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Influence of Emotional Regulation on Job Satisfaction among Secondary School Teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya

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Abstract
This study examined how emotional regulation influences job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya. A descriptive survey design was employed. Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to 400 teachers and interview guides administered to key education stakeholders, including the County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, the Chairperson of the Kenya Secondary School Heads Association, and the Secretary General of the Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers. Of the 400 questionnaires distributed to teachers, 380 were completed and returned, representing a 94 per cent response rate. All three key education stakeholders participated in the study, achieving a 100 per cent response rate in this category. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to analyse teachers' perceptions of emotional regulation. Simple linear regression was also used to examine the relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction. The findings showed that emotional regulation had a fairly moderate overall mean score (M = 3.09, SD = 1.26), indicating that many teachers had difficulty controlling their emotions during professional activities. Nevertheless, regression analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction among secondary school teachers (b = 0.017, t = 3.035, p = 0.003). The study concludes that emotional regulation is associated with job satisfaction among teachers. The study recommends that schools should consider incorporating emotional intelligence training and psychosocial support programmes to strengthen teachers' emotional regulation and enhance job satisfaction. The study provides county-specific evidence linking emotional regulation to job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya.

Key words: Emotional regulation, job satisfaction, professional commitment, stress management, teacher well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

This study examined how emotional regulation affects job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya. Teachers' job satisfaction is important because it influences their commitment, performance, and retention. While workplace factors such as workload, remuneration, and administrative support shape satisfaction, teachers' ability to regulate emotions during demanding interactions with learners, parents, colleagues, and administrators may also be significant. However, the relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction requires context-specific empirical investigation.

In Kenya, prior studies have examined teachers' job satisfaction in relation to social determinants (Getuba et al., 2025), work–life balance (Odisa et al., 2021), and emotional regulation in relation to job satisfaction and burnout (Masidza, 2024). Although informative, these studies do not establish the statistical relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County.

This gap informed the present study, which examined the relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya, using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Their job satisfaction matters because it is linked to professional commitment, teaching performance, and retention in the teaching profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Beyond organisational conditions, emotional regulation may also influence how teachers respond to professional demands and interpersonal challenges. Teaching involves continuous interactions with learners, colleagues, parents and administrators, which may expose teachers to emotional pressure and occupational stress. Emotional regulation helps teachers recognise and manage their emotional responses, supporting constructive professional relationships and positive attitudes toward their work. Evidence from Kajiado County, Kenya, has examined emotional regulation ability in relation to job satisfaction and burnout among public secondary school teachers (Masidza, 2024).

Similarly, Brackett et al. (2010) investigated the relationship between emotion-regulation ability, burnout and job satisfaction among British secondary school teachers. Although these studies provide a basis for understanding the relationship between emotional regulation and teachers' job satisfaction, further investigation is needed to clarify this relationship within specific county contexts. Findings from other counties cannot automatically be generalised to Bungoma County because teachers may experience different working conditions and institutional demands. Therefore, this study investigated how emotional regulation influences job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya.

Teaching is an emotionally demanding field where teachers are in constant contact with students, parents, administrators, and co-workers. Teachers often face stressful environments because they manage student behaviour, meet curriculum requirements, address administrative expectations, and face societal pressure (Kundu & Lata, 2024; Greener, 2021) Such professional needs often involve teachers controlling their emotions to achieve effective classroom management and strong professional relationships (Gross, 2015).

Emotional regulation is the capacity to identify, interpret, and regulate individuals' emotional reactions to different circumstances (Gross, 2015; Masten, 2021). Emotional regulation allows teachers to remain composed during stressful classroom communication, respond positively to work stressors, and stay motivated in their teaching practice. With high emotional regulation, teachers can better manage stress, build positive relationships with learners, and are more likely to remain satisfied with their jobs (Rodrigo-Ruiz, 2016)

Despite the growing recognition of emotional regulation as an important aspect of teachers' professional well-being, existing studies have largely examined teacher job satisfaction in relation to organisational conditions, occupational stress and work–life balance. However, context-specific evidence on the relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya remains limited. Findings from studies in other settings may not fully explain this relationship in Bungoma County because teachers' experiences may differ by institutional environment, workload demands, and access to professional support. Furthermore, the extent to which emotional regulation is statistically associated with job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in the county requires empirical investigation. Addressing this

gap is important for generating context-specific evidence to inform teacher support and well-being initiatives.

