

Research on Teacher's Emotion Regulation Strategies in Classroom Teaching: Based on Self-control Theory

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Abstract: Teachers' emotions play a pivotal role in shaping classroom environments, directly influencing students' learning engagement and instructional outcomes. Therefore, mastering and applying effective emotion regulation strategies has become a crucial focus for educators. This study systematically analyzes the intrinsic mechanisms of teachers' emotion regulation patterns in classroom settings through four major self-regulation theoretical frameworks: the Hot-Cold System Model, Cognitive-Affective Personality System Model, Resources and Intensity Model, and Two-Stage Process Model. By integrating theoretical foundations with practical teaching needs, five core strategies are distilled: context selection, context modification, attention allocation, cognitive adjustment, and response regulation. The research aims to provide educators with systematic emotion management tools to enhance teaching effectiveness through cultivating positive classroom atmospheres, thereby optimizing student learning participation and academic performance.

Keywords: Teacher emotions; Classroom instruction; Teaching effectiveness; Emotion regulation; Regulation strategies

1. Introduction

For much of the 20th century, emotions were underestimated in psychology, often seen as obstacles to rationality (Keller, 2021). Maslow (1943) shifted this view by stressing their educational relevance, and emotions are now regarded as essential to cognition and learning.

Emotional processes influence learning, motivation, attention, and decision-making, making regulation central to both students' and teachers' experiences. While research confirms the link between regulation and outcomes, more work is needed to identify effective strategies for teachers (Fathi et al., 2021).

This study proposes strategies for classroom emotion regulation, structured around five stages of the emotion-generation process: situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation. By emphasizing teachers' self-regulation, it highlights the role of emotions in promoting teaching effectiveness and student achievement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Emotion and Teaching

Education is inherently emotional for students, teachers, and parents alike. Emotions are deeply embedded in teaching and learning, shaped by one's cognitive interpretation of events (Greenier et al., 2021). They can enhance or hinder learning (Fathi et al., 2021), as they interact closely with cognition and motivation. Negative emotions impair working memory, while tasks requiring greater cognitive effort can buffer their effects (Greenier et al., 2021). Conversely, positive emotions broaden cognition, foster creativity, and support deeper engagement (Keller & Becker, 2021). They also strengthen intrinsic motivation, whereas negative emotions reduce the use of complex learning strategies (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Hence, emotion regulation plays a vital role in effective learning.

Teachers' emotions are crucial to instructional quality, classroom climate, and students' outcomes (Frenzel et al., 2018). Yet, they are often overlooked compared to pedagogy or resources (Keller & Becker, 2021). The emotional tone teachers set strongly influences students' engagement and performance (Kwon et al., 2017). Students' affective responses mirror their teachers' emotional expressions, directly linking teaching practices to learning results (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). Therefore, understanding teachers' emotions and developing effective regulation strategies are essential for improving teaching effectiveness and student achievement.

2.2 Emotion Regulation and Teaching

Emotion regulation refers to managing one's own emotions and, to some extent, those of others (Keller & Becker, 2021). In teaching, it centers on teachers' self-regulation—the control of emotional responses within classroom settings (Fathi et al., 2021). It is a dynamic process involving strategies that shape emotional experience, expression, and physiology (Kwon et al., 2017). Regulation may be automatic or deliberate, aiming to enhance, maintain, or reduce emotions depending on context (Greenier et al., 2021).

Gross (2011) viewed teachers' emotion regulation as self-regulation directed toward educational goals. Because spontaneous emotions may conflict with instructional aims, teachers must consciously manage their affect to sustain productive learning environments. Effective regulation enables them to align emotions with professional objectives, manage physiological reactions, and convey supportive expressions (Keller et al., 2021). Strategic use of these skills fosters emotional balance and optimizes classroom dynamics (Keller & Becker, 2021).

3. Methodology

Emotion regulation has become a central concern in psychology, inspiring multiple models of self-control, including the hot/cold system, the cognitive-affective personality system (CAPS), the resource and intensity model, and the two-stage process model. Together, these frameworks explain how teachers regulate emotions within demanding classroom settings.

The hot/cold system model (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999) distinguishes between a reactive “hot” system and a reflective “cold” system. Effective emotion regulation requires shifting from impulsive emotional reactions to deliberate cognitive control. Teachers strengthen their cold system through professional experience, reflective practice, and emotional awareness, enabling them to manage stress constructively.

