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Unveiling emotional experiences: a phenomenological study of emotional labor in expatriate EFL teachers

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Abstract

This phenomenological study aimed to investigate the most common emotions experienced by expatriate EFL instructors and identify the factors that affect their emotional labor in the Turkish educational context. Emotional labor refers to the effort, expression, and management of emotions as part of one's job responsibilities. In the context of this study, it specifically pertains to the emotional demands and challenges faced by expatriate EFL instructors during their teaching experiences. The study involved eight participants, consisting of five males and three females, working in different state and foundation universities across Türkiye. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data, which were then analyzed using MAXQDA software. The findings of the study revealed a range of both positive and negative emotions experienced by the participants. Negative emotions included stress, boredom, feeling ignored, job dislike, low motivation, and insecurity, while positive emotions entailed happiness, job satisfaction, love of one's job, feeling appreciated, contentment, and motivation. The obtained results also indicated that the emotional labor of expatriate EFL instructors was influenced by two broad groups of positive and negative factors. The former group consisted of personal, interpersonal work-related relations, as well as institutional, and professional factors, while the latter was composed of personal, interpersonal work-related relations, as well as national, economic, institutional, and pedagogical categories. The findings were further discussed and several pedagogical implications were presented.

Keywords: Emotional labor, Expatriate, EFL instructors, Phenomenological study, Positive and negative emotions, Türkish instructional context

Introduction

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching holds a significant position in the global educational landscape, reflecting the growing importance of English as a lingua franca in international communication. As societies become increasingly interconnected, proficiency in English is sought after for academic, professional, and social purposes.

The demand for EFL teachers has surged worldwide due to globalization, cross-cultural interactions, and the desire for active participation in the global community. This

has led to the emergence of a diverse cadre of EFL teachers, including expatriates who venture beyond their home countries to teach English in contexts with different linguistic, cultural, and political landscapes (Sherman, 2023). These teachers are tasked not only with the typical demands of emotional labor associated with teaching but also with the complexities of navigating a foreign cultural and linguistic context (Dumlao & Mengorio, 2019; Halicioglu, 2015). Besides, they may find themselves at the intersection of various emotional experiences stemming from their previous cultural contexts and the new context in which they teach. Therefore, expatriate EFL teachers have been major figures in English language teaching in recent times, specifically in countries like Türkiye. Türkiye has witnessed a significant surge in the demand for English language education due to globalization, international business interactions, and the desire to participate fully in the global community (Coşkun, 2013; Tatar, 2019). This has led to a substantial presence of expatriate EFL teachers in Turkish educational institutions, with a notable proportion being expatriates from diverse cultural backgrounds (Tüurkish Ministry of National Education, 2017). The Turkish government aims to increase the number of expatriate educators by offering attractive terms and conditions of employment, competitive salaries, and the recognition of religious holidays. Additionally, the government provides plane tickets to and from Türkiye for both the educators and their dependent children upon the termination of their employment (Aydın et al., 2019). However, the lack of communication with administration and colleagues and lack of recognition seemed to be the top aspects leading to their dissatisfaction (Han & Mahzoun, 2018; Kasimi & Hangişi, 2021).

Building upon the global context of EFL teaching and the increasing trend of expatriate teachers in Türkiye, it is of significant importance to delve into the intricate realm of teachers' emotional experiences, specifically emotional labor. Emotional labor, as defined by Hochschild (1983), refers to the exertion of effort and energy individuals invest in managing their own emotions and those of others in social interactions. While teachers' emotional activities are not explicitly supervised, teaching can be considered a form of emotional labor when teachers' emotional states are shaped by the emotional norms inherent in their profession, akin to emotional control exercised by employers (Hebson et al., 2007; Zembylas, 2002). Teachers are expected to manage their emotions and the emotions of their students to create a positive and productive learning environment (Gates, 2000) since 'they constitute the frontline individuals responsible for fostering student engagement and adavancing their learning' (Mirzapour& Jalilzadeh, in press p. 2). This can involve displaying certain emotions, such as enthusiasm and empathy (Winograd, 2005), as well as managing difficult emotions like anger and burnout (Kinman et al., 2011; Kunter et al., 2011; Winograd, 2005). Whether it involves complimenting a student for a correct response or handling a disruptive student with unwavering enthusiasm (Näring et al., 2006), teaching, by its very nature, demands substantial emotional labor (Edwards, 2016; Hargreaves, 2000; Mahoney et al., 2011).

Several studies have focused on the significant role of emotional labor in attaining teaching objectives (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). However, deliberately regulating emotions can potentially harm an individual's well-being (Grant et al., 2009; Mauss et al., 2007; Pugh et al., 2011). This suggests that even though teachers try to manage their

emotions for their students' benefit (Attaran et al., 2019; Shoval et al., 2010), doing so may gradually reduce their well-being and have negative impacts on their work-related attitudes, including teacher burnout and turnover intention (Goodwin et al., 2011; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011).

