



PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY ON EMOTION REGULATION PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT :

This study investigated the relationship between professional identity and emotional regulation strategies among elementary school teachers handling Grades 1 to 3, using a mixed methods design. The quantitative phase examined how dimensions of professional identity influence five emotional regulation strategies. Results showed that all aspects of professional identity were significantly and positively related to emotional regulation. Among these, commitment to the profession was the strongest predictor, particularly in proactive and cognitive strategies. Professional values and ethics showed the highest influence on response modulation. The regression model explained 37.2% to 51.5% of the variance in emotional regulation practices.

The qualitative phase explored the challenges teachers face in regulating learners' emotions and the strategies they use to cope. Themes that emerged included managing disruptive behaviors, emotional immaturity, social exclusion, and the influence of home environments. Teachers reported using two main types of coping strategies: teacher preparedness, including emotional regulation, resilience, and mindfulness; and practical techniques, such as using emotional tools, promoting positive behaviors, and creating structured routines.

The findings underscore the importance of a strong professional identity in shaping effective emotional regulation practices in the classroom. The study recommends emotional support programs, relevant training in teacher preparation, and policies that recognize the emotional demands of early-grade teaching.

Introduction

Teachers face various emotionally charged situations that demand skilled way of managing emotions of learners. In inclusive settings, where teachers work with learners who may have diverse needs, effective emotion regulation practices become increasingly valuable since the ability to regulate emotions is vital for elementary learners who are at the crucial early stages of development.

Emotional regulation practices encompass techniques that help individuals identify, understand, and manage their emotions in a healthy and constructive way (Almheiri, 2021). These strategies enable children, to respond to emotional challenges effectively rather than reacting impulsively. For elementary school teachers, employing appropriate strategies in emotional regulation are crucial for fostering social skills, academic success, and overall well-being.

However, the practices of emotional regulations that teachers may utilize in the class is shaped by their professional identity encompassing their values, beliefs, and experiences. This identity impacts their approach to teaching, classroom management, and how they cope with the emotional demands of the profession (Sessiani, & Syukur, 2021). A strong professional identity allows teachers to better understand their roles, leading to effectiveness in emotional regulation (Richter et al., 2021; Yang, 2019).

Researches investigating professional identities and emotional regulation practices have primarily focused on general findings (Yang et al., 2022; Cheng, 2021) without adequately considering the contextual variability within which teachers operate which may include school culture, community context, and individual teacher backgrounds. Another gap lies in the underrepresentation of diverse teacher experiences and perspectives within research since existing literature relies on quantitative approaches. Qualitative methodologies, may yield richer insights into how teachers negotiate their professional identities and emotional regulation practices in real-world classroom settings. Hence, this study will be proposed.

Further, recognizing the relationship between professional identity and emotion regulation strategies holds significant implications for teacher training programs. Training may be directed of not only equipping teachers with pedagogical skills but also with the emotional competencies necessary to thrive in diverse classrooms. Enhancing teachers' understanding of their professional identity and emotional management can foster more positive educational experiences for both teachers and learners.

Research Question

How Professional Identity influences the emotion regulation practices of teachers ?

What are the challenges and coping mechanism of teachers in dealing with the emotions of their learners?

Research Design

This study will utilize a sequential explanatory mixed-method design to explore the relationship between professional identity and emotion regulation among elementary school teachers. The quantitative phase will employ a descriptive-correlational approach, which focuses on measuring variables and examining their relationships to identify patterns, correlations, or potential causal connections (Leavy, 2017). This approach will allow the study to describe the characteristics of professional identity and emotion regulation practices while investigating the naturally occurring relationships between these variables.

By applying the descriptive-correlational design, the study will quantify the levels of professional identity and the emotion regulation strategies employed by elementary school teachers. The relationship between these variables will be analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how professional identity influences teachers' emotion regulation practices.

