



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Exploring the Challenge of Head Teachers' Emotional Labour Experiences in Public Schools of Punjab**

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**ABSTRACT**

Head teachers are vital for the smooth functioning of schools. The sole intention of this research work was to get a comprehension of the emotional labour experiences of head teachers regarding work engagement, affective well-being, and emotional exhaustion. The descriptive phenomenological research design was used in this study. The heads of the elementary and secondary public schools were selected as the population of the study. The random sampling method was utilized. The research data of semi-structured telephonic interviews was analyzed through Colaizzi's (1978) method. Results of the research show that the head teachers who hide their true emotions they feel stress which results in feeling tired, unhappy and less engaged in work. The head teachers who display true emotions they feel less stress. They are more satisfied resulting in being happy and more engaged in work. There is need to provide counseling services to heads of schools.

**KEYWORDS** Affective Well-Being, Emotional Exhaustion, Emotional Labour, Work Engagement

**Introduction**

Educational leadership performed by Heads of institutions is widely known as one of the most complex and challenging tasks. Head teachers in the schools play their role as educational leaders. There are lots of expectations from educational leaders; it is expected from them that have to develop communities that would contribute to the betterment of society. Head teachers encourage and guide their staff members, especially their teaching staff, to build their professional capacity. They invite parents to give suggestions and advice for the improvement of the institution. They resolve conflicts among the staff members and engage them in productive activities. As heads of institutions, they have to attend people respectfully and appropriately to fulfill the needs of the students and teachers. Head teachers consider themselves responsible for the achievements and failures of their students. All of these responsibilities put pressure on the head teachers (Adler & Elmhurst, 2008).

As heads of the institutions, head teachers have to continuously interact with the different members of the community. This interaction and dealing with different persons like staff members, students, parents, and education officers involves the process of managing their emotions. It is necessary for head teachers to effectively manage their emotions for the smooth operation of the educational processes. This effective management of their emotions forms the basis of emotional labor. In the process of managing their emotions, head teachers mask their emotions and sometimes display their actual emotions. The focus of this research is what head teachers feel during the process of masking and displaying their emotions (Bastian et al., 2014).

## **Literature Review**

### **Emotional Labour**

School leaders use passionate work activities impact their supporters at workplace. Head teachers use surface acting and deep acting while interacting with their students, parents, staff members, colleagues, subordinates, and officers. Surface acting means head teachers change their external expressions and do not show the other person what they are feeling. They do not try to actually experience those emotions. They just give superficial expressions to other people which are suitable according to the situation (Humphrey et al., 2008).

The head of the school also uses deep acting while interacting with the staff members. Deep acting means they actually feel those emotions that they are showing to their colleagues whether these emotions are positive or negative. Sometimes as a head of the institution, the head teacher has to behave strictly as some staff member comes late to school or due to any other mistake. While feeling furious about this act, the head teacher has to show his negative emotions such as disappointment and displeasure. Similarly, if some staff member performs better and does something good then the head teacher also shows his satisfaction with it (Beal, 2006).

### **Affective Well-Being**

Teaching is considered emotional work. It is well-thought-out that teachers are liable for the academic success of the students as well as the good mental health of the students. Affective well-being has different aspects i.e. passion, zeal, interest in work, happiness, calmness in work, nervousness, stress, uneasiness, and depression.

The researchers have shown that the emotional labor of head teachers has linked with the affective well-being of head teachers as they feel happy or sad depending upon the different circumstances (Bono & Vey, 2005). Affectivity includes both positive affectivity and negative affectivity which means feeling both types of emotions.

It is proved from many pieces of research that those people who take more stress undermine their abilities and show less competence in their work. If a person feels stressed then it affects his/her decision-making skills. The people who feel sad are unable to concentrate on their work. Those people who take challenges with a positive mind feel content and it improves their ability in doing work (Cotes, 2005; Zapf, 2002).

### **Work Engagement**

It is defined that one's deep indulgence in his work is called one's work engagement. If a person feels satisfied; positive and encouraged regarding work it is considered as one is engaged in his/her work.