Therefore, this study examined the relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya, using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression analysis.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by Resilience Theory and Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory. The two theories provide complementary but distinct explanations of the relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction among secondary school teachers. Resilience Theory explains how teachers' capacity to manage emotional responses may help them cope with professional challenges, while Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory provides a framework for understanding job satisfaction in relation to intrinsic motivators and extrinsic working conditions.

Resilience Theory explains how individuals adapt to stressful situations and adversity while maintaining their functioning and well-being (Masten, 2021). In the teaching profession, educators encounter challenges such as classroom disruptions, heavy workloads, administrative demands and difficult interpersonal interactions. Emotional regulation supports resilience by helping teachers recognise and manage their emotional responses when faced with these challenges (Gross, 2015). Teachers who regulate their emotions effectively may manage frustration better, respond constructively to challenging classroom situations, and maintain positive relationships with learners and colleagues. These coping capacities may be associated with greater job satisfaction because teachers are better equipped to handle everyday professional demands. In this study, Resilience Theory therefore provides a psychological explanation for how emotional regulation may relate to job satisfaction through teachers' responses to occupational stressors. However, resilience itself was not treated as a separately measured outcome in the study.

Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory explains job satisfaction by distinguishing between motivator factors and hygiene factors (Herzberg et al., 2011). Motivator factors include achievement, recognition and opportunities for professional growth, which can promote job satisfaction. In contrast, hygiene factors include salary, working conditions, and organisational policies, and their inadequacy may contribute to dissatisfaction.

Applied to this study, the theory helps explain why teachers' emotional regulation may shape how they experience their work. Teachers who manage their emotions effectively may be better positioned to engage constructively with professional responsibilities, recognise their accomplishments and sustain positive interactions with colleagues and learners. These experiences may support their appreciation of achievement, recognition and professional development.

Nevertheless, emotional regulation alone cannot eliminate dissatisfaction arising from inadequate remuneration, excessive workloads, or unfavourable institutional policies. Herzberg's theory therefore offers an organisational and motivational perspective on the relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction, while recognising that workplace conditions also shape satisfaction.

Taken together, the two theories inform different aspects of the relationship investigated in this study. Resilience Theory explains the potential role of emotional regulation in helping teachers cope with the emotional demands of teaching. In contrast, Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory explains how teachers' work experiences and organisational conditions relate to job satisfaction. The former emphasises psychological coping, while the latter emphasises motivational and workplace factors. These perspectives guided the interpretation of the findings on emotional regulation and job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya. The study examined the statistical relationship between these variables using descriptive statistics and simple linear regression; consequently, the theories informed the interpretation of the observed relationship rather than establishing a causal effect.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional regulation is a key psychological resource that shapes teachers' ability to manage emotions arising from classroom interactions, workload, learner discipline, and professional responsibilities. Gross (1998) explained that emotional regulation involves processes through which individuals influence the emotions they experience and express. Gross and John (2003) further identified cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression as

distinct emotional regulation strategies with different implications for psychological well-being. Empirically, Yin et al. (2019), in a meta-analysis of teachers' emotional labour, found that emotional regulation strategies were associated with teachers' job satisfaction and burnout. Similarly, Kinman et al. (2011) established that emotional labour and workplace social support were associated with teachers' occupational well-being. In Kenya, Masidza (2024) found a positive and statistically significant relationship between emotional regulation ability and job satisfaction among public secondary school teachers in Kajiado County. However, evidence specific to secondary school teachers in Bungoma County remains limited. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya, providing county-specific evidence to inform strategies for strengthening teachers' emotional regulation and occupational satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The design enabled data collection at one point in time and examined the relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction. Quantitative data were analysed statistically, while qualitative data from key informants were used to contextualise the findings. The target population comprised 7,712 secondary school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya, according to the County Education Board (CEB) Report (2023). The sample size was estimated using Yamane's (1967) formula: (n=N/[1+N(e)^2]), where (n) represents the sample size, (N) the target population, and (e) the margin of error of 0.05. Substituting a population of 7,712 teachers yielded a minimum sample size of approximately 380. The study targeted 400 teachers, exceeding the calculated minimum to provide a slightly larger sample.