The qualitative phase of the study will involve a descriptive qualitative research design to describe the challenges and coping mechanisms of teachers in relation to their emotion regulation practices. Also, this approach will complement the quantitative findings by providing rich, contextual insights into how teachers' professional identity shapes their ability to manage emotions effectively.

Together, the sequential mixed-method approach will enable a thorough investigation of the connection between professional identity and emotion regulation, offering both measurable data and in-depth narratives to inform educational practices and teacher development.

Results and Discussion

Study 1- Professional Identity and Emotional Regulation Practices Among Elementary School Teachers

Perceived Extent of Professional Identity

Self-Perception and Role Identification

Findings indicate that the respondents have very high confidence and clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The findings suggest that teachers exhibit a strong sense of professional identity through well-developed self-perception and role identification. This is supported by Yağın et al. (2022), who emphasized that clear role identification helps professionals align their personal values with their occupational responsibilities, resulting in more focused and effective performance.

Commitment to Profession

The findings indicate that respondents demonstrate a strong dedication to their profession. The results reveal that teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to the teaching profession, as shown by their sustained enthusiasm, motivation for professional growth, and pride in their role as educators. This commitment reflects both personal dedication and a sense of professional responsibility, contributing to long-term engagement and resilience in their careers.

This holds true with Meyer and Maltin (2010), who describe affective commitment as an emotional attachment to one's profession that fosters greater motivation and job satisfaction. Teachers who are emotionally invested in their work are more likely to build meaningful relationships with students and utilize constructive emotion regulation strategies. Similarly, Brackett et al.

Professional Values and Ethics

The respondents' professional identity in terms of professional values and ethics. It indicates that the respondents highly uphold ethical standards and core values of their teaching profession.

It can be implied from the results that there is an integral role that ethical conduct and core values play in shaping professional identity. This finding implies that teachers not only internalize the ethical standards of their profession but also apply them consistently in their interactions and decision-making processes. Upholding such values enhances emotional regulation, promotes respectful and inclusive classroom environments, and contributes to the overall integrity of the profession.

The connection between professional ethics and emotion regulation practices—such as cognitive reappraisal and mindfulness—supports the notion that value-driven professionals are more likely to engage in adaptive coping strategies (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017; Hülsheger et al., 2013). As Grandey and Gabriel (2015) noted, emotional labor is more sustainable when professionals operate within an internalized value system. Therefore, teacher education programs should emphasize the cultivation of ethical sensitivity and integrity, as these qualities not only foster professional growth but also serve as protective factors against burnout and emotional exhaustion.

Emotional Regulation Practices

Situation Selection

It indicates that the respondents tend to create or seek out environments that promote emotional well-being and reduce potential triggers for negative emotions.

The findings suggest that respondents value student well-being and strive to support it through thoughtful planning and emotionally responsive teaching practices. However, the results also point to a potential need for additional institutional support to help teachers consistently implement these strategies. For Zhou et al. (2020) and Gross and Thompson (2007), teachers who design emotionally supportive environments are more likely to foster positive student engagement and reduce classroom disruptions. These results also reflect the emotional investment and professional identity of teachers, as discussed by Namaziandost et al. (2024), who argue that teacher immunity and emotional regulation are strongly linked to motivation and well-being.

Situation Modification

The result shows that the respondents actively adjust or alter situations to manage their students' emotional responses and use strategies to influence or change the emotional impact of a situation.

The data suggest that teachers are attentive to the emotional dynamics of their classrooms and implement modifications to optimize both emotional and educational outcomes. The high practice level in situation modification among respondents reflects their proactive engagement in shaping emotionally conducive learning environments. As supported by Gonzalez et al. (2018) and Aldao & Nolen-Hoeksema (2012), modifying one's environment is an effective emotion regulation strategy that enhances well-being and promotes resilience. The findings affirm that teachers are not only aware of the emotional demands of their profession but also take concrete steps to mitigate stress and support emotional stability among students.

