THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-EFFICACY ON THE EMOTIONAL WORK OF TEACHERS

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Abstract

Studies show that self-efficacy plays an important role in emotional work. The goal of research is to identify if there is a connection between the perception of self-efficacy, interest teachers for feedback, biological gender and type of education (public and private) on teachers’ emotional work. The applied tool aims to level the teacher is interested in emotions, feelings and messages conveyed in daily communication at school. The type of education, gender, and feedback are not influencing the teachers’ emotional work. A new factor, the interest for feedback seems to be important for the emotional work of teachers.

Keywords: teachers; emotional work; private institution; public institution; self-efficacy; education.

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Education represents a public service sector where the main beneficiaries are students. Unlike private organizations, which offer various types of services to adults within relatively short interactions, in the educational system teachers work with children during longer periods of time. Relationships are more profound, some primary and secondary school teachers managing to leave their mark on the personalities of future adults.

Arlie Hochschild (1983) was accredited as the first to develop and refine the concept of emotional labor in a study conducted on flight attendants. The author defined emotional labor as workers' effort to manage their feelings in order to create a publicly accepted face and bodies pose. The attributes of emotional effort act deep (for instance: changing the emotions one feels in order for them to match the emotions one shows) and they act on the surface (examples: falsehood, showing emotions we do not feel, suppressing emotions we feel) (Diefendorff, 2005 cited in Huynh, Alderson & Thompson, 2008). Starting from the works of Hochschild (1983), Morris and Feldman (1997), Zapf and Vogt, Seifert, Mertini and Isic (1999), we summarize the main characteristics of emotional labor. To begin with, emotional labor represents an important component of jobs that involve face-to-face interactions: these jobs can be encountered mainly in the service sector, but also in other professions, such as those of teacher, police officer, tax collector. It has been proven that the teaching profession fulfills Hochschild's model that is, the three criteria necessary to obtain emotional labor: a) face-to-face contact between teachers and others, generally students; b) teaching must produce a certain emotional state (for instance: anger or fear, enthusiasm or anxiety) in students or in those around; c) there is external control of emotional labor, that teachers perceive as generally deriving from the cultural expectations or professional norms of this occupation (Yin et al, 2013).

Previous qualitative studies have shown that emotional labor is an important part of teaching, as well as of perceiving one's own results: burnout, dedication, identification etc. (Cukur, 2009; Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2004).

Bandura first introduces the concept of self-efficacy defining it as “a person's belief in his or her capacities to mobilize the cognitive and motivational resources necessary to successfully fulfill his or her tasks” or “an anticipation of positive results to actions taken, due to one's knowledge and abilities” (Bandura, 2006). A teacher's self-efficacy may be defined as the belief in one's ability to help students learn and to influence their...
results and motivation in a specific situation (Moe et al, 2010). Recent studies have proven the moderating role of self-efficacy for emotional labor. Heuven, Bakker, Schaufeli and Huisman (2006) have studied the role of self-efficacy in performing emotional labor on 154 flight attendants.

Another important factor is the interest in feedback. When talking about the interest in feedback, we refer to the teacher's attention to all verbal and nonverbal messages transmitted by the some sources of interaction: students, parents and the management. The reason for the interest in this type of relation is the importance of high quality communication in schools.

Lately, great emphasis has been placed on the importance of school feedback, from the teacher-student perspective (Chang, J.C.Y. & Lam, S.F., 2008; Pânişoară, 2008), as well as on the teacher-management dyad (Geijsel, R.P et al, 2010; Huber, S. G., 2013), but these studies are focused on its importance; therefore, we identify the need to create an instrument that will practically measure whether teachers are interested or not in receiving feedback both from students, parents and from school management. Another reason for the importance of studying the interest in feedback is the connection between the concept and the antecedents of motivational work; we are practically talking about vocational identity, which implies a set of internalized expectations of an individual regarding his professional role (Zaharia, 2011).

Hochschild (1983) advances the idea that, because the cultural specificity of Western society invites women more than men to focus on affective experiences, the former will be stronger adepts of emotion management. Since Western cultures encourage men to give up affective experiences, one may form the hypothesis that they are less aware of their affective experiences, by comparison with women, so gender is important, too.

2. PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of the research is to determine if there is a connection between the perception of self-efficacy, the interest in feedback, subjects' biological gender and the type of learning about the emotional labor of teachers. The hypotheses are the following:

there are differences at the level of the emotional labor performed by teachers, depending on the type of education, in that teachers in private schools will experience more intense emotional labor than those in public schools.

there are differences at the level of the emotional labor performed by teachers, depending on their biological gender, in that women will perform more intense emotional labor compared to male subjects.

there are differences at the level of the emotional labor performed by teachers, depending on their interest in feedback, in that those with a high level of interest in feedback will perform more intense emotional labor than those with a low level of interest in feedback.

there is an interaction effect between the level of interest in feedback and perceived self-efficacy, in that teachers with high levels of interest in feedback and high levels of perceived self-efficacy will perform more intense emotional labor than subjects with low levels of interest in feedback and low levels of self-efficacy.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

A number of 208 teachers participated in the research, 178 (85,6%) of which were female and 30 (14,4%) male. The average age was 35, the minimum age being 22 and the maximum being 61. The subjects work in pre-university education, as kindergarten, primary and secondary school teachers. Of the 208 subjects, 68 are kindergarten teachers, 48 work as primary school teachers and 92 are primary and secondary school teachers. Of the 208 subjects, 115 work in public education and 93, in a private institution. The selection of subjects was based on accessibility; they are only equivalent from the viewpoint of the grades they work with.

The participants were asked to respond to three surveys: TELS (Teacher Emotional Labor Scale), created by Cukur (2009) for measuring emotional labor; the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Bandura, A., 2006). The third instrument is the interest in feedback; after referring to several studies (Chun, J.C.Y & Lam, S., 2008; Geijsel F.P. Kruger M.L Sleegers P.J.C., 2010; Huber S.G., 2013), we finally organized it on three dimensions: the interest in feedback between teacher -student, teacher-teacher and teacher-management. The instrument assesses the teacher's level of interest in the emotions, feelings and messages transmitted in daily communication at school. The data collected by these instruments were analyzed by means of the SPSS 13,0 software.

Before analyzing the effects of the independent variables, we calculated the Alpha Cronbach internal consistency coefficient for each scale. After eliminating items 4 and 41 of the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, the coefficients calculated for each part of the instrument were over 0.50. For TELS, the total Alpha Cronbach value was 0.708. For the feedback involvement scale, the value for the dimension showing the interest in teacher-
student feedback was 0.901; for teacher-management feedback, 0.793, and the interest for teacher-parent feedback, 0.920.

4. FINDINGS

In order to test the first three hypotheses, we applied t tests for independent samples. The outcomes were the following:

For the first hypothesis, no significant differences emerge between global results obtained for the ‘emotional labor’ variable and the type of education (p = 0.549, t (206) = -0.60; F = 7.04). No significant differences emerge during t tests for the type of education concerning the dimensions of emotional labor.

For the second hypothesis, for the gender variable, there are no significant differences between the results obtained for the ‘emotional labor’ variable and subjects’ biological gender (p = 0.099, t (209) = 2.23, F = 12.58). During t tests on the dimensions of emotional labor, there emerge significant differences between genders (F = 2.61; p = 0.008; t = 2.83), in that female subjects (M = 14.91) will perform ‘deeply played’ emotional labor more intensely than male subjects (M = 12.30). Therefore, women try harder to change their inner affective experiences in order to feel what is expected of them. These results support specialized literature (Taylor and Tyler, 2000; cited in Zaharia, 2011), which notes that most employees in jobs where emotional labor is a request are women and that most of the required skills for such positions are associated with the female gender, this type of work being regarded as women’s work.

For the third hypothesis, there are no significant differences between the results obtained for the ‘emotional labor’ variable and the interest in feedback, with a 0.065 significance threshold, t (206) = 1.854 and F = 2.42. We also applied t tests to each dimension of the interest in feedback, whence the only differences that emerged were between emotional labor and the level of interest in teacher-parent feedback, p = 0.001, t (206) = 3.54, F = 206; averages obtained for the interest in teacher-parent feedback were 54.06 (for low interest) and 49.47 (for high interest). Subjects with a low interest in feedback in the teacher-parent dimension perform more intense emotional labor than subjects highly interested in feedback. In t tests for the interest in feedback focused on the dimension of emotional labor, there are no significant differences.

In order to test the fourth hypothesis, we calculated the main effect of the level of self-efficacy variable. The results in table ‘Test of Effects Between Subjects’ show the following values: F (1;207) = 0.59 and p = 0.441, which points to the fact that there is no main effect of the independent variable named ‘level of self-efficacy’ on the dependent variable named ‘emotional labor’ (Mlow.level=54.48; Mhigh.level=53.17).

