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The Mediating Role of Teacher Self-Efficacy in the Relationship Between Learning Culture and Teaching Emotionality: A Structural Equation Modeling Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Teachers' emotions during the teaching process play a crucial role in students' learning quality and teachers' psychological well-being. The present study aimed to examine the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in the relationship between school learning culture and emotionality in teaching.

Methods: This study employed a descriptive-correlational design using structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population consisted of all elementary school teachers in Bandar Abbas during the 2023–2024 academic year. From this population, 330 teachers (250 women and 80 men) were selected through stratified random sampling. Participants completed the Learning Culture Questionnaire (Barnett et al., 2001), the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), and the Teaching Emotionality Questionnaire (Villavicencio, 2010). Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling and the bootstrap method.

Results: The findings indicated that learning culture had a positive and significant direct effect on teacher self-efficacy, and teacher self-efficacy had a positive and significant direct effect on emotionality in teaching. Moreover, the indirect effect of learning culture on teaching emotionality through teacher self-efficacy was significant. Model fit indices indicated a good fit for the final model.

Conclusions: The results suggest that teacher self-efficacy plays an important mediating role in transmitting the effect of learning culture on emotionality in teaching. Therefore, improving learning culture in schools and strengthening teachers' self-efficacy beliefs may facilitate the experience of positive emotions in the teaching process.

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Introduction

In recent decades, the process of teaching and learning has undergone profound changes in the understanding of the roles of emotions, cognitive beliefs, and organizational culture. Contemporary educational ecosystems require that the role of teachers be considered not merely as transmitters of knowledge, but as facilitators of children's holistic development. The importance of emotions in teaching becomes more evident when it is recognized that a substantial portion of meaningful and lasting learning is influenced by the quality of emotional interactions between teachers and students. Scholars argue that effective teaching cannot be achieved without understanding the emotional and affective dynamics among members of the classroom, and neglecting this dimension is considered one of the main causes of motivational difficulties and academic decline (Afrooz, 2022).

Teaching emotionality refers to emotions that are directly related to teaching activities and play a significant role in students' motivation, learning, and academic performance (Reuter et al., 2019). Numerous studies have demonstrated that teachers' emotions influence their behavior, instructional practices, professional identity, and overall professional life (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Teachers who experience positive emotions in the classroom tend to employ more active and effective teaching strategies and create a more vibrant learning environment for students (Frenzel et al., 2018). In contrast, negative teacher emotions may weaken active teaching strategies and reduce students' intrinsic motivation to learn (Orahane, 2014). Since classroom management is largely under the teacher's control, teachers' emotional states can significantly influence the way a classroom is managed.

Research conducted over the past decade highlights the critical role of emotions in guiding the educational process. Effective teaching and child development are more likely to occur when teachers demonstrate creativity and self-efficacy in regulating and expressing their emotions and when they select appropriate teaching approaches and methods (Pekrun, 2006). Teachers who experience positive emotions are more capable of maintaining positive thinking and productive engagement. The ability of teachers to regulate their emotions enables them to apply strategies focused on modifying emotional responses or solving problems, thereby helping them manage students' emotions as well (Valente et al., 2018). By creating learning environments characterized by positive emotions, teachers can influence students' perceptions and values related to learning

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activities and their outcomes, thereby shaping students' academic emotions (Astleitner, 2000). Emotions are contagious and can be transferred to others; therefore, the emotions that teachers experience and display in the classroom can profoundly influence the emotions previously experienced by students.

These effects can be observed during the learning process through positive emotions such as enjoyment, confidence, and pride, as well as negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, and hopelessness (Pekrun, 2014). Emotionally engaging teaching is considered one of the key characteristics of effective instruction (Keller et al., 2016). Teachers who establish enjoyable and supportive relationships with their students through appropriate strategies can influence students' emotional experiences, thereby encouraging greater engagement in learning activities (Frenzel et al., 2018). Examining such emotional exchanges in the classroom is essential for understanding the learning dynamics that lead some classrooms to achieve better outcomes than others (Renninger & Hidi, 2016).