Attention Deployment

This suggests that teachers regularly implement strategies that help students manage their focus and emotional responses by guiding where and how attention is directed during classroom activities.

Results implied that using mindfulness techniques and encouraging students to redirect attention from distractions are both practiced by the respondents, though at a slightly lower level than the abovementioned. These results imply that while these strategies are used regularly, there may be opportunities for further development in helping students enhance focus and emotional regulation through attention-based techniques.

The emphasis on cultivating a positive learning atmosphere supports the development of students' emotional intelligence, reinforcing findings from Brackett et al. (2012), who linked professional commitment with emotion regulation and classroom climate. Teachers who help students reframe their attention toward constructive stimuli also contribute to the development of adaptive coping strategies—important not just for academic success, but also for students' long-term social-emotional development.

Cognitive Change

This indicates that teachers regularly use strategies aimed at helping students change the way they think about emotionally challenging situations to maintain a positive and constructive mindset.

The results suggest that teachers are highly engaged in fostering cognitive flexibility and emotional growth, equipping students with tools to mentally reframe difficulties and manage stress in adaptive, constructive ways. This is consistent with the work of Aldao et al. (2010) and Garnefski et al. (2001), who emphasized the role of cognitive reappraisal in reducing emotional distress and promoting well-being.

By modeling and teaching cognitive reframing, teachers help students develop a mindset that embraces challenges and failure as part of the learning process—an approach central to fostering long-term emotional regulation and academic perseverance.

Response Modulation

This indicates that the respondents often practice helping their students control their emotional responses on situations.

Particularly, guiding students in calming techniques, such as deep breathing, when emotions run high, demonstrating and encouraging self-control to help students manage their emotions, using strategies to help students express their emotions appropriately in challenging situations, and ensuring their students feel supported and understood while managing their emotional responses are practiced by the respondents.

Research by Taxer and Frenzel (2015) and Butler et al. (2003) has shown that suppressing emotional expression—especially among teachers—can lead to emotional exhaustion and decreased classroom engagement if not balanced with supportive regulation methods. In contrast, constructive response modulation like deep breathing, verbal expression, emotional validation fosters emotional resilience and psychological well-being.

Relationship of the Professional Identity and Emotion

Regulation Strategies of Teachers

The correlation matrix shows that all indicators of professional identity have a significant relationship to all indicators of emotional regulation strategies. In particular, the professional identity of teachers in terms of self-perception and role identification, commitment to profession, and professional values and ethics have significant relationship to situation selection, which have correlation coefficients of 0.376, 0.541, and 0.281, respectively (p -value = 0.000). Notably, commitment to the profession exhibits the strongest relationship ($r = 0.541$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that teacher who are more deeply committed are more likely to proactively manage their emotional experiences by selecting or avoiding particular situations.

Moreover, all three aspects of professional identity show statistically significant positive correlations with situation modification, as shown in the table their correlation coefficients of 0.426, 0.669, 0.601 with p -values of 0.000. This implies that teachers who are deeply invested in their profession and guided by strong ethical values are more inclined to actively alter emotional situations to help students regulate and deal with their emotions.

The data also indicate that all dimensions of professional identity are positively and significantly correlated with the use of attention deployment as an emotional regulation strategy, with correlation coefficients of 0.492, 0.620, 0.373 and p-values of 0.000. This implies that a clear professional role empowers teachers to manage students' emotional attention effectively and it also emphasizes that the ethical responsibility of educators to support student well-being.

Lastly, the results show that all aspects of professional identity are significantly correlated with teachers' use of response modulation to help students regulate their emotional expressions. The strongest correlation is observed with professional values and ethics (cor. coef. = 0.509, $p = 0.000$), suggesting that teachers who prioritize ethical conduct and values are more likely to help students appropriately manage outward emotional reactions. Self-perception and role identification (cor. coef. = 0.412, $p = 0.000$) also contributes meaningfully, reflecting the teacher's sense of duty in guiding student behavior. While commitment to the profession (cor. coef. = 0.278, $p = 0.000$) is positively correlated, it appears to play a more general role in emotional support compared to values and role understanding.

