

**EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND THE WELLBEING OF CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS
IN BENIN CITY**

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**UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
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PG/IED2416275**

**A RESEARCH PROJECT WRITTEN IN THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, AND
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CITY.**

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CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, certify that this research work was written and submitted by me,
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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to Jehovah God, the Almighty who made this program possible at his appointed time.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines emotional Labour and the wellbeing of early childhood educators in Benin City. To achieve this objective, five research questions were posed and answered.

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study, and the sample comprised 150 early childhood teachers selected through a multi-stage sampling procedure. The data collection instrument was a self-structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated by three experts in the field of early childhood education, health and counselling psychologists. Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the instrument's internal consistency, yielding an alpha of 0.89. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations). The findings revealed that early childhood teacher experienced a high level of emotional Labour in their professional roles. In addition, emotional Labour affects the wellbeing of early childhood teachers. Furthermore, the study indicates that the emotional Labour experienced by early childhood teachers is triggered by contextual factors such as workload, low salaries, large class sizes (high pupil-to-teacher ratios), school management policies and cultural expectations of teachers. Moreover, the study revealed that early childhood teachers employ various strategies, such as prayer, spiritual activities, positive thinking, peer support, relaxation and exercise, in coping with emotional Labour. Additionally, the study indicated that the support system available for the teachers includes family, friends, colleagues and training opportunities. However, management's institutional support was limited.

Based on these findings, the study recommends, among others, that school management and educational authorities should establish structured emotional support systems for teachers, such as counselling services, mentorship programs and regular wellbeing check-ins. Government and school proprietors should reduce class sizes, provide adequate teaching resources, and ensure fair workload distribution to minimise emotional stress among teachers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Emotional Labour has emerged as a critical concept for understanding teachers' experiences, particularly those working in early childhood education (ECE). The term, coined by Hochschild (1983), refers to the process by which employees regulate their emotions to meet the expectations of their professional roles. In the context of teaching, this involves not only managing personal feelings but also deliberately displaying or suppressing emotions to foster a positive learning environment and meet institutional or societal norms. Early childhood educators (ECEs) are uniquely positioned within this dynamic, as their work is deeply relational and requires sustained emotional engagement with young children, families, and colleagues.

Teaching is widely recognised as an emotionally demanding profession. Teachers are entrusted with the dual responsibility of imparting knowledge and nurturing children's holistic development, including their social-emotional competencies. In early childhood settings, the emotional demands are heightened by young children's developmental needs, which require warmth, empathy, and responsive interactions to thrive. The quality of teacher-child interactions has been shown to significantly influence children's social-emotional development, classroom behaviour, and long-term wellbeing. Teachers must consistently exhibit positive emotions, even in the face of challenging behaviours, limited resources, and high workloads.

Globally, the importance of social-emotional learning (SEL) in early childhood education has gained prominence, with frameworks such as the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) advocating its integration into educational systems. SEL emphasises the development of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness,

relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, all of which are fostered through emotionally supportive teacher-child relationships. In Nigeria, recent policy documents, including the National Policy on Education and the National Early Childhood Development Policy, underscore the significance of ECE and the need for qualified, emotionally competent educators.

Despite these policy advancements, the realities of early childhood education in Nigeria and specifically in Benin City are marked by systemic challenges. Many ECE centres operate with inadequate resources, insufficient teacher training, and high teacher-to-student ratios, hindering educators' capacity to provide individualised emotional support. The sector is predominantly privatised, with disparities in quality and access between public and private providers. Teachers often face low remuneration, limited professional recognition, and high turnover rates, all of which contribute to emotional exhaustion and burnout.

Empirical studies from Nigeria and West Africa highlight the multifaceted nature of emotional Labour among teachers. For instance, Obijiofor and Ugwele (2025) found that teacher-child interactions in Southeast Nigeria are shaped by warmth and empathy but are inconsistently delivered due to classroom size and workload. Teachers in Benin City, specifically those in early childhood settings, have been reported to encounter work-related challenges such as low remuneration, late payment of salaries, lack of appreciation of work done, poor school environment, overcrowded classrooms, which exert physical and emotional toll on the teachers (Uwadiae & Otulu, 2024; Uwadiae & Iyamu, 2023). Despite these challenges, teachers are expected to provide the necessary care, learning and nurturing environment for the children, in line with professional ethics. This emotional Labour not only affects teachers psychologically but also has significant implications for their physical wellbeing. Physical wellbeing includes teachers' energy levels, sleep quality, general health status, and resistance to illness. Chronic emotional stress can trigger physiological responses

that negatively affect physical health.