Despite the paramount significance of the context in shaping emotional labor, there remains a scarcity of studies that investigate the emotional labor of teachers in foreign language classrooms, with a specific focus on expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye. Understanding the emotional labor of expatriate EFL teachers in the Türkish context is of significant importance since the demand for English has exponentially increased. Moreover, expatriate EFL teachers in the Turkish context need to manage emotions related to their previous cultural experiences as a change in setting and culture, new colleagues, a shift in parental involvement, and the loss of established signs and symbols can endanger their well-being. Investigating the emotional experiences of expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye is crucial for assessing the potential impact on their mental health and overall job satisfaction. This understanding is integral for developing strategies to support teacher well-being, reduce burnout, and enhance teacher retention in the context of foreign language education. In light of this context, the current study aimed to investigate emotional experiences and challenges faced by expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye, and to explore the factors leading to emotional labor in such teachers.

Literature review
Theoretical definition of emotional labor

Emotional labor, as conceptualized by Hochschild (1979), is based on the regulation of emotions in the workplace. Jobs that involve face-to-face interaction, are supervised by others, and require the production of emotions for the benefit of others are considered to be loaded with emotional labor. In this regard, emotional labor can be divided into two categories: surface acting and deep acting. The former involves the display of emotions that are not necessarily felt but are necessary for the job, while the latter encompasses an attempt to genuinely experience the emotions that are required for the job (Hochschild, 1983). Therefore, emotional labor at the surface level entails pretentious acts of employees to show feelings that are not theirs, using words and gestures (Grandey, 2003; Tracy, 2005; Tsang, 2011), while at the deep level, emotions are actively encouraged, suppressed or shaped (Basim & Beğenirbaş, 2012; Miller et al., 2007), and consequently skills, such as empathy are welcomed (Rupp et al., 2008). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) expanded this classification and added the third dimension of authenticity. Emotions in this dimension are naturally and genuinely felt with little prompting (Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000). As a result, the main distinction among these three dimensions lies in the extent to which behaviors are internalized (Yilmaz et al., 2015). The expression of naturally felt emotions is seen as the most desirable, while deep acting is still more adaptive than surface acting regarding outcomes (Yin et al., 2017). Organizations require their employees to show the expected emotions and adopt and genuinely experience them. Furthermore, as the feeling of being emotionally conflicted or fake can become unpleasant and unsustainable in the long run, workers may internalize the expected emotions as a coping mechanism to diminish the sense of dissonance (Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000).

Emotional labor, according to Morris and Feldman (1996), is a contextual concept that highlights how different social environments can elicit various emotions. Employees are expected to show the emotions desired by the organization during interpersonal transactions, which require effort, planning, and control. From an inner psychological perspective, emotional labor involves the regulation of expression and emotion to achieve organizational objectives (Grandey, 2000). Similarly, Diefendorff and Gosserand (2003) defined it as the process of monitoring one's emotional expression and organizational requirements and making an effort to reduce the gap. Researchers believe that the two crucial dimensions of emotional labor are displaying and experiencing emotions (Ye & Chen, 2015). In this line of research, emotional laboring studies can be classified as employee-focused or job-focused approaches (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). The first approach involves the emotional regulation process and internal state when employees perform emotional labor (Kruml & Geddes, 2000). However, studies in the second approach category address issues, such as the frequency of customer interaction, the intensity of the required emotions, and display rules (Cukur, 2009).

Considering the sociological perspectives introduced by Hochschild (1983), teaching can be considered a profession that involves emotional labor since it meets the three criteria. Firstly, teaching involves direct interpersonal interactions between educators and their students. Secondly, teachers are expected to elicit certain emotional responses from their students, such as happiness or anxiety. Lastly, teachers' emotional labor is subject to external regulation, typically through cultural standards or professional guidelines (Winograd, 2003; Yilmaz et al., 2015). The emotional rules of teaching are not always explicit and may be disguised as professional behavior, limiting the emotional expression of teachers (Zembylas, 2002). Therefore, teachers use surface, deep, and natural acting strategies to regulate their emotions (Liu et al., 2013; Mou, 2014; Tian et al., 2009).

Emotional labor and teaching

Empirical studies have delved into the relationship between personality traits and emotional labor. Yang (2008) found positive correlations with psychoticism and negative correlations with extraversion-introversion. Basim et al. (2013) demonstrated the predictive nature of the big five personality traits in emotional labor strategies. Guo (2014) highlighted a negative relationship between emotion regulation and surface acting, while emotional intelligence showed positive associations with deep acting and the expression of naturally felt emotions (Guo, 2014; Yin et al., 2013).

The role of motivation and self-efficacy in emotional labor is also explored in the literature. Truta (2014) found intrinsic motivation correlated with deep acting, while self-efficacy was not a significant predictor (Ching-Sheue, 2014).

