

# EFL NOVICE TEACHERS' EMOTION REGULATION IN INDONESIAN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS: EMOTIONAL LABOR

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## Abstract

Teachers' emotions can impact the classroom's learning atmosphere and affect students' motivation and engagement. By involving emotional labor, teachers can pursue their professional goals, such as teaching effectively and maintaining a positive relationship with students and colleagues. This study explored the emotional labor of EFL novice teachers at different levels of schools using the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) to collect data and establish triangulation using an open-ended FGD questionnaire and in-depth interviews. Six EFL novice teachers in Indonesian primary and secondary schools were purposefully chosen as the participants of this study. Thematic analysis was employed to code and organize the themes when assessing the data. The findings showed that EFL beginner teachers used various emotional labor strategies depending on their teaching experiences, the nature of interactions, and their relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. Surface acting was visible when teachers needed to hide their negative emotions while displaying positive ones. Still, deep acting was more prominent when teachers demonstrated empathy and sincerity in their interactions. Therefore, understanding emotional labor strategies will enable novice teachers to improve their well-being and effectiveness in the classroom. The study suggested future research on EFL teachers' emotional experiences, emphasizing the need for a deeper understanding of both experienced and novice teachers' emotional labor.

**Keywords:** EFL Novice Teachers; Emotional Labor; Critical Incident Technique

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching can be stressful, as it requires teachers to develop good interaction and communication during the teaching and learning process in the classroom. This situation may occur to novice teachers (Sali & Kecik, 2018; Santihastuti et al., 2022). For example, teachers have to manipulate their real emotions by showing the expected emotions as their job requires. Further, teachers need to display appropriate and ideal emotions to the students. In this case, teachers may conduct emotional labor to teach effectively and maintain a positive relationship with students (Kim & Kim, 2018; Muehlbacher et al., 2022; Schutz et al., 2018; Schutz & Lee, 2014). In conclusion, teachers' emotions can impact the classroom's learning atmosphere and affect students' motivation and engagement.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching is complex and challenging, requiring teachers to explore multiple roles and expectations (Mohammadi & Moradi, 2017; Sali & Kecik, 2018). Understanding the identity of language teachers is essential to understanding their work and why they do it, particularly for those who have just graduated and are starting a career as a teacher. In that sense, they are considered novice teachers (Rahman & Kurniawan, 2022). Becoming a teacher requires time to adapt and improve performance. EFL novice teachers, in particular, face unique challenges as they navigate the complex landscape of language teaching and construct their professional identities. The process of identity construction for novice EFL

teachers is influenced by various factors, such as teaching context and the social and cultural norms of the communities they serve (Ke Lomi & Mbato, 2020; Sali & Kecik, 2018).

Researchers have begun investigating the emotional aspect of teacher identity in recent years, involving investigating how teachers experience and express emotions concerning their professional identity. Studies on teacher identity have shown that emotions majorly impact shaping and influencing teachers' professional identity (Gu et al., 2022; Schutz & Lee, 2014; Xie, Liang, et al., 2022). One of the several topics related to the study of emotions is emotional labor. According to Hochschild, emotional labor involves managing and regulating emotions for a wage (Hochschild, 1983; Tsang, 2011). In the teaching context, emotional labor requires teachers' ability to manage and express their appropriate emotions to students, colleagues, and parents.

Several studies have examined the emotional labor of EFL teachers in different fields of education, particularly in primary and secondary school. A previous study (e.g., Li & Liu, 2021) has reported that the use of emotional labor strategies by Chinese beginning EFL teachers still needs to be discovered due to a lack of quantitative measures. Their study found that emotional labor strategies at the beginning of EFL teachers were four-dimensional, encompassing surface, deep, positive, and negative consonance. Another study of two EFL novice teachers' emotional affect and regulation of online teaching during the pandemic (Santihastuti et al., 2022) revealed that students' misbehaviors, unequal resource distribution, and time management are attributed to teachers' emotional labor, causing frustration, anger, and anxiety. Teachers employ surface acting, deep acting, and genuine expression to manage emotions. Similarly, a study by Kim (2018) investigated the emotional labor of EFL teachers for young learners in Korea and found that EFL teachers conduct emotional labor by suppressing negative emotions and exaggerating positive emotions to encourage students to practice speaking English. They also regulate their emotions while communicating with students' parents, despite the conflict between institutional demand and personal teaching beliefs (Kim & Kim, 2018). Overall, research on teachers' emotional labor highlighted the importance of providing support and resources to help teachers cope with the emotional demands of their jobs and performance.

