, so as to turn pressure into educational opportunities. Secondly, cultivating teachers' ability to express their emotions, helping them to channel negative emotions effectively and preventing the excessive accumulation of negative emotions. Finally, promote positive thinking stress reduction training to fundamentally optimize the long-term mechanism of teachers' ability to self-regulate their emotions. Positive thinking, i.e., conscious awareness of the present moment and acceptance of the feelings of the moment without judgment, is a state that can help teachers withdraw from the quagmire of negative emotions and feel the relaxation of the body, thus relieving tension and anxiety and devoting themselves to the next stage of the teaching work with fuller enthusiasm.

4.3. Establishing Organisational Support Systems

It is key to promoting teachers' physical and mental health and professional development for schools and society to work together to build positive organizational support systems and provide teachers with effective emotional management training and burnout intervention strategies. Schools can build emotional support groups and set up "Emotional Health Day" to provide a safe and private space for teachers to talk about their work pressure, share their teaching confusions, and gain understanding and support from peers or professionals. In addition, schools can also offer regular training courses on emotion management, inviting psychologists from outside the school to explain emotion regulation skills to teachers, and conduct case analyses and role-plays, so as to help teachers master practical strategies to cope with negative emotions, stimulate their enthusiasm for work, improve the quality of teaching and learning, and ultimately promote the sustainable development of the school's educational endeavours.

4.4. Enhancing Incentives

Enhancing the incentive mechanism for college teachers is crucial for elevating ed-

educational quality. Educational institutions and society must establish an emotional labour evaluation system and incorporate it into teacher assessments, while also refining the evaluation criteria to ensure scientific rigour and fairness. This approach will encourage educators to enhance their emotional intelligence, infuse greater emotional insight and humanistic care into their teaching, and facilitate a positive interplay between professional rewards and emotional contributions.

5. Findings

This study delves into the impact of emotional labor on teachers' emotional management and burnout, and proposes a series of emotional management strategies and interventions. The focus on emotion management and burnout adjustment strategies in teacher development can effectively help teachers transform their emotional experiences into educational and teaching resources, and improve the quality of classroom teaching and students' learning efficiency. Through emotion management, teachers can adjust their own emotional state to the best, and devote themselves to education and teaching with fuller enthusiasm and a more positive state, thus creating a positive classroom atmosphere, stimulating students' interest in learning, and building a harmonious teacher-student relationship, which ultimately promotes the overall development of the students and the professional happiness of the teachers, and forms a virtuous circle. Educational policy makers should attach great importance to the management of teachers' emotional labor and incorporate emotional intelligence and expression skills into the development and evaluation system of teachers. By reducing non-teaching burdens, optimizing working environments, and providing resource support and emotional labor incentives, a healthier and more positive educational climate can be created.

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