The study collected data using structured questionnaires and interview guides. Of the 400 questionnaires distributed to teachers, 380 were completed and returned, representing a 94 per cent response rate. The study also interviewed 3 key education stakeholders: the County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer, the Chairperson of the Kenya Secondary School Heads Association, and the Secretary General of the Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers. All three participated, giving a 100 per cent response rate for key informants. They were selected purposively because of their institutional roles and their potential to provide insights into teachers' working experiences. Quantitative data were analysed using means and standard deviations. Simple linear regression was used to examine the relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction. Qualitative interview data were analysed thematically and used to complement the quantitative findings during interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Scientific Ethics Review Commission at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, and research authorisation was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Participants were informed about the study and their right to decline or withdraw. Informed consent was obtained before data collection. Confidentiality was maintained, and participation was voluntary.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined teachers' perceptions of emotional regulation and its relationship with job satisfaction. Emotional regulation had a mean of 3.09 and a standard deviation of 1.26, indicating a moderate level of emotional regulation among respondents. The study used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For interpretation, mean scores were classified as follows: 1.00–1.80 (very low), 1.81–2.60 (low), 2.61–3.40 (moderate), 3.41–4.20 (high), and 4.21–5.00 (very high). Based on these thresholds, the mean of 3.09 falls within the moderate category. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Perceptions of Emotional Regulation and its Influence on Job Satisfaction

Item	Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
D1	I am clear about how I feel as a teacher	4.34	0.74	High
D2	I pay attention to how I feel as a teacher	4.28	0.79	High
D3	I know exactly how I feel as a teacher	4.23	0.83	High
D4	I am confused about how I feel as a teacher	2.15	1.30	Low
D5	I experience my emotions as overwhelming	2.69	1.31	Low
D6	When upset I acknowledge my emotions	3.73	1.07	High
D7	When upset I become angry with myself	2.56	1.38	Low
D8	When upset I struggle to focus	2.90	1.44	Moderate
D9	When upset I believe I will remain that way long	2.52	1.46	Low
D10	My feelings are valid in teaching	3.23	1.40	Moderate
D11	When upset I feel out of control	2.51	1.46	Low
D12	When upset I feel I may become depressed	2.62	1.46	Low
D13	I feel embarrassed about my emotions	2.64	1.44	Low
D14	My emotions affect my behavior	2.84	1.41	Low
D15	When upset I prefer keeping to myself	3.10	1.41	Moderate
Average		**3.09**	**1.26**	Moderate

Source: Researcher, 2024

Teachers reported high emotional awareness in some areas. For example, most educators reported being specific about their experiences as teachers (M = 4.34), mindful of their emotions (M = 4.28), and aware of their feelings in professional contexts (M = 4.23). These results indicated that some teachers were strongly emotionally aware.

Nonetheless, several items registered comparatively low mean scores, suggesting that teachers find it difficult to regulate their emotions. Most teachers reported confusion about their feelings (M = 2.15), feeling out of control when upset (M = 2.51), and perceiving that negative feelings could last a long time (M = 2.52). These results suggested that many teachers struggled to cope with negative emotions under stressful professional conditions.