In addition, it is essential to explore the emotional labor of EFL teachers, especially novice teachers in Indonesia. A study by Santihastuti et al. (2022) suggested that future research should explore emotional labor and teaching episodes encountered by novice teachers in different contexts to see how different schools or students' characteristics affect teachers' emotional regulations. Therefore, to fill this gap, this study explored the emotional labor of EFL novice teachers working at different schools with different levels using a critical incident technique (CIT). This study was expected to broaden understanding of the emotional labor performed by EFL novice teachers by investigating their emotional labor strategy and the influence of emotional labor on their emotional work. The study aimed to answer the research questions: 1) What emotional labor strategies do Indonesian EFL novice teachers use in dealing with students, colleagues, and parents? 2) How do EFL novice teachers cope with their emotional labor in forming their identity?

Emotional Labor refers to suppressing one's own emotions, showing certain emotions that are expected or required as the responsibilities of their job (Kim & Kim, 2018; Puckett, 2022), and managing the emotions of others. Emotional labor was proposed for the first time by Hochschild (1983), which refers to the feelings that workers must display due to the demands of their jobs while neglecting their true feelings or emotions. For example, public health workers, sales marketing employees, flight attendants, bill collectors, and other jobs that require satisfactory service (Puckett, 2022; Schutz et al., 2018; Tsang, 2011) must clearly show what should be shown, such as smiling friendly, maintaining eye-contact, being soft-spoken, and having a pleasant facial expression. Hochschild (1983) defines two dimensions of emotional regulation

in the workplace: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting requires the workers to suppress or fake their genuine emotions, which can lead to dissonance and burnout (Schutz et al., 2018). On the other hand, deep acting involves changing the internal experience of emotions to align with ideal outward expression authentically and sustainably (Blake & Dewaele, 2022). To sum up, deep acting is more resilient and less emotionally draining.

In recent years, the components of emotional labor have been explored (Puckett, 2022; Schutz & Lee, 2014; Tsang, 2011). Emotional labor is particularly relevant in the language education context. Language teachers must often manage their emotions and feelings to create a positive and supportive learning environment among students, colleagues, and institutions (Kim & Kim, 2018; TÖRE, 2021). The teachers also have to deal with the job's emotional demands, such as managing students' emotions, providing emotional support and encouragement, and maintaining a positive relationship with students (Schutz et al., 2018; Schutz & Lee, 2014; Xie, Wu et al., 2022). Language teachers must communicate effectively with students from different cultures or linguistic backgrounds, which requires sensitivity and empathy.

Previous studies in the education context revealed that emotional labor could lead to emotional exhaustion or burnout, job satisfaction, and health symptoms (Schutz & Lee, 2014; Yilmaz et al., 2015). Kim and Kim (2022) reported that beginning EFL teachers suppressed unpleasant emotions toward their students, increasing their emotional labor burden. In a study of teachers in Kutahya, teachers have the highest burnout level when they experience emotional exhaustion (Yilmaz et al., 2015). Therefore, research into emotional labor in teaching is essential because it can affect student learning, school climate, and teacher identity.

In second language teaching, novice teachers face a range of emotional demands. This includes managing students' behavior, difficulties, classroom management, school environments, and coping with evaluations. Overall, novice teachers struggle with emotional distress, maintaining self-efficacy, and adjusting to their new role. In their early careers, novice EFL teachers were also found to struggle with identity issues to overcome the tensions of the new environment (Averina & Kuswandono, 2022; Diasti, 2021; Ke Lomi & Mbato, 2020). It is crucial to investigate the emotional labor that EFL novice teachers perform and how it affects their well-being, job satisfaction, and preservation.

Several studies have found that various factors influence the identity construction of EFL novice teachers. Fundamental teacher education programs significantly impact novice teachers' identity construction. According to research, teacher education programs can significantly impact novice teachers' beliefs, values, and attitudes toward teaching and their sense of professional identity (Harendita & Pasaribu, 2019). Teacher education programs that encourage reflective practice and collaboration are particularly effective in assisting novice teachers in developing their professional identity.

Another factor influencing EFL novice teachers' identity construction is their teaching experiences. According to research, novice teachers' interactions with students, colleagues, and administrators shape their beliefs and values about teaching and contribute to forming their professional identity (Sardabi et al., 2018). Furthermore, the cultural norms and expectations of the communities where EFL novice teachers work can significantly influence their professional identity (Farrell, 2013). Studies have additionally revealed EFL novice teachers' difficulties during identity construction. These difficulties include juggling multiple roles and expectations, overcoming language barriers, and navigating cultural differences. Novice teachers may also experience an identity crisis as they struggle to reconcile their personal beliefs and values with the expectations and demands of their teaching context (Rahman & Kurniawan, 2022).

## METHOD

### Research Design

This study aimed to explore the issues of emotional labor from EFL novice teachers working at primary and secondary schools. This study was expected to broaden understanding of the emotional labor performed by six EFL novice teachers by investigating their emotional labor strategy and how they coped with the challenges of emotional labor in their workplace. The Critical Incident Technique (CIT) was used since this study explored EFL novice teachers' reflections and experiences of their emotional labor in their early careers. The CIT is a qualitative research design that collects and analyzes human behaviors, experiences, or incidents that significantly impact a specific phenomenon or situation (Harrison & Lee, 2011; Hughes, 2007). In this study, participants were allowed to become more receptive to alternative ways of thinking and behaving. EFL novice teachers could reflect on their real-life experiences by telling others about their thoughts and beliefs that influence their responsibilities at work (Farrell, 2013).

