

Journal of

# Advanced Psychology


(JAPSY)

Mapping the Antecedents and Hidden Costs of Emotional Labor in  
Higher Education Faculty.



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## Mapping the Antecedents and Hidden Costs of Emotional Labor in Higher Education Faculty.

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*Accepted: 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2026, Received in Revised Form: 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2026, Published: 25<sup>th</sup> May, 2026*

### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study investigates the factors leading to emotional labor in higher education faculty and its impact on their professional life. To explore it few questions were formulated including: 1. what are antecedents of emotional labor in university teachers? 2. How they manage this emotional distress? 3. How this emotional labor impact their professional life?

**Methodology:** Sample included 20 participants (Lecturer, Assistant and Associate Professors) both male and female. This study employed qualitative approach and interpretive phenomenological research design. Data was collected through semi structured interviews and thematic analysis was used to analyze and transcribe the data.

**Findings:** Participants described that expectations from their profession were a major source of emotional distress but at the same time this profession is a motivation for emotion regulation because they know being a teacher their emotions will affect their students, colleagues and the environment of their organization.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** The study highlights that presence of organizational support is very important for teachers to regulate their emotions and this emotional labor can have positive impacts for faculty.

**Keywords:** *Emotional Labor, Higher Education Faculty, Faculty Well-Being, Qualitative Research*

## Introduction

Nowadays, teachers undertake growing duties for not only students' educational results, but also for their mental health and collective expressive education (Corcoran et al., 2018). As a result, teachers are greatly anticipated to accomplish not only the responsibilities of education but also those of caring (O'Connor, 2008). Over the past two eras, the emotional facets of teaching have expected extensive thoughtfulness in educational exploration. As proposed by Yin and Lee (2012), teachers' emotional job strains in their communications with learners, parents and coworkers need them to make abundant struggle to confirm appropriate emotional jargons. Teachers' emotional labor is thus imperative in itself. For teachers, it occasionally takes an excessive extent of energy to cope with unwanted feelings during education, while at the same time, consideration for students has been found to make teaching worthwhile and thrilling (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006).

Hochschild (1983) first described emotional labor as “the managing of feeling to produce a publicly apparent facial and physical demonstration” and proposed that “emotional labor is vended for a remuneration and thus has interchange worth”. Emotional labor at the distinct level should be examined as particular categories of emotion regulation, where effortful emotional labor strategies (ELs) such as surface acting and deep acting are used to control emotional state and feelings (Grandey, 2000). Specially, surface acting comprises forging unfeeling sentiments or smacking internal feelings, while deep acting includes amending or altering the really felt emotions into more required ones via reconsideration or care utilization. However, some scholars offered a third type, the expression of naturally felt emotions (Diefendorff et al., 2005). The manifestation of naturally felt emotion is categorized as involuntary emotion regulation, which signifies the way people freely show the emotions essential by the institute (Zapf, 2002).

The mechanisms underlying emotional labor are deeply rooted in a broader psychological theory of emotion. Examining this theory provides a critical lens for understanding the cognitive and physiological processes teachers engage in. the Schachter-Singer Two-Factor Theory (1962) proposes that emotion is the product of both physiological arousal and a cognitive label for that arousal. According to this theory, we experience undifferentiated arousal, look to the external environment for cues, and then cognitively appraise the situation to label the emotion. This theory is highly congruent with the core processes of emotional labor, particularly deep acting. The teacher experiences physiological arousal from a stimulus (e.g., a student's disrespectful comment, leading to a flushed face and tense muscles), then cognitively appraises the situation based on contextual cues (e.g., "This student is struggling personally," "I must maintain professionalism"). The teacher labels the arousal according to this appraisal (e.g., not as "anger" but as "a pedagogical challenge requiring compassion"), which then guides their emotional expression. For the purpose of understanding emotional labor in higher education, the Schachter-Singer theory offers the most comprehensive framework. Emotional labor is, at its core, a cognitive process of reappraisal where

individuals manage the "labeling" stage to align their emotional expressions with professional norms (Grandey, 2000).