These results align with studies by Namaziandost et al. (2024) and Hui et al. (2024), who assert that professional identity and emotional regulation are intertwined, with identity shaping the way teachers engage with emotional challenges. Furthermore, the high correlations involving commitment to the profession reinforce the view of Meyer and Maltin (2010), who described affective commitment as a key driver of sustained motivation and engagement, ultimately influencing how teachers regulate both their own and their students' emotions. Professional values and ethics also play a pivotal role, especially in the regulation of emotional expressions, which supports findings by Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017) and Grandey and Gabriel (2015), emphasizing the ethical underpinnings of emotional labor.

Influence of the Professional Identity on the Emotion Regulation Strategies of Teachers

The regression results provide the data on how each dimension of professional identity—self-perception and role identification, commitment to the profession, and professional values and ethics—influences the five emotional regulation strategies: situation selection, situation modification, attention deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation.

Reflected in Table 10 are the data on the influence of self-perception and role identification on teachers' emotion regulation strategies. The results are statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.001 alpha level. Hence, the influence of this professional identity indicator on emotion regulation is considered highly significant.

As shown in the data, self-perception and role identification significantly influenced cognitive change ($t = 3.595$), response modulation ($t = 2.957$), and attention deployment ($t = 2.198$). These findings indicate that teachers with a strong understanding of their roles and a positive self-view are more likely to help students reframe emotional challenges, manage their emotional responses, and redirect attention in productive ways. These strategies are essential in building emotional resilience and classroom engagement.

However, this indicator showed a negative influence on situation modification ($t = -3.245$), suggesting that rigid role expectations or a fixed sense of professional identity may limit teachers' ability to adapt classroom environments to meet students' emotional needs. The remaining is influenced by factors not included in the model.

These findings are consistent with Yağan et al. (2022), who emphasized that a teacher's self-perception significantly influences how they interact with students and manage classroom challenges. Similarly, López-Yáñez et al. (2024) and Zhang & Kim (2024) underscore that a positive professional self-concept enhances a teacher's ability to respond reflectively and regulate both their own and students' emotions effectively.

Among all professional identity indicators, commitment to the profession had the strongest and most consistent influence. It significantly affected situation selection ($t = 8.629$), situation modification ($t = 8.512$), attention deployment ($t = 7.819$), and cognitive change ($t = 7.908$). These results suggest that teachers who are highly committed to their profession are more likely to regulate classroom emotional climates proactively—by choosing emotionally positive activities, modifying classroom settings, guiding student focus, and promoting a growth mindset through cognitive reframing.

Interestingly, commitment had a negative influence on response modulation ($t = -2.397$), suggesting that while highly committed teachers excel in anticipatory and cognitive strategies, they may be more emotionally vulnerable in real-time emotional management due to overinvolvement or exhaustion. The model explains 37.2% to 51.5% of the variance in teachers' emotion regulation practices, meaning that professional commitment contributes significantly to nearly half of the overall influence on how teachers regulate emotions in the classroom. The remaining variability is likely influenced by unmeasured factors.

It can be deduced from the results that teachers who are emotionally and professionally committed are more proactive in fostering emotionally safe environments, selecting or modifying situations to minimize distress, guiding student attention constructively, and encouraging reframing of difficult experiences. These results align with Meyer and Maltin (2010), who conceptualized affective commitment as a key factor in motivation, engagement, and resilience, and with Wasti and Can (2023), who emphasized the sense of duty and emotional investment associated with normative commitment. Furthermore, Brackett et al. (2012) support this by linking strong professional commitment to enhanced emotional intelligence, which facilitates effective classroom emotional regulation.

