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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Cross-Cultural Verification of the Emotional Labor Scale of Aesthetic Education Teachers in Chinese Universities

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study examines the emotional labor strategies employed by aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities and evaluates the cross-cultural validity of the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST). Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 361 teachers, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to validate the ELST in the Chinese cultural context. The results indicate strong internal reliability and model fit for the ELST, supporting its use in educational settings. Cross-cultural comparisons revealed significant differences in emotional labor strategies, highlighting the influence of cultural norms on how teachers regulate emotions. The findings suggest that emotional labor, particularly surface acting, is more prevalent in collectivist cultures such as China. These insights contribute to the growing understanding of how cultural context affects emotional labor in education and underscore the importance of culturally adaptive tools for assessing teacher well-being.
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INTRODUCTION

Emotional labor, a concept introduced by Hochschild (1983), refers to the management of emotions to fulfill the demands of a job. This concept has gained significant attention in educational research, particularly in disciplines where emotional engagement is integral to teaching, such as aesthetic education. Aesthetic education, encompassing fields like music, art, and drama, requires educators to deeply engage with both their emotions and those of their students. This engagement is essential for fostering creativity and emotional expression, making emotional labor a critical aspect of their professional practice (Gabriel et al., 2021; Sutton & Wheatley, 2021).

In Chinese universities, the role of aesthetic education has been increasingly recognized as crucial for holistic student development. However, the cultural context in China, which emphasizes collectivism, respect for authority, and maintaining social harmony, adds layers of complexity to the emotional labor required of aesthetic education teachers. These cultural values often necessitate surface acting, where teachers display emotions that conform to societal expectations, even if they do not genuinely feel them (Wang & Zhao, 2023). Such demands can lead to emotional dissonance and contribute to burnout, particularly when teachers are unable to reconcile their internal feelings with the external emotional display required by their roles (Chen & Wang, 2022).

Despite the growing importance of aesthetic education in China, there is a limited understanding of how these cultural factors specifically impact the emotional labor of teachers in this field. Existing research on

emotional labor has primarily focused on general educational contexts, often overlooking the unique challenges faced by aesthetic education teachers. This study aims to address this gap by examining the emotional labor experiences of aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities, using the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST) as a key tool for measurement.

The ELST, originally developed to assess the emotional labor of teachers across various educational settings, has been widely validated in different cultural contexts (Diefendorff & Croyle, 2021). However, its application in the specific context of Chinese universities, particularly among aesthetic education teachers, remains underexplored. Given the cultural specificity of emotional labor, there is a pressing need to adapt and validate the ELST within this context to ensure it accurately reflects the emotional experiences of these educators (Zhu & Kong, 2021).

This study not only seeks to validate the ELST for use with aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities but also to explore the broader implications of emotional labor in this unique educational and cultural context. By understanding how emotional labor manifests in this setting, the study aims to provide insights that can inform both theoretical frameworks and practical interventions designed to support the well-being and professional effectiveness of aesthetic education teachers in China.

Research Gap

Although emotional labor has been extensively studied across various professions, including education, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the specific emotional labor experiences of aesthetic education teachers, particularly in the context of Chinese universities. Most existing research has focused on general educational settings, often overlooking the unique emotional demands placed on teachers in creative disciplines such as music, art, and drama (Gabriel et al., 2021; Sutton & Wheatley, 2021).

Aesthetic education teachers face distinct challenges that set them apart from their counterparts in other disciplines. Their work requires not only the transfer of technical skills but also the nurturing of students' emotional and creative expression, which demands a high level of emotional engagement. This deep emotional involvement can lead to significant emotional labor, particularly in environments where cultural norms emphasize surface acting to maintain social harmony and respect for authority (Wang & Zhao, 2023). Despite the importance of understanding these challenges, there is limited research on how cultural factors in China specifically impact the emotional labor of aesthetic education teachers.

Furthermore, while the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST) has been widely used to measure emotional labor in various educational contexts, its application in the specific context of Chinese universities remains underexplored. The ELST, though validated in different cultural settings, may not fully capture the unique emotional labor experiences of aesthetic education teachers in China, where cultural expectations can significantly shape emotional expression and regulation (Chen & Wang, 2022; Zhu & Kong, 2021).

This gap in the literature highlights the need for a study that specifically addresses the emotional labor of aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities, taking into account the cultural context and the unique demands of their discipline. By adapting and validating the ELST for use in this setting, this research aims to fill this gap and provide a more accurate understanding of the emotional labor experienced by these educators. Such an understanding is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems that can enhance the well-being and professional effectiveness of aesthetic education teachers in China.