Some emotional regulation aspects were also rated moderately. For example, a few teachers said they have difficulty concentrating when they feel upset (M = 2.90) and that they tend to avoid people when emotionally troubled (M = 3.10). To test the hypothesis that emotional regulation affects job satisfaction, the regression analysis was conducted as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Emotional Regulation on Job Satisfaction

Hypothesis	Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.	Decision
H_3	Emotional Regulation → Job Satisfaction	0.017	3.035	0.003	Reject H_0

Model Statistics	Value
R	0.99
F (7,363)	129,992.65

Source: Researcher (2024)

The regression analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County (b = 0.017, t = 3.035, p = 0.003). This finding suggests that higher emotional regulation scores were associated with higher job satisfaction scores.

The qualitative findings further illuminated this relationship. The County Quality Assurance and Standards Officer highlighted the importance of emotional regulation in classroom management and professional performance, stating:

A teacher needs to manage emotions when dealing with learners because classroom situations can be challenging. Remaining calm helps the teacher handle learners' behaviour and continue teaching effectively.

This illustrative account highlights how emotional regulation may help teachers manage emotionally demanding classroom interactions. This interpretation aligns with Brackett et al. (2010), who found a positive association between emotional-regulation ability and job satisfaction among British secondary-school teachers. Their study also identified positive affect and support from school principals as factors that helped explain this relationship.

Similarly, Yin et al. (2019), in a meta-analysis of 85 empirical articles and 33,248 teachers, found that emotional-labour strategies were associated with teachers' satisfaction and burnout, though the direction of the relationship varied by strategy. Deep acting was positively associated with teaching satisfaction, whereas surface acting was negatively associated with it.

These studies support the relevance of emotional processes to teachers' professional experiences. However, they do not establish that remaining calm in every classroom situation necessarily produces job satisfaction. Instead, they suggest that how teachers manage and express their emotions may shape how they experience their work. Similarly, the Teachers' Union Representative emphasised the importance of emotional regulation in managing professional demands:

Teachers face different pressures in their daily work. When they can manage their emotions, they may cope better with these challenges and maintain a more positive attitude towards their work.

This account highlights the possible relationship between emotional regulation, coping with workplace pressures, and teachers' attitudes towards their work. Supporting evidence from Kenya comes from Masidza (2024), whose study of public secondary-school teachers in Kajiado County found a positive, statistically significant correlation between emotional-regulation ability and job satisfaction ($r = 0.18$, $p = 0.003$). Although the relationship was modest, the finding provides a useful comparison with the positive association identified in Bungoma County.

Taken together, the quantitative results and qualitative themes suggest that emotional regulation is relevant to understanding teachers' job satisfaction. The regression analysis establishes a statistically significant association in the Bungoma County sample. At the same time, the interview themes offer possible explanations relating to classroom management, professional interactions and coping with workplace demands. The findings are also broadly consistent with previous studies conducted among secondary-school teachers in the United Kingdom and Kenya. Nevertheless, differences in study settings, measures and research designs should be considered when comparing the results. Since the present study used a descriptive survey design, the findings demonstrate an association rather than proof that emotional regulation causes higher job satisfaction.

Discussion

The findings indicate that emotional regulation was significantly and positively associated with job satisfaction among secondary school teachers in Bungoma County ($b = 0.017$, $t = 3.035$, $p = 0.003$). This addresses the study objective by showing that emotional regulation significantly predicted job satisfaction in the regression model. The finding suggests that teachers' capacity to manage emotional responses may shape how they experience their professional roles. However, the result should be interpreted as an association rather than evidence that emotional regulation alone causes job satisfaction. Moreover, the coefficient indicates the direction and statistical significance of the relationship; its practical magnitude should be interpreted in relation to the scales used to measure the study variables.

This finding aligns with Brackett et al. (2010), who examined emotional-regulation ability among 123 British secondary-school teachers and found a positive association between emotional regulation and job satisfaction. Their study further identified positive affect and principal support as factors that helped explain this relationship. This suggests that the relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction may involve both individual psychological resources and the organisational environment. A broader meta-analysis by Yin et al. (2019), based on 85 empirical articles involving 33,248 teachers, similarly found that the relationship between teachers' emotional labour and job satisfaction varied according to the emotional strategy employed. Surface acting was negatively associated with teaching satisfaction, whereas deep acting and expressing

naturally felt emotions were more positively associated with satisfaction. These findings indicate that emotional regulation should not be understood simply as suppressing negative feelings; how teachers manage and express emotions may shape their occupational experiences. The present study extends this discussion by providing evidence from secondary-school teachers in Bungoma County, Kenya.