Studies examining demographic variables, such as teacher experience and gender, offer valuable insights. Brown et al. (2014) and Liu (2007) observed a growth in deep acting with increased teaching experience. Regarding the role of gender, Liu (2007) reported that naturally felt emotions occurred more in female teachers, compared to their male counterparts, although some other studies did not show any difference (Chen, 2010). Ye and Chen (2015) declared that gender could affect teachers' emotional work; however, the role of gender may be different for different groups of teachers.

Concerning culture, individuals in Eastern countries tend to display lower life satisfaction, less positive emotions, and more negative emotions, compared to individuals in Western countries (Kitayama et al., 2000). Therefore, teachers' emotional labor may be different in different cultural environments (Lee & Van Vlack, 2018) since cultural norms dictate which emotions are appropriate to express in different situations (Allen et al., 2014).

Apart from the positive consequences of teachers' emotional labor, such as an increase in self-esteem, commitment, work effectiveness, and job satisfaction (Kimura, 2010; O'Connor, 2008; Tsang, 2011), there are also negative consequences that affect teachers. Researchers have indicated that surface acting may cause depersonalization and emotional exhaustion rather than deep acting (Cukur, 2009; Hülsheger et al., 2010; Näring et al., 2006). Some other studies highlight the effect of emotional labor on burnout (Noor & Zainuddin, 2011; Zhang & Zhu, 2008). Given the findings from the previous research, it is obvious that while language teachers may experience similar problems, being an expatriate EFL teacher adds more complication to the emotions teachers feel in their language classroom. Moreover, since emotional labor is an experience perceived differently by various language teachers, the best way to approach it is through qualitative methods. This study, using phenomenology as its research method, aims to fill this gap in the existing literature and explore the most common emotions experienced by expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye, and the factors that affect their emotional labor.

Methodology

Design of the study

This qualitative study employed an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method during the qualitative phase to investigate the emotions of instructors and their perceptions of emotional labor. The use of IPA is highly recommended to obtain first-person, detailed, and extensive data from participants. This method is frequently used to propose models contributing to better understanding the meaning of individuals' experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

Participants and setting

In the present study, expatriate TEFL instructors teaching at preparatory language schools in Istanbul, Türkiye, were recruited as participants. The sample included were male and female instructors aged 25–45 years, with at least three years of English teaching experience. Theoretical sampling was used to recruit the informants in this study, and the researchers could gain saturation after interviewing eight teachers. As mentioned by many researchers in the field of qualitative research, the sample size in qualitative research is much smaller than that in quantitative research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Mason & Morris, 2010). Individual participation in the study was voluntary and participants were informed about the study procedures before agreeing to participate. They were free to withdraw from the study at any time and could choose not to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable with. The researchers considered ethical considerations, such as obtaining consent, ensuring anonymity, and maintaining confidentiality, before conducting the interviews, since addressing ethical issues is an important

Table 1 Demographic information of the participants

	Number (percent)
Education	
Ph.D	5 (60.4%)
Masters of Arts	3 (39.6%)
Gender	
Male	5 (60.4%)
Female	3 (39.6%)
Experience	
3–7 years	3 (36.4%)
7–10 years	2 (24.6%)
Above 10	3 (36.6%)

concern for qualitative researchers (Ary et al., 2013). The participants were also offered a short, straightforward, and relevant explanation about the aim and method of the research, and how their obtained data would be used. The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 1.

In Tüurkish universities, new students are required to study English for one year as part of a basic English program. The learners are placed into different proficiency levels based on their scores on proficiency exams taken upon their arrival. Based on the Common European Frame of Reference, the EFL learners start with the A1 level of language proficiency and exit the B2 level. The teachers teach four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and two sub-skills (grammar and vocabulary) during two semesters. The participants work for state and foundation schools of foreign languages and teach 20 to 24 h per week.

Instruments

The researchers utilized semi-structured interviews and framed narratives to collect data. In line with Seidman's (2006) belief that individuals share their details of experience through an interview, the researchers made use of the interview to gain the participants' perspectives of their emotions and emotional laboring. To meet the requirements of IPA, the interview questions were open-ended and nondirective. Open-ended questions are considered appropriate for exploring sensitive subjects (Sarantakos, 2005). In total, the instructors responded to nine questions.

Procedure

The data collection process commenced in May 2021 and concluded in October 2021. Given the ongoing pandemic, expatriate teachers in this study exclusively taught online classes. However, it is crucial to note that the impact of COVID-19 was meticulously considered. All invited teachers were required to have a minimum of three years of teaching experience, indicating that they possessed prior experience in conducting face-to-face classes in Türkiye. This criterion was particularly significant since the first case of COVID-19 in Türkiye was reported on March 11, 2020. By ensuring that participating teachers had this background, the study aimed to isolate the influence of the pandemic

on teaching modalities, allowing for a more accurate assessment of the factors affecting emotional laboring.