Furthermore, it indicated that the incidents or phenomena in this study were subjective perceptions and reflections of the participants' experiences of their emotional labor and teaching experience in constructing their professional identity. Therefore, the participants were asked to reflect on their emotions, feelings, and thoughts by sharing their critical incidents during an in-depth interview that would be used to collect data.

### Participant

This study involved six EFL teachers with their first to five years of teaching experience at various primary and secondary schools in Indonesia. Participants for this study were recruited through purposeful sampling to ensure a diverse range of teaching experiences in both primary and secondary education. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who were assumed to have the necessary knowledge and experiences for this study based on the consideration that has been established (Creswell, 2012). They were purposively recruited based on the following criteria: (1) They were novice teachers with less than four years of teaching experience, and (2) They taught the English language in primary or secondary school. The participants were contacted by the researchers through WhatsApp to obtain consent before data collection. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identities. The demographic characteristics of the participants are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 Participants' Demographic Data

Name	Years of Teaching	Age	Other details
<b>Alpha</b>	Two years	25 years	He graduated from the English Language Education Study Program at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He started teaching at the Joy Kids National Plus elementary school at the beginning of 2022. This is a private school that highly upholds Christian values.
<b>Marsulin</b>	Two years	27 years	He graduated from the English Language Education Study Program at Widya Karya Malang, East Java, Indonesia. He teaches English at a public junior high school in a rural village. He began teaching there in early 2022. In addition, he also taught Citizenship Education (Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan) at the

			school because the school lacked teachers and did not have a subject teacher for the school.
<b>Tony</b>	Three years	26 years	He graduated from the English Language Education Study Program at Sanata Dharma University. He started teaching at a private junior high school in Jakarta in 2021.
<b>Mici</b>	Three years	27 years	She graduated from the English Language Education Study Program at Sanata Dharma University in 2018. She has taught English in a private school at Santo Yoseph Pangudi Luhur 1 elementary school since 2020.
<b>Tia</b>	Five years	26 years	She graduated from the English Language Education Study Program at Sanata Dharma University in 2018. She has taught English in a private school at Kristen Petra 5 Surabaya Elementary School for four years. Before that, she taught English at Kristen Petra Junior high Junior High School for one year (2019-2022).
<b>Tyas</b>	Four years	27 years	She graduated from the English Letters Department at Sanata Dharma University in 2018. She has taught English for about four years in a private junior high school.

**Instruments**

The researchers conducted Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and individual in-depth interviews as data collection instruments. The two instruments also helped the researchers to triangulate the data. An in-depth interview and focus group discussion were intended to gather detailed information from participants about their emotional experiences. In this case, an individual interview is highly suggested in CIT (Hughes, 2007). The in-depth interview included open-ended questions that encouraged participants to describe specific incidents or events that have affected them emotionally in their teaching experiences. The questions were designed to elicit rich and detailed responses that could be analyzed using the CIT approach. The open-ended questions for focus group discussions and the guided questions for individual in-depth interviews were adapted from Kim and Kim (2018) and Puckett (2022). The purpose of the FGD was to examine shared experiences in preparation for in-depth interviews.

Table 2. Blueprint of the instruments

<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Aspects</b>	<b>Items</b>
<b>FGD Open-Ended Questions</b>	Recognition of Emotional Labor (Kim & Kim, 2018; Puckett, 2022)	Self-description as EFL teacher Teaching experience at the institution/school X Positive and negative experiences while teaching Expectations of teaching career and reality
<b>In-depth Interview</b>	Emotional Labor Experience	Emotional transformation of teaching burn-out Deep acting vs. Surface acting

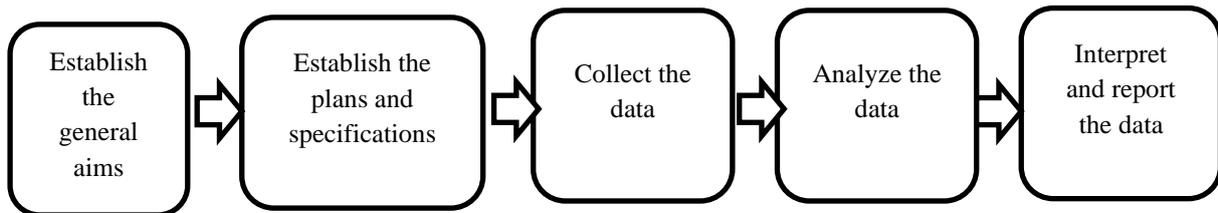
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The way the teachers overcome or manage their emotions and feelings in the classroom

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### Data Collecting Technique

In this study, the researchers used in-depth interviews to gain data on participants' perceptions of critical incidents related to their experiences with emotional labor (Brenes-Dawsey, 2018). The researchers used the guidelines of the critical incident technique proposed by Flanagan (1954) by following the step-by-step below.



