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Examining the Mediating Role of Teacher Self-Efficacy in the Relationship Between Responsibility Attitude and Teaching Emotions

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Teacher emotions play a critical role in both the quality of students' learning and teachers' psychological well-being. The present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in the relationship between responsibility attitude and teaching emotions.

Methods: This descriptive-correlational study employed structural equation modeling. The statistical population included all elementary school teachers in Bandar Abbas during the 2023–2024 academic year, from whom 330 teachers (250 women and 80 men) were selected through stratified random sampling. Participants completed the Personal Responsibility Scale by Ahlman and Karabenick (2013), the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale by Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk (2001), and the Teaching Emotions Scale by Villavicencio (2010). Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling and bootstrap methods.

Results: The results showed that responsibility attitude had a positive and significant direct effect on teacher self-efficacy, and teacher self-efficacy had a positive and significant effect on teaching emotions. Moreover, the indirect effect of responsibility attitude on teaching emotions through teacher self-efficacy was significant. Model fit indices indicated good fit for the final model.

Conclusions: The findings highlight the important mediating role of teacher self-efficacy in transmitting the effect of responsibility attitude on teaching emotions. Therefore, strengthening teachers' sense of responsibility and enhancing their self-efficacy beliefs can facilitate the experience of positive emotions in the teaching process.

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Introduction

In recent decades, the processes of teaching and learning have undergone profound transformations in understanding the roles of emotions, cognitive beliefs, and organizational culture. The current educational ecosystem requires that the role of the teacher be viewed not merely as a transmitter of content but as a facilitator of children's holistic development. The importance of emotions in teaching becomes evident when we realize that a substantial portion of enduring learning is influenced by the quality of emotional interactions between teachers and students. According to many scholars, effective teaching is impossible without a deep understanding of the emotional and affective dynamics within the classroom, and neglecting this dimension is considered one of the major causes of motivational difficulties and academic decline (Afrouz, 2022).

Teaching-related emotions are defined as those emotional experiences directly associated with teaching activities, which play an undeniable role in shaping students' motivation, learning, and academic performance (Ruiter et al., 2019). Numerous studies have shown that teachers' emotions influence their behavior, instructional practices, professional identity, and overall career life (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015). Teachers who experience positive emotions in the classroom tend to employ more active and effective teaching strategies and create more joyful learning environments for their students (Frenzel et al., 2018). Conversely, negative teacher emotions can weaken active teaching strategies and reduce students' intrinsic motivation to learn (Orahan, 2014). As classroom management primarily rests in the hands of teachers, their emotional states can significantly affect how the class is conducted.

Research findings from the past decade have highlighted the crucial role of emotions in directing instruction. Effective education and training of children occur when teachers are creative and self-efficacious in regulating and expressing their emotions and when they select appropriate approaches and methods of teaching (Pekrun, 2006). A teacher who manages emotions effectively tends to think positively and act productively. Such emotional competence enables teachers to regulate students' emotions as well by using strategies aimed at changing feelings or solving problems (Valenti et al., 2018). By establishing a learning environment rich in positive emotions, teachers can reshape students' perceptions and values regarding learning activities and outcomes, thus influencing their academic emotions (Astilner, 2000). Emotions are contagious and can be transmitted from one person to another; therefore, the emotions teachers experience and display in

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the classroom profoundly affect students' emotional states—both positive emotions such as enjoyment, confidence, and pride, and negative ones such as anger, anxiety, and frustration (Pekrun, 2014). Emotionally engaging teaching is thus a key feature of effective instruction (Keller et al., 2016). Teachers who employ appropriate strategies to build pleasant interpersonal relationships with their students directly influence learners' emotions and foster greater engagement in classroom activities (Frenzel et al., 2018). Examining such emotional exchanges within classrooms is crucial to understanding the learning dynamics in high-performing classrooms compared to others (Renninger & Hidi, 2016).