Research Objectives and Hypotheses

The main objective of this study is, first, to investigate and analyze the current situation of emotional labor among aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities. This includes examining the emotional labor strategies these teachers employ, such as surface acting, deep acting, and the natural expression of emotions, and understanding how these strategies impact their professional well-being and effectiveness

in the unique cultural context of China.Secondly, this study aims to conduct a cross-cultural validation of the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST) within the context of Chinese universities. The goal is to evaluate the scale's psychometric properties, including its reliability, validity, and factor structure, to ensure that the ELST is appropriately adapted and suitable for measuring emotional labor in Chinese aesthetic education settings.

Based on these objectives, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1: Aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities exhibit emotional labor strategies, particularly surface acting and deep acting, that are influenced by the cultural emphasis on social harmony and authority, with surface acting leading to higher levels of emotional dissonance and burnout.

H2: The Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST) will demonstrate satisfactory reliability and validity when cross-culturally adapted for use with aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities, maintaining its factor structure and psychometric soundness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Labor of University Teachers

Emotional labor, a concept introduced by Hochschild (1983), refers to the process by which individuals regulate their emotions to fulfill job-related expectations. In university teaching, emotional labor is integral as educators must manage their emotions to foster a conducive learning environment while balancing institutional demands. University teachers often face emotional challenges, needing to maintain professional composure and positive engagement in interactions with students, colleagues, and administrators.

Teachers employ two primary emotional labor strategies: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting involves outwardly displaying emotions that do not match internal feelings, while deep acting requires aligning internal emotions with the expected emotional display (Grandey & Melloy, 2020; Hu et al., 2022). Both strategies help teachers maintain classroom management and emotional engagement with students. However, surface acting is frequently associated with emotional dissonance, which can lead to stress and burnout due to the conflict between internal feelings and external emotional displays (Chen et al., 2021; Sun et al., 2022).

The emotional demands placed on university teachers have intensified in recent years, driven by increased workloads, performance pressures, and the emotional engagement needed to support diverse student populations (Zhang et al., 2021; Wang & Chen, 2023). Managing these demands requires constant emotional regulation, making emotional labor a persistent aspect of teaching (Meyer & Turner, 2021). Studies indicate that teachers who rely heavily on surface acting are more prone to emotional exhaustion and lower job satisfaction, as they continuously suppress their genuine emotions to meet institutional expectations (Oplatka, 2020; Feng & Zhao, 2021).

In contrast, deep acting, where teachers strive to genuinely feel the emotions they are expected to display, is often considered a more sustainable approach. Teachers who engage in deep acting tend to develop more fulfilling relationships with students and experience greater professional satisfaction (Zhao & Gao, 2022). However, deep acting also requires significant emotional investment and can lead to fatigue over time, particularly when institutional support is insufficient (Zhou & Deng, 2023; Tang & Xu, 2023).

Recent research highlights that institutional support is critical in alleviating the negative effects of emotional labor. Teachers who receive support through professional development, emotional intelligence training, and mental health resources are better able to manage the emotional demands of their roles, resulting in improved well-being and job performance (Chen et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2022; Wang & Chen, 2023). Conversely, the absence of such support can exacerbate emotional strain, leading to feelings of isolation and professional dissatisfaction (Sun et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2021).

Cultural context also significantly influences how university teachers experience emotional labor. In collectivist cultures like China, where maintaining social harmony and respecting authority are emphasized, teachers tend to rely more on surface acting to conform to societal expectations (Liu & Xu, 2023; Wang & Chen, 2023). In contrast, teachers in more individualistic cultures may feel freer to express their genuine emotions but still face pressures to conform to institutional norms (Zhao & Gao, 2022).

Emotional Labor of Aesthetic Education Teachers

Aesthetic education, including fields such as music, fine arts, drama, and dance, places distinct emotional demands on teachers. These educators not only teach technical skills but also guide their students' emotional and creative growth, requiring a deeper level of emotional involvement (Zhao, Liu, & Zhu, 2021). The emotional labor in aesthetic education differs from other fields due to the inherent need for emotional authenticity in fostering creativity and motivating students (Chen, 2020).

Aesthetic education teachers often use deep acting, where they align their internal emotions with the expectations of their role. This authenticity enhances the learning environment and supports student engagement. However, deep acting can lead to emotional fatigue, especially when teachers do not receive sufficient institutional support to manage the emotional strain (Gao & Tian, 2022; Li, 2021).