Source: Flanagan (1954)

This study explored the emotional labor strategies of EFL novice teachers and how they coped with the challenges in their early careers. The researchers established plans for gathering data, participants, instruments, data collection, and analysis. The results of the open-ended questions were used as a foundation for gathering and analysis. In collecting the data, the researchers gave the participants reflective questions before the interview and FGD. Then, the Focus Group Discussion was done using Zoom meeting and lasted for 60 minutes, covering four topics: 1) school context, 2) self-description as an EFL teacher, 3) teaching experience at an institution or school X, and 4) positive and negative experiences while teaching. The in-depth interviews were scheduled based on the participants' convenience through Zoom meetings and lasted 50-70 minutes for each participant. The in-depth interviews covered four topics: 1) emotional transformation of teaching, 2) burn-out, 3) emotional labor experiences (surface and deep acting), and 4) ways to overcome and manage emotions. Finally, the researchers transcribed all of the recorded interview data and investigated the presence of critical episodes.

### Data Analysis Technique

The qualitative data were collected from the open-ended questions in an individual in-depth interview and Focus Group Discussion. The narrative analysis was used to interpret the data. Narrative analysis is a research methodology that is used to analyze and interpret people's or groups' stories, accounts, and experiences (Alase, 2017; Riessman, 2005). The researchers could better understand the complex and diverse nature of human experience by analyzing narratives and investigating how narratives shape identities, relationships, and social worlds. The researchers employed narrative analysis, specifically thematic analysis, to code and organize the themes when assessing the data. Initially, the researchers searched for patterns or links between the themes. Codes were derived from a focus on the form of narratives and the various story situations. The next step was reading through relevant expressions and stories and then encoding them. The researchers identified teachers' experiences, emotions, and reactions. The use of emotion coding was to determine the explicit and implicit emotions of the participants. In the third step, the researcher classified the codes into appropriate themes based on common thoughts or emotions. Afterwards, the themes were reviewed and refined based on the most consistent patterns were organized. In the final step, the coded portions were compared to the results of the previous studies, and new elements were added to the coding scheme to

deepen the understanding of the participants’ cases. The examples of refined coding in data analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Examples of Transcription in the Coding Stage

<b>Transcript of English Equivalents</b>	<b>Themes</b>
<i>Tia</i> – When I felt sad, I tried to hide my feelings in front of my students and showed my best expressions to them.	<b>Hiding negative feelings.</b>
<i>Tony</i> – I always start my day by smiling at my colleagues in the office and my students in the classroom, even though I have a bad day and am not in the mood.	<b>Forcing a smile.</b>
<i>Alpha</i> – I have one situation where one of my students is often absent and has a reason that he is sick. He didn’t come to the class because he was lazy. He often didn’t come to class and always had the same reason: sickness. That’s why, when his parents texted me that he was sick, I replied “Get well soon” with untruthful feelings. I was just too lazy to reply to their messages.	<b>Showing fake empathy.</b>
<i>Marsulin</i> – I always make time to give suggestions and offer solutions to my students. During the learning process, I sometimes give them motivation to continue their study to the next level. Overall, I tried to build good relationships with my students and set boundaries between the teacher and students.	<b>Showing Empathy.</b>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This section presents the emotional labor of EFL novice teachers’ performance and the impact of their emotional labor on students, parents, and colleagues. This section will also discuss the transformation of EFL novice teachers in teaching related to their identity. The relevant examples of excerpts taken from the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews were provided to support the descriptions. The teacher’s expressions found in the excerpts were translated into English and presented in italics. Based on data analysis, the findings and discussion of this study were structured in the following themes:

### Emotional Labor Strategies Concerning Students

#### Students’ Misbehaviors

In the classroom, teachers encountered challenges assessing students’ actual performance and characteristics. As told by teachers related to their experience in teaching, there are several problems they often face in schools. These problems are related to students’ misbehaviors such as cheating, impolite, harshness, rudeness, and dishonesty. However, they tend to hide their negative feelings when they are at school dealing with colleagues and students in class. As said

by Tia, the students do not deserve to see negative emotions from the teachers. She believed showing positive emotions towards students and co-workers at school would build a healthy and enjoyable environment. Mici also found that some children's characters were difficult to manage, especially elementary school children who generally loved to play.

