



Facets of teachers' emotional lives: A quantitative investigation of teachers' genuine, faked, and hidden emotions



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Teachers genuinely express, fake, and hide their positive and negative emotions.
- Highly efficacious teachers have healthier emotional lives.
- Faked positive and negative emotions are negatively related to teacher well-being.
- Boredom seems to play a more crucial role for teachers than previously assumed.
- Anger is detrimental regardless of if it is genuinely expressed, faked, or hidden.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the frequency teachers' genuinely express, fake, and hide various emotions and how they relate to key teacher variables. Analyzing data from $N = 266$ secondary-school teachers, key results were that teachers frequently genuinely express positive emotions and hide negative emotions, and that there are consistent relationships between genuine expression, faking, and hiding emotions and the proposed correlates. Also, our findings suggest that examining teacher emotions on a molar regulation strategy level (e.g., hiding negative) does not capture the whole picture, instead it is relevant which discrete emotions teachers genuinely express, fake, and hide while in the classroom.

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1. Introduction

Research on the nature of emotions within the classroom has slowly begun to receive more research attention and now includes research on the experience of emotions as well as on how emotions are regulated in classroom settings (cf. Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014). However, which emotions are experienced and how emotions are regulated have largely been researched separately from one another, particularly when it comes to teachers' emotions. On the one hand, some researchers have concentrated on teachers' experiences of discrete emotions, predominantly on the experience of anger, anxiety, and enjoyment while teaching (Frenzel, 2014; Frenzel, Goetz, Lüdtke, Pekrun, & Sutton, 2009;

Frenzel, Goetz, Stephens, & Jacob, 2009), but have not investigated if teachers actually express these emotions or how the expression or non-expression of specific emotions impacts teachers. On the other hand, researchers have investigated the strategies teachers use to regulate their emotions and how these strategies positively and negatively impact teachers (Hülshager, Lang, & Maier, 2010; Näring, Briët, & Brouwers, 2006; Näring, Vlerick, & Van de Ven, 2011). In addition, to date, no one seems to have differentiated between the regulation of positive versus negative emotions (i.e., molar level) within teachers or examined which discrete emotions teachers report regulating. One aim of this study was to combine and extend these two research areas by investigating the frequency teachers report genuinely expressing and regulating emotions on a molar as well as discrete level.

On a daily basis teachers are faced with a wide variety of emotional experiences. Some of these experienced emotions are deemed by the teacher as appropriate and are freely expressed, while others are considered inappropriate, either in general or at

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the experienced intensity level, and are hidden or down-regulated to a more appropriate intensity. Other times the desired emotion is not experienced and the teacher has to fake the appropriate emotion for that situation. Whether an emotion is appropriate for a specific situation is determined by display rules, a term coined by Ekman, Sorenson, and Friesen (1969) and defined as the rules learned early on in life that prescribe whether an emotion should be expressed within a particular situation. The defining factor here is emotion *expression*: Display rules are not about what emotions should be felt, but about what emotions should be expressed. Emotional display rules for teachers clearly exist, but are typically implicit and disguised (Zembylas, 2002, 2003, 2005). Qualitative studies have found that emotional display rules for teachers include avoiding the display of too strong emotions (Winograd, 2003; Zembylas, 2005) as well as up-regulating (i.e., faking) positive and down-regulating (i.e., hiding) negative emotions (Schutz, Cross, Hong, & Osbon, 2007; Sutton, 2004). Thus, there will be times when teachers express their genuine emotions as well as times when they regulate (i.e., fake or hide) their emotions.

We propose that *teachers' emotional lives* consist of the wide variety of discrete emotions that teachers genuinely express or regulate while in the classroom. So far teachers' emotional lives have predominately been examined qualitatively (Hargreaves, 2000; Sutton, 2004; Sutton, Mudrey-Camino, & Knight, 2009). The current study concentrates on quantitatively examining the facets of teachers' emotional lives in order to assess which emotions teachers genuinely express, fake, and hide in the classroom, while also exploring important possible correlates of teachers' emotional lives including teaching self-efficacy, feelings of relatedness with students, and well-being.