While there are many professions that include interactive connections and want the personnel to do some type of emotional labor, the extent and nature of emotional job strains that workers face differ across careers. For example, Holman (2003) recognized two types of service collaborations: mass service and high commitment service. Mass service interactions are categorized by uniform service during short-term, one-off encounters between consumers and staffs with a low added significance. High commitment service connections, by contrast, are described by long-term, custom-built service with a high added value, during which comparatively constant connections are recognized between clients and workers. Different from mass service employees, teachers enjoy significant independence in their teaching and construct comparatively constant associations with apprentices, parents, and coworkers. Emotional labor in an educational framework could be described as "service with power" (Tunguz, 2016). This theory provides the basic vocabulary and mechanism for understanding what emotional labor is. It allows to categorize and describe the specific strategies (surface vs. deep acting) that faculty employ. This study adopts this dualistic model to analyze the strategies higher education teachers employ.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) recognized two vital methodologies to theorizing emotional labor. The first is job-focused emotional labor that signifies the level of emotional job weights such as the occurrence of connections and hopes to show definite sentiments. The second one is employee-focused emotional labor indicating the procedure of emotion parameter and managing such as the effort to do emotional labor and the usage of diverse emotional labor strategies. With a specific focus on the managing or altering of emotions at the work, Grandey (2000) anticipated a blending model for theorizing the procedure of emotional labor in the workplace.

This model proposes a direct route between emotional labor and its precursors. Precursors of emotional labor are situational cues, as well as personal and organizational dynamics. Situational precursors contain prolonged anticipations of connections and important events influencing on emotional labor. Individual precursors are subjective reasons such as gender, self-expression, emotional intelligence, and affection. Institutional precursors are aspects donating to the atmosphere and condition in which emotional labor is executed, such as sovereignty, and administrator and colleague backing. Emotional job demands signify one of the most important organizational antecedents, mentioning to the qualitative strains enforced by the frequency, amount, and diversity of interactive connections necessary in academic work (Han et al. 2021).

These emotional job strains represent the expressive rules or demonstration rules of instruction, leading teachers' emotional jargons, such as displaying optimistic emotions while subduing undesirable ones (Yin & Lee, 2012). A recent study found that teachers' perception of

these emotional job demands directly enabled their use of together surface and deep acting tactics (Han et al., 2021). So far a very few studies have discovered the effect of institutional aspects on teachers' emotional labor tactics (Yin et al., 2017).

Additionally, emotional intelligence—the capacity to recognize and manage emotions in oneself and others—correlates positively with the use of adaptive emotional labor strategies, particularly deep acting and unaffected emotional expression (Yin et al., 2017). Significances of emotional control are long-standing significance for and for administrations e.g., performance and taking out behavior (Han et al., 2021). Grandey's theoretical model assimilates job-focused emotional labor and employee-focused emotional labor, which are, correspondingly, embodied in terms of situation related prompts and responsive regulation. This model has aided as an influential background with robust illustrative influence in studies discovering the process of emotional labor (Yin et al., 2017).

Literature shows that emotional labor has negative imports for teachers. Zhai (2025) studied that emotional labor significantly anticipated both fatigue and disengagement in college teachers. Hong (2022) discovered that emotional labor had a significant negative consequence on mental health of preschool teachers. Literature shows that EL has negative consequences including burnout (yin et al. 2019), employee work performance, teaching efficacy, learning assessment (Han et al., 2021) and job related stress (Coskun, 2025). Historically, research on emotional labor in education has been dominated by linking it to burnout, emotional exhaustion, and job dissatisfaction (Kariou et al., 2021). While a 2025 meta-analysis confirms that strategies like deep acting enhance well-being, while research on how specific strategies cultivate positive emotions and outcomes remains insufficient (Wang et al. 2025). There is a pressing need to shift the paradigm and systematically investigate how emotional labor contributes to positive outcomes such as work engagement, professional fulfillment, and teaching efficacy.

The existing literature on emotional labor is heavily skewed toward Western educational systems. This creates a significant knowledge gap, as the emotional demands and display rules for teachers are profoundly shaped by cultural norms. In collectivist and high power-distance societies teachers are often expected to be moral exemplars and custodians of culture, which intensifies and alters the nature of their emotional labor. While Grandey's integrative model identifies organizational factors as key antecedents, their specific manifestations in higher education are not fully understood. For instance, the concept of "teacher-student psychological distance" has been identified as a critical factor affecting emotional labor strategies, yet its mechanisms are not thoroughly explored (Zheng, 2025). Research on EL is characterized by a reliance on cross-sectional and quantitative designs which captures a snapshot of the phenomenon but fails to reveal how emotional labor strategies develop and change over a teacher's career or in response to specific institutional interventions. The scarcity of qualitative studies means the lived experiences, motivations, and contextual challenges faced by higher education teachers remain largely hidden (Wang et al. 2025).