Professional values and ethics had the strongest positive influence on response modulation ($t = 5.077$) and a significant effect on situation modification ($t = 4.619$). These findings suggest that teachers guided by strong ethical principles are more inclined to foster emotionally safe classrooms and support students in managing the expression of their emotions constructively.

The model accounts for 42.3% of the variance in response modulation and up to 51.5% across all strategies, confirming that professional values and ethics are significant contributors to teachers' emotional regulation behaviors. Still, 48.5% to 62.8% of the variance remains unexplained, pointing to the importance of other contextual, institutional, or individual-level factors not captured within this model.

These results suggest that teachers who strongly adhere to ethical standards are more likely to create emotionally supportive environments and help students manage and express emotions in a socially appropriate manner. This aligns with Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe (2008), who emphasized that professional ethics shape decision-making and promote integrity in interpersonal interactions. Arman (2023) also noted that strong professional values

foster respectful and emotionally responsive classrooms, while Ashkanasy and Dorris (2017) highlighted that ethics serve as a framework for emotion management, particularly under pressure.

Challenges of Teachers in Regulating Emotions of the Elementary School Learners

To describe the challenges that teachers face in regulating emotions of the elementary school teachers, two (2) global themes were generated with the corresponding basic themes. These are challenges in dealing with disruptive behaviors encompassing the themes about struggles to manage intense emotions of learners, dealing with attention-seeking and behavioral outburst, and identifying and addressing emotions. These are displayed in table 2.

Challenges in Dealing with Disruptive Behaviors

The theme Challenges in Dealing with Disruptive Behaviors which describe the challenges of teachers in handling emotions, encompasses several sub-themes which include managing intense emotions; dealing with attention-seeking and behavioral outbursts; and identifying and addressing emotions.

Managing intense emotions. Learners according to teachers exhibit emotions like sadness, anxiety and other negative emotions leading to their being difficult to manage in the class. Teachers expressed key observations and challenges. Their interview responses illustrate real classroom experiences in dealing with the young learners. One of the challenges is the lack of emotional regulation skills in many children, which can result in emotional problems within the classroom setting.

pupils struggle to manage anger, sadness, or anxiety IDI-1

pupil might react with rage over a minor criticism or become overwhelmed with anxiety during a group activity. - IDI-3

As observe maam , younger children specially like grade 2 often have big emotion but lack of coping skills to manage them leading them to tantrums or crying and panagsa , minsan , resulting to fighting . - IDI-11

Dealing with Attention-Seeking and Behavioral Outbursts. Another major challenge identified by teachers is dealing with attention-seeking and behavioral outbursts. These behaviors, often stemming from unmet emotional needs or a desire for recognition, disrupt classroom routines and make it difficult for teachers to maintain focus and order. Teachers shared real experiences that highlight how learners express their need for attention through both verbal and physical disruptions. This example shows how children may resort to yelling or reporting to parents as a means to feel seen or heard.

Identifying and addressing emotions. Another significant challenge identified by teachers is the difficulty in recognizing and responding to the emotions of young learners. Many students, particularly in the early grades, do not yet have the emotional vocabulary or self-awareness needed to express what they are feeling. This makes it difficult for teachers to identify emotional issues and respond appropriately. Teachers often encounter students who are clearly struggling internally, but cannot explain their emotions, leading to misunderstandings, frustration, and behavioral problems in the classroom.

Challenges in Dealing Behaviors with External and Developmental Influences

Teachers also highlighted the complexities of managing student behavior that is shaped by external influences and developmental differences. These challenges often go beyond the classroom environment and are rooted in factors such as family background, home practices, social dynamics, or developmental maturity. They shared that these influences can deeply affect how children behave, respond emotionally, and interact with peers and teachers. Teachers are faced with the added difficulty of addressing behaviors that stem from situations they cannot control directly—such as parenting styles, emotional immaturity, or bullying. These external and developmental factors make behavior management not just a classroom issue but a broader developmental concern.