The theoretical frameworks underpinning emotional Labour and teacher wellbeing are diverse. Hochschild's (1983) distinction between surface acting (feigning emotions) and deep acting (genuinely modifying emotions) provides a foundation for understanding how teachers navigate emotional demands. The Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) model further elucidates how high job demands and insufficient resources lead to burnout and emotional exhaustion among educators. Emotional intelligence and reflective functioning have been identified as protective factors, enabling teachers to manage stress, build resilience, and maintain psychological wellbeing.

In Benin City, the landscape of early childhood education reflects both the promise and the challenges of emotional Labour. The city hosts a range of public and private ECE centres with varying quality standards, teacher qualifications, and resource allocation. Local studies indicate that while some centres maintain high standards of learning activities and secure environments, others struggle with staffing, facilities, and curriculum implementation. Teachers in Benin City report experiences of emotional Labour in managing classroom dynamics, engaging with parents, and coping with institutional pressures.

The implications of emotional Labour for teacher wellbeing are profound. Research demonstrates that chronic emotional Labour, particularly surface acting, is associated with increased stress, emotional exhaustion, and intentions to leave the profession. Conversely, deep acting and authentic emotional engagement can enhance job satisfaction, resilience, and professional commitment. Interventions such as mindfulness training, professional development, and supportive work environments have shown promise in reducing teacher stress and promoting wellbeing.

Given the rising emotional demands suffered by early childhood teachers and the documented implications for occupational wellbeing, there is an urgent need to empirically

explore and understand the emotional Labour experienced by early childhood educators and its impacts on their wellbeing in Benin City.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers are agents of transformation, whose duty, by training, is to bring about behavioural change in their learners through a supportive and nurturing learning environment. In a bid to meet these professional requirements, teachers are expected to manage, regulate, and suppress emotions to maintain good relationships with pupils, co-workers and parents in the face of internal and external stressors such as poor pay, delayed salaries, poor school environment, large class size and lack of opportunities for professional development, among others. Thus, persistent demonstration of this professional need over time often results in a mismatch between felt and displayed emotions, which, if left unchecked, can negatively affect workers' mental health and overall wellbeing.

Despite growing recognition of emotional Labour as a central component of teaching, there remains a significant gap in understanding how early childhood educators in Benin City experience and navigate it in their daily professional lives. While the existing literature has predominantly focused on the cognitive and academic dimensions of teaching, less attention has been paid to the challenges faced by early childhood educators in Benin City, particularly those related to emotional Labour and its impact on their wellbeing. In response to this knowledge gap in the literature, this study is imperative.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

1. How do early childhood educators in Benin City experience emotional Labour in their professional roles?
2. What are the perceived impacts of emotional Labour on the wellbeing of early childhood educators in Benin City?

3. What are the contextual factors influencing the emotional Labour and wellbeing of early childhood educators in Benin City?
4. How do early childhood educators in Benin City cope with the emotional demands of their work?
5. What support systems are available for early childhood educators in Benin City?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the emotional Labour experienced by early childhood educators and its impacts on their wellbeing. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Find out the emotional Labour experienced by early childhood educators in their professional roles.
2. Investigate the perceived impacts of emotional Labour on teacher wellbeing.
3. Identify contextual factors that influence the emotional Labour of early childhood educators in Benin City
4. Determine how early childhood educators in Benin City cope with emotional labour demands of their work.
5. Ascertain the support system available for early childhood educators in Benin City.

Significance of the Study

This study, when published, will be significant to early childhood educators, educational institutions, policymakers, children, families and the academic community and will add to existing literature.

The study provides a platform for educators in Benin City to share their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies related to emotional Labour. By articulating these experiences, the research validates the emotional complexities of teaching and highlights the importance of teacher wellbeing as a professional and personal concern.

In addition, the study's findings can inform the development of supportive policies,

professional development programs, and institutional practices that prioritise teacher wellbeing. By understanding the specific emotional demands faced by early childhood educators, institutions can design interventions that address burnout, promote resilience, and enhance job satisfaction.

