Emotional Labour and Misogyny: a general look at gender differences among teachers in Chinese high schools

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Abstract. Emotional labour and misogyny have been studied in the gender field for decades. Numerous studies focused on the association of the two subjects and education industry in the western world respectively, while little research of such topics has been done in the eastern world context. This study took a step to examine the gender differences of high school teachers' emotional labour in mainland China by reviewing previous literature and conducting interviews with teachers and students at a school located southeast China. The result found that misogyny is an essential factor causing different emotional labour contents between genders. Yet the consequences of this difference can be both positive and negative due to the varying types of emotional labour, and the detailed impacts are discussed. This study results also suggested that improvements of gender equality in classrooms, especially regarding teachers' emotional labour, are crucial and urgent to be made for both teachers' well-beings and students' learning quality.

Keywords: Emotional Labour; Misogyny; Teachers; Gender Inequality; Education.

1. Introduction

In recent years, numerous studies have focused on the emotional labour performed by teachers in the education field. It has been strongly connected with students' learning and satisfaction, as well as teachers' feelings and health conditions. [1] (Yin & Lee, 2012) Due to the complexity and particularity of the profession, teachers are normally and constantly required to adjust their emotions when dealing with students, parents, colleagues and superiors. [2] (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998) Consequently, this job has become highly demanding in terms of how to present emotions, which results in the phenomenon that teachers "fake" their emotions to be desirable ones.

In the meantime, the emotional requirements of female teachers, in specific, have evolved to a higher level. The study has shown that students tend to be more critical of female teachers who do not meet 'social gender role expectations than male teachers who don't. One of the reasons can be the fact that female teachers must fit the requirements for being both a "teacher" and a "female". As a teacher, female teachers would be sanctioned if they lack professionalism, which is consistent for male teachers due to professional ethics. As a female, however, they have encountered more sophisticated requirements that are not consistently seen on their male colleagues, such as the balance between the stereotypes and work ethics. On the one hand, female teachers will receive a lot of critiques when they exhibit weak interpersonal skills such as warmth and accessibility, which are thought to be "feminine". On the other hand, when female teachers exhibit strong effectiveness traits such as objectivity, logicality, and professionalism, which are considered "masculine", they will still be criticized for destroying the stereotypical images of women. [3] (MacNell, Driscoll & Hunt, 2015) This difference has caused female faculty more efforts to meet the criteria from students and others in the emotional labour process. Yet this dissonance of emotional requirements is not based on several individuals' standards, rather, it stems from the social norms and expectations of women under patriarchy, which is consistent with the definition of misogyny according to Manne. [4] (2017)

Misogyny, in Manne's work, is interpreted as the ideology that rationalizes patriarchy. It serves as the punishment for females who do not satisfy the patriarchal demands, which can be seen in the gender role expectations of female teachers mentioned above. In the case of female teachers, misogyny is the tool that ensures they are constantly carrying emotional labour in and out the workplace.

The purpose of this research is to answer the question that how emotional requirements for female teachers differs from their male colleagues in Chinese high schools in the southeast area, with a specific focus on emotional labour. Based on the difference, this research goes further to explore the reasons behind, and possible consequences followed. This research has primarily used literature review to define emotional labour and misogyny as well as to collect some perspectives from previous studies. Next, interviews with female teachers and students of Chinese high schools have been conducted to check if the results are consistent with the past studies or if there is any variation in the specific context of this research.

2. Methodology

This research used qualitative methods that primarily focused on literature reviews and personal interviews. In the first stage, this paper defines "emotional labour", "misogyny" and related concepts. This study collected and reviewed previous research of emotional labour and gender differences in the education sector in order to construct theoretical answers to the research questions, which are the reasons result in and influences followed by the visible distinctions of emotional labour contents among different gender groups. In the second stage, interviews have been conducted. The respondents are 6 high school female teachers and 6 high school students, who are from a sub-provincial city [*Sub-provincial city refers to Chinese prefecture-level cities governed by a province that are half a level under the provincial level but half a level above the prefecture-level.*] in southeast China. This research uses the interview results to corroborate the answers derived from literature reviews. In the final stage, a conclusion is drawn based on the comparison between literature reviews and interview results.