The participants were recruited from different universities in Istanbul, Türkiye. University instructors were contacted through WhatsApp and Google Meet, and a number of them accepted the invitation to be interviewed. After obtaining their consent, the participants were asked to determine a convenient time, date, and location for the interview. The interviews with the instructors were held at their offices, where they were more comfortable. To maintain a neutral approach, the researchers carefully formulated questions, avoiding any loaded or confusing language (Seidman, 2006), and in the event where a participant required clarification on a specific question, the question was explained and rephrased. During the interview, the researchers adopted an active listening approach, allowing participants to extensively discuss the questions.

The interviews were conducted in English as all teachers were proficient in the language. The researchers reviewed and listened to each interview before the transcription. Then, they listened to the recordings again to transcribe the participants' statements verbatim. The researchers made an effort to capture the informal nature of the interviews by accurately recording the colloquial expressions and phrases used by the participants. Transcriptions were completed daily, immediately following the interview sessions. Each transcription was then checked for the initial phases of the data analysis. On average, each interview lasted approximately 50 min, with the overall discussion ranging from 50 to 90 min. The interview questions were developed by the researchers after reviewing the relevant literature (Appendix). Three experts in the field of applied linguistics checked the content validity of the questions and made minor modifications.

The interviews were transcribed, and the transcript data were subjected to IPA analysis, involving four stages of the researchers' familiarization with the text, identifying themes, clustering themes and exploring their potential relationship, and summarizing the identified themes with the examples (Smith et al., 2009). The obtained data were analyzed using MAXQDA (version 22), which facilitated the creation of codes, categories, and themes. To ensure the credibility of the analysis, 20% of the generated codes were randomly selected for a second coding process by another researcher who was a university lecturer specializing in applied linguistics and had sufficient experience in qualitative research. In this study, 225 codes were created, out of which 45 codes were sent to the second coder. Coders were found to have disagreements on only two codes, resulting in an inter-coder agreement coefficient of 96%. To resolve the disagreements, the two coders discussed and applied the needed modifications, and subsequently, finalized the qualitative data process.

Results

According to the analysis of qualitative data presented in Table 2; Fig. 1, expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye reported a range of emotions in the instructional context. These emotions were classified into two main categories: negative ($n = 35$) and positive ($n = 60$) emotions. The negative emotions included stress, boredom, feeling ignored, job dislike, low motivation, insecurity, dissatisfaction, regret, worry, disappointment, unwillingness, feeling unstable, feeling pressured, lack of professional freedom, unhappiness, feeling insanity, uncertainty, feeling submissive, feeling of being fossilized, and anxiety.

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Table 2 The frequency of emotions experienced by expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye

| Emotions	Frequency
Negative emotions	35
Stress	6
Boredom	5
Feeling ignored	3
Job dislike	3
Low motivation	2
Insecurity	2
Dissatisfaction	1
Regret	1
Worry	1
Disappointment	1
Unwillingness	1
Feeling unstable	1
Feeling pressured	1
Lack of professional freedom	1
Unhappiness	1
Feeling insanity	1
Uncertainty	1
Feeling submissive	1
Feeling of being fossilized	1
Anxiety	1
Positive emotions	60
Happiness	15
Job satisfaction	12
Love of one's job	12
Feeling appreciated	3
Contentment	2
Motivation	2
Feeling vivacious	1
Thrill	1
Inspiration	1
Inner peace	1
Excitement	1
Being fascinated with one's job	1
Enjoyment	1
Feeling noticed	1
Feeling fruitful	1
Fulfillment	1
Work engagement	1
Job appreciation	1
Feeling energetic	1
Feeling rewarded	1
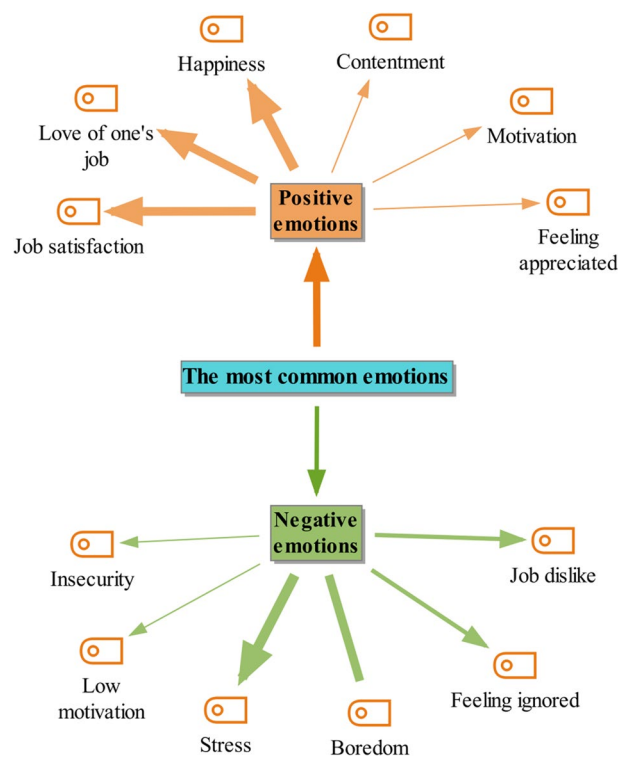
Fig. 1 The most common emotions experienced by expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye

Presented below are some excerpts from the participants which reflect their negative emotions in their instructional context.