Within this context, learning culture has emerged as one of the most important contextual factors shaping teachers' emotions. Learning culture refers to a set of beliefs, values, norms, and practices within an educational environment that emphasize continuous learning, professional collaboration, and individual development (Marsick & Watkins, 2003). A rich learning culture should also enable teachers to share their learning achievements and professional knowledge through interactive communication and collaborative activities. Such environments help teachers experience greater professional success, strengthen their belief in their professional capabilities, and enhance their motivation for continued learning, since learning culture is essentially a collective asset that cannot be developed individually (Kazi, 2020). For learning culture to exert its influence effectively, the cultural environment must facilitate teachers' intrinsic motivations—such as self-efficacy and emotional engagement—rather than suppress them (Westen & Kelly, 2018).

Schools characterized by a strong learning culture create supportive and collaborative environments that promote the exchange of professional experiences and the development of teachers' competencies. Recent studies have shown that a positive learning culture is significantly associated with increased positive teaching emotions and reduced emotional burnout among teachers (Sherlinckx et al., 2023). Teachers working in learning-oriented environments tend to

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experience greater psychological safety and demonstrate more adaptive emotional responses when confronted with instructional challenges.

Another key construct in educational research is teacher self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to organize and execute the actions required to achieve desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997). In the context of teaching, teacher self-efficacy is defined as teachers' beliefs about their capacity to effectively engage in teaching activities and achieve positive student outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers with high self-efficacy tend to spend more time on planning, show greater openness to new ideas, and demonstrate stronger persistence when dealing with challenging students (Vaviro et al., 2021). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2019) argue that self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by four primary sources: mastery experiences, social modeling, successful social persuasion, and physiological and psychological responses. Bandura (2006) also emphasized that cultural factors play an important role in shaping self-efficacy. Culture influences self-efficacy through values, beliefs, and self-regulatory processes that function as sources for evaluating efficacy beliefs and their outcomes. Culture acquired through learning processes within a group or environment can evolve into a learning culture (Aprilia et al., 2021).

Several studies have examined the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teachers' emotions. For example, Fathi et al. (2021), in a study of Iranian English language teachers, found that teacher self-efficacy significantly predicts teachers' psychological well-being and plays an important role in regulating their emotions. Similarly, Calik and Kapa-Aydin (2025) reported that students' self-efficacy in self-regulated learning mediates the relationship between teaching quality and achievement emotions (such as enjoyment, anxiety, and anger). In addition, Shao et al. (2023) indicated that teachers' positive emotions during instruction significantly influence their psychological well-being and are affected by several factors, including their self-efficacy during teaching. These findings suggest that self-efficacy, as a cognitive-motivational construct, may serve as an important mediating variable in the relationship between contextual factors and emotional experiences.

Despite the growing body of research on teacher emotions and self-efficacy, a notable research gap remains regarding the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in the relationship between learning culture and teaching emotionality. Most previous studies have focused on examining the direct relationships between these variables, while comprehensive models that investigate the

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mediating role of self-efficacy remain limited. Furthermore, given the critical importance of elementary education in shaping children's personalities and competencies, greater attention to the emotional experiences of elementary school teachers and the factors influencing them is essential. Bandar Abbas, as one of the multicultural regions of Iran, provides a suitable context for examining these relationships. The Iranian educational system—particularly at the elementary level and in multicultural regions such as Bandar Abbas—faces diverse socio-cultural conditions that make the study of factors affecting teaching quality particularly important.

Based on theoretical foundations and prior research, it can be expected that learning culture, as an organizational and contextual variable, influences teachers' emotionality in teaching through the strengthening of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. A strong learning culture provides opportunities for continuous learning, constructive feedback, and collegial support, thereby creating conditions for successful experiences that enhance teachers' self-efficacy (Schein, 2010). High levels of self-efficacy, in turn, lead teachers to perceive challenging teaching situations as manageable and to experience more positive emotions in their professional activities (Bandura, 1997). Therefore, the present study aimed to test a structural model examining the relationship between learning culture and teaching emotionality with the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy. The main hypothesis of the study was that teacher self-efficacy plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between learning culture and teaching emotionality.

Material and Methods

The present study employed a descriptive–correlational design and tested the proposed model using structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population consisted of all elementary school teachers working in the two educational districts of the Bandar Abbas Department of Education during the 2023–2024 academic year. According to official statistics obtained from the Department of Education, the total number of elementary school teachers was 2,152.