3. Literature Reviews

3.1 Misogyny as the cause for different display requirements

The dictionary defined the term 'misogyny' as hatred, aversion or prejudice towards women. Misogyny can take various forms, such as male privilege and violence targeted at females [5] (Chaudhury, Srivastava, Bhat & Sahu, 2017). One of the most common forms of misogyny is gender discrimination against women, which primarily labels men and women with different personalities and constructs stereotypical gender roles according to these traits. For instance, females are considered to be more empathetic and caring. [6] (Müller, 2018) Males, in contrast, are considered to be strong, aggressive, and assertive. These oversimplified traits lead to a narrow view of gender and sexual division of labour[*Sexual (gender) division of labour refers to the delegation of different tasks between males and females*]. One example is a traditional Chinese ideology that males should go out for work and females should stay at home to do chores and take care of family members, which assumes men are more independent, comprehensive and aggressive handling competition at work, while women are more sensitive and careful looking after children and the elderly.

Emotional labour is no exception when it comes to gender differences. The term emotional labour refers to the process in which the management and adjustment of feelings and expressions are required to fulfill the emotional demands of a job. Specifically, in the case of teachers, employees are expected to regulate their emotions when interacting with students, parents, coworkers and superiors. Arlie Hochschild argues that emotional labour is of distinct importance to each gender because males and females are required to perform differently during emotional labour. She also provides examples of gender division in the emotional labouring process by elaborating that women, on the one hand, are

more likely to be presented with the tasks of managing anger in the service of being nice. Men, on the other hand, are socially assigned the task of showing anger against those who break the rules. [7] (Hochschild, 2012)

By examining the literature on teachers and their emotional labour, this study found that the fundamental reason behind the different emotional requirements for female teachers and their male colleagues is misogyny. Male and female teachers are held to differing emotion management expectations [8] (Blackmore*, 2004), as well as distinct consequences of disobeying such expectations. In short, a woman who refuses to be emotionally available risks being called out or disliked to a much higher degree than men do. [6] (Müller, 2018) This gender difference is highlighted by emotional labour workloads and the expression of anger. A study shows that female teaching faculties are practising higher emotional labour than male teaching faculty in their work. [9] (Dhulipala & B Dhole, 2022) An Australian study involving several female teachers and principals in primary and secondary schools argues that the expression of anger is culturally acceptable for men but not for women. In the meantime, some female teachers interviewed in this study said they feel there is an 'unwritten' professional code that directs them to be compassionate consistently and show understanding to other staff at school. [2] (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998) These mentioned display rules for women at school confirm misogyny and the stereotype of women in sexism, which is perceiving women should be empathetic and take more care of others' feelings. Another study's results resonate with this finding. It shows that female teachers, especially those in leadership positions, feel more compelled to manage their anger than male colleagues in similar positions. They also recognized that the effort to manage anger originates from the idea that it is culturally inappropriate for women to show anger. Women are afraid they will be labelled as 'nag' or 'unfeminine' due to their expression of anger. [8] (Blackmore*, 2004) Through the expression of anger, previous literature shows that the different expectations of male and female teachers regarding emotional labour are closely linked to gender stereotypes and misogyny.

Moreover, the interview results are consistent with previous literature findings. Students' interview results confirmed gender-biased expectations for female teachers. Most students interviewed consider female teachers more approachable, and in their expectation of female teachers, "gentleness" has become the keyword. In many students' minds, the best female teachers are most likely to be similar to their mothers, which indicates that they expect female teachers to take care of their emotions and pay attention to both students' academic and personal performance. Within the interview with female teachers, T3 said female teachers are more stressed than male teachers when it comes to balancing school and family life. The requirement for emotional management for female teachers is higher, as they are required to be strong in both their teaching careers and families after having children. When they have negative emotions, they may have no place to vent their emotion but directly devote themselves to work or household chores. T1 said in the interview, "If I were busy with my career and not taking care of my family, I would be under psychological pressure. Maybe the family expect me to help my family more. Also, I always need to balance different relationships between different family members. For example, I need to balance my relationship with my child and my parents to care for them simultaneously. Whereas, for a male teacher, in society's expectations, it is acceptable for him to focus more on his career and less on his family." In the interview, T3 mentioned the unfair treatment of female teachers she encountered. An elderly male teacher felt that young Chinese teachers were simply incompetent. He recklessly suppressed this female teacher in front of the students, showing no respect to her, and spread the idea of valuing other subjects than hers in the class. His action eventually led to the replacement of this female teacher, which disappointed the female teacher deeply. Under the current system, the schools might be more tolerant toward male teachers as there are fewer male teachers compared to female teachers. Female teachers usually accept unfair treatment silently, and the silence could, in turn, foster a misogyny culture. It is also worth noting that teachers' gender-biased behaviour may negatively impact students' outlook development. Traditional misogynistic values may affect students' value orientation in the future and even affect their whole life.