> *When I see that I am not at the spot where I should have been, I feel stressed.*
> *At present, routine in personal and professional life makes me bored.*
> *I might feel overlooked when some decisions are made independently, neglecting my opinions.*
> *Workload and office work makes me dislike my job.*
> *I cannot feel safe, economically speaking.*

Moreover, they reported positive emotions of happiness, job satisfaction, love of one's job, feeling appreciated, contentment, motivation, feeling vivacious, thrill, inspiration, inner peace, excitement, being fascinated with one's job, enjoyment, feeling noticed, feeling fruitful, fulfillment, work engagement, job appreciation, feeling energetic, and feeling rewarded. The following sentences reflect the participants' positive emotions in their instructional context.

> *What makes me happier in this profession is working with learned and sophisticated colleagues.*
> *Regardless of economic state and income through my job, I am satisfied with the job I do.*
> *It is my dream job and I love teaching.*
> *Whenever I can contribute to and foster learners' learning of the language, I feel vivacious.*

Table 3 *Frequency of factors affecting the emotional labor of expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye*

Factors affecting emotional labor	Frequency
Positive factors	
Personal	6
Family well-being	4
Personal improvement	2
Interpersonal work-related relations	24
Teacher–student relationships	11
Good relationship with students	2
Friendly relationship with students	2
Respectful teacher–student relationship	2
A calculated distance with students	2
Close teacher–student relationship	1
Energetic and young community of students	1
Students' respecting teacher comfort zone	1
Teacher–teacher relationships	13
Friendly relationship with colleagues	6
Respectful relationship with colleagues	2
Close relationship with a few colleagues	1
Harmony in relationship with colleagues	1
Respectful relationship with colleagues	1
Socializing with colleagues	1
Finding a common ground with colleagues	1
Economic	4
Covering expenses	1
A good pay raise	1
Economic gains	1
Good economic conditions	1
Institutional and Professional	31
Professional improvement	6
School's valuing teacher independence	3
Being well-paid	3
Fostering students' learning	2
Professional achievements	2
Working in a professional atmosphere	2
Sufficient vacation and travelling	2
Satisfactory teaching environment	1
Running workshops for colleagues	1
Working with learned and sophisticated colleagues	1
Good vibe in the university	1
Being involved in an unending learning process causing dynamism	1
Doing one's favorite job	1
Academic appraisal/recognition	1
Working in a safe place	1
School officials' appreciating teachers	1
Flexible working hours	1
Fair workload	1
Negative factors	
Personal	4
Family well-being concerns	3
Lower efficiency	1

Table 3 (continued)

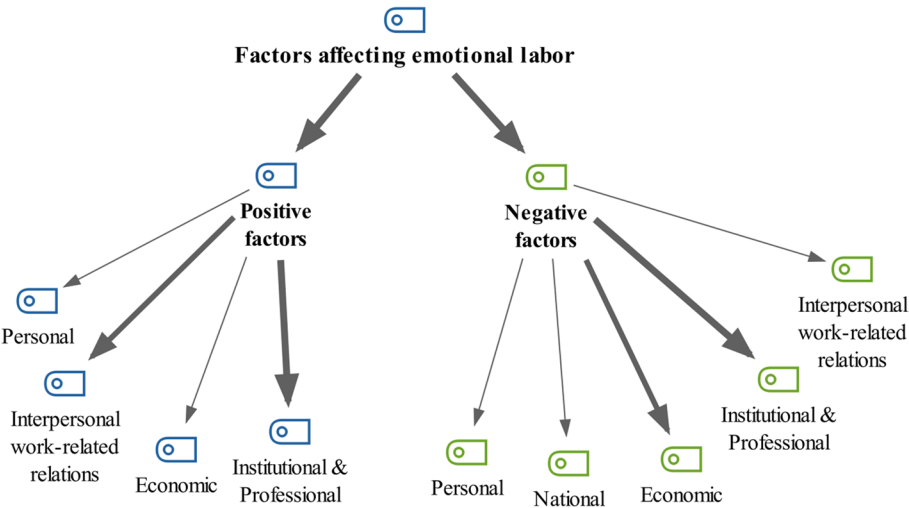| Factors affecting emotional labor	Frequency
Interpersonal work-related relations	4
Teacher–student relationships	1
Evading close relationships with students	1
Teacher–teacher relationships	3
Little connection with colleagues	1
Evading close relationships	1
Past ruining relational experiences	1
National	1
Annually changing immigration regulations	1
Economic	20
Unstable/Critical economic conditions	11
Economic inflation	4
Exponentially rising living costs	2
Economic recession	1
Economic concerns	1
Ambiguous economic prospect	1
Institutional & Professional	36
High workload	12
Insufficient payment	11
Imposed institutional rules & regulations	4
People's devaluing the teaching profession	1
Inexperienced/Unknowledgeable colleagues	1
Some unhealthy staff	1
Monotony in work	1
Incongruence of evaluation system and course content	1
Insufficient school administrators' support of teachers	1
No professional progression	1
Unfair institutional considerations	1
Discrimination between teachers	1