1.1. Genuine and regulated emotions

Genuine emotions, also referred to as authentic emotions, are sincere and spontaneous responses to an emotion-eliciting situation (Salmela, 2005). Essentially, genuine emotions are the absence of regulated emotions, meaning that emotions are first experienced and then expressed without trying to alter or hide them in any way. Thus, within the present research teachers' *genuinely expressed emotions* are defined as having two components – an internal, affective experience as well as an external, behavioral expression.

Emotions are regulated and no longer genuine when a person intentionally tries to express an unfeared emotion and masks the real emotion or the lack of emotion (Pugmire, 1998). This inauthenticity comes from either down-regulating an undesirable, experienced emotion or up-regulating an unfeared, desirable emotion. Thus, regulated emotions are viewed as predominately having either an affective or behavioral component, with the component differing based on whether the emotion is being down- or up-regulated. Within the present research teachers' *hidden emotions* are defined as having an internal, affective experience without an external, behavioral expression, whereas teachers' *faked emotions* are defined as having an external, behavioral expression without an internal affective experience. The act of regulating an emotion has been extensively studied under two separate research traditions—emotion regulation and emotional labor; however, neither tradition has thoroughly explored emotions pertaining to teaching.

1.1.1. Emotion regulation

Emotion regulation can be defined as “the process by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions” (Gross, 1998b, p. 275). This is done through the use of different strategies that occur at different time points during the emotion episode (Gross, 1998a). The present research concentrates on the

response-focused strategy of suppression (Gross, 1998a, 2002), referred to here as the hidden emotion facet of teachers' emotional lives. Suppression refers to inhibiting the expression of an emotion (Gross & John, 2003). Qualitative studies on emotion regulation within teachers have found that teachers regulate their emotions on a daily basis and particularly seek to suppress negative emotions, such as anger (Sutton, 2004; Sutton et al., 2009). In addition, quantitative studies have found that teachers who suppress their emotions are more emotionally exhausted than teachers who reappraise the situation (Chang, 2013; Tsouloupas, 2011).

While the theory of emotion regulation includes maintaining, suppressing, down-regulating, and up-regulating both positive and negative emotions, thus far, researchers have nearly exclusively concentrated on suppressing and down-regulating negative emotions (cf. Gross, 2002). Research assessing emotion regulation strategies has largely neglected the regulation of positive emotions, despite findings indicating that individuals do regulate their positive emotions (cf. Gross, Richards, & John, 2006). It could very well be that teachers need to simultaneously hide a negative emotion and fake a positive emotion. Research within the emotion regulation framework has also neglected up-regulating negative emotions, such as anger, which could be a strategy that teachers use (e.g., to maintain order in the classroom, Averill, 1982). Furthermore, this theory lacks the idea that individuals just act out (i.e., fake) an emotion without reappraising the situation.

1.1.2. Emotional labor

Emotional labor is defined as the process of regulating both the internal and expressive components of emotions according to an organization's display rules (Grandey, 2000). Within the emotional labor framework, display rules are seen as either implicit or explicit guidelines on the appropriate expression of emotions on the job (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). According to this theory, emotions are regulated through compensatory strategies that show an emotion that does not come naturally. Within the present research, we focused on the strategy of surface acting because it includes faking unfeared, as well as hiding felt emotions so that the desired emotion is expressed (Hochschild, 1983).

Research on teachers from an emotional labor perspective has found that surface acting leads to increased feelings of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Näring et al., 2006), as well as increased strain over time (Hülshager et al., 2010). So far researchers have typically assessed surface acting as the combination of how often individuals fake and hide their emotions (cf. Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005; Grandey, 2003). This combination of faking and hiding makes it impossible to disentangle the negative effects these elements of surface acting can have on individuals. For example, is faking or hiding emotions more strongly related to emotional exhaustion? Furthermore, this body of research has concentrated on how using a specific emotional labor strategy influences teachers, but not on which discrete emotions teachers actually fake and hide. It could be that there are differential effects of faking and hiding positive versus negative emotions or for specific discrete emotions. Also, while faking positive and hiding negative emotions is most often discussed, it is conceivable that teachers fake and hide both positive and negative emotions and previous qualitative research has indeed found that teachers report regulating both their negative as well as their positive emotions (Sutton, 2004; Sutton et al., 2009).

1.1.3. Comparing and contrasting two traditions

Theoretically the emotion regulation and emotional labor traditions are quite similar. Both make the claim that humans are willing and able to regulate their emotions through the use of different strategies. The strategies the two theories propose are also

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