It can be explained by different aspects like work potency, dedication, and indulgence in work. These aspects have emerged from various research studies which were conducted by different researchers in various fields and at different times. Work potency is related to physical health and energy. It can be explained as the advanced levels of dynamism, struggle, and mental suppleness at the workplace to face different challenges, different demands of the job, and difficulties. Commitment or dedication can be explained as a person's feeling of persistence, eagerness, passion, motivation, happiness, and dare. It is characteristic of an individual to be loyal to his/her job. Indulgence in work is a state of being immersed and fully devoted to one's work. It has minimum chances of detaching one's attention from work. Different research studies have claimed that indulgence in work or work engagement is the reason for increased performance levels (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Indulgence in work is a state of mind which is considered positive and satisfying. It is also characterized by work potency, devotion, and absorption (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004).

### **Emotional Exhaustion**

Emotional exhaustion of head teachers at workplace can be described as the early level of emotional and physical weakening that is a result of more effort at the workplace and it becomes the reason for continuing strain (Wharton, 1993). Emotional exhaustion of head teachers is explained such as the state of a person in which he/she feels completely emotionally tired due to work-related pressure (Whiting et al., 2011).

Overall, it is assumed that worry increases as there are fewer resources for one's goal completion (Fugate et al., 2004). Commitment towards one's work is characterized as a positive and satisfying state of mind. It is exactly the opposite of emotional exhaustion (Dustetal.,2018). Head teachers are role models for the students and the staff members. They are at the heart of the community in different ways. Though, the various activities and responsibilities performed by them also make them weak towards work-related stress. Stressful situations are very common in any occupation and workplace and their effects can differ regarding different situations. Thus it is considered vital to study the conditions and situations faced by individuals in workplaces and their relationship with emotional exhaustion (Cherulnik, 2001).

Emotional labour is clarified by way of the practice of an individual handling his/her emotions so that he/she can fulfill his/her emotional requirements of mind (Lee &Chelladurai, 2017). It has been proven through various research that emotional labor affects the mental health and performance of the employees at the workplace as it requires a psychological struggle to manage sentiments so that employees can meet their professional expectations (Bushra&Yasir, 2014; Zapf & Holz, 2006 ).

### **Material and Methods**

In qualitative research, phenomenological methodology is used as the subset of it. Husserl's descriptive phenomenology tries to identify the real meaning from the daily living experiences of the research participants (Vagle, 2014).

The heads of the elementary and secondary public schools were selected as the population of the research work. Random sampling method was utilized.

There are nine divisions and 36 districts in the province of Punjab. The researcher selected one district from each division randomly. Thus, the following nine districts were selected:

1. Lahore
2. Bahawalpur
3. Dera Ghazi Khan
4. Multan
5. Okara
6. Toba Tek Singh
7. Bhakkar
8. Gujranwala
9. Jehlum.

The researcher randomly selected 02 head teachers from each district. Thus, 18 head teachers (09 male and 09 female) were selected from nine districts. Thus, the sample size of the research study was 18 head teachers.

## **Instrumentation**

A self-developed interview protocol was used for data collection.

For this purpose semi-structured telephonic interviews were conducted to explore the challenge of Head Teachers' emotional labour experiences in public schools of Punjab.

The interview protocol was authenticated by taking opinions from experts in the field of education.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

The semi-structured telephonic interviews were taken from the participants. The method of Colaizzi's (1978) was utilized in this research study for bracketing and analyzing the narrative data of interviews.

This method consisted of four steps which includes bracketing, analyzing, intuiting and describing.

An inductive approach was used by the researcher for data analysis. The responses of the participants were transcribed verbatim. The data were coded first by analyzing each sentence of the transcription of the data. The codes which were related to each other were organized into themes. It helped the researcher to get the main idea of the data. Open coding of the data was done. The researcher reviewed each word of the answers of the participants of the research and it helped the researcher to understand the opinions of the participants regarding their emotional experiences in their schools.