Moreover, teacher wellbeing is closely linked to the quality of teacher-child interactions and, consequently, to children's social-emotional development and learning outcomes. By supporting educators in managing emotional Labour, the study indirectly contributes to improved educational experiences for children and stronger partnerships with families.

Furthermore, the research addresses a critical gap in the literature by providing context-specific insights into emotional labour and teacher wellbeing in Benin City. It enriches the theoretical discourse on emotional labour and teacher wellbeing, offering empirical evidence from a Nigerian urban context.

The study will serve as a reference point by adding to the existing body of knowledge in early childhood education.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study centres on investigating the emotional Labour experienced and teacher wellbeing among early childhood educators. It is limited to early childhood teachers in both private and public early childhood centres in Benin City. The study specifically focused on emotional Labour, wellbeing of early childhood educators, contextual factors influencing emotional Labour, coping strategies and support systems available for Early Childhood Educators. It excludes other factors, such as early childhood teachers' emotional intelligence. In addition, it excludes the collection of qualitative data.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were operationally defined as follows:

Emotional Labour: The process by which early childhood educators manage, regulate and display emotions to meet the expectations of their professional roles, institutions and societal norms. Emotional Labour encompasses both surface acting (feigning emotions) and deep acting (genuinely modifying emotions), as well as the internal strategies employed to align emotional expressions with professional standards.

Teacher wellbeing: Refers to the overall state of mental, emotional and physical health of educators, influenced by job demands, resources and personal coping strategies. Teacher wellbeing includes dimensions such as job satisfaction, emotional resilience, psychological capital and quality of life.

Early Childhood Educators: Professionals who work directly with children aged 0-5 years in early childhood education settings, including crèches, nurseries and kindergartens.

Social – Emotional Learning (SEL): A framework for promoting the development of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making in children and adults. SEL is integral to early childhood education and is fostered through emotionally supportive teacher-child interactions.

Surface Acting: A form of emotional Labour in which educators feign or suppress emotions to conform to professional expectations, without genuinely modifying their internal feelings.

Deep Acting: A form of emotional Labour in which educators actively attempt to modify their internal feelings to align with professional expectations, resulting in more authentic emotional expressions.

Psychological Capital: A positive psychological state characterised by self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience, which enables educators to cope with the emotional demands of their work.

Burnout: A state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to job-related stressors, often associated with chronic emotional Labour.

Resilience: The capacity of educators to adapt to and recover from adversity, stress, or emotional challenges in their professional roles.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed related literature relevant to the study under the following subheadings:

- Theoretical Framework of Emotional Labour
- Conceptual Review of Emotional Labour and Teacher Well-Being
- Experiences and Navigation of Emotional Labour among Early Childhood Educators in Benin City.
- Perceived Impacts of Emotional Labour on the Wellbeing of Early Childhood Educators in Benin City
- Contextual Factors Influencing Emotional Labour and Teacher Wellbeing in Benin city
- Coping Strategies Adopted by Early Childhood Educators in Benin City
- Support System Available to Early Childhood Educators in Benin City

Theoretical Framework of Emotional Labour

This study is anchored on Emotional Labour Theory as posited by Arli Russell Hochschild in 1983. The theory explains how organizations regulate workers' emotions through explicit and implicit rules known as "feeling rules." These rules dictate what emotions are appropriate to express in specific situations. In educational settings, teachers are expected to be calm, caring, patient, and emotionally stable regardless of personal challenges or workplace stressors.

Hochschild's theory emphasizes that emotional labour becomes problematic when there is a persistent mismatch between felt emotions and displayed emotions. Over time, this emotional dissonance can negatively affect workers' mental health and overall well-being. For early childhood educators, who must consistently provide emotional care to children while managing large class sizes, limited resources, and administrative pressures, emotional

dissonance may be a common experience.

Other scholars have expanded Hochschild's work by highlighting the positive and negative outcomes of emotional labour. While emotional labour can enhance professional effectiveness and strengthen teacher-child relationships, excessive emotional regulation without adequate support may result in burnout, job dissatisfaction, and emotional withdrawal. Therefore, the theoretical framework of emotional labour provides a useful lens for examining how emotional demands in early childhood education influence teacher well-being.