Fig. 2 Positive and negative factors affecting the emotional labor of expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye

The findings presented in Table 3; Fig. 2 demonstrate that expatriate EFL teachers in the Tüurkish instructional context are influenced by two main categories of positive and negative factors when it comes to emotional labor. The positive factors included categories of personal, interpersonal work-related relations, economic, and institutional and professional factors. The personal ($n=6$) factors were family well-being and personal improvement. Presented below are some excerpts reflecting this category.

> *In my personal life, I feel elated when l see my family is thrilled.*
> *The well-being of the family comes first.*

The interpersonal work-related relations ($n=24$) category entailed factors related to teacher-student and teacher–teacher relationships. The examples are

> *I have strong relationships with a few colleagues.*
> *At work, my relationship with colleagues is full of respect and harmony.*
> *I try to have a calculated distance with students.*

Furthermore, the economic category ($n=4$) involved factors of covering expenses ($F=1$), a good pay raise, economic gains, and good economic conditions. Presented below are some excerpts reflecting this category.

> *Economic gains are good incentives and generally, people are happy when their work is appreciated.*
> *I suppose it is not bad. That doesn't mean I am fully happy and I don't have any economic concerns. I am trying to reach a decent middle-class type-what has been propagated so much. Good income, good car, a comfortable house.*

Finally, the institutional and professional category ($n=31$) involved factors of professional improvement, school's valuing teacher independence, being well-paid, fostering students' learning, professional achievements, working in a professional atmosphere, sufficient vacation and travelling, satisfactory teaching environment, running workshops for colleagues, working with learned and sophisticated colleagues, the good vibe in the university, being involved in an unending learning process causing dynamism, doing one's favorite job, academic appraisal/recognition, working in a safe place, school officials' appreciating teachers, flexible working hours, and fair workload. Some excerpts reflecting this category include

> *I try to develop myself professionally and academically.*
> *Well, it is occasionally quite fair during semester time and the school follows the policy of valuing teachers' independence by avoiding any direct intervention when it comes to class-level decision making in any respect to leave teachers free with their career.*
> *Having a high income to meet my life standard.*
> *When I run a workshop and transfer what I know to my colleagues, I feel vivacious.*
> *Being appreciated and noticed by the (deputy) management and other officials in charge.*

On the other hand, the negative factors reported as influencing emotional labor by the teachers were grouped into personal, national, economic, institutional and pedagogical, and interpersonal work-related relations categories. The personal category ($n = 4$) involved factors of family well-being concerns and lower efficiency. Moreover, the national category included only the factor of annually changing immigration regulations. Some quotes in this category are:

> *My parents and their health and economic situation have always been my constant worry.*
> *Workload has remained the same but what is distinguished nowadays is lower efficiency.*

The economic category ($n = 20$) included factors of unstable/critical economic conditions, economic inflation, exponentially rising living costs, economic recession, economic concerns, and ambiguous economic prospects.

> *Undoubtedly, the entire world is facing critical economic conditions and everything is getting expensive.*
> *The inflation rate in almost all the nations is on the rise.*
> *It is evident that the world is undergoing an economic recession.*

The institutional and professional category ($n = 35$) included factors of high workload, insufficient payment, imposed institutional rules and regulations, people's devaluing the teaching profession, inexperienced/unknowledgeable colleagues, some unhealthy staff, monotony in work, unfair institutional considerations, the incongruence of the evaluation system and course content, insufficient school administrators' support of teachers, no professional progression, and discrimination between teachers.

> *I think we deserve to be paid more.*
> *Working in an atmosphere where top-down initiatives are predominantly implemented makes me feel ignored.*
> *If my co-workers are neither experienced nor knowledgeable, my job satisfaction will drop.*
> *Following the same schedule, the same routine every day can bring monotony.*

The interpersonal work-related relations ($n = 4$) category involved two subcategories of teacher–student relationships with one factor of evading close relationships with students as well as teacher–teacher relationships, including factors of little connection with colleagues, evading close relationships, and past ruining relational experiences.