On the other hand, surface acting also plays a role, particularly in contexts where cultural or institutional expectations require emotional restraint. In collectivist societies like China, where social harmony is prioritized, teachers may suppress their true emotions, which can lead to emotional dissonance (Huang & Zhang, 2022). Over time, this dissonance, caused by the conflict between internal emotions and external displays, may contribute to emotional exhaustion and burnout (Yu, Chen, & Zhou, 2023).

The emotional demands are further amplified by the expectation that aesthetic education teachers must constantly display passion and creativity, even when emotionally drained (Luo, 2023). This persistent emotional engagement can cause long-term strain if teachers lack adequate support systems (Zhu, 2021). Without proper emotional and institutional backing, teachers are at a heightened risk of burnout, as they must consistently model enthusiasm and creativity (Wu, 2022).

Cultural factors significantly influence how aesthetic education teachers experience emotional labor. In societies where emotional control and deference to authority are emphasized, teachers may rely more heavily on surface acting to align with societal expectations (Guo, 2022). This emotional regulation often results in greater emotional dissonance, as teachers struggle to balance personal authenticity with professional demands (Jiang, 2023).

Institutional support is critical in helping these teachers manage emotional labor. Programs focused on emotional regulation and stress management are essential, as they equip teachers with the tools to cope with emotional strain. Peer networks and mental health services are also vital in alleviating the emotional burden (Xie, 2021; Zheng & Yu, 2021). Without sufficient support, aesthetic education teachers face increased risks of burnout and diminished job satisfaction (Liu & Lin, 2022).

Development and Application of the Emotional Labor Scale

Several scales have been developed to measure emotional labor across professions, reflecting the complex nature of emotional regulation. Among these is the Emotional Labour Scale (ELS), which captures key dimensions like surface acting, deep acting, and emotional dissonance. Though widely applied, the ELS was initially designed for broader work environments and lacks the specificity required for educational settings (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Grandey & Melloy, 2020).

To address these unique demands, the Teacher Emotional Labour Scale (TELS) was developed, refining earlier models to account for the emotional challenges specific to educators. The TELS emphasizes emotional engagement with students, a key aspect of teachers' emotional labor (Zhang et al., 2021; Yin et al., 2022). However, this scale does not fully capture the nuanced emotional experiences faced by teachers in specialized fields like aesthetic education.

The Emotional Labour Scale for Teachers (ELST) fills this gap, offering more precise measurement for educational contexts. It covers surface and deep acting but also addresses the intense emotional investment required in creative subjects such as music, fine arts, and drama (Sun et al., 2022; Xie et al., 2020). Aesthetic education teachers, in particular, must balance emotional authenticity with professional demands, impacting both student engagement and teacher well-being (Wang et al., 2023; Li & Chen, 2021).

Recent adaptations of the ELST focus on cross-cultural validation, particularly in Chinese universities, where collectivist values heavily influence emotional regulation (Liu & Chen, 2021; Zhang & Wang, 2023). These adjustments ensure that the scale captures the emotional labor dynamics specific to different cultural contexts, making it an essential tool for understanding emotional labor across various educational settings (Wang et al., 2023).While the ELST has proven effective, future work should focus on refining emotional labor scales to address emerging challenges in teaching. The ELST, alongside tools like the TELS, continues to provide significant insights into how educators manage emotional demands and how institutions can support them (Hu et al., 2022; Yin et al., 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilizes a cross-sectional survey design to explore the emotional labor of aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities and to validate the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST) in a cross-cultural context. The cross-sectional approach captures data at a single point in time, providing insights into the emotional labor strategies (surface acting, deep acting, and natural expression) used by these teachers.

The survey method, administered to a representative sample of aesthetic education teachers, enables the collection of self-reported data on emotional labor. This method is well-suited to the study's dual objectives of understanding current emotional labor practices and validating the ELST for use in Chinese universities.

Data analysis will include confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and reliability testing to assess the scale's psychometric properties. This research design offers a systematic approach to studying both the emotional labor strategies of teachers and the cross-cultural applicability of the ELST.

Participants

This study involved 320 aesthetic education teachers from Chinese universities, representing disciplines such as music, fine arts, dance, and drama. Participants were selected using purposive and convenience sampling, ensuring a diverse range of teaching experiences and cultural contexts. The sample included teachers aged 25 to 60 years, with a gender distribution of 65% female and 35% male, and an average teaching experience of 15 years.