*When I started teaching Grade 3, at first, I was a little nervous. During the teaching process, I felt tired of controlling the children who were running around and who didn't listen to what I said. The children were bored with my teaching method. Maybe it's because I'm a new teacher. However, after one month adapting to the situation, I approached and used various cheerful and fun teaching techniques, and everything started to run smoothly. (Mici)*

Tia used to feel very insecure about her ability to face students who still liked to play and were easily bored with learning activities in class. However, she continued to struggle to build a close relationship with students and prepare a variety of pleasant teaching and learning activities for students to follow. On the other hand, Tyas felt a different thing in the school she taught. She did not find it challenging to deal with children. Maybe because she teaches junior high school students whose characters and behaviors differ slightly from elementary school students, she thought controlling them was not too difficult. Tyas said that she did a surface act that the teachers should do, such as greeting students cheerfully, showing children's upbeat and happy sides, and creating a comfortable learning atmosphere for them even though their feelings and conditions were not too good. Tyas said, *"I gave my best smile to greet my students in the classroom although I didn't feel really well on that day"*.

In another situation, Marsulin experienced a similar incident related to students' misbehavior in Junior high school.

*I feel stressed when dealing with several students, especially when they do assignments at school; they often get bad grades. However, when I gave them homework, they got excellent grades. This surprised me. There was a significant difference between the scores at school and home. Some female students who did their assignments with their efforts also said honestly that some boys sometimes cheat on them. Therefore, I gave them less homework to see which students worked on their tasks very well.*

Marsulin was concerned about the situation where students sometimes cheated. He saw the inconsistency that occurred among his students. Some students got high grades when doing their homework, but they got low grades when doing assignments at school. This significant difference made him aware of the dishonesty of his students. Alpha also experienced the same problems related to the dishonesty of his students.

*I have one situation where one of my students is always absent and has a reason to be sick. He didn't come to the class because he was lazy. He often didn't come to class and always had the same reason: sickness. That's why, when his parents texted me that he was sick, I replied, "Get well soon," with untruthful feelings.*

he situation that Alpha experienced made him feel a little annoyed because of the dishonesty that his students did. However, in the interview, Alpha explained that he used different ways to show negative emotions by replying to the message nicely. As a teacher, he also committed on his natural actions by giving attention, which actually he did not want to do because of the dishonesty of his students.

Based on the excerpts above, teachers expressed disappointment, frustration, and upset when they realized their students were taking the wrong actions. But at some point, they also took action that can help overcome the problems above. Teachers realized their duties as educators, which included guiding students in academics and character, and their actions were their strategies for fulfilling these duties. The teachers above carried out strategies for Surface Acting and Deep Acting. Surface acting that the teacher does above is related to hiding their negative feelings while still paying attention to their students even though they are disappointed and upset with their behavior. Deep acting includes self-reflection in challenging situations, such as creating pleasant teaching methods for children and building authentic relationships with students by understanding their characteristics.

### **Students' Demotivation**

Based on teachers' stories and experiences, almost all teachers stated that they always motivate their students during their teaching time by giving them attention and valuable advice. However, teachers still need help to motivate their students. Marsulin said that:

*I tried to be the best teacher. I approach my students sincerely, especially when they need help understanding the materials and learning motivation. So, I tried to find the problems about why the students have demotivation by digging more deeply about my students' situations outside the school, communicating with the parents, seeking their problems, and finding the best solutions for them.*

As a teacher, Marsulin not only carried out his duties by teaching, but he also tried to find solutions to the problems experienced by his students. Besides that, Marsulin, a home teacher, reported that around three children were unmotivated to continue their education at a higher level. He tried to get to know and find out why these children were not motivated to go to school. Marsulin discovered that economic and social factors led some children to be unenthusiastic about attending school, as they became more focused on earning money and forming connections with the outside world. Tony, a junior high school teacher at a private school, also carried out Marsulin's action. As stated by Tony:

*Motivating students is challenging, but it requires caring for them. I have faced a situation where two students struggled with the subject matter, initially believing it was because they did not have the ability as the other friends. After consulting with the students and their parents, I discovered that their less intimate relationships with their parents led to a lack of supervision and academic neglect.*

From the two excerpts above, it was found that several factors did cause student demotivation, such as economic factors, family factors, and social factors. A teacher's task is not only to accompany the learning process of their students, but also the process of developing their character and enthusiasm in the world of education. While motivating students, the teachers above do a lot of deep acting, including showing empathy by finding existing problems and solutions related to their students, building close relationships by exploring character, and getting closer to their students. From this, it can be concluded that the teachers do not just do surface acting, which only shows a smile and hides their negative feelings in front of the students. However, Marsulin and Tony try to do their best for their students. They are not just a teacher whose job is only to teach, but they also involve themselves fully by being guides and teachers.