> *I evade a very close relationship with both the colleagues and students.*
> *I have little connection with colleagues.*
> *Regarding the colleagues, I act quite conservatively because of the past ruining experiences and it should not happen anymore.*

Discussion

The first aim of the current study was to delve into the emotional experiences of expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye. Teachers' emotions are essential components of their cognitive, knowledge, and strategy development (Golombek & Dorian, 2014; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Johnson & Worden, 2014). The findings of the current study indicated a diverse spectrum of emotional experiences among expatriate EFL teachers, shaped by a unique interplay of personal, cultural, and professional factors.

The findings revealed that expatriate EFL teachers' emotions could be categorized into negative and positive, among which positive emotions were more frequent. On the positive side, happiness, the most frequently cited positive emotion, reflects a strong foundation of positive experiences. This emotion can serve as a reservoir of resilience, empowering teachers to navigate challenges. Existing research has established a causal relationship between teacher happiness and sense of well-being, teaching quality, and ultimate student performance (Day & Gu, 2009; Klusmann et al., 2008). Job satisfaction and love of one's job were identified as two other positive emotions experienced by the expatriate teachers in Türkiye. Job satisfaction is often linked to positive relationships within a supportive community, fostering communication, connection, collaboration, and even friendships- a recurring theme in teacher satisfaction literature (e.g., Pepe et al., 2017; Subaşı, 2021).

The study also highlighted other positive emotions, such as feeling appreciated, contentment, motivation, which underscores the potential for creating a supportive, engaging, and fulfilling teaching environment, as was mentioned in previous studies (Gkonou & Miller, 2021; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

On the negative side, stress emerged as the most frequently reported negative emotion among expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye, with six instances noted. The level of stress a teacher undergoes in a given situation may depend on several factors. For instance, unstable job contracts, and insecure working conditions can be considered as stressors, which were reported by both the participants of the current study and previous research (e.g., Mercer et al., 2016; Wieczorek, 2016). As Cowie (2011) mentioned, teachers' emotional challenges and threats to their senses of identity or sense of selves can be worsened when they are living and working in a foreign country. This was followed by boredom, feeling ignored, and job dislike. One interviewee expressed a sense of neglect during decision-making processes, aligning with existing literature that highlights the lack of communication with administration and colleagues and the lack of recognition among Tüurkish expatriate EFL teachers (Han & Mahzoun, 2018; Kasimi & Hangişi, 2021).

Low motivation, insecurity, and dissatisfaction, each with two instances, highlight specific challenges faced by these teachers. Considering that EFL teachers' motivation in Türkiye is influenced by various factors, such as the teaching environment, workplace dynamics, collegial relations, and student interactions (Hülya, & Kanatlar, 2018), there is no doubt that the lack of communication with peers and colleagues (as mentioned above) could diminish motivation and trigger dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the single instances of regret, worry, disappointment, unwillingness, instability, pressure, lack of professional freedom, unhappiness, insanity, uncertainty, submissiveness, feeling of being fossilized, and anxiety collectively underscore the diverse range of negative

emotions experienced by expatriate EFL teachers. This breadth of emotions suggests the need for a holistic and individualized approach to teacher well-being, considering the unique circumstances of each educator, as these emotions can impede effective teaching, hinder student engagement, and impact overall teacher well-being (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Jian & Tengyao, 2023; Tsang, 2011).

Regarding the second objective of the study, which aimed to explore the factors affecting emotional labor, it was found that expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye experienced both positive and negative aspects of emotional labor. This finding aligns with previous studies conducted by Kimura (2010), Noor and Zainuddin (2011), and Tsang (2011). Previous studies have revealed that EFL teachers in Türkiye are engaged in emotional labor in a variety of ways, including managing students' emotions, suppressing their own emotions, and expressing positive emotions (Akın et al., 2014; Aydin & Ünal, 2021; Şimşek & Şimşek, 2013). However, the level and the impact of emotional labor depend on the teachers' personal factors as well as contextual factors (Blake & Dewaele, 2023).

Regarding personal factors, the obtained results of the present study revealed that well-being and personal improvement could positively affect emotional laboring. In the same vein, other studies have indicated that personality traits (Basim et al., 2013), emotional intelligence (Guo, 2014), and motivation (Truta, 2014) can affect emotional laboring. As Dumlao and Mengorio (2019) suggested, teaching abroad is a way for expatriate teachers to develop and widen their horizons in the field of teaching, leading to improved communication skills. However, the positive or negative effects of personal factors on emotional laboring depend on their levels. As indicated, a low level of motivation in language teachers can lead to job dissatisfaction, and consequently, negative emotional laboring, while highly motivated teachers benefit from job satisfaction. Regarding the relationship between emotional labor and job satisfaction, Beşoluk and Önder (2019) found that emotional labor was negatively correlated with job satisfaction in Türkish EFL teachers, implying that EFL teachers who work more emotionally are less satisfied with their employment. Likewise, Kaur and Singh (2018) conducted a study on emotional labor and job satisfaction among English language instructors in India. They discovered that emotional labor had a negative effect on job satisfaction and that teachers who had to deal with more emotional labor were less satisfied with their jobs. However, Lee and Lim (2021) reported that emotional labor had a positive effect on the job satisfaction of English language instructors in South Korea and that teachers who had greater levels of emotional labor were happier in their jobs.