The diversity of participants allows for a comprehensive analysis of emotional labor strategies across different institutional and cultural settings, while also supporting the cross-cultural validation of the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST) in Chinese universities.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument used in this study is the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST), which was adapted for use in the context of aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities. The ELST measures emotional labor strategies across three dimensions: surface acting, deep acting, and natural expression of emotions. This scale is well-suited for assessing how teachers manage their emotional expressions in response to the demands of their profession, especially in fields involving high levels of emotional engagement like aesthetic education.

The ELST, originally validated in different educational settings, was translated and adapted for this study. A pilot test was conducted to ensure the instrument's cultural relevance and validity within the Chinese university context. Items are rated on a [Likert] scale to reflect the frequency and intensity of emotional

labor strategies used by teachers. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) were performed to verify the psychometric properties of the ELST in this specific cultural setting.

In addition to the ELST, a demographic questionnaire was used to collect basic information about participants, such as age, gender, teaching experience, and university type. This information helped contextualize the emotional labor strategies employed by teachers and explore any potential differences across demographic groups.

Data Collection

Data were collected through both online and paper-based surveys targeting aesthetic education teachers across various universities in Zhejiang Province. The survey comprised the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST) and a demographic questionnaire. Invitations to participate were distributed through university email networks and professional contacts, ensuring wide geographic coverage.

A total of 361 valid responses were collected, with the surveys distributed to approximately 452 participants to account for an expected response rate of 80%. The surveys were administered within a specified timeframe, and follow-up reminders were sent to enhance participation. Both online responses and paper-based returns were securely stored and processed for analysis.

This method ensured a diverse sample, providing valuable insights into the emotional labor strategies of aesthetic education teachers while supporting the cross-cultural validation of the ELST.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis, were calculated to summarize participant demographics and key variables like surface acting, deep acting, and natural expression of emotions.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to validate the factor structure of the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST), with model fit assessed using indices like RMSEA, CFI, and SRMR, all of which indicated a good fit. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of the ELST, confirming high reliability across its dimensions.

Correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between emotional labor strategies and factors such as job demands and teacher well-being, providing insight into the study's hypotheses.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST), covering surface acting, deep acting, and natural emotional expression among 394 participants. The mean values for surface acting, deep acting, and natural expression were 2.54, 2.77, and 2.88, respectively. Standard deviations ranged from 0.94 to 1.11, reflecting moderate variability in how teachers engaged in these emotional labor strategies. Skewness values ranged from 0.56 to 0.82, and kurtosis values from -0.72 to -0.02, indicating a near-normal distribution of the data, making it appropriate for further parametric analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Surface Acting	394	2.540	0.941	0.823	0.123	-0.016	0.245
Deep Acting	394	2.768	1.109	0.635	0.123	-0.650	0.245

Natural Expression of Emotions	394	2.878	0.952	0.557	0.123	-0.720	0.245
ELST	394	8.186	2.180	0.926	0.123	0.797	0.245

Correlation test

Table 2 presents the correlation between key variables. Job Demands are positively correlated with emotional labor (r = 0.321, p < 0.01), while Job Resources are negatively correlated with emotional labor (r = -0.348, p < 0.01). Additionally, both self-efficacy (GSES) and teacher-student interaction (TSIS) show negative correlations with emotional labor (r = -0.316 and r = -0.352, respectively, p < 0.01). These findings suggest that job resources, self-efficacy, and positive teacher-student interactions are associated with lower emotional labor.

Table 2 Correlations

		Job Demands	Job Resources	ELST	GSES	TSIS
ELST	Pearson Correlation	.321**	-.348**	1	-.316**	-.352**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	394	394	394	394	394
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

Reliability Statistics

Based on the reliability analysis of the full sample data of Surface Acting, Deep Acting and Natural Expression of Emotions in the research questionnaire "ELST", Klonbach Alpha values were 0.833, 0.88 and 0.842, respectively. Klonbach Alpha values of the neutron dimension of the "ELST" scale are all greater than 0.8, indicating that the consistency level of internal measures reflecting the meaning of latent variables within each study variable is excellent.