The CAPS model (Mischel & Shoda, 2013) conceptualizes emotion regulation as an interaction among cognitive-affective units (beliefs, goals, and competencies) that form individualized networks. Teachers who recognize their own emotional triggers and cognitive patterns can reconfigure these internal systems to achieve better emotional balance and classroom harmony.

The resource and intensity model posits that self-regulation depends on finite internal resources that fatigue with use. Emotional control diminishes when these reserves are depleted. Teachers can sustain self-regulatory strength through rest, positive motivation, and strong emotional self-efficacy, fostering resilience and maintaining a productive classroom climate.

Finally, the two-stage process model (Gross, 2011) differentiates antecedent-focused strategies (situation selection, cognitive reappraisal) from response-focused ones (emotional suppression). Proactive strategies are generally more effective in preventing escalation, while excessive reliance on suppression may lead to burnout.

Overall, these models reveal that teachers' emotional regulation relies on cognitive control, internal resources, and proactive strategies, underscoring the need for self-awareness and resilience in educational practice.

4. Discussion

Teachers' emotion regulation generally takes two forms: enhancing positive feelings and reducing negative ones. In classroom practice, strategies for reducing negativity are more common and often more crucial. Considering the dynamic and demanding nature of teaching, emotion regulation can be understood through several key approaches.

Situation Selection : Teachers regulate emotions by approaching or avoiding particular contexts. Recognizing emotional “hot spots” enables them to anticipate and prevent frustration, for instance through seating arrangements or lesson planning. Yet, avoidance should not become habitual, as short-term relief may undermine long-term professional growth and interpersonal relations. Constructive rather than evasive choices are essential.

Situation Modification : When facing unpredictable classroom challenges, teachers must act quickly to prevent negative emotions from escalating. A projector breakdown, for example, may cause frustration, but adaptive teachers redirect the lesson with alternative tools. Advance preparation, such as having spare materials, reduces anxiety. Importantly, regulation does not mean suppression at all costs; appropriate expression of negative emotions can inform students of the teacher's state and encourage behavior adjustment. Using respectful “I-messages” rather than accusatory language preserves classroom climate, while humor and a relaxed atmosphere foster positive emotions.

Attentional Deployment : Shifting attention is another effective strategy. Teachers may use distraction, such as recalling positive experiences, or concentration, such as engaging in hobbies, to reduce stress. These strategies not only buffer against negativity but also cultivate broader personal growth. Since teaching is a form of emotional labor, teachers often manage outward displays—presenting enthusiasm even when fatigued—to maintain effective classroom engagement.

Cognitive Change: Reframing negative events alters emotional responses. A teacher frustrated by repeated misbehavior may

react with greater tolerance upon learning the student faces personal hardship. Similarly, self-talk and re-evaluation help transform stressful events into manageable challenges. By adopting routine positive reinterpretation, teachers reduce reliance on instinctive defenses and cultivate resilience.

Response Modulation: Once emotions are activated, teachers can regulate their impact through techniques such as self-talk, relaxation, and expression control. Deep breathing, temporary withdrawal, or practicing neutral facial expressions prevent escalation and preserve professionalism. Long-term strategies, including exercise, communication with family and friends, and cultivating hobbies, further sustain emotional balance. Reflection also strengthens self-awareness, enabling teachers to refine their regulation methods over time.

Overall, teachers' emotion regulation encompasses both immediate classroom responses and sustained out-of-class practices. Effective use of multiple strategies not only safeguards teachers' psychological well-being but also shapes a positive classroom climate, ultimately enhancing teaching quality and student development.

5. Conclusion

Teachers' emotions are integral to classroom processes: while positive emotions broaden cognition and sustain motivation, negative ones can restrict attention and hinder interaction. Effective regulation is thus a professional necessity.

Drawing on self-control theory and four psychological models, this study outlined strategies across the five stages of emotion regulation. Findings indicate that teachers, as active regulators, can anticipate, reinterpret, and reshape emotional experiences to enhance both personal well-being and student outcomes.

Emotion regulation is a dynamic skill requiring practice, reflection, and effective resource management. Strengthening teachers' self-efficacy and resilience helps sustain regulation across demanding contexts. Future research should test interventions and explore cultural differences to further advance both theory and practice.

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