

# TEACHERS' EMOTIONS IN CLASSROOM AND THEIR JOB SATISFACTION: A MEDIATING ROLE OF REGULATION OF EMOTIONS

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## Abstract

The increase in reported emotional difficulties, reflected in higher levels of stress and burnout among teachers across Europe, underscores the importance of developing a conceptual understanding of the underlying processes and support mechanisms for teacher well-being, including teachers' emotional competencies. The range of emotions that teachers experience in the classroom is diverse, both in terms of quality and intensity. These emotions have a significant impact on teachers' cognition, motivation and relationships with their students. Furthermore, research indicates that teachers' emotions are closely related to levels of burnout and job satisfaction and also influence the decision to leave the teaching profession. In this context, the experience of pleasant emotions and the use of more adaptive emotion regulation strategies contributes positively to job satisfaction. Research on teachers' emotions, emotion regulation and their effects on teachers' outcomes has gained increasing attention in recent years; however, such research has not yet been conducted in Slovenia. The present study uses in-service teachers' data ( $N = 1,191$ ; 86.6% females) from a larger data collection entitled Positive Teacher Development Model: Interplay of the Individual (Motivational, Emotional, and Cognitive) and Contextual (School and System-Level) Assets During the School Year. After exploring the psychometric properties (validity and reliability) of the scales used, we analysed teachers' classroom emotions (joy, hopelessness, anger, pride, and love) as predictors of job satisfaction and a mediating role of emotion regulation difficulties between teachers' emotions and their job satisfaction. Finally, practical implications are discussed.

**Keywords:** *Teachers, emotion, regulation, job satisfaction, Slovenia.*

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## 1. Introduction

The growing prevalence of emotional difficulties, characterised by increasing stress and burnout among teachers across Europe (OECD, 2020), highlights the need for a deeper conceptual understanding of the factors that influence teachers' well-being, including their emotional competencies. Teachers experience a wide range of emotions in the classroom, varying in both their quality and intensity (Burić et al., 2018). The emotions that teachers experience have a significant impact on their mindset, motivation and engagement with students (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Furthermore, research shows that teachers' emotions are closely linked to levels of burnout and job satisfaction and also influence the decision to leave the teaching profession (Atmaca et al., 2020). In this context, the experience of pleasant emotions and the use of more adaptive emotion regulation strategies contributes positively to job satisfaction (Aldrup et al., 2020, Brackett et al., 2010). Research on teachers' emotions, emotion regulation and its impact on teachers' outcomes has gained increasing attention in recent years; however, such research has not yet been conducted in Slovenia.

In the present study, we will examine the role of emotions in teachers' job satisfaction in Slovenia. More specifically, after examining the psychometric properties of the scales used, we will analyse teachers' emotions in the classroom (joy, hopelessness, anger, pride and love) as predictors of their job satisfaction. In addition, we will analyse difficulties in emotion regulation as a mediating factor between teachers' emotions and their job satisfaction in a sample of Slovenian teachers.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

The sample included 1191 in-service teachers (86.6% females), aged from 22 to 65 years ( $M = 42.49$ ;  $SD = 9.42$ ) from 49 elementary and 21 upper-secondary schools from Slovenia.

### 2.2. Instruments

**The Teacher Emotion Questionnaire** (TEQ, Burić et al., 2018) consists of 35 items. Teachers assess their emotions in relation to their teaching, engaging and their interaction with students. It comprises the subscales joy (5 items, e.g. "I feel satisfied when I achieve my learning goals"), pride (6 items, e.g. "The pride I feel when my students succeed confirms that I am doing a good job"), love (6 items, e.g. "I feel happy when I achieve my learning goals"), anger (5 items, e.g. "I feel frustrated when things don't go as planned in class") and hopelessness (5 items, e.g. "I feel helpless because I just can help some of my students"). The original scale also included fatigue, which was not included in the study. Respondents rated the extent to which each item applied to them on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). The anger and hopelessness scales are reverse-coded. The higher the values, the lower the anger and the lower the hopelessness.

**The Difficulties with emotion regulation Scale.** The brief version of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS; Gratz & Roemer, 2004) is a 16-item self-report instrument that measures the following dimensions of difficulties in emotion regulation: nonacceptance of negative emotions (3 items), inability to engage in goal-directed behaviours when distressed (3 items), difficulties controlling impulsive behaviours when distressed (3 items), limited access to emotion regulation strategies perceived as effective (5 items), and lack of emotional clarity (2 items). Respondents rated the extent to which each item applied to them on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always).