Assuming responsibility and being accountable for one's tasks enhance belief in one's personal capabilities (Heydari-Vahed & Mohammadi-Yousefnejad, 2023). Indeed, responsibility, commitment, and the type of attitude toward them have significant effects on both teaching and learning processes (Larman & Karabenick, 2013) and on teachers' self-efficacy (Madadi-Mahani, 2021; Ghavanloo et al., 2016). Teachers' perceptions of responsibility and the situations that prepare them for personal accountability constitute an essential part of their professional identity. The sense of teacher responsibility represents an intrinsic commitment to guiding students toward intended educational goals or desired learning outcomes (Larman et al., 2017). Studies have shown that teachers who experience positive changes in instructional effectiveness demonstrate a stronger sense of responsibility for both positive and negative learning outcomes of their students. Thus, teachers' personal responsibility potentially affects their teaching skills, mental health, and students' performance (Halvorsen et al., 2009). Similarly, Ahern (2013) found a significant relationship between teachers' teaching emotions and their sense of personal responsibility. Lack of responsibility, on the other hand, leads to difficulties in forming healthy relationships, indecisiveness, repeated failures, and, most notably, negative emotions such as aggression (Siham, 2013). Responsible and committed teachers are less likely to leave their schools, more likely to sustain positive attitudes toward teaching and learning, and tend to provide higher-quality instruction (Bazhoori, 2019). In another study, Vidoshi et al. (2020) found that teachers' attitudes toward responsibility and commitment were significantly associated with their teaching styles. Likewise, Ghavanloo et al. (2016) confirmed a positive and significant relationship between teachers' self-efficacy and responsibility.

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In the context of teaching, teacher self-efficacy refers to one's belief in their ability to effectively engage in teaching activities and achieve desirable student outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers with high self-efficacy devote more time to lesson planning, show greater enthusiasm toward new ideas, and display higher resilience when dealing with challenging students (Waweru et al., 2021). Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2019) argue that self-efficacy is influenced by four key sources: past experiences, social modeling, positive social persuasion, and physiological and psychological states.

Despite extensive research on teachers' emotions and self-efficacy, there remains a notable research gap regarding the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between responsibility attitude and teaching emotions. Most existing studies have focused only on the pairwise associations among these variables, while comprehensive models testing self-efficacy as a mediator are scarce. Moreover, given the crucial role of elementary education in shaping children's character and abilities, attention to teachers' responsibility at this level and its influential factors is particularly important. Bandar Abbas, as a multicultural city, offers a suitable context for examining these relationships. The Iranian educational system, particularly in elementary schools located in culturally diverse regions such as Bandar Abbas, faces diverse socio-cultural challenges that necessitate studying factors affecting teaching quality.

Based on theoretical foundations and prior research, it can be expected that teachers' responsibility attitude—as an organizational and contextual variable—affects their teaching emotions through enhancing self-efficacy beliefs. A strong sense of responsibility provides opportunities for continuous learning, constructive feedback, and collegial support, thereby fostering teachers' sense of success and strengthening their self-efficacy (Schein, 2010). High self-efficacy, in turn, helps teachers perceive challenging teaching situations as controllable and experience more positive emotions during instruction (Bandura, 1997). Accordingly, the present study aimed to test a structural model exploring the relationship between responsibility attitude and teaching emotions, with teacher self-efficacy as a mediating variable.

Material and Methods

The present study employed a descriptive–correlational design and tested the proposed model using structural equation modeling (SEM). The statistical population included all elementary

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school teachers employed in the two educational districts of Bandar Abbas during the 2023–2024 academic year. According to data obtained from the Department of Education, the total number of elementary teachers was 2,152.

To estimate the required sample size, the method proposed by Schumacher and Lomax (2004) was used. Considering the number of model parameters and the likelihood of sample attrition, a minimum sample size of 330 participants was determined. A stratified random sampling method was applied. First, the population was divided into two strata based on gender (female and male). Then, proportional to the population distribution (80% female, 20% male), participants were randomly selected from each stratum. The final sample consisted of 330 teachers (250 women and 80 men). Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 58 years, and their teaching experience ranged from 2 to 32 years. Regarding educational background, 5.5% held an associate degree, 55.1% a bachelor's degree, 35.8% a master's degree, and 3.6% a doctoral degree.

To assess teachers' sense of responsibility, the Personal Responsibility Scale developed by Ahlman and Karabenick (2013) was used. This scale consists of 13 items and measures four subscales: teacher responsibility for student motivation, responsibility for student success, responsibility for relationships with students, and responsibility for teaching. Responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "I do not feel responsible at all" to 5 = "I feel completely responsible." The reliability of the scale in the present study, based on Cronbach's alpha, was 0.87.

Teacher self-efficacy was measured using the Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk (2001) Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale. This 24-item scale measures three subscales: self-efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. Responses are scored on a five-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient in the present study was 0.90.

Teaching emotions were assessed using the Villavicencio (2010) Scale, which includes 45 items across five dimensions: anger and frustration, pride and enjoyment, guilt and shame, blame, and resentment. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for this scale in the current study was 0.85.

After obtaining the necessary permissions from the Department of Education in Bandar Abbas, the questionnaire link was distributed to selected teachers via the *PORSLINE* online survey system.

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Prior to completing the questionnaires, the study objectives were explained to participants, and they were assured of confidentiality. Data collection lasted approximately one month.

Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. First, the normality of the data was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test. Structural equation modeling was conducted using AMOS version 28. The significance of mediating effects was examined using the bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals. Model fit was evaluated using the following indices: relative chi-square, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

Results

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of the study variables for the total sample and by gender.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of the Study Variables by Gender

Variable	Group	n	M	SD
Teaching Emotions	Total	330	3.72	0.48
	Women	250	3.75	0.45
	Men	80	3.63	0.55
Responsibility Attitude	Total	330	3.88	0.50
	Women	250	3.91	0.48
	Men	80	3.75	0.56
Teacher Self-Efficacy	Total	330	3.82	0.58
	Women	250	3.90	0.55
	Men	80	3.60	0.65

As shown in Table 1, the overall mean scores for teaching emotions (M = 3.72), responsibility attitude (M = 3.88), and teacher self-efficacy (M = 3.82) were above the midpoint of the Likert scale, indicating relatively favorable levels of these variables among elementary school teachers.

Gender-based comparisons reveal that female teachers reported slightly higher mean scores than male teachers across all three variables. The largest difference was observed in teacher self-efficacy (M_women = 3.90 vs. M_men = 3.60), followed by responsibility attitude and teaching emotions. Standard deviations indicate acceptable variability within groups.

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Structural Equation Modeling

To test the study hypothesis, the indirect path between responsibility attitude and teaching emotions, mediated by teacher self-efficacy, was examined using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The significance of the mediating effect was assessed using the bootstrap method with 5,000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval.

Direct Effects

Responsibility Attitude → Teacher Self-Efficacy:

β=0.21 \beta = 0.21 β=0.21, $p = 0.003$

Teacher Self-Efficacy → Teaching Emotions:

β=0.37 \beta = 0.37 β=0.37, $p < 0.001$

Indirect (Mediated) Effect

Responsibility Attitude → Teaching Emotions (via Self-Efficacy): β=0.08 \beta = 0.08 β=0.0895% Bootstrap CI = [0.03, 0.13] $p < 0.01$. Because the 95% confidence interval does not include zero, the indirect effect is statistically significant, confirming the mediating role of teacher self-efficacy.

Model Fit Indices

The structural model demonstrated a good fit to the data: CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.045 and $\chi^2/df = 2.75$. These indices fall within commonly accepted thresholds (CFI and TLI ≥ 0.90; RMSEA ≤ 0.06; $\chi^2/df < 3$), indicating that the proposed model adequately fits the observed data.

Table 2. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Path	Standardized Coefficient (β)	p-value	Result
Responsibility Attitude → Self-Efficacy	0.21	0.003	Positive and significant
Self-Efficacy → Teaching Emotions	0.37	< 0.001	Positive and significant
Responsibility Attitude → Teaching Emotions (Indirect)	0.08	< 0.01	Significant mediation

The findings indicate that teachers' positive attitudes toward responsibility have a significant indirect positive effect on their teaching emotions through enhanced self-efficacy. In other words, teachers who perceive themselves as responsible for their educational and social duties develop stronger beliefs in their professional capabilities. These enhanced self-efficacy beliefs, in turn, contribute to increased enthusiasm, motivation, and positive emotional engagement in teaching.

The significant indirect pathway suggests that self-efficacy functions as a psychological mechanism through which responsibility attitude influences emotional experiences in teaching

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contexts. While responsibility alone contributes to professional commitment, its emotional impact appears to operate largely through strengthening teachers' confidence in their instructional abilities.

Discussion

The findings of the present study demonstrated that teachers' attitudes toward responsibility significantly influence their teaching emotions through the mediating role of self-efficacy. In other words, a positive attitude toward responsibility indirectly contributes to the reduction of negative emotional experiences in teaching by strengthening teachers' self-efficacy beliefs. This finding is consistent with prior national and international research.

International studies have shown that teachers' sense of professional responsibility and occupational commitment is positively associated with stronger self-efficacy beliefs (Lauermann & Karabenick, 2011). Furthermore, research in the field of education indicates that teacher self-efficacy plays a decisive role in emotion regulation and in reducing stress and emotional tension in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Frenzel et al. (2009) similarly reported that teachers' cognitive beliefs—particularly self-efficacy—serve as important mediators between professional attitudes and teaching-related emotions. The results of the present study align with these findings and provide additional empirical support for the mediating function of self-efficacy.