This qualitative inquiry into the antecedents and positive impacts of emotional labor among higher education teachers will hold significant value across multiple domains. By moving beyond a purely quantitative or stress-oriented perspective, it will offer nuanced insights that can enrich theoretical understanding, inform practical institutional support, and empower faculty themselves. University administrators and department chairs often overlook the emotional dimension of academic work. This study will provide them with compelling, qualitative evidence of its positive impact on teaching quality and faculty well-being because it voices subjective experiences of higher education teachers themselves. In an era of top-down policy and evaluations, present research will center the expertise of those on the front lines of education, ensuring that policies and theories are grounded in the reality of their professional lives.

### **Objectives**

1. To explore the antecedents that trigger emotional labor among higher education teachers.
2. To explore the perceived impacts of emotional labor on teachers' professional life.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do higher education teachers experience emotional labor in their professional practice?
2. How emotional labor contributes to their professional life?

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

A qualitative research design utilizing a phenomenological approach is employed, because it is concerned with the detailed understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by a group of people as in this case, the experience of performing emotional labor by higher education teachers.

### **Sampling Technique**

A purposive sampling strategy is employed to ensure the selection of information-rich cases. The sample consisted of full time higher education teachers (including lecturers, assistant professors and associate professors) from various public universities and disciplines with different career stages (early-career: 0-5 years, mid-career: 6-15 years, late-career: 15+ years). The sample included 20 teachers both male (n=10) and female (n=10).

### **Data Collection**

This study employed an arduous qualitative data analysis procedure following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for instinctive thematic analysis. This method is chosen for its flexibility, theoretical freedom, and ability to produce a rich, detailed, and complex account of the data, which is ideal for exploring the nuanced experiences of emotional labor. First step is data cleaning, to prepare the raw data for analysis Verifying recordings, creating a data set. Second step included data transaction, which included repeated readings, noting initial impressions, ideas, and

patterns. Third step is based on initial coding, systematically labeling features of the data and creating concise codes across the entire dataset. Fourth step is based on theme development, Collating codes into broader patterns and grouping codes into potential themes (e.g., "Organizational support"). Fifth step consisted of refinement, Checking and shaping the thematic map and ensuring that themes work in relation to coded data and the entire dataset. Last step is producing the report based on the extracted themes.

The prime technique of data collection is in-depth, semi-structured interviews. This method permits deep investigation of individual experiences while upholding some structure for cross-case comparison. Interviews are conducted both physically and online. The interview questions are constructed on base of objectives of the study. The participants are also asked to quote examples from their practiced life. The interview begin with questions to get a subjective summary of the respondent in teaching occupation, such as: "Can you tell me since how long you have been in this occupation?, What are your zones of proficiency?" and then progressed to questions which seized several components about work setting, work atmosphere, managing of emotions at work, the tactics used to overcome that and influence of this emotional labor on professional life.

### Results

The data analysis aided in understanding the emotional labor practices of higher education faculty in public universities; they also threw light on what aids them in coping with the same, and how. The outcomes are distributed into four most important themes:

1. Factors leading to emotional labor,
2. How they regulate emotions.
3. Motivation or support in this emotion regulation.
4. Impacts of emotional labor on professional life.