### Emotional Labor Strategies Concerning Parents

As teachers, the participants revealed that almost all of them used emotional labor when communicating with the parents of students. Tyas, Tia, and Tony stated that they needed to communicate well with the parents of students to maintain a good relationship. They communicated when dealing with matters related to their children, such as when parents asked permission for their children not to attend class by sending messages via WhatsApp and discussing their children's development via WhatsApp. However, they stated they did not need to meet with parents to discuss their children's development, just via WhatsApp. This could happen because the three teachers were not homeroom teachers, so they didn't need to deal further with the parents of the students. As stated by Tyas:

*We, teachers, have a good relationship with our students' parents. Parents usually ask about their student's progress through the homeroom, and we never meet face to face when discussing their children. So far, the relationship with the student's parents has not had any problems. In replying to parents' messages, I usually use polite, formal language and always take my time to respond to their messages.*

From Tyas's statement above, as a teacher, she not only built relationships with her students, but she also tried to build positive relationships with the parents of students. It was clear that Tyas used the surface acting strategy in communicating with parents, such as politely replying to parents' messages and taking time for their parents. Teachers stated that they always displayed positive feelings and ignored negative emotions when dealing with parents. In the interview, Alpha revealed:

*When I was on afternoon picket duty, and it was time to go home from school, the parents waited at the school gate and gave their children pick-up cards to the afternoon picket teacher. Then, the afternoon picket teacher called the child's name, who was to be picked up according to what was written on the pick-up card, and gave it again when the child was ready to be picked up. I'm physically tired, but as a teacher, I still have to give the parents a smile and a friendly greeting.*

Alpha used a strategy of emotional labor in communicating with parents of students, involving making the required emotions. He engaged in surface acting, trying to feel the emotions his work expected to display. Just like he did when serving as the afternoon picket teacher, he honestly said that even though he was tired, he showed fake smiles and other required emotions that did not reflect their true feelings. Mici and Marsulin had the same experience related to emotional strategies used in their relations with parents. However, Mici and Marsulin were homeroom teachers, and the school also required regular meetings with the parents every semester to explain the students' progress. As Mici stated in the interview:

*We meet with parents at school every semester when they take their children's learning outcomes. The relationship with the parents is perfect so far. I also never felt forced to smile at the parents and behaved as best I could. I present and carry myself as I am without demands from others or my job. As a teacher, I am also human, and my every word or behavior could be better. In fact, with some of our student's parents, we chat casually about their children's development.*

From the description that Mici explained above, it can be understood that Mici was actively trying to influence her inner feelings to align with the emotions required by her job demands.

Thus, Mici did not feel compelled to show fake emotions to the parents. Then, Marsulin experienced the same thing as a homeroom teacher. The school required him to meet face-to-face with the parents when taking report cards at the end of each semester. However, in several conditions, Marsulin also visited the parents' homes and had good conversations to discuss their children's problems. As he told me during the interview, 2 or 3 children were not motivated to study and were often absent from class. Marsulin tried to solve the problems by finding out the causes of these things. He revealed that by knowing the family background, family roles, and also the social environment of the children, as a teacher, he could also help with the problems faced by his students. Marsulin said that:

*Once, I went to my student's house. I had a good chat with the parents and expressed that I wanted to ask how my students were at home, whether they were studying or not because this child never got good grades. I didn't think it was because he was stupid; it could be for something else. From the results of my conversations with the parents of the students, I concluded that these children did get less supervision from their parents because they were busy working. Then, the child was also busy playing games when he got home. Understanding these problems prevented me from judging this child.*

From the excerpt above, Marsulin played a teacher's role very well. He did not just teach and deliver material at school and take care of administration to get a salary from his job. However, he also paid attention to his students' development at school and home. Even outside of school, he took the time to visit the homes of his student's parents. It can be concluded that deep acting was involved in his work. His deep acting involved the empathy he showed his students by communicating with the student's parents. Then, he put effort into actual feelings and expressions that required emotions. In this condition, emotional work can occur when teachers no longer show their negative but positive feelings.

### **Emotional Labor Strategies Concerning Colleagues**

All teachers in public and private schools reported that they conducted emotional labor concerning their colleagues. Marsulin, in public school, stated that he conducted emotional labor regarding his colleagues in school, especially with the administrators and the headmaster. As he explained in the interview, several times, he received reprimands or criticism from administrators regarding incomplete administration. When he had to face them, Marsulin stated that it was in those situations that he used emotional labor while still trying to smile and be gracious in accepting criticism from them. On the other hand, Alpha also experienced the same situation regarding fellow teachers, administrators, and staff at the school. Alpha reported that the principal came to classes several times to control and provide input to the teachers. Once upon a time, he received criticism and suggestions regarding his teaching methods and materials. While receiving criticism and suggestions from the school principal, Alpha felt he had a different opinion. He tried to convey the ideas and reasons why he did this. However, perhaps because of the considerable age difference between the young and senior teachers, Alpha felt she couldn't go against what the headmaster said. Even though it was with a heavy heart and an awkward feeling, Alpha still accepted criticism and suggestions from the principal with a fake smile and tried to be lighthearted.

From the events above, it can be concluded that Marsulin and Alpha engaged in an emotional labor strategy in dealing with their co-workers. This surface-acting strategy was used to show the emotions and feelings about their work. They showed fake smiles and also tried to hide the negative feelings they were feeling. Based on Marsulin and Alpha's backgrounds, there might be reasons that cause them to be involved in emotional labor, especially surface acting in

dealing with co-workers or school principals. One of them was the time they taught at school, which caused them to carry out the stages of adaptation and emotional regulation in their work.