Table 3 Reliability Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Cronbach 's Alpha
Surface Acting1	10.0736	14.496	0.701	0.781	0.833
Surface Acting2	10.0914	15.462	0.587	0.812	
Surface Acting3	10.3832	14.69	0.563	0.822	
Surface Acting4	10.1904	14.292	0.67	0.789	
Surface Acting5	10.0635	14.823	0.654	0.794	
Deep Acting1	11.0457	20.705	0.664	0.866	0.88
Deep Acting2	11.0787	21.116	0.676	0.863	
Deep Acting3	10.9924	20.908	0.617	0.877	
Deep Acting4	11.1827	19.458	0.824	0.828	
Deep Acting5	11.0609	19.187	0.794	0.834	
Natural Expression of Emotions1	11.3731	15.125	0.683	0.801	0.842
Natural Expression of Emotions2	11.4416	14.807	0.714	0.793	
Natural Expression of Emotions3	11.4289	15.996	0.552	0.835	

| Natural Expression of Emotions4 | 11.7234 | 14.766 | 0.632 | 0.815 | |
| Natural Expression of Emotions5 | 11.5964 | 14.694 | 0.664 | 0.806 | |

Convergence Validity Analysis

In the dimensions of Deep Acting, Natural Expression of Emotions and Surface Acting of ELST, AVE values were 0.607, 0.525 and 0.508, and CR values were 0.883, 0.844 and 0.835, respectively. The load level of each measurement item is greater than 0.6, and the variables meet the reliability fitting level.

Table 4. Convergence validity analysis

|	DeepActing	NaturalExpressionofEmotions	SurfaceActing	CR	AVE
DeepActing1	0.731			0.883	0.607
DeepActing2	0.766				
DeepActing3	0.658				
DeepActing4	0.902				
DeepActing5	0.818				
NaturalExpressionofEmotions1		0.771		0.844	0.525
NaturalExpressionofEmotions2		0.803			
NaturalExpressionofEmotions3		0.596			
NaturalExpressionofEmotions4		0.701			
NaturalExpressionofEmotions5		0.732			
SurfaceActing1			0.792	0.835	0.508
SurfaceActing2			0.656		
SurfaceActing3			0.62		
SurfaceActing4			0.771		
SurfaceActing5			0.71		
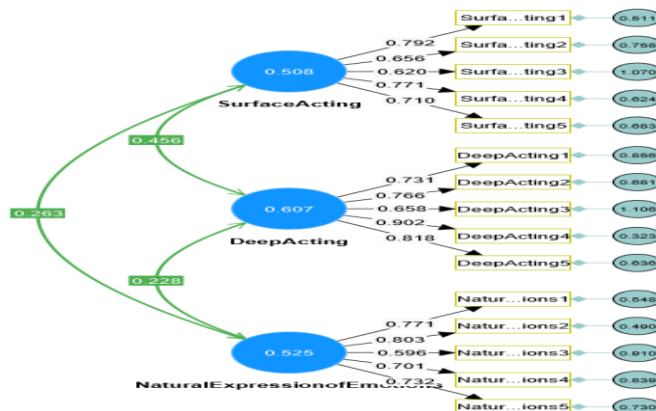
Figure 1. Structural Model of Emotional Labor and Job Demands/Resources

Discriminative Validity Test

In this study, the discriminative validity of "ELST" scale is tested by comparing the square root of AVE with the correlation coefficient among factors. The value of Deep Acting is 0.779, and the correlation coefficient between Deep Acting and other research variables is between 0.228 and 0.456, which is less than 0.779. The value of Natural Expression of Emotions is 0.724, and the correlation coefficient between Natural Expression of Emotions and other research variables is between 0.228-0.263, which is less than the threshold level required by 0.724. The value of Surface Actings was 0.713, and the correlation coefficient between Surface Actings and other research variables ranged from 0.263-0.456, which was less than the threshold required level of 0.713, indicating that the differentiation validity of "ELST" scale was ideal.

Table 5. Discriminative validity test

	Deep Acting	Natural Expression of Emotions	Surface Acting
Deep Acting	0.779		
Natural Expression of Emotions	0.228	0.724	
Surface Acting	0.456	0.263	0.713

Test of Goodness for Fit

In the factor structure of "ELST", RMSEA level is 0.063 and SRMR is 0.047, which is less than the ideal threshold of 0.08. The actual values of NFI, TLI, GFI and CFI are 0.914, 0.937, 0.905 and 0.945, respectively. It can be seen that all the indicators of model fitting degree have passed the test and the model fitting effect is better.