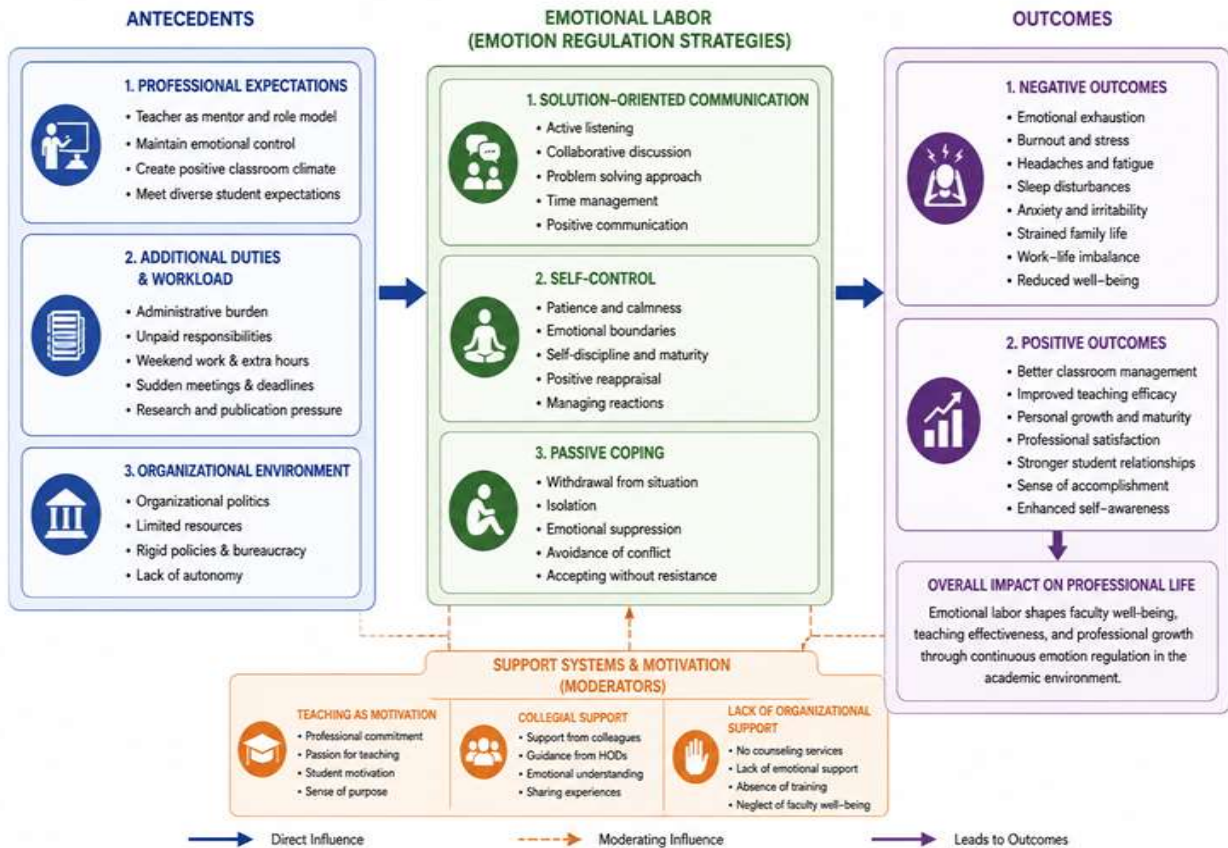
**Table 1:** Demographic data of the participants ( $N=20$ )

| Participant's characteristics | Category                 | Frequency |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Gender                        | Male                     | 10        |
|                               | Female                   | 10        |
| Academic Position             | Lecturer                 | 9         |
|                               | Assistant Professor      | 7         |
|                               | Associate Professor      | 4         |
| Qualification                 | MS/MPhil                 | 3         |
|                               | PhD                      | 17        |
| Career Stage                  | Early Career (0-5 years) | 3         |
|                               | Mid-Career (6-15 years)  | 15        |
|                               | Late Career (15+ years)  | 2         |

**Table 2:** *Theme illustrations*

| <b>Aggregating Theoretical Dimensions</b> | <b>Themes</b>                   | <b>Open codes</b>   | <b>Frequency</b> |
|---|---------------------------------|---|------------------|
| Factors leading to emotional labor        | Professional expectations       | Job requirement, teacher as a mentor, maintain positive working environment, influence on students,   | 12/20            |
|   | Other duties/tasks              | Other administrative duties, unpaid duties, tasks on weekends, emergency meetings during classes.   | 10/20            |
|   | Organizational environment      | Organizational politics, management with limited resources,   | 9/20             |
| Emotion regulation strategies             | Solution oriented communication | Task analysis, focus on solution, positive communication, active listening, perspective understanding, time management, collaborative talk, | 11/20            |
|   | Self-control                    | Patience, remain calm and relax, maturity, set boundaries.  | 10/20            |
|   | Passive coping                  | Withdrawal, isolation, distraction,   | 6/20             |
| Support system/Motivation                 | Teaching profession             | Ethical commitment, teaching itself, students, teaching experience, involvement with profession   | 11/20            |
|   | Organizational support          | No support, zero support.   | 10/20            |
| Impacts on professional life              | Negative impacts                | Mental and physical health deterioration, effect on family life,  | 13/20            |
|   | Positive impacts                | New experiences, learning, improve classroom climate, sense of personal accomplishment, job performance,                                    | 10/20            |

### Thematic Model: Antecedents, Emotional Labor, and Outcomes in Higher Education Faculty



**Figure 1: Thematic Model**

#### First Theme

#### Factors Leading to Emotional Labor

Participants said that emotional labor practices are fragment of their daily work life. They told many facets of the work setting which directed to emotional labor practices. The instances and the explanations shared by the contributors were relating to the cumulative professional expectations, duties and tasks apart from teaching and organizational environment.

**Professional expectations:** The participants shared their views that professional expectations are a major source of emotional labor. It is required from teachers to manage and control their emotions in every situation because students see them as mentors. Their behavior and actions will influence the students. A participant said “It doesn’t matter you belong to social sciences, sciences or IT or whichever field, you are a teacher and it is required and expected from you to control and manage your emotions”.