We calculated the main effect of the level of interest in feedback variable. The results in table ‘Effects Between Subjects’ show the following values: F (1;207) = 0.93 and p = 0.334; there is one main effect of the ‘level of interest in feedback’ variable on emotional labor. The average for low interest in feedback is 54.65, and the average for high interest in feedback is 53.

The interaction effects between level of self-efficacy and level of interest in feedback: F (1;207) = 0.93; p = 0.001; there is an interaction effect of the ‘level of self-efficacy’ and ‘level of interest in feedback’ variables.

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Horizontal comparison (level of self-efficacy):
Gr 1-2: F(104) = 11.16; t = -4.19; p = 0.001 significant
Gr 3-4: F(100) = 1.61; t = -5.99; p = 0.005 significant

Vertical comparison (interest in feedback):
Gr 1-3: F(104) = 0.36; t = -2.25; p = 0.026 significant
Gr 2-4: F = 5.70; t = 2.78; p = 0.001 significant

Following the statistical analysis, one main effect of the ‘level of interest in feedback’ variable on emotional labor was discovered to be that those with a low level of interest in feedback will experience emotional labor as more intense, as well as an interaction effect of the ‘level of self-efficacy’ and ‘interest in feedback’ variables.

There is no main interaction effect of the level of self-efficacy on emotional labor. Regarding the significant statistical differences, we notice that, contrary to specialized literature, the two do not interact, at least not at the main level. Taking into account the fact that interaction effects still emerge, together with the interest...
in feedback, we may assume that the first variable influences emotional labor in conjunction with other, more important variables.

The 'level of interest in feedback' variable has one main effect on emotional labor. This result shows us that the interest in transmitted and received information is important when one engages in emotional labor. The fact that the teacher constantly follows the emotions and reactions of the students and of everyone he interacts with determines him to engage in this emotional labor.

5. DISCUSSION

These results back up the fact that, in Romania, private institutions are no more than 20 years old, which makes this a market that is still young and continuously changing. Another factor that could have influenced the results is the fact that teachers migrate from public to private schools and vice versa, and they possibly form certain habits that they will keep irrespective of the institution they currently work for.

Low scores in the dimension of the interest in teacher-parent feedback prove that the individual performing the job does not offer parents an opportunity to express their opinion about his work and, moreover, he does not expect parents to want such a thing. This type of teacher will avoid discussions with parents, will not consider that they have a major influence on school progress and will not be interested in what they have to say. All of these factors cause a more intense emotional labor, as the teacher feels he cannot act naturally in the parents' presence and feels the need to please.

For the fourth hypothesis, results showed that, when the teacher has a low perceived level of self-efficacy, he will perceive emotional labor more intensely if he has a high interest in feedback. This fact is perceived thus because a teacher who pays attention to all the information he transmits and receives will perceive his weaknesses very clearly, and this will cause difficulty in performing emotional labor. The teacher will understand the complexity of this type of work, but he will not consider himself capable of performing it.

When teachers have a high level of self-efficacy and also a high interest in feedback, they perceive emotional labor as intense. One explanation of these results could be the fact that teachers in this situation try to please everyone they interact with, that is, to exhibit an efficient emotional labor in relation to all characters; however, the latter are diversified, of different statuses and different “profit” interests, therefore the teacher sets himself difficult challenges, that he will need to face constantly. Teachers with a low interest in feedback and a high perception of self-efficacy perceive emotional labor more intensely than those with a low level of self-efficacy. This is possibly due to the fact that teachers in this situation perceive themselves as capable in their work as teachers, but they are not interested in the two-way communication they should supposedly engage in while performing emotional labor.

Teachers who have a high level of interest in feedback and a low level of self-efficacy perceive emotional labor more intensely than those with a high level of self-efficacy. They perceive their skills as low in their work as teachers, therefore they will have little confidence in their skills and will perceive greater difficulties in performing emotional labor. This fact is enhanced by the high degree of feedback they both engage in and expect. The high degree of their interest in feedback shows that not only do they seek feedback from students, the management and parents, but they also offer chances and expect to receive feedback regarding their work.

6. CONCLUSION

We wish to underline the novelty of this research, which is connected to the comparison of private and public education (private education having existed in Romania only in the past 20 years), in the dimension of teachers' self-efficacy; in addition, we have identified a new factor that may influence emotional labor, namely the interest in feedback on the three dimensions. The concept of interest in feedback can be better defined and integrated into the concept of emotional labor; we expect to fulfill this purpose in future studies.

7. REFERENCES