3.2 Positive and negative impacts of emotional labour on female teachers

Many studies examined the effects of emotional labour on employees according to employees' methods of undergoing emotional labour. According to Hochschild, employees perform emotional labour in two ways: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting happens when employees express feelings that are not felt; in contrast, deep acting involves attempts to experience the emotions required to display. [7] (Hochschild, 2012) This paper will focus on the emotional labour's impact on female teachers, which is considered much more significant and obvious than that on males as emotional labour is closely related to social expectations of different genders. The fact that women are socially constructed as caregivers makes women structurally vulnerable to disproportionally taking up emotional labour. [6] (Müller, 2018)

For surface acting, the literature review results show it may hurt teachers' well-being. When undergoing surface acting, employees must suppress their authentic emotions and display the required feelings. For example, a salesperson needs to smile and act friendly even when he or she is sad or angry. Emotional dissonance occurs when feelings do not match the display rules. Hochschild reported that emotional labour is linked with problems such as alcohol and drug abuse, which can harm employees' well-being. [7] (Hochschild, 2012) According to a meta-analysis, emotion-rule dissonance has a positive relationship with indicators of impaired well-being. (ρs between 0.39 and 0.48, ρ = the average correlation corrected for sampling and measurement error in the predictor and criterion, ρ>0 means a positive correlation) [10] (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011) Wang et al suggest teachers who fake more positive emotions and hide more negative emotions reported a higher level of burnout. [11] (Wang, Hall & King, 2021) From the surface acting perspective, female teachers' avoidance of expressing anger and the need to demonstrate care are corresponding. Therefore, female teachers might have a higher probability of emotional dissonance and the consequential adverse effects on their well-being. Study results on female teachers confirmed this tendency. Female teachers experienced higher levels of emotional exhaustion [12] (Chang, 2013) and more distress when facing students' aggression. [13] (Berg & Cornell, 2016) According to the survey results of 112 teaching faculties in a business school, female teachers were having more emotional dissonance than male teachers of 18%. [9] (Dhulipala & B Dhole, 2022) Some scholars' work have reported that female secondary teachers feel the "care work" they carried at school is difficult to separate from their private lives. [14] (O'Connor, 2008)

However, Ericson [15] (1991) argues that the relationship between emotional labour and well-being is not straightforward. Job autonomy, the freedom to work in the way that suits an employee, is an essential factor in this process; people with high job autonomy suffered fewer negative impacts of emotional labour than those with lower job autonomy. [15] (Erickson, 1991) According to her statement, teachers might suffer less from emotional labour, as teachers usually can choose their teaching styles.

This research confirms such idea and shows a positive impact on female teachers' by deep acting. Studies found that female teachers were depicted as more likely to care for and connect with students emotionally with deep acting. One teacher interviewee talked about the advantages of being a female in the teaching profession —— women can influence students more profoundly by warm words and setting good examples for them as female teachers exhibit more sensitive, sensible and empathetic traits. Besides, students often feel being cared of by female teachers in addition to their studies. According to student interviewees, female teachers may be more considerate and capable of looking after students. "If students are sick, female teachers would quickly notice that without students' notification, sending care and contacting students' guardians afterwards. In other situations where students feel awkward and difficult understanding the course materials, female teachers are better at perceiving students' emotions and communicating with them in time with their self-esteem protected. By contrast, male faculty lacks ability of detecting students' conditions and emotions, or at least are not as comprehensive as their female colleagues.