External Factors and Family Influence. A recurring challenge mentioned by teachers is how home life and parenting styles can directly shape a child's emotional and behavioral responses in school. For the teachers, learners who are overprotected or neglected at home may bring those emotional patterns into the classroom, making it harder for teachers to manage or redirect behaviors effectively.

External influences like depende paunsa sila ginahandle sa balay. Example, sailing balay kay ginapauyunan lang jud ang bata...mao sad na mahitabo sa school. – IDI-1

External factors like sa classmates kanang nay classmates man jud nga sungugan...mahimo nalang sad nga mag show nalang ang bata ug either disruptive behavior or dili na jud magparticipate... – IDI-2

The findings reveal that students' emotional and behavioral challenges often originate from home. Parenting styles, emotional neglect, or overprotection can lead to immaturity or dependency, making it difficult for teachers to establish consistent behavior expectations in school.

Coping Strategies of Teachers in Dealing with the Challenges in Regulating Emotions of the day Elementary School Learners

In response to the emotional and behavioral challenges they face, teachers employ a range of coping strategies to manage and support the emotional development of their learners. These strategies are grouped into two major global themes: Teacher Preparedness and Using Practical Techniques for Learner Support. Each theme represents different yet complementary approaches that teachers apply to regulate learners' emotions and maintain a positive classroom environment.

The theme Teacher Preparedness encompasses strategies that focus on the teacher's internal capacity and classroom climate. This includes Regulating Emotions, where teachers recognize and respond calmly to emotional challenges; Developing Emotional Resilience, which involves staying patient and composed under pressure; Creating Supportive Classrooms, through fostering safe and inclusive environments; and Employing Mindfulness, where teachers integrate mindfulness exercises to promote emotional awareness among learners.

On the other hand, Using Practical Techniques for Learner Support refers to strategies that involve structured interventions and tools that help learners directly. These include Introducing Emotional Management Tools like peace corners and breathing exercises, Encouraging Positive Emotions by validating student feelings and promoting optimism, and Establishing Structure and Routines through consistent classroom rules and positive discipline practices.

Arts and crafts , pop it , drawing emotions. – IDI-13

Teachers introduced tools such as feeling notebooks, emotion drawings, peace corners, and breathing techniques to help students identify and process emotions independently. Here are some of what they have searched:

Feeling notebook where they can express what makes them happy, sad or angry...– IDI-5

Breathing exercises inhale/exhale to help them calm down. – IDI-3

Letting them draw what emotion emoji they're feeling. – IDI-5

Breathing exercises. – IDI-9

These techniques offer constructive outlets for emotional release and reduce impulsive behavior by encouraging reflection and emotional awareness.

Encouraging Positive Emotions. Teachers also actively create emotionally positive environments by validating students' feelings and using praise and interactive activities to build confidence and reinforce emotional regulation. This proactive approach helps students feel emotionally secure and understood, which in turn promotes better self-regulation and classroom harmony. As shared by the teachers:

I used interactive activities like role playing, games, and action songs to boost confidence and morale. – IDI-14

Implication and Concluding Remarks

Based on how the study addressed the objectives, the following were the conclusion drawn. Teachers demonstrated high level of professional identity across all three dimensions: self-perception and role identification, commitment to the profession, and professional values and ethics.

Emotional regulation strategies were found to be consistently and actively practiced. Teachers were particularly effective in situation selection, attention deployment, situation modification, and cognitive change, reflecting their proactive approach in shaping emotionally positive learning environments.

The strongest correlation was found between commitment to the profession and cognitive change, highlighting that teachers who are emotionally and professionally invested in their work are more likely to help students reframe challenges in a constructive way.

Regression analysis confirmed that professional identity significantly influences emotional regulation strategies, with commitment to the profession emerging as the most influential predictor across four of the five strategies. Professional values and ethics had the greatest influence on response modulation, indicating that teachers with a strong ethical foundation are more inclined to guide students in expressing emotions appropriately.

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