## **Results and Discussion**

The research work was carried out to probe the emotional labor experiences of head teachers' regarding work engagement, affective well-being, and emotional exhaustion. During the past years, many researchers have worked to gather data that claimed that educational management and teaching students are emotional practices. It has evolved from the results that Head teachers' surface acting (fake outer expression) has worse effects on head teachers' work engagement. Those head teachers who practice surface acting, their work engagement were reported low. The findings or outcomes of the research are consistent or reconcilable with the earlier research work which claimed that surface acting means showing those emotions which are in line with the rules and regulations of the organization. The employees fake their emotions so that the emotions displayed by them look genuine. One head teacher said, "Sometimes the challenge of dealing with a problematic staff member who violates rules of school like coming late to school and does not do his work properly is annoying and becomes the reason for irritation. As a head teacher, it is my responsibility to maintain discipline in the school and mend their ways" One another head teacher said, "Sometimes there is the badly-behaved boss who would not appreciate my work despite my repeated efforts. I have to bear all this behavior and hide my emotions". Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) highlighted this fact of showing those emotions which are not genuine and suppressing the actual emotions. An individual who practices fake emotions suffers from stress and it affects their engagement in work at the workplace which results in bad performance.

The qualitative results of the study show that those Head teachers who practice deep acting, their work engagement becomes high. The one head teacher said, "There are officers who appreciate me for my efforts and for providing me with creative leadership growth opportunities. It enhances my confidence and emotional well-being. I feel satisfied as I display the emotions which I am experiencing. I show positive emotions and also feel those emotions. I feel like a valuable member of the school and it increases my attention in my

work which increases my engagement in the work". The outcomes of the research are aligned with the previous research which claimed that for those individuals who feel the emotion and show those emotions their engagement in work increases and as a result, they feel satisfied. They feel that they have internalized their role (Rich et al., 2010). The results of the study show that those Head teachers who display genuine emotions, their work engagement becomes high. One head teacher said, "I feel competent when I deal with challenging situations. The environment of my school is very good. All the staff members cooperate with me. When I find that my team is behind me then any challenging situation does not scare me and puts pressure on me. I find myself fully engaged in work and find myself content. I also maintain calmness in any unusual situation. I think it is all because I express to my staff that we understand each other well and we work as a team". The findings of the research are compatible with past research which claimed that those employees who display genuine emotions feel more attached to their work and workplace and they are expected to serve as role models for their colleagues and subordinates (Bandura, 1977).

The results of the research work show that heads of schools who display surface acting have their affective well-being become low. On the other hand, increased affective well-being was discovered among the heads of schools who display deep acting. All the heads of schools who display genuine emotions were having increased affective well-being. One head teacher said, "As a head teacher I have to deal with many challenges. I am responsible for the overall performance of the school. Every month a monitoring and evaluation assistant comes to my school for inspection and checks the overall performance of the school. If the performance of the school is not good on that visit then as a head teacher I have to face the departmental inquiries which put pressure on me and affect my performance. I feel stressed but I have to show that I am feeling good. It affects my emotional engagement in the work and I feel pressure". This finding of the research is in line with the previous research which highlighted the fact that individuals who display fake emotions feel depression, sadness, and dissatisfaction (Bono & Vey, 2005). A person with positive affectivity feels optimistic and excited and a person with negative affectivity relates to gloominess and a bad mood (Grandey, 2000).

It is evident from the results of the study that those head teachers who conceal their feelings feel displeased and sad. It increases their anxiety level as they find it hard to hide their feelings. Contrary to this, those head teachers who show their true feelings they experience gratification, and a sense of accomplishment.