In Chinese culture, the relationship between teachers and students is often compared to the relationship between parents and their children, which means teachers have the responsibility to care

for and educate their students as if they were students' parents. Chinese teachers, especially female faculty, like to compare themselves to another "mother" of students. [1] (Yin & Lee, 2012) In the interview with students, many reported that they felt that female teachers were like their mothers. At the same time, within the conversation with female teachers, their children remind them of their students' daily lives. These overlapping roles give female teachers more sense of achievement and motivation to thrive in their work. One teacher interviewee mentioned that the excitement of seeing students' improvement is the same as seeing her own child's growth. She also mentioned that as a teacher, the constant learning process for educating her child is very similar to what she does in the classroom. She tries to learn something new daily to be a better example for her students.

To sum up, emotional labour has both positive and negative on female teachers. Surface acting can harm female teachers' well-being, while deep acting can positively affect teacher-student relationships and work motivation.

4. Conclusions

This study found that one fundamental reason behind the different contents of emotional labour between female teachers and male teachers is misogyny, of which gender discrimination towards women puts them under the burdens of following gender rules, such as being considerate and caring. Moreover, female teachers' anger, is not acceptable in classrooms, while for male teachers, expressing anger in workplaces does not leave others with an "inappropriate" impression of them. This particular difference arisen from surface acting can have negative impacts on female teachers' health due to the more frequently hidden true emotions and feelings.

This paper's results have significant implications for the education sector. The results suggest high schools pay more attention to female teachers' mental health and well-being. More emotional management skills can be introduced in the training process, and essential counselling service is also beneficial for both female and male teachers. Moreover, gender roles presented by teachers strongly affect Students. Since education bears significant importance in individuals' lifelong development, reducing gender stereotypes and discrimination in school is critical. This research encourages high schools to redefine the roles of male and female teachers, which has positive influences on students' gender perceptions in the long run.

The current research on emotional labour is mainly from the western world. Therefore, this research contributes theoretical perspectives on emotional labour and misogyny in a Chinese context, presenting similarities and differences with existing foreign study findings.

However, there are still some potential limitations in this study. Primarily, due to time restrictions, this study could not cover a larger sample size when doing qualitative research of interviews. Furthermore, the interviews concentrate at a school in a southeast city. Hence, neither the location nor the population of the sample could strongly imply the situation in other regions, such as cities in middle China, rural areas in middle China, cities in northwest China, rural areas in northwest China. Besides, the finding only includes female instructors from high schools without any teachers from other levels of education institutions. Thus, it can be only used as a reference for female teachers' emotional labour in the Chinese high school context.

Appendix

1. Interview questions for female teachers

i. What are the main stressors in your routine work? How do you deal with the negative emotion in work?
ii. As a female teacher, how do you deal with the relationship with students? If you encounter a student who is in a rebellious period, or if you are confronted by a student for no apparent reason, how do you feel and what is your solution?
iii. In terms of gender, what are some of the advantages of being female?
iv. Do you think there are any stereotypes of women teachers in the teaching profession?

v. Do you think emotions have a significant impact on your classroom teaching? Why or why not?
vi. In your opinion or practice, which teachers' emotions should (not) be expressed or felt?
vii. Do you think there is a difference between female and male teachers in terms of the feelings that should or should not be expressed? If so, can you give examples?
viii. Do you think that the pressure and emotional demands of being a female teacher are more or less than those of a male teacher, or are they the same? Why?
ix. In your opinion, is the management of emotions and demands in teaching positive or negative for teachers? What are the possible consequences?
x. As a female teacher, are there any differences or similarities in the process of educating students and your own children? Please explain.

2.Interview question for students:

i. What is your ideal female teacher like (image, temperament, personality)? What do you expect from a female teacher?
ii. (Emotional labour: Emotional labour refers to the labouring process in which workers create a certain "emotional state" for others in social interaction through the management and expression of their own emotions.) As a student, do you think that a teacher should carry corresponding emotional labour?
iii. Do you think is there any difference when female teachers and male teachers expressing their emotions?
iv. Do you think female teachers have similar images as “mothers”?

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