The findings can also be interpreted through Resilience Theory, which emphasises adaptation when individuals encounter adversity. In teaching, emotionally demanding situations may arise from classroom management, relationships with learners and colleagues, and administrative responsibilities. Teachers' capacity to regulate emotional responses may help them respond constructively to such demands rather than allowing immediate frustration to dominate their professional interactions. Nevertheless, emotional regulation and resilience are related but distinct concepts. The present study examined emotional regulation and job satisfaction; unless resilience was separately measured, the findings cannot establish that teachers with better emotional regulation necessarily possessed greater resilience. Resilience Theory therefore offers an interpretive perspective on the possible relevance of emotional regulation under workplace pressure, rather than a directly tested explanation of the observed association.

Herzberg's Motivator–Hygiene Theory offers a complementary explanation by distinguishing factors associated with job satisfaction, such as achievement, recognition, and opportunities for growth, from workplace conditions such as remuneration, policies, and working conditions. Emotional regulation may help teachers navigate interpersonal challenges and remain engaged with meaningful aspects of their work. However, it cannot independently compensate for inadequate resources, excessive workloads, unfair administrative practices or poor employment conditions. The positive association found in this study should therefore not be interpreted to mean that teachers' job satisfaction depends primarily on their ability to manage their emotions. Rather, emotional regulation may be one individual resource operating within a wider organisational context.

This interpretation is supported by Brackett et al. (2010), whose findings linked emotional-regulation ability with both job satisfaction and perceived principal support. This suggests that teachers' emotional experiences and their working environments should be considered together. Supportive school leadership, constructive professional relationships and appropriate institutional support may help create conditions in which teachers can manage emotionally demanding situations more effectively. Conversely, an exclusive emphasis on individual emotional control risks overlooking the institutional conditions that contribute to dissatisfaction. Teachers should not be expected to regulate their emotions instead of addressing unreasonable workloads, inadequate teaching resources, or unsupportive management.

The findings also have implications for teacher development and school management. Professional development programmes could incorporate practical approaches to recognising emotional responses, reflecting on difficult classroom interactions and responding constructively to interpersonal conflict. Such initiatives should be accompanied by supportive leadership, opportunities for professional consultation and attention to teachers' working conditions. However, the present study did not test the effectiveness of emotional-regulation training or specific organisational interventions. These measures should therefore be understood as potential applications that warrant further evaluation rather than interventions whose effectiveness has been established by the current findings.

Overall, the study provides evidence of a statistically significant positive association between emotional regulation and job satisfaction among secondary-school teachers in Bungoma County. Its findings align with international research showing that teachers' emotional experiences relate to occupational satisfaction, while also highlighting the importance of distinguishing constructive emotional regulation from mere suppression of feelings. Resilience Theory helps explain the possible role of emotional regulation in responding to professional demands, while Herzberg's Motivator–Hygiene Theory highlights the organisational conditions that also shape job satisfaction.

Taken together, these perspectives suggest that understanding teachers' job satisfaction requires attention to both individual emotional resources and the environments in which teachers work. Further research using longitudinal designs and measures of

organisational support, workload and other workplace conditions could clarify how these factors interact over time.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: The study concludes that teachers' emotional regulation was average, and most had difficulty regulating negative emotions during stressful events in their professional lives. Nevertheless, regression analysis established a significant positive relationship between emotional regulation and job satisfaction. When teachers successfully manage their emotions, they are more likely to experience greater satisfaction, resilience, and professional commitment.

Recommendations: The study recommends study that emotional regulation is a significant individual resource contributing to job satisfaction and job effectiveness of teachers. Thus, professional development programs that enhance the emotional intelligence and coping mechanisms of teachers should be adopted in educational institutions. School leadership should also develop positive working conditions that support teachers' psychological well-being and professional satisfaction.

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