Teachers are expected to display encouragement, patience, and enthusiasm, often suppressing frustration or fatigue to create a conducive learning environment. This is amplified in contexts where teachers are seen as "cultural custodians and moral exemplars" (Zhai et al., 2025). A member told, "Teaching is academically motivating but also very challenging. There is a lot of stress. Because the students assume the teacher to know everything; however that's incredible". Another aspect of professional expectations is institution's high hopes from faculty, to engross in study and publishing. Exploratory work sometimes does not give adequate time to make for lectures. A member said, "Along with education, we are also projected to do research and publish. So, these numerous tasks add on to the burden".

**Other duties/tasks:** Apart from teaching many other administrative and departmental duties are assigned to teachers, which overburden the faculty and effects their professional working. A participant shared "sometimes I feel like I am a clerk not a lecturer in university, it feels like 24/7 on job and no weekends". Sudden meeting calls during lectures effect deadlines set by teachers to complete their course outlines which becomes a burden for them. A participant said "whether these duties are paid or unpaid, they feel like a pressure, which effects our teaching quality and quantity".

**Organizational environment:** Another source of this emotional labor is organizational environment. A participant told "organizational politics makes me feel sick and tired all the time, it demotivates me". Organizations expect from the faculty to follow every rule and policy without any criticism. The organizational environment is a well-documented and significant antecedent of emotional labor in teachers. It shapes the emotional demands of the job and influences which emotional regulation strategies teachers' use. High quantitative demands (large classes, administrative tasks) and a negative school climate increase surface acting and emotional exhaustion (Kariou et al., 2021).

## Second Theme

### Emotion Regulation Strategies

Participants also talked about different strategies which facilitated them adjust their sentiments in classroom, with colleagues, students and during teaching. During data exploration, it appeared that strategies such as solution oriented communication, self-control and in some situation passive coping helped them in emotion regulation.

**Solution oriented communication:** Participants also shared that when they focus on solution instead of problem it helps them better in resolving the problem and feeling better. A participant said "I try to analyses the situation to understand the cause of problem and then find the solution according to the reason". Another participant shared "if the situation is related to students I focus on active listening, because students feel that they are misunderstood in many situations". Participants shared that positive communication and collaborative talk are better strategies to deal the situations with colleagues. A participant said "time management is very important in our job because we have to do many tasks along with teaching, if we are not good at time management it

increases our burden”. Solution-oriented communication can be an effective individual-level strategy for teachers to manage the emotional labor of their profession by shifting focus from problems to collaborative action, which can reduce stress and emotional exhaustion (Rodrigues et al., 2025).

**Self-control:** Another important strategy is self-control. Participants shared that when you behave maturely, try to remain calm and relax in stressful situations it helps in emotion regulation. A participant shared “when you set boundaries from the very first day of your job, this impression of yours secures you from many stressful situations in future”. Another participant shared “this job demands patience and self-control, if you are impatient personality it will affect your students, your professional relation with your colleagues and your working environment”.

**Passive Coping:** In some situations the participants shared that passive coping works, where you try to avoid the situation, withdraw from the situation or isolate yourself for the time being. In contrast to active strategies, passive coping refers to emotion-regulation behaviors that involve avoidance, suppression, or disengagement. While it may provide temporary relief, literature generally positions passive coping as a largely maladaptive or ineffective strategy that can worsen the negative impacts of emotional labor for teachers (King et al., 2024). A participant said “for example if the problem arises with authorities or your seniors you cannot discuss it with even your colleagues, here you try to avoid any further escalations so you withdraw from the situation and accept it as the authority demands”.

### Third Theme

#### Support System/Motivation

Teachers also exhibited that their profession is a strong motivation to regulate their emotions along with a minimal support from colleagues and HODs, but the organization does not provide any support to teachers, no counselling or training is held for teachers to guide them about regulating their emotions.

**Teaching Profession:** Participants shared that teaching profession is a support or motivation for them to maintain their emotions. A participant said “it is the only profession in which you daily learn something new and you are also influencing a lot of people at a time, so you have to maintain and regulate your emotions”. Another participant shared “my students are my motivation, they are so energetic and enthusiastic that I always try to keep myself in control and calmness to feel their energy and keep with their pace of learning and understanding”.

Teaching includes many interpersonal communications where teachers are expected to control and manage their emotions and show only positive emotions, these expectation sometimes becomes a motivation for teachers to manage their emotions (Wang et al., 2025). Participants also shared that in some situations their colleagues motivate them or become their support in emotion maintenance. A participant said “cooperative and friendly colleagues and HODs are not less than a blessing, in many situations I ask for their advice and support”.