Domestic research has likewise shown that teachers with stronger responsibility attitudes tend to report higher levels of self-efficacy and lower levels of negative emotional reactivity in educational settings (Mirzaei et al., 2016; Hosseini & Rezaei, 2019). The consistency between the present findings and previous studies further confirms the intermediary role of self-efficacy in the relationship between responsibility attitude and teaching emotions.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings can be interpreted through the integration of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1997) and conceptual frameworks related to professional commitment and responsibility in teaching. Responsibility attitude, as an attitudinal–ethical construct, reflects the degree of an individual's commitment to their professional role and to the consequences of their instructional performance. A positive responsibility orientation enhances teachers' sense of meaning, purposefulness, and intrinsic motivation in teaching.

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According to Bandura's theory, such an orientation facilitates the development of stronger self-efficacy beliefs. Teachers who perceive themselves as accountable for educational outcomes are more likely to engage deeply in professional activities, pursue mastery experiences, and seek constructive feedback. These experiences, in turn, reinforce their sense of competence. Higher self-efficacy enables teachers to interpret challenging instructional situations as manageable rather than threatening, thereby fostering more adaptive emotional responses in the classroom.

Conversely, a weak sense of responsibility may reduce professional engagement, undermine self-efficacy beliefs, and increase feelings of inadequacy. This psychological state can contribute to heightened negative emotional experiences during teaching. Thus, self-efficacy functions as a key psychological mechanism through which responsibility attitudes are translated into emotional outcomes in instructional contexts.

From a practical standpoint, the results suggest that reducing teachers' negative emotional reactivity requires simultaneous attention to professional attitudes and self-efficacy beliefs. Teacher education and in-service training programs should therefore systematically incorporate components related to professional responsibility, ethical commitment, and instructional accountability.

Moreover, designing targeted interventions to strengthen teacher self-efficacy—such as providing opportunities for successful teaching experiences, delivering constructive performance feedback, implementing professional mentoring systems, and offering effective role modeling—may enhance the positive impact of responsibility attitudes on emotional regulation in teaching.

The findings of this study have important implications for educational administrators and policymakers. By promoting responsibility-oriented professional cultures and investing in programs that enhance teachers' self-efficacy, educational systems can foster teachers' emotional well-being and ultimately improve instructional quality.

In conclusion, the confirmation of the study hypothesis indicates that responsibility attitude exerts an indirect yet decisive influence on teaching emotions through the enhancement of teacher self-efficacy. Recognizing and strengthening this mediating mechanism may contribute to sustainable improvements in teacher performance and the overall effectiveness of the educational system.

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Despite the contributions of the present study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research employed a correlational design, which limits the ability to draw causal conclusions about the relationships among responsibility attitude, teacher self-efficacy, and teaching emotions. Although structural equation modeling provides a robust framework for examining relationships among variables, experimental or longitudinal designs would provide stronger evidence regarding causal mechanisms.

Second, the data were collected using self-report questionnaires. While these instruments are widely used and demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity, self-report measures may be influenced by social desirability bias or respondents' subjective perceptions. Future research may benefit from incorporating multiple data sources, such as classroom observations, peer evaluations, or student feedback, to provide a more comprehensive assessment of teachers' emotional experiences and professional beliefs.

Third, the sample of this study consisted solely of elementary school teachers from Bandar Abbas. Although the sample size was adequate for the statistical analyses conducted, the geographical and contextual limitations may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other educational levels or cultural contexts. Replication of this study with teachers from different regions, school levels, and educational systems would enhance the external validity of the findings.

Fourth, the study focused specifically on the mediating role of self-efficacy. However, other psychological and organizational variables—such as job satisfaction, emotional regulation strategies, perceived organizational support, and professional identity—may also influence the relationship between responsibility attitude and teaching emotions. Future research could develop more comprehensive models that incorporate additional mediating or moderating variables.

Based on these limitations, several recommendations for future research and educational practice can be proposed. Future studies are encouraged to employ longitudinal or experimental research designs in order to examine the causal dynamics among responsibility attitudes, self-efficacy beliefs, and teaching emotions over time. Additionally, researchers may investigate the role of contextual factors, such as school climate, leadership style, and professional development opportunities, in shaping teachers' emotional experiences and self-efficacy.

From a practical perspective, teacher education programs should place greater emphasis on developing professional responsibility and ethical commitment as fundamental components of

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teacher preparation. Strengthening these attitudes may indirectly contribute to improved emotional experiences in teaching through enhanced self-efficacy.

Educational institutions and policymakers should also design professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing teacher self-efficacy. Providing opportunities for mastery experiences, constructive feedback, collaborative learning environments, and professional mentoring can strengthen teachers' confidence in their instructional abilities and help them manage emotional challenges more effectively.

Finally, promoting supportive school environments that recognize teachers' professional responsibilities and provide psychological and professional support may contribute to improved emotional well-being and greater teaching effectiveness. Such initiatives can ultimately lead to more positive educational outcomes for both teachers and students.

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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 the ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

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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