Conceptual Review of Emotional Labour and Teacher Well-Being

Emotional labour, as originally conceptualised by Hochschild (1983), refers to the process by which workers manage and regulate their emotions to meet the emotional expectations of their job roles. Within educational settings, particularly early childhood education (ECE), emotional labour is an inherent and unavoidable component of teachers' daily work. Early childhood educators are expected not only to teach and care for young children but also to display warmth, patience, empathy, enthusiasm, and emotional stability, even in the face of stress, fatigue, or personal challenges.

In the context of early childhood education, emotional labour goes beyond surface interactions. Teachers are required to constantly engage in emotional regulation while responding to children's developmental needs, managing classroom behaviour, communicating with parents, and complying with institutional expectations. Scholars such as Grandey (2015) and Sutton and Wheatley (2003) argue that teaching is one of the most emotionally demanding professions because teachers must continuously align their internal feelings with socially and professionally prescribed emotional display rules.

In Nigeria, and specifically in Benin City, early childhood educators operate within socio-cultural and institutional contexts that further intensify emotional demands. These contexts

include large class sizes, limited instructional resources, low remuneration, role overload, and high parental expectations. As a result, emotional labour becomes a central feature of teachers' lived experiences.

Experiences and Navigation of Early Childhood Educators

Studies conducted in Edo State provide valuable insights into how early childhood educators experience emotional labour in their professional roles. Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023) examined the occupational stress of early childhood care and development teachers in Benin City. Their findings revealed that teachers frequently experienced emotional exhaustion arising from prolonged interaction with young children, excessive workload, inadequate teaching materials, and pressure to meet administrative and parental expectations. The study highlighted that teachers were often required to suppress feelings of frustration, anxiety, and fatigue while maintaining a calm and nurturing disposition in the classroom.

Similarly, Uwadiae and Owie (2012) examined stress-related experiences among teachers and emphasized that emotional strain is a major component of occupational stress in the teaching profession. Their study revealed that teachers are expected to present themselves as emotionally composed and motivated regardless of internal stressors. For early childhood educators, this expectation is intensified due to the vulnerability of young learners and societal beliefs that early childhood teachers should be naturally caring and endlessly patient.

Moreover, Uwadiae et al. (2019) conducted a study on perceived sources of job stress among primary school teachers in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State. Although the study focused on primary school teachers, its findings are highly relevant to early childhood educators. The study identified emotional demands, classroom management challenges, workload pressure, and role conflict as significant sources of stress. Teachers reported that managing pupils' behaviour while maintaining emotional control was one of the most

stressful aspects of their job, suggesting a strong link between emotional labour and job stress.

These findings align with the experiences of early childhood educators, who often work under similar conditions. Teachers are required to remain emotionally available to children who may display challenging behaviours, emotional distress, or developmental difficulties, while simultaneously meeting curriculum demands and institutional expectations.

Researchers have identified different forms of emotional labour, including surface acting, deep acting, and genuine emotional expression (Hochschild, 1983; Grandey, 2000). Surface acting involves suppressing true emotions and displaying emotions that are not genuinely felt, while deep acting involves attempting to internally modify one's feelings to align with expected emotional displays.

Early childhood educators often engage in surface acting when they hide feelings of frustration, anger, or exhaustion in order to appear calm and caring in front of children. According to Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023), teachers reported that they frequently smiled, used soft tones, and displayed patience even when they felt emotionally overwhelmed. This constant emotional regulation, when prolonged, was found to contribute to emotional exhaustion and burnout.

Deep acting, on the other hand, is commonly used by teachers who consciously remind themselves of the importance of their role in shaping young lives. Studies by Sutton (2004) and Yin et al. (2016) suggest that teachers who engage in deep acting may experience more positive outcomes, such as emotional fulfilment and job satisfaction. Some early childhood educators cope with emotional demands by reframing challenging situations as opportunities to support children's growth and development.

Genuine emotional expression also plays a role in early childhood education, as teachers often develop authentic emotional bonds with their pupils. However, while such emotional

connections can be rewarding, they can also increase vulnerability to emotional strain, especially when teachers lack institutional support.

Early childhood educators employ various strategies to navigate emotional labour in their roles. One common strategy identified in the literature is peer support. Uwadiae and Owie (2012) noted that teachers often rely on informal interactions with colleagues to share experiences, release emotional tension, and seek advice. Such interactions serve as emotional outlets and help teachers feel understood and supported.