**Organizational support:** Participants shared that at organizational level there is no emotional support system for teachers. They are performing many duties at a time, even they are not free at weekends, their family life is influenced but when they face any emotional distress there is no support from their organization. The literature records "uncooperative management" and an absence of emotional backing structures as key feature causing emotional labor (Zhai et al., 2025). Qualitative explorations in Pakistani public universities recognize extreme amount of work, organizational loads, and incompetent systems as chief professional stressors. Faculty describes a lack of "appropriate work-life stability" due to these official loads (Hashmi, 2021). A participant shared "it doesn't matter whether you belong to a public or private institute, for teachers there is no emotional support". Another participant said "we have zero emotional support from our organization, they expect us to be available for 24hrs for other tasks and duties but when it comes to our mental health or emotional support we have no forum to express our emotions". A participant shared "sometimes it feels like a cold war inside but you have no proper support system, so you keep a forceful smile on your face to show everything is good".

#### Fourth Theme

##### Impacts

Teachers expressed that this emotional labor influence them and their professional life in many ways both positively and negatively. It effects their mental and physical health and their family life is also disturbed due to this emotional toll. But they also learn how to handle stressful situations and self-control, which helps them in future.

**Negative Impacts:** Teachers shared that this effects their mental and physical health. Mental health is crucial to quality of teaching. A participant said "when you have to show what you are not feeling it causes distress and it effects a teacher's performance". Another participant said "sometimes I start feeling may be I am incapable when I can't manage my work and emotions". Teachers in high-need settings, regularly absorb the emotional burdens of students experiencing trauma, poverty or crisis. A participant said "on daily basis we listen to student's personal issues related to their family life, which effects our mental health also, when we feel that emotional pressure".

Studies constantly shows that emotional labor in university teaching can harmfully influence mental and physical health. These effects differ based on regulation tactic employed and the institutional setting. This fatigue causes poor health, loss of vigor and physical tiredness (Chen et al., 2022), headaches, sleep troubles (Jeung et al. 2018), anxiety & depression (Sui et al. 2025). This emotional burden effects physical health of teachers. A participant shared "24/7 I feel headache and muscle tension. I feel tired and exhausted". A participant said "this emotional exhaustion and workload has disrupted my sleep patterns, as a result I feel tired and demotivated". Participants also expressed that their family life is also affected by this. They emotionally feel withdrawn from their relationships, they feel inability to engage meaningfully with their families.

**Positive Impacts:** Emotional labor is not inherently detrimental. When performed through authentic strategies it can be a professional asset. It can enhance teacher well-being, improve classroom climate and student outcomes and contribute to a sense of personal accomplishment. Better tactics positively affect teaching satisfaction (Yin et al., 2019), well-being and instruction efficiency (Han et al., 2021). A participant shared “with experience you learn that controlling emotions make you a better person, whenever you control your negative emotions it feels like you achieved something”. Participates shared that when you learn to handle this emotional labor and stress it improves job performance, this keeps them motivated to improve themselves as teachers and improves their students learning outcomes.

### Discussion

This study talks about the scarcity of exploration on university teacher’s sentiments and surges writings to the research of university teachers’ emotional labor. Emotional labor has mostly been chatted as negative occurrence in the works, as research proposes that it leads to adverse outcomes, such as stress, exhaustion (Bayram et al., 2012; Rathi et al., 2013). However, there are some partial studies on deep acting feature of emotional labor, which show that the influence of emotional labor is not always destructive (Gabriel & Diefendorff, 2015). Teachers are anticipated to regulate emotions to achieve the complexities of the teaching role (Greenier et al., 2021). Yet, the emotional work of teachers is closely associated with teachers’ burnout (Carroll et al., 2022) wellbeing, retention (Buchanan et al., 2013) and sense of accomplishments (Heffernan et al., 2022).

In the context of Pakistani public universities, the demanding administrative environment, characterized by bureaucratic hierarchies and resource constraints, creates a high-stress setting where faculty must manage complex emotional demands. In Pakistan's collectivist and hierarchical society, teachers are often expected to act as moral exemplars and cultural custodians, adhering to strict emotional display rules. This occurs within an academic system where institutional support for emotional well-being is often lacking. Faculty may suppress true feelings due to leadership and bureaucratic pressures, which depletes emotional resources and leads to detachment (Zhai et al., 2025). Antecedents of emotional labor in present study focused on professional expectations from university teachers as Mahoney et al. (2011) noted, university teachers may be more stressed to cope their emotions because rankings from their mature pupils and colleagues create a crucial aspect in teachers' performance evaluation.