**The Job Satisfaction Scale** (OECD, 2020) measures job satisfaction and comprises 10 items. The Job Satisfaction Scale assesses two aspects of teachers' job satisfaction: satisfaction with the profession (4 items, e.g. "The advantages of being a teacher clearly outweigh the disadvantages") and satisfaction with the current working environment (4 items, e.g. "If possible, I would like to change schools"). The two remaining items assess whether teachers feel that society values the teaching profession and satisfaction with their own job. Respondents rated the extent to which each item applied to them on a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (completely agree).

### 2.3. Procedure

The data is part of a research project entitled Positive Teacher Development Model - An interplay of the Individual (Motivational, Emotional, and Cognitive) and Contextual (School and System level) Assets during the School Year, which aimed to investigate individual and contextual factors that can contribute to job satisfaction, retention and reduce burnout. All elementary and upper secondary schools in Slovenia were invited to participate so that the data would reflect the population as closely as possible. Prior to data collection, the questionnaires were translated into Slovenian (if they had not been translated before) using a double translation procedure (two independent translations with a third translator deciding on the translations, all three translators being psychologists). The study was approved by an ethics committee of the Educational Research Institute (No. 3-2024). Informed consent was then obtained from the participants. In addition, all participants were informed about what the survey was about, how the data would be collected, protected and analysed and that they could withdraw their participation at any time. Participants received the link to the online questionnaire battery from the school coordinators. The data was collected at the end of September 2024 to record how the start of the school year affected teachers. It took them around 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### 2.4. Data analyses

After examining descriptive statistics, correlations, and reliabilities using IBM SPSS Statistics 26, we conducted CFA (confirmatory factor analysis), and SEM (structural equation modelling) using Mplus (Version 8.1; Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). A maximum likelihood (ML) algorithm was used to handle missing data and assess parameters in the model. Separate CFA models were conducted for each construct. If indicated by modification indices and justified by the content of the items, a correlation between the items was added. CFA models were brought into the mediation model in the second step. Item loadings were interpreted in accordance with Tabachnick and Fidell (2006), suggesting cut-off values of 0.32 (poor), 0.45 (fair), 0.55 (good), 0.63 (very good), or 0.71 (excellent). Model fit was assessed with chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), comparative fit indices (CFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), following the recommendations by Hu and Bentler (1999) for a good fit:

CFI > 0.95, RMSEA < 0.06, and SRMR < 0.08. For adequate fit, the following cut-off values were applied: CFI > 0.90, RMSEA < 0.08, and SRMR < 0.08 (Hair et al., 1998).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Confirmatory factor analyses and reliability analyses

Confirmatory Factor Analyses models for each construct were examined. The items were used as indicators in the models. Fit indices are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Model Fit Indices for Latent Constructs.

Scale	$\chi^2(df)$		CFI	RMSEA [90% CFI]	SRMR
Emotion	1689.394 (340)	***	.971	0.058 [0.055–0.061]	0.049
Emotion Regulation Difficulties	531.828 (92)	***	.985	0.063 [0.058–0.069]	0.028
Job satisfaction	131.9476 (25)	***	.993	0.060[0.050–0.071]	0.021

Notes: \*  $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$

All scales showed good fit proving their validity. Additionally, reliability analyses showed adequate internal consistency (Cronbach's alphas) for all scales in Teacher emotion Questionnaire: joy: .873, pride: .895; love: .887; anger: .874; hopelessness: .904 as well as for Emotional Regulation Difficulties: .934 and Job Satisfaction: .843.