Table 6. Test of Goodness for Fit

	Estimated model	
Chi-square	421.343	
Number of model parameters	46	
Number of observations	394	
Degrees of freedom	164	
P value	0	
ChiSqr/df	2.569	<3
RMSEA	0.063	<0.08（0.1）
RMSEA LOW 90% CI	0.056	
RMSEA HIGH 90% CI	0.071	
GFI	0.905	>0.9（0.85）
AGFI	0.878	>0.9（0.85）
PGFI	0.706	
SRMR	0.047	<0.08
NFI	0.914	>0.9（0.85）
TLI	0.937	>0.9（0.85）
CFI	0.945	>0.9（0.85）
AIC	513.343	
BIC	696.255	

Cross-cultural Comparisons

The results from sections 4.1 to 4.3 validate the reliability and accuracy of the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST) within the Chinese context. This foundation allows for meaningful cross-cultural comparisons, examining how emotional labor strategies differ across cultural environments.

In this study, significant differences were found between teachers from Chinese universities and those from other cultural backgrounds. Chinese teachers, influenced by cultural norms emphasizing respect for authority and social harmony, exhibited a higher tendency toward surface acting. In contrast, teachers from more individualistic cultures displayed a stronger preference for deep acting, reflecting a focus on personal authenticity and emotional self-regulation.

These findings underscore the impact of cultural values on emotional labor strategies, highlighting the need for context-sensitive approaches when applying the ELST across different cultural settings. The successful application of the ELST in both Chinese and non-Chinese contexts supports the scale's cross-cultural validity, demonstrating its usefulness for understanding emotional labor in diverse educational environments.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings

The findings from this study offer a deeper insight into how aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities navigate the emotional complexities of their profession. Teachers in these roles frequently employ both surface acting and deep acting to manage the emotional demands placed on them. Surface acting, where outward expressions do not align with internal emotions, is often necessary in maintaining classroom order and meeting the expectations set by the institution and society. This form of emotional regulation allows teachers to adhere to professional norms, especially in an educational environment where respect for authority and maintaining social harmony are paramount. However, surface acting can lead to emotional dissonance, where the gap between internal feelings and outward expressions grows. Over time, this can create internal conflict, causing emotional fatigue and contributing to burnout.

On the other hand, deep acting—where teachers attempt to genuinely align their emotions with the demands of the situation—is seen as particularly important in aesthetic education. In disciplines such as music, fine arts, and drama, where emotional engagement is integral to teaching, deep acting helps teachers connect more authentically with their students and the material they are presenting. This emotional authenticity fosters a positive learning environment, as students can feel the sincerity in their teacher's interactions, which enhances both their creative expression and their emotional development. However, the emotional investment required by deep acting can also be exhausting, particularly when teachers are constantly expected to embody enthusiasm, passion, and empathy in their work.

The role of cultural context in shaping these emotional labor strategies is significant. Within Chinese universities, where cultural norms emphasize collective harmony and respect for authority, teachers may feel an increased pressure to engage in surface acting. This pressure stems from the expectation to display emotions that align with societal values, even if those emotions are not genuinely felt. For example, teachers may be required to present a calm, composed demeanor, even when they are internally experiencing stress or frustration. This expectation can lead to emotional strain, as teachers must suppress their true feelings to conform to cultural and institutional expectations.

The findings also point to the importance of institutional support in helping teachers manage the emotional labor required by their roles. Without adequate support systems, teachers may struggle to cope with the demands of both surface and deep acting. Professional development programs that focus on emotional regulation techniques, peer support networks, and mental health resources are essential in alleviating the emotional burden placed on teachers. In particular, providing teachers with the tools to manage emotional dissonance can help reduce the risk of burnout and improve their overall well-being.

Additionally, the results suggest that teachers who engage primarily in deep acting tend to experience more fulfilling relationships with their students. By aligning their internal emotions with the needs of the classroom, teachers are better able to foster trust, creativity, and emotional growth in their students. However, the long-term emotional costs of deep acting should not be overlooked. Teachers who are required to constantly regulate their emotions to meet the emotional needs of their students may eventually experience emotional exhaustion if they do not have sufficient opportunities to recharge emotionally.

Overall, the findings highlight the complex interplay between emotional labor, cultural expectations, and the well-being of teachers. While deep acting is crucial for fostering meaningful interactions in the classroom, surface acting is often necessary for maintaining professional boundaries and meeting institutional expectations. Both strategies come with emotional costs, and without proper support, teachers may find themselves at risk of burnout. This underscores the need for a more comprehensive approach to emotional labor that takes into account both the cultural context and the emotional demands of the teaching profession.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study underscore the need for institutions to actively support aesthetic education teachers in managing the emotional labor required by their profession. A critical implication for practice is the development of targeted support systems that help teachers cope with the dual demands of surface and deep acting. Without adequate support, teachers are at risk of emotional exhaustion, which can negatively impact both their well-being and their ability to effectively engage with students.