The sample size was determined based on the method proposed by Schumacher and Lomax (2004). Considering the number of model parameters and the possibility of sample attrition, a minimum sample size of 330 participants was determined. A stratified random sampling method was employed. First, the statistical population was divided into two strata based on gender (female and male). Then, in accordance with the proportion of each stratum in the population (80% female and

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20% male), the required sample was randomly selected from each group. The final sample consisted of 330 teachers (250 females and 80 males). The participants' ages ranged from 25 to 58 years, and their teaching experience ranged from 2 to 32 years. In terms of educational level, 5.5% held an associate degree, 55.1% a bachelor's degree, 35.8% a master's degree, and 3.6% a doctoral degree.

Instruments

Learning Culture Questionnaire: Learning culture was measured using the questionnaire developed by Barnett et al. (2001). The instrument consists of 23 items and assesses five subscales: intrinsic motivation for learning, attention and support, personal expectations of teaching ability, extrinsic motivation for learning, and excellence in teaching. Responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale. In the present study, the reliability of the questionnaire, calculated using Cronbach's alpha, was 0.87.

Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale: Teacher self-efficacy was measured using the scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). This instrument includes 24 items and measures three dimensions: efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies, and efficacy in classroom management. Responses are scored on a five-point Likert scale. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale was 0.90.

Teaching Emotionality Scale: Teaching emotionality was assessed using the scale developed by Villavicencio (2010). This instrument contains 45 items and measures five dimensions, including anger and frustration, pride and enjoyment, guilt and shame, and blame and resentment. Responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale. The reliability of this scale in the present study, calculated using Cronbach's alpha, was 0.85.

Procedure

After obtaining the necessary permissions from the Bandar Abbas Department of Education, the link to the research questionnaires was distributed to the selected teachers through the Porsline online survey system. Before completing the questionnaires, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants, and they were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Data collection lasted approximately one month.

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Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to analyze the data. First, the normality of the data distribution was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test. Subsequently, structural equation modeling was conducted using AMOS software (version 28) to test the proposed model. The significance of the mediating effects was examined using the bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval. Model fit was evaluated using several indices, including the relative chi-square (χ^2/df), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) of the study variables for the total sample and by gender.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

Variable	Group	n	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Teaching Emotionality	Total	330	3.72	0.48
	Female	250	3.75	0.45
	Male	80	3.63	0.55
Learning Culture	Total	330	4.05	0.52
	Female	250	4.10	0.50
	Male	80	3.85	0.60
Teacher Self-Efficacy	Total	330	3.82	0.58
	Female	250	3.90	0.55
	Male	80	3.60	0.65

As shown in Table 1, the mean scores of learning culture, teacher self-efficacy, and teaching emotionality were slightly higher among female teachers compared with male teachers.

To test the research hypothesis, the indirect path between the construct of learning culture and teaching emotionality through the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy was examined using structural equation modeling (SEM). The significance of the mediation effect was assessed using the bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval.

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The statistical results indicated that the direct path from learning culture to teacher self-efficacy was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$). In addition, the direct path from teacher self-efficacy to teaching emotionality was also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect of learning culture on teaching emotionality through teacher self-efficacy was significant ($\beta = 0.10$). The bootstrap 95% confidence interval for this indirect effect ranged from 0.06 to 0.15, which does not include zero, confirming the significance of the mediation effect ($p < 0.001$).

The model fit indices indicated that the proposed model had an acceptable fit with the data (CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.045, $\chi^2/df = 2.75$).

Table 2 presents the standardized path coefficients and significance levels of the structural relationships in the proposed model.