The other four participants had slightly different experiences from Marsulin and Alpha. The teachers had teaching experience of more than three years. In the interview, they said that their relationship with their co-workers and staff at the school had been perfect. They had never experienced unpleasant things in the school environment. As Tyas said, she learned a lot from his colleagues. Shee liked the teamwork that was implemented in his school. That way, he felt he received guidance and direction from senior teachers and colleagues at school. Tony and Tia also reported that they didn't care about unpleasant things, especially from colleagues who sometimes seemed jealous of their work. Even Tony and Tia felt they were showing off in front of other teachers. They said that when they were in the office, they could act normally and didn't have to pretend to be cheerful and passionate about their work. Because at times like that, they could rest and share stories, releasing complaints regarding the problems. This action was reported by Mici in the interview, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

*When I'm in the teacher's office and meeting with co-workers, I feel very comfortable expressing the emotions and feelings I'm experiencing. At that moment, I feel I could express myself freely without forgetting my identity as a teacher. During breaks at work, I feel free to express how tired I feel. If there is a problem in class, I don't hesitate to tell stories and ask for solutions from my colleagues. I feel very comfortable with good and supportive co-workers. Although sometimes some of them convey criticism and give suggestions with true feelings. I still show what I am without acting fake in front of them.*  
(Mici)

The experiences reported by the four participants had slight differences regarding the use of emotional labor strategies, particularly related to relationships and co-workers at school. The four participants above revealed that regarding colleagues, they acted as they were without the need to use strategies from emotional labor. It can be concluded that, sometimes, emotional work can occur without them knowing it.

### **Novice EFL Teachers Coping with Emotional Labor in Forming Their Identity**

In forming their identity, novice EFL teachers cope with their emotional labor in several ways, which involve self-reflection and support systems. Emotional labor, managing and regulating emotions to meet job demands, can significantly impact teachers' sense of self and professional identity. Based on the interview results, the participants explained how they coped with emotional labor strategies in forming their identity as a teacher. Tyas and Michi reported that they often adapted to their new teaching environment and the challenges they faced as a teacher. As they gained experience, they learned to cope with emotional situations such as in the classrooms with the students, in the office with colleagues, and with the parents. They explained that they developed emotional strategies aligned with their professional values and goals through trial and error.

*In the beginning, it was stressful. Am I doing right? Due to the transition from informal to formal. Lots of free time. I feel like it's not working. When I became a teacher in a formal school, they asked me to do paperwork. But we don't have to work very hard in the classroom. It turns out that education in Indonesia is like this. I was shocked at the start. After the adaption, I decided to do what had to be done. Overall, I have enjoyed teaching from the beginning until now.*

Based on the excerpts above, Tyas felt stress at the beginning of her profession during the transition from informal school to formal school. The shift brought changes, leading to a temptation to avoid work. However, upon becoming a teacher in a formal school, paperwork became a new responsibility, but classroom teaching was manageable. Despite the initial shock, Tyas adapted to the new circumstances and decided to fulfill their responsibilities. Marsulin, Tony, and Alpha almost had the same experience in dealing with situations such as communicating with parents to discuss their child's problems and facing various challenges in dealing with students and colleagues at school.

Teachers acknowledged engaging in self-reflection to understand their emotional responses and emotions better. They examined how their emotions affected their teaching, relationships with students, and interactions with co-workers and parents. Self-awareness enables individuals to identify places where emotional work is required and select appropriate ways to manage emotions efficiently. As Tony indicated below:

*After reflecting on my experience, I have become a person who is more grateful and full of joy, and I can control my anger through the exercising of emotional labor and regulating my emotions.*

Based on Tony's experience, he became more grateful and joyful. He attributed this positive transformation to exercising emotional labor, which has helped him control his anger and regulate his emotions. Another participant, Tia, reported that she coped well with emotional labor by prioritizing her authenticity in her interactions with students, parents, and colleagues. She found ways to be genuine while still adhering to professional norms and expectations. Authenticity fosters stronger connections with students, parents, and colleagues, leading to a more meaningful and coherent professional identity. As stated by Tia below:

*Working as a teacher has helped me a lot in my life development. I learned to be a parent through children at school, how to educate them as my children, and how I can have better emotional control over the years.*

In conclusion, novice EFL teachers coped with emotional labor by adapting to challenges, self-reflection, and seeking authenticity in their interactions. The participants' experiences highlighted the importance of managing emotions and finding ways to fulfill their responsibilities. Emotional labor positively impacts their well-being and helps shape their professional identity as teachers.