A significant modern pressure comes from the shifting perception of students as customers or consumers of education. This "institutional isomorphism" pushes universities to compete, increasing the emotional labor required to manage student and parent expectations while balancing academic standards and pastoral care (Kariou et al., 2021). These display rules act as direct antecedents to the type of emotional labor strategy a teacher employs.

Based on the educational works, the teaching profession exclusively roles as both a significant cause of emotional labor and a probable basis of support against its adverse impacts. The key lies in why teachers involve in emotional labor and how they cope it. Continuous anticipation to control sentiments to produce a constructive learning atmosphere (Kariou et al., 2021), engrossing students' feelings, distresses, and handling multifaceted communications, loss of official backing, high-stakes testing, and being the "shock absorber" for social problems (Ma et al., 2023) are the features of teaching job which leads to emotional labor but at the same time this occupation becomes a sustenance for teachers viewing emotional labor as helpful for student achievement provides an eloquent aim (Kariou et al., 2021), caring contacts with students can be a cause of gratification and flexibility, vigorous, reverent, team-based organization can make the labor feel rewarding.

Research confirms that strong display rules for positive emotion create a situational cue that promotes more authentic regulation, such as deep acting or the expression of naturally felt emotions (Ma et al., 2023). Conversely, when rules are rigid and resources are low, the dissonance can lead to the more harmful surface acting (Zhai et al., 2025). The organizational environment of a university its structures, leadership, and support systems determines whether emotional labor is sustainable or becomes a pathway to burnout. Theoretical models like the Job-Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) model are instrumental in framing this dynamic (Coskun et al., 2025). High Job demands (Heavy workload, bureaucratic pressure, diverse stakeholder management, and other administrative duties) depletes emotional resources, forcing reliance on resource-intensive surface acting, leading to stress and exhaustion (Younus et al., 2023). Low Institutional Support (Lack of collegial networks, unsupportive leadership, no emotional skills training) fails to replenish depleted emotional resources. The absence of support is making the negative effects of surface acting significantly worse (Sun et al., 2025).

For university teachers, effectively managing emotional labor is a professional imperative linked to their well-being, teaching efficacy, and job performance. Research identifies distinct emotion regulation strategies with different consequences including self-control, solution oriented communication and sometimes passive coping, shaped by organizational environments and individual resources. Strategies like withdrawal, isolation and suppression of emotions are part of surface acting, associated with negative impact on well-being, mental health and teaching efficacy (Han et al., 2021; Hao, 2024). While strategies like cognitive reappraisal, task analysis, positive communication are part of deep acting, which Associated with enhanced teacher well-being and job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2025), higher teaching efficacy (Han, 2021), and positive impact on job performance (Hao et al., 2024). The choice and effectiveness of an emotion regulation strategy are moderated by several contextual and personal factors. The workplace context is a powerful antecedent, High emotional job demands (e.g., managing diverse classrooms, institutional pressure) can necessitate increased emotional labor, prompting the use of both surface and deep acting (Zhang et al., 2024). Supportive organizational resources (e.g., teaching support, collegial relationships, and autonomy) are crucial. They reduce the reliance on harmful surface acting and

encourage the use of naturally felt emotions by making the expression of authentic, positive feelings more sustainable (Han et al., 2021).

Within the demanding context of university teaching, the motivation to engage in emotion regulation stems from a dual dynamic: the intrinsic professional ethos of the teacher and the extrinsic support or lack thereof provided by the academic institution. Research consistently frames this interplay through key theoretical models, showing how professional demands necessitate emotional labor and how organizational structures can either facilitate healthy regulation or exacerbate emotional strain. For many, this regulation is fueled by work passion—a strong inclination toward teaching that is personally valued and enjoyable. This harmonious passion is a significant internal motivator linked to greater teacher effectiveness and occupational wellness (Yu & Ying, 2024). Teaching involves frequent, intense interpersonal contact where teachers are expected to express positive emotions and suppress negative ones to create a conducive learning environment. This expectation to manage emotional displays according to professional norms is a core component of emotional labor (Wang et al., 2025). Teaching Resources & Administrative Support (tools, favorable conditions, institutional backing), Provides practical resources to meet job demands, reducing strain and the need for inauthentic surface acting (Han et al., 2021), Peer & Collegial Support Offers social resources for sharing challenges, problem-solving, and emotional validation, This can be a direct form of interpersonal emotion regulation (Vogl et al., 2025).

