

BAR- ILAN UNIVERSITY

**"Emotional Labor Theory" in Teaching:
The Influence of Teacher's Experience, Age of Students and
Teacher's Burnout on the Teacher's Perception of "Emotional
Display Rules" at School and on the Application of Emotional Labor
Techniques in Teaching**

Racheli Zaretzky

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ABSTRACT

The teaching profession involves a variety of demands. While in the past teacher's training had mostly addressed pedagogic aspects, the last decades witness the growing trend of addressing the emotional aspects involved in the profession. This trend stems from the growing awareness to the teacher's need to cope not only with pedagogic issues, but also with emotional overload.

The current research focuses on the theory of Emotional Labor, first presented in 1983 by the American sociologist Arlie R. Hochschild, elaborating on the emotional demands on service sectors employees and on the varied techniques for coping with such demands. Hochschild and later researchers identified three techniques: (a) surface acting – displaying an ideal emotion which is incompatible with the authentic emotion; (b) deep acting – turning the ideal emotion into an authentic emotion; (c) natural acting – displaying an authentic emotion when it meets the ideal emotion, with no need to manipulate the authentic emotions.

The teaching profession has received wide research attention in the context of emotional labor. In the teaching profession, unlike many other professions in the service sector, the emotional display rules are not clear enough, nor are they explicitly defined and formulated.

The present study examines the influence of three variables – age of students (elementary school/high school); teacher's professional experience (in years); and teacher's burnout (including: exhaustion, inefficacy, and depersonalization) – on teacher's perception of *emotional display rules* in school, and on the use of the three emotional labor techniques.

The present research's main objective is to raise theoretical and practical awareness among the heads of Israeli educational system, education scholars and policy makers to the following: First, the central place of emotional management involved in the teachers' work and the importance of emotional management in class. Second appropriate and optimal adoption of emotional labor techniques would promote teaching and learning and contribute to teachers' willingness to continue working in the teaching profession in the long term. A practical objective derived from the above main objective is the idea of combining training programs, as a part of their pre- and post-service) for teachers in order to prevent teachers' burnout, raise their mental welfare and diminish teacher's dropout from the educational system. At the practical level, the present study aims to identify the way participants (divided into two groups: a) the age group they teach and b) their seniority in teaching) grasp the emotional display rules required from them at school, and identify the level of the three emotional labor techniques (deep, surface and natural) they display in their work. In addition, the present study aims to identify the relationship between the participant's burnout level and the emotional display rules in their school and the emotional labor techniques they display.

At the practical level, the present study aims to promote a preventive intervention addressing teacher's burnout resulting from emotional labor, in order to significantly reduce teachers' dropout rates in the Israeli education system.

Three hypotheses were raised:

1. Differences in perception levels of the emotional display rules in school and in the use of the three emotional labor techniques will be found between elementary school and high school teachers.

2. There is a relationship between teacher's experience with their perception levels of the emotional display rules in their school and their use of the three emotional labor techniques.
3. There is a relationship between teacher's burnout levels with their use of the three emotional labor techniques.

The sample included 170 female teachers in elementary and high schools across Israel who had a wide range of professional training (from qualified teacher to master's degree). The research instrument used consisted of three self-report questionnaires: The Emotional Labor of Teaching Scale - TELTS (Levine-Brown, 2011), Teacher Burnout Questionnaire (Friedman, 1999), and a demographic questionnaire formulated for the present study. The data collected in the study was processed using SPSS software, including reliability and varimax factor analyses as well as means and standard deviation of the research variables. The hypotheses were tested by Pearson correlations, ANOVA, one-way MANOVA and Hierarchical Regression Analysis.

The findings indicate that only one of the three independent variables tested, teacher's burnout, was found to be significantly related to the use of the three techniques of emotional labor (surface, deep and natural acting). An examination of the relationships between the use of each emotional labor technique and each of the three burnout dimensions (exhaustion, inefficacy and depersonalization) yields many significant outcomes.

In light of the significant relationships found between teacher's burnout levels with teacher's perception level of emotional display rules and teachers' use of emotional labor techniques, the following can be concluded: First, the issue regarding teacher's emotional labor has a wide range of implications on teachers' optimal professional

functioning. Second, emotional labor should be seen as a central variable in understanding teachers' emotional world.

In addition, several significant findings related to the original hypotheses, the present study's limitations, suggestions for future research and practical recommendations, will also be discussed.