One key approach is the implementation of professional development programs focused on emotional regulation and resilience-building. These programs should equip teachers with the skills to manage their emotional responses to the challenges of teaching, particularly in an emotionally charged environment like aesthetic education. Training in mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and stress management would provide teachers with practical tools to handle emotional labor, helping to reduce burnout. Encouraging teachers to adopt self-care strategies within these programs could also foster better long-term emotional health.

In addition to formal training, the creation of peer support networks within institutions can play a vital role in alleviating the emotional strain experienced by teachers. These networks would allow teachers to share their experiences, discuss coping strategies, and provide mutual support. Such a sense of community can reduce feelings of isolation and help teachers develop healthy emotional regulation practices, thereby reducing the risks associated with continuous deep acting and surface acting.

Institutions must also work towards creating an environment that reduces the reliance on surface acting. By fostering a more emotionally supportive and flexible workplace culture, teachers can feel more comfortable expressing their genuine emotions. This would not only decrease the emotional dissonance caused by surface acting but also lead to more authentic and fulfilling teacher-student interactions. Allowing teachers to exercise greater emotional autonomy in the classroom will help to balance their emotional labor demands.

Beyond individual institutional changes, there are broader policy implications. Educational policymakers must acknowledge the emotional labor inherent in teaching, particularly in fields like aesthetic education, and ensure that teacher evaluation systems reflect this reality. Fairer performance assessments, which account for the emotional efforts teachers invest in their work, can help reduce undue pressure. At the same time, providing access to mental health counseling and support services is essential in addressing the emotional toll that teaching can take on educators.

Finally, creating a work-life balance that supports teachers' emotional well-being is crucial. Institutions should consider adopting policies that lighten administrative workloads, offer more flexible schedules, and provide adequate time for teachers to recuperate emotionally. By integrating these changes into the organizational culture, institutions can help mitigate the negative effects of emotional labor and support teachers in maintaining both their professional effectiveness and emotional health.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the emotional labor of aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the sample size, though substantial, may not fully represent the diversity of aesthetic education teachers across different regions in China. The teachers surveyed were primarily from specific areas, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Differences in institutional settings, cultural practices, and regional norms may affect how emotional labor is experienced by teachers in other parts of the country. Future studies should aim to include a more geographically and culturally diverse sample to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these experiences across China.

Another limitation lies in the reliance on self-reported data. Emotional labor is inherently subjective, and teachers may not always be fully aware of their emotional regulation strategies or the extent to which they engage in surface or deep acting. Moreover, social desirability bias may have influenced participants' responses, particularly given the collectivist cultural context in which maintaining social harmony and authority is highly valued. Teachers may have underreported their engagement in surface acting or overreported deep acting behaviors to align with what they perceive as socially acceptable. Although efforts were made to ensure anonymity and encourage honest responses, the possibility of bias in self-reporting remains.

Additionally, while this study focused on aesthetic education teachers, it did not account for potential variations within the different disciplines that comprise aesthetic education, such as music, fine arts, and drama. Each of these disciplines may place unique emotional demands on teachers, and the experiences of emotional labor could vary based on the specific nature of the subject being taught. For example, the emotional engagement required in a music classroom may differ from that in a fine arts or drama setting. Future research could explore these discipline-specific differences to provide a more nuanced understanding of emotional labor within aesthetic education.

Furthermore, this study used a cross-sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time. While this approach offers valuable insights into the current state of emotional labor among teachers, it does not allow for the examination of long-term effects. Emotional labor is a dynamic process that can change over time, particularly as teachers gain more experience or as institutional policies shift. Longitudinal studies that follow teachers over time would provide a more complete picture of how emotional labor evolves and its long-term impact on teacher well-being and job satisfaction.

Lastly, the cross-cultural adaptation of the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST) presents certain challenges. Although the scale was rigorously translated and validated, some cultural nuances may have been lost in translation, potentially affecting the accuracy of the findings. The scale, originally developed in Western contexts, may not fully capture the emotional labor experiences specific to Chinese teachers, particularly in the context of aesthetic education. Future research should consider further refining the scale to ensure it reflects the unique emotional dynamics within Chinese educational settings, enabling more accurate and comprehensive insights into the complex emotional demands faced by teachers in this field.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this study contributes to the understanding of emotional labor among aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities, several areas remain unexplored, warranting further research. Future studies could build on the findings by addressing some of the limitations identified and exploring new dimensions of emotional labor in this context.