Teaching can be one of the most rewarding jobs in the world, but also the most stressful one. One head teacher said, "I feel stressed and emotionally drained if there is any unusual situation in my school. Sometimes, students get injured; at that time the head teacher has to behave responsibly to give that student first aid and handle that situation carefully. These types of incidents create panic but as the head of the institution, I have the responsibility to maintain discipline and deal with the situation. But in that process, I also feel emotionally drained. If there is any misunderstanding among staff then it is my responsibility as a head teacher to maintain a positive atmosphere in the class and eliminate hatred from among them. But all these things affect me and I feel a lack of engagement in work which affects my positive well-being and I feel emotionally drained". It is evident from past research that teaching jobs are demanding jobs (Becker et al., 2015). Many indicators measure the performance of the school from the monthly visits of monitoring and evaluation assistants consequently after these visits educational administration expects good performance from head teachers which puts pressure on head teachers. There are many problems which are faced by the head teachers of the schools like low enrolment, dropout, and attendance gaps in the schools. One of the participants shared, "educational administration is very challenging and demanding as it puts a lot of pressure on the head teachers whether it's in the form of results or monthly indicators. To meet all these demands is an emotional labor experience which ultimately causes emotional exhaustion and I find myself less focused in my work".

One head teacher said, "As a human being in life one has to face both positive and negative experiences as I talk about my professional experiences. These experiences no doubt affect me. If I did not spend a good day at my office due to any unpleasant situation in school then I feel stressed and I keep on thinking about that situation not only in school but also at home. This thing affects my personal and professional life as I feel unable to concentrate on my work. I lack emotional engagement in work and I feel unhappy which causes emotional exhaustion". The stressful experiences at work affect one's mental health. Those individuals who face pressure at work they do not work properly which eventually affects their performance at work (Purvanova&Muros, 2010).

When researcher asked head teachers what strategy they use to manage their emotions and feel satisfy the head teachers said that they have their firm believe in Allah. They said that they understand that they have a responsibility to deal with all those circumstances which are tough. They said they focus on positive things and try to ignore the negative things which affect their mental and physical health and their concentration at work.

One head teacher said, "I know that I have a professional and moral duty to display ethically good character towards my staff members and students. I have to do my duty without considering my emotions. So if there is anything happens which upsets me then I try my best to not think about it and divert my attention from that upsetting event or thing. I know about my responsibilities and try to feel satisfaction and I practice gratitude for the blessing which Allah has given to me". The research participants said that they have to deal with many situations in their day-to-day life which sometimes lead to stress and sometimes satisfaction. They have to act as a mentor for their subordinates and role models for their students and they have to endure the pressure of difficult circumstances which lead them to stressful situations

## **Conclusion**

The research was carried out to find out the Challenge of Head Teachers' Emotional Labour Experiences in public schools of Punjab regarding their work engagement in schools, affective well-being in different situations, and emotional exhaustion regarding various matters. The conclusions of the subsequent research work demonstrate that some head teachers hide their true feelings and emotions from their subordinates and show those emotions which are according to the norms of the school. Those head teachers who hide their true emotions and mask their emotional reactions at workplace; they feel stressed. Those head teachers who hide their emotions they suffer from emotional exhaustion which results in less engagement in work. It also affects their affective well-being as they feeling sad and unhappy at workplace. They lose their interest at workplace.

Those head teachers who understand themselves and show their genuine emotions to their subordinates they are satisfied and less stressed. Those Head teachers who feel their emotions through deep acting their emotional exhaustion are less. Their level of affective well-being and work engagement is also high. There is a need to consider the emotional health of head teachers' as they are in a key position that requires a lot of responsibility and performance from them.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the conclusions of the research, some recommendations are given below:

1. The educational authorities should arrange workshops and training which guide head teachers regarding the practice of deep acting to reduce their stress levels at the workplace.
2. Seminars should be arranged for head teachers to guide them on emotion management.

3. Counseling services should be provided to school leaders by the school authorities.
4. Regular educational lectures and online conferences should be arranged by the directorates of education to sensitize the school leaders and other staff about the importance of emotional labour experiences. It would be a good initiative how to increase the capacity of the school head teachers to manage their emotions and to overcome the general and personal crises they are exposed to face at their workplaces.

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