In Pakistani culture especially in public universities a hierarchical structure with multiple levels of governance complicates decision-making and can strip autonomy from faculty (Munir et al., 2025). The literature notes "unsupportive administration" and a lack of emotional support structures as primary factors contributing to burnout (Zhai et al., 2025). Qualitative studies in Pakistani public universities identify excessive workload, administrative burdens, and inefficient systems as major work-related stressors. Faculty report a lack of "proper work-life balance" due to these institutional demands (Hashmi, 2021). In such a resource-depleted context, teachers often "suppress their true feelings due to institutional and leadership pressures", a form of surface acting linked to negative outcomes (Zhai et al., 2025).

Research consistently shows that the negative impacts of emotional labor on university teachers are significant and multi-dimensional. The specific consequences are strongly tied to the emotion regulation strategy employed. Use of surface acting emotion regulation strategies is linked with Strong positive link to burnout, especially emotional exhaustion and cynicism/depersonalization (Kariou et al., 2021), Negative impact on job performance, harming both task execution and relationships with students and colleagues (Hao, 2024) and Lower teaching satisfaction and job satisfaction (Yin et al., 2019). Research consistently shows that emotional labor in university teaching can negatively impact mental and physical health, often mediated by chronic stress and burnout. These impacts vary significantly depending on the emotion regulation strategy used and the institutional context. This emotional

exhaustion leads to Poor overall health, lack of energy, and physical exhaustion (Chen et al., 2022), headaches, sleep disturbances, or other stress-related ailments (Jeung et al. 2018), Anxiety & Depression (Sui et al. 2025) and General negative affect and poor mental well-being (Jeung et al., 2018).

This qualitative study shows that emotional labor also positively impact teacher's professional life including better job performance, better classroom management, learning new experiences and enhancing teaching efficacy which aligns with the literature. Deep acting strategies positively impact teaching satisfaction (Yin et al., 2019), well-being (Wang et al., 2025), teaching efficacy in course design and strategy (Han et al., 2021). The research proposes that emotional labor is not essentially adverse, but it rests on what coping tactics are used, if the workers involving in emotional labor detect their part and the personnel have some independence in their job, emotional labor can be helpful for both, employees and organizations.

### **Practical implications**

The useful suggestions of the study are mainly in the area of tactics to cope with emotional labor and its impacts. The study proposes that, to efficiently deal with emotional labor, it is vital that teachers are able to adopt their character. Teachers who are able to recognize with the role better would be competent to deal with emotional labor more successfully. Past results on emotional labor results mostly focused on negative significances; therefore, the focus was on positive impacts also. Explanations of the relation between university teachers' emotional labor approaches and some precursors and outcomes offer both university teachers and proprietors with new considerations of the worth of teachers' emotional labor.

The outcomes of this exploration have important inferences for apprehending that how university educators' observed environment plays a role in their embracing of emotional labor strategies. Precisely, bearing in mind the diverse characters of university teachers' observed emotional job strains and teaching backing, a encouraging environment could be generated to make university teachers sense extra helpful and unrestricted to show their honest feelings, which would help upsurge their self-confidence in teaching practice.

Some faculty improvement plans are required to increase teachers' comprehension of the role of emotional labor in their job and the diverse natures of emotional labor approaches. Specially, faculty members should feel permitted to show their true sentiments and decrease their use of surface acting tactics to efficiently progress their teaching.

It is recommended that policy makers consider the implementation of initiatives that support positive institutional environments, reduce administrative burdens, and provide and implement resources and programs that promote and train teachers in emotional regulations and self-care. The findings are useful as they provide insight into how teachers' manage their emotional labor in teaching. There is also an awareness on the importance of teacher autonomy and ownership. University teachers are motivated by a deep commitment to positively influence their

students' lives, finding accomplishment in stirring change and nurturing a caring, helpful environment; this needs to be recognized, cheered, and supported.

### **Conclusion**

This study makes a vital aid by discovering the occurrence of emotional labor and regulation of emotions among teachers in higher education organizations. It defines the emotional labor practices of higher education faculty, how they manage its weights and how it impacts their professional life. The study displays how, in the setting of university teachers, emotional labor leads to constructive outcomes.

### **Ethics Statement**

SZABIST University's Ethics Committee approved this study and was conducted as per regulation and institutional requirement.

### **Funding**

No funding

### **Conflict of Interest**

Author discloses no conflict of interest.

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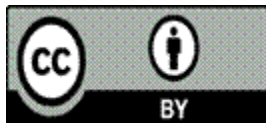
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