#### 3.2. Descriptive statistics

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for the scale mean scores are presented in Table 2 to provide a brief insight into the data; however, in the CFA and SEM analyses, questionnaire items were used as indicators of latent variables. Following the recommendation of Curran et al. (1996) for ensuring the multivariate normality required in SEM, no variables (items) needed to be transformed due to excessive skewness or kurtosis.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations across Scales.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Emotion (Joy)	4.77	0.38						
2. Emotion (Pride)	4.43	0.56	.615**					
3. Emotion (Love)	3.98	0.68	.403**	.535**				
4. Emotion (Anger)	3.79	0.82	-.011	-.076**	0.038			
5. Emotion (Dispair)	3.48	.88	-.020	-.039	.113**	.705**		
6. Emotion Regulation Difficulties	1.97	0.64	.000	.029	-.084**	-.476**	-.447**	
7. Job Satisfaction	4.29	0.80	.085**	.097**	.231**	.352**	.322**	-.242**

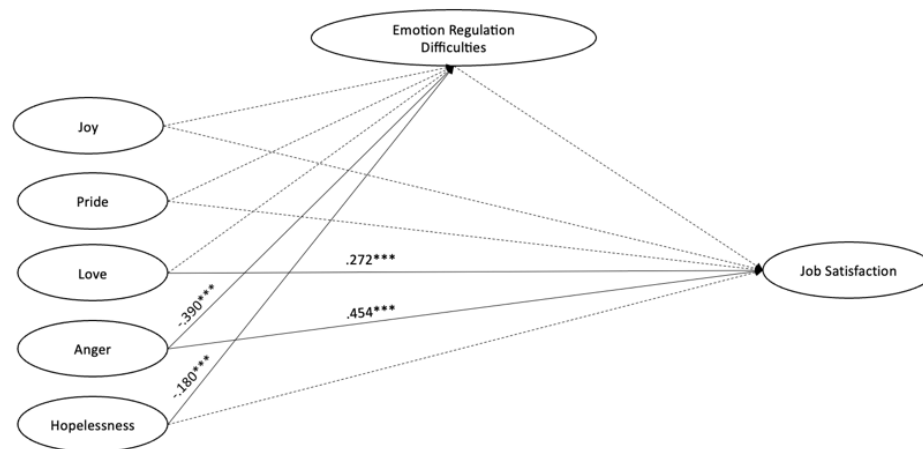
Note. \*\*\*  $p < .001$

We can observe positive associations between emotions joy, pride and love and high positive associations between anger and hopelessness. Emotion regulation difficulties are negatively associated with love, lack of anger and lack of hopelessness, while job satisfaction has significant associations with all other occluded scales.

#### 3.3. Mediation model

Further on we investigated mediation model in which we analyse direct and indirect paths leading from teachers' emotion to emotion regulation difficulties, and job satisfaction. The model fits the data well:  $\chi^2(1334) = 3677.922$ ,  $p = .000$ ; CFI = .968; RMSEA = .038, 90% CI [.037, .040]; SRMR = .049.

Figure 1. Relationships between Teachers' Emotions, Emotion Regulation Difficulties and Job Satisfaction: Structural Equation Model. The numbers present completely standardised coefficient estimates. Solid lines represent significant paths or correlations and dashed lines indicate non-significant paths or correlations. \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



There are significant direct paths leading from hopelessness and anger to emotion regulation difficulties and from love and anger to job satisfaction. The less anger and hopelessness teacher report the less they also report emotion regulation difficulties. The more love and less anger they report the higher are their levels of job satisfaction. The indirect path from teachers' emotion through emotion regulation difficulties to job satisfaction are not significant.

#### 4. Conclusions

In view of the worsening teacher shortage, the need for support for teachers is increasing rapidly. With many teachers leaving the profession due to stress and burnout (Madigan & Kim, 2021), strengthening their emotional competences can be an important part of the solution. The study highlights how emotions contribute to job satisfaction in different ways. Love and anger were of particular importance. Love is interesting as it was identified as a rare emotion of teachers in the study by Burić et al. (2018). Therefore, its prevalence and supporting mechanisms are worth investigating. On the other hand, anger was identified in the same study (Burić et al., 2018) as a common emotion experienced in situations such as student misbehaviour, violation of classroom discipline, rudeness or laziness. Experiencing unpleasant emotions such as anger is associated with emotional exhaustion, a core component of burnout (Chang, 2009). Our results show that pleasant emotions, such as love, are associated with higher job satisfaction, while unpleasant emotions, such as anger, are associated with lower job satisfaction. Interestingly, difficulties in emotion regulation did not contribute significantly to job satisfaction. Further in-depth analyses are needed in future studies, preferably using a mixed-methods approach and intensive longitudinal studies, to overcome the limitations of the cross-sectional design of the current study, which is based on self-report.

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