## **Discussion**

This research aimed to explore the emotional labor strategies that Indonesian novice EFL teachers used concerning students, colleagues, and parents and how they coped with their emotional labor in forming their identity. According to the qualitative data, the teachers conducted emotional labor. There were some strategies novice EFL teachers undertook to cope with emotional labor to form their identity. The findings revealed that EFL novice teachers faced challenges related to students' misbehaviors, such as cheating, rudeness or impoliteness, and dishonesty. Despite experiencing negative emotions while coping with students' behaviors, the teachers suppressed them while interacting with students, parents, and colleagues. This strategy was undertaken to foster a healthy and enjoyable learning environment. Tia and Mici,

for example, altered their teaching strategies to deal with tough kids, resulting in enhanced classroom dynamics and student involvement. They utilized surface acting, which involved hiding negative emotions, and deep acting, which involved reflecting on challenging situations and building authentic relationships as emotional labor strategies.

Furthermore, teachers like Marsulin and Alpha encountered students' disengagement. In that situation, they conducted deep-acting strategies. They showed empathy by understanding the students' situations outside of school, communicating with parents, and finding solutions to improve their motivation and academic performance. The teachers recognized their role in guiding students academically and emotionally, emphasizing the importance of deep acting in their teaching approach. Burić and Frenzel (2020) mention that teachers perform deep acting due to job nature and student-teacher relationships.

This finding aligns with a previous study on two EFL novice teachers (Santihastuti et al., 2022), which showed that misbehavior significantly influenced teachers' emotional labor. Teachers experienced frustration, anger, and anxiety, which required emotional control in dealing with students, classes, and well-being. They used surface and deep-acting strategies. This finding is also supported by Kim and Kim (2018), which revealed that EFL teachers suppressed negative emotions in class to encourage English-speaking practice while exaggerating positive emotions to boost student attention. Overall, emotional labor is used by teachers to manage students' misbehaviors and create a positive learning environment. Therefore, emotional labor plays a crucial role in the teaching profession, and teachers' ability to navigate and manage their emotions significantly impacts their classroom effectiveness. Teachers' emotional management awareness helps them understand their emotional labor, emotional work in teaching, and the timing, reasons, and consequences of such emotions (Tsang, 2011).

The current study also looked into how new EFL teachers used emotional labor methods while dealing with parents. Teachers such as Tyas, Tia, and Tony emphasized developing solid relationships with parents using surface-acting strategies such as respectfully responding to messages and expressing positive feelings. Surface acting was more common among teachers who engaged with parents primarily through messaging. However, deep acting was more common among homeroom teachers with direct face-to-face encounters with parents. They displayed genuine concern by learning about students' families and seeking solutions for problems affecting their motivation and school involvement. The data also revealed that novice EFL teachers had different experiences concerning their colleagues. Some teachers, such as Marsulin and Alpha, participated in surface acting when dealing with school authorities and colleagues. They exhibited the necessary positive emotions even while receiving criticism and comments, which may have been affected by their relatively short teaching experience. Other instructors, however, reported solid and supportive connections with their colleagues, where they felt comfortable expressing their actual emotions without the need for emotional labor strategies. A similar finding was reported by Kim and Kim (2018), where teachers in both the public and private sectors engaged in emotional labor when interacting with parents. Public sector teachers handled indirect influences on learners' proficiency levels, while private sector teachers faced more direct communication and negative emotions, requiring surface acting to maintain a positive attitude. Private sector teachers also experienced emotional labor because of institutional pressure.

Consequently, the teachers had to suppress their feelings while teaching and could not express dissatisfaction to administrators. As highlighted by other researchers, novice EFL teachers exhibit different emotional labor styles. Despite criticism, some engage in surface acting due to limited teaching experience. Others have solid and supportive relationships, allowing them to express genuine emotions without resorting to emotional labor strategies (Tejeda et al., 2016; Zheng et al., 2020).

## CONCLUSION

This study revealed the findings on novice EFL teachers' emotional labor strategies concerning students, parents, and colleagues. In conclusion, EFL beginner teachers use various emotional labor strategies depending on their teaching experiences, the nature of interactions, and their relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. Surface acting was visible when teachers needed to hide their negative emotions while displaying positive ones. However, deep acting was more prominent when teachers demonstrated empathy and sincerity in their interactions. The current study highlighted the importance of emotional labor in teaching, as teachers' emotions could significantly impact their teaching experiences and relationships. Understanding emotional labor strategies can aid novice teachers in improving their well-being and effectiveness in the classroom.

The findings also emphasized the complex emotional dynamics that EFL novice teachers navigated in their professional roles. This study highlighted the significance of emotional labor in teaching and offered insights into how teachers managed their emotions to create positive and supportive learning environments. This study provides a pedagogical implication and a recommendation for future researchers. The novice EFL teachers should regulate their negative and positive emotional experiences concerning their job. As a recommendation, future researchers may conduct a deeper study on how experienced and novice EFL teachers engage in emotional labor to find the similarities and differences in experience and their impacts on teacher's identity.

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