Table 2. Structural Path Coefficients in the Proposed Model

Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	C.R / t	p-value	Result
Learning Culture → Teacher Self-Efficacy	0.28	3.02	< 0.001	Positive and significant
Teacher Self-Efficacy → Teaching Emotionality	0.37	—	< 0.001	Positive and significant
Learning Culture → Teaching Emotionality (Indirect)	0.10	—	< 0.001	Significant mediation

Overall, the findings indicated that learning culture in schools positively and significantly influences teachers' teaching emotionality indirectly through increasing teacher self-efficacy. In other words, when the school environment promotes shared learning, exchange of experiences, and collegial support, teachers' beliefs in their own abilities (self-efficacy) are strengthened. This strengthened belief subsequently enhances their emotional engagement and motivation in teaching.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in the relationship between learning culture and teaching emotionality. The findings indicated that the proposed model demonstrated a good fit with the data and that teacher self-efficacy played a significant

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mediating role in the relationship between learning culture and teaching emotionality. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies.

This result can be interpreted based on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory. According to this theory, self-efficacy beliefs are shaped by four primary sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states. A strong learning culture within schools—by providing opportunities for continuous learning, constructive feedback from colleagues and administrators, and a supportive environment—creates conditions that enable teachers to experience success and strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs (Schein, 2010). This finding is consistent with the results of Arpaci et al. (2024), who showed that cultural intelligence and teaching motivation influence teachers' self-efficacy through classroom management self-efficacy. Likewise, the study by Sherlinckx et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of teachers' social-emotional skills and the role of school culture in strengthening these competencies.

Another finding of the study indicated that teacher self-efficacy has a direct, positive, and significant effect on teaching emotionality. This result is also consistent with previous research. For example, Fathi et al. (2021) found that teacher self-efficacy is a significant predictor of teachers' psychological well-being and plays an important role in regulating their emotions. Similarly, Taxer and Frenzel (2015) reported that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy employ more effective strategies for regulating their classroom emotions and experience more positive emotions.

This finding may be explained by the fact that teachers with high self-efficacy perceive challenging teaching situations as opportunities to demonstrate their abilities. As a result, they are more likely to experience positive emotions such as enjoyment, pride, and enthusiasm. In contrast, teachers with low self-efficacy tend to perceive such situations as threatening and therefore experience negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and hopelessness.

The most important finding of the present study was the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in the relationship between learning culture and teaching emotionality. This finding is consistent with the results of Calik and Kapa-Aydin (2025), who found that students' self-efficacy in self-regulated learning mediates the relationship between teaching quality and achievement emotions. Furthermore, Santana-Monagas et al. (2024) reported that teachers' instructional style

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and the way instructional content is presented—particularly when emphasizing positive aspects—affect students' self-efficacy and emotional experiences.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding suggests that learning culture, as a contextual and organizational variable, facilitates the experience of positive emotions in the teaching process by strengthening teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. In other words, self-efficacy, as a cognitive-motivational construct, acts as a mediator that transfers the influence of environmental conditions to teachers' emotional responses (Bandura, 1997). This finding can also be explained through Pekrun's (2006) control-value theory. According to this theory, individuals' cognitive evaluations of control and value play a mediating role in the relationship between environmental variables and achievement emotions. Within this framework, self-efficacy—representing a key cognitive evaluation of control—mediates the effect of learning culture on teaching emotionality.

Conclusion and Practical Implications

The results of the present study demonstrated that teacher self-efficacy plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between learning culture and teaching emotionality. These findings have important practical implications for educational systems, particularly at the elementary level.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed:

1. School administrators should foster a strong learning culture in schools in order to strengthen teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. This can be achieved by encouraging continuous learning, creating opportunities for professional knowledge sharing, providing constructive feedback, and offering emotional support to teachers.
2. Teacher education programs and in-service training should place greater emphasis on developing skills related to enhancing self-efficacy and emotional regulation. Training workshops based on social-emotional learning may help improve teachers' emotional balance.
3. Educational policymakers should reconsider school structures and develop learning-oriented environments that promote teachers' psychological well-being and improve the quality of teaching.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the use of self-report measures for data collection may be associated with response bias. Future research is recommended to

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employ multi-method approaches such as classroom observations or interviews. Second, the study used a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to draw causal conclusions. Longitudinal or experimental studies could provide a more precise understanding of causal relationships among the variables.

Finally, the sample was limited to elementary school teachers in Bandar Abbas, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational levels or regions. Future studies are recommended to include more diverse samples from different regions of the country. Additionally, examining the moderating roles of variables such as gender, teaching experience, and personality characteristics may contribute to further development of the proposed model.

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Islamic Azad University.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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