Considering contextual factors, the findings of the present study revealed that professional improvement, the school's valuing of teacher independence, being well-paid, professional working atmosphere could positively affect emotional labor. According to Hobfoll (1988), social support can serve as a stress buffer and assist people in coping with emotional labor demands. Brotheridge and Grandey (2002) discovered that perceived organizational support was linked to emotional labor strategies, such as deep acting. In contrast, high workload, imposed institutional rules and regulations, unfair institutional considerations, insufficient school administrators' support of teachers, and an unstable economy could negatively affect teachers' emotional labor. At the time this research study was carried out, the socio-economic situation in Türkiye was a big concern for EFL teachers. The economy of Türkiye was, and continues to be, entrenched

in a profound economic crisis, exemplified by escalating living expenses and notable inflation rates (Kantur & Özcan, 2021). This situation has directly affected teachers' salaries and has created a sense of financial instability and uncertainty for teachers. Job demand was another negative factor affecting emotional labor. Emotional labor is a job requirement that, if not managed correctly, can result in stress and burnout (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Jiang et al., 2020; Zapf & Holz, 2006). In this regard, emotional regulation and social support were successful strategies for managing emotional labor and avoiding burnout.

While the study did not specifically focus on the pandemic, which can be considered as one of the limitations of the study, the broader implications of managing emotional labor, promoting well-being, and reducing burnout are particularly relevant in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. As reported by Li and Yao (2022), negative emotions were intensified by the consequences of the global COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a significant decline in teachers' job satisfaction and an increase in emotional exhaustion and depression. The study conducted by Ece and Kazazoğlu (2021) on English language instructors teaching online in Türkiye during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that job satisfaction was influenced by the experience of online teaching. However, the study emphasized that achieving overall success for institutions and learners would not be attainable if instructors' perspectives, professional fulfillment, and expectations were overlooked. This unique aspect is precisely what the current study aims to contribute to the existing literature. By considering the perspectives of teachers, this research seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how emotional labor operates in Türkiye, a country experiencing a growing demand for English language education. This study has highlighted crucial points for paying attention to teachers' emotions. School leaders should recognize that the contentment level of their staff directly influences the quality of students' education. The study addresses the impact of the economic situation on expatriate EFL teachers' emotional labor. Accordingly, it serves as a reminder that economic conditions can have a significant influence on educational practices and teacher well-being. EFL scholars and educators in countries facing economic challenges can use this study as a reference point to explore the interplay between economic factors and the emotional experiences of teachers.

Although this study was limited to expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye, the insights gained have relevance for expatriate EFL teachers in diverse cultural contexts. It highlights the role of culture in shaping emotional labor and emphasizes the need for culturally sensitive approaches to EFL instruction. Educators and researchers in other countries can adapt these insights to better understand and support expatriate EFL teachers within their unique cultural contexts.

Conclusion

The exploration into the emotional experiences of expatriate EFL teachers in Türkiye reveals a complex interplay of factors shaping the context of English language teaching. As the demand for English language education in Türkiye continues to rise, the emotional labor of expatriate EFL teachers emerges as a critical aspect influencing teaching practices, teacher well-being, and the overall educational experience. The results of the study revealed that emotional labor is an undeniable aspect of English language teaching,

requiring teachers to manage their own emotions while also providing emotional support to their students. Whether positive or negative, the obtained results highlight the multidimensionality of emotional labor among expatriate EFL instructors influenced by different factors, including personal, interpersonal, economic, institutional, occupational, national, and educational categories. Therefore, ELT teachers are recommended to prioritize self-care, set boundaries, and seek support from colleagues and mentors in order to manage their emotions. Future research could delve deeper into the specific dynamics of cultural influences on emotional labor, providing a more detailed understanding of how diverse cultural contexts shape the emotional experiences of teachers. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking the changes in emotional labor over time and in response to evolving educational landscapes would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

Appendix
The interview questions

1. How do you feel about your economic conditions? How would you describe your economic conditions?
2. How would you describe your satisfaction at a job?
3. How happy are you with your workload?
4. What makes you feel bored in your life at present—professional and personal?/What are the sources of stress in your life at present—professional and personal?
5. In your professional and personal life, what makes you happy?
6. How often are you fascinated by what you are doing at work?
7. What makes you love your job?
8. What causes you to dislike your job?
9. How would you describe the relationships in your workplace? (With colleagues, learners)

Declarations

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