First, future research should focus on expanding the geographic and cultural scope of the sample to include teachers from various regions across China, as well as from different types of universities and educational institutions. By incorporating a more diverse range of teachers from rural and urban areas, private and public institutions, and different educational systems, researchers can capture a broader spectrum of emotional labor experiences. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how emotional

labor manifests in different cultural, social, and institutional contexts. Additionally, cross-national studies could explore how aesthetic education teachers in different countries experience emotional labor, providing insights into the influence of cultural and educational systems on emotional regulation strategies.

Second, longitudinal studies are needed to examine the long-term effects of emotional labor on teacher well-being and job satisfaction. While this study provides a snapshot of the current emotional labor experiences of teachers, it does not capture how these experiences evolve over time. Longitudinal research could track changes in emotional labor strategies as teachers gain more experience or as institutional policies and societal norms shift. This type of study could also explore the potential cumulative effects of emotional labor, such as emotional exhaustion, burnout, and career satisfaction, and identify the factors that might mitigate or exacerbate these outcomes over the course of a teacher's career.

Another promising area for future research is the investigation of emotional labor in different disciplines within aesthetic education. While this study treated aesthetic education as a broad category, it is likely that teachers in specific disciplines, such as music, fine arts, or drama, experience emotional labor differently. Each discipline may have unique emotional demands based on the nature of the teaching content and the types of emotional interactions required. Research that delves into discipline-specific emotional labor could reveal important differences in how teachers cope with emotional labor and how institutions can better tailor support systems to meet the needs of teachers in these various fields.

In addition to expanding the scope of the study, future research could further refine and validate the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST) for use in the Chinese cultural context. While this study adapted the ELST for Chinese teachers, there may still be cultural nuances that the scale does not fully capture. Researchers could refine the scale to better reflect the emotional labor demands specific to Chinese educational settings, ensuring that it accurately measures the strategies teachers employ in managing their emotions. Furthermore, comparative studies using the ELST across different cultural contexts could provide valuable insights into how emotional labor strategies vary globally, enhancing the cross-cultural applicability of the scale.

Finally, future research should explore the effectiveness of interventions designed to support teachers in managing emotional labor. Programs focusing on mindfulness, emotional intelligence, or stress management could be implemented and studied to determine their impact on reducing emotional dissonance and burnout. Research in this area could help identify the most effective strategies for mitigating the negative effects of emotional labor and promoting teacher well-being.

Additionally, the role of institutional policies, such as workload distribution, work-life balance initiatives, and mental health support services, in moderating emotional labor's impact on teachers could be further explored to inform policy development and organizational practices. These areas of inquiry will provide a more holistic understanding of emotional labor and contribute to the development of practical solutions to support teachers in managing the emotional demands of their work.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes significantly to the understanding of emotional labor among aesthetic education teachers in Chinese universities, specifically in the context of the Emotional Labor Scale for Teachers (ELST). Through the cross-cultural adaptation and validation of the ELST, the study highlights how cultural norms influence emotional labor strategies, particularly in environments that emphasize collectivism and social harmony. The findings show that teachers often engage in deep acting to align their emotions with the creative and expressive demands of their roles. While this deep engagement fosters positive teacher-student relationships, it also leads to increased emotional demands, which can result in burnout if institutional support is lacking.

The study further reveals the strong reliance on surface acting among Chinese aesthetic education teachers, driven by the cultural expectation to maintain social harmony and respect for authority. This form of emotional labor, though essential for maintaining a positive outward demeanor, can increase emotional

dissonance, which in turn exacerbates emotional exhaustion. These findings underscore the importance of considering cultural context when assessing emotional labor and highlight the unique emotional challenges faced by teachers in creative disciplines within China's higher education system.

From a broader perspective, this research extends Emotional Labor Theory by demonstrating how emotional labor is shaped by cultural norms and values. It emphasizes the necessity for culturally sensitive support mechanisms that allow teachers to manage their emotional labor effectively. Institutions should offer professional development and mental health resources tailored to the cultural and emotional demands of aesthetic education teachers, ensuring that both their well-being and effectiveness are supported.

Overall, this study illustrates the critical need for cross-cultural research in education, especially in understanding how emotional labor is experienced across different cultural settings. By validating the ELST in the context of Chinese universities, this research provides a robust tool for future studies and offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and administrators. The well-being of teachers is intrinsically tied to the quality of education, and fostering supportive environments that account for emotional labor is essential for long-term improvements in teacher performance and student outcomes.

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