Another strategy is personal emotion regulation and stress management. Teachers may engage in prayer, reflection, or self-encouragement to cope with emotional demands. In the Nigerian context, spirituality and religious beliefs play a significant role in how individuals manage stress. Studies by Kyriacou (2011) and Akinboye (2014) suggest that personal coping mechanisms, including religious faith, can buffer the negative effects of emotional labour.

Professional commitment and a sense of calling also influence how teachers navigate emotional labour. Some early childhood educators perceive teaching as a vocation rather than merely a job. This perception enables them to tolerate emotional demands and derive meaning from their work despite challenges. According to Day and Gu (2014), teachers who strongly identify with their professional roles are more likely to engage in deep acting rather than surface acting, thereby reducing emotional dissonance.

However, the literature also reveals that coping strategies are often insufficient in the absence of institutional support. Uwadiae et al. (2019) emphasized that teachers' ability to manage emotional stress is significantly influenced by working conditions, administrative support, and access to professional development opportunities.

Institutional factors play a crucial role in shaping how early childhood educators experience and navigate emotional labour. Many early childhood education centres operate with limited

resources, inadequate teacher-child ratios, and minimal welfare provisions. These conditions intensify emotional demands and reduce teachers' capacity to cope effectively.

Research by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) indicates that lack of administrative support and unclear role expectations increase emotional strain among teachers. In similar vein, Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023) found that early childhood educators in Benin City experienced heightened emotional stress due to poor remuneration, delayed salaries, and limited opportunities for career advancement. These factors contribute to emotional dissonance, where teachers' internal feelings conflict with the positive emotions they are expected to display.

In addition, cultural expectations also influence emotional labour in early childhood education. In Nigerian society, for instance, teachers, especially those working with young children, are expected to be morally upright, emotionally stable, and endlessly patient. These societal expectations place additional emotional pressure on educators and discourage open expression of emotional difficulties.

Beyond the Nigerian context, numerous studies have examined emotional labour among teachers. For instance, Chang (2009) found that emotional labour significantly predicts teacher burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion. Similarly, Yin et al. (2016) reported that surface acting was positively associated with burnout, while deep acting was linked to job satisfaction.

A study by Tsang (2018) on early childhood educators revealed that emotional labour is intensified by close teacher-child relationships and high parental involvement. These findings resonate with the experiences of early childhood educators, who often manage strong emotional attachments to children while navigating parental expectations.

In a more recent study, Burić and Frenzel (2020) emphasized that teachers' emotion regulation strategies significantly influence their wellbeing and instructional effectiveness. The study highlighted the importance of institutional support in helping teachers manage

emotional labour sustainable.

Emotional labour has emerged as a critical concept in understanding the lived experiences and overall wellbeing of teachers, particularly those in early childhood education. Early childhood educators are required to engage in sustained emotional interactions with young children who are still developing emotionally, socially, and cognitively. These educators are expected to demonstrate warmth, patience, empathy, enthusiasm, and emotional stability irrespective of their personal feelings, challenges, or stressors. Such expectations often require teachers to regulate, suppress, or modify their emotions to meet institutional and societal standards, thereby placing significant emotional demands on them.

In Benin City, early childhood educators work within a context characterized by increasing enrolment rates, limited instructional resources, large class sizes, and high parental expectations. These contextual realities intensify emotional labour and may have profound implications for teachers' psychological, emotional, physical, and social well-being. Understanding how emotional labour affects teacher wellbeing is therefore essential for improving both teacher retention and the quality of early childhood education.

Teacher wellbeing is a multidimensional construct that encompasses psychological well-being, emotional health, physical vitality, social functioning, and professional fulfilment. In early childhood education, teacher wellbeing is especially important because teachers' emotional states directly influence classroom climate, children's emotional development, and learning outcomes. Scholars have argued that emotionally healthy teachers are better positioned to provide nurturing and responsive care to young children.

Emotional labour intersects strongly with teacher wellbeing because the continuous regulation of emotions can either enhance or undermine teachers' health depending on how it is managed.

When emotional labour aligns with teachers' personal values and is supported by the school

environment, it may contribute to a sense of meaning and professional satisfaction. However, when emotional labour is excessive, unrecognized, or unsupported, it often results in negative wellbeing outcomes.

Perceived Impacts of Emotional Labour on the Wellbeing of Early Childhood Educators

Psychological wellbeing refers to teachers' mental health, emotional stability, sense of purpose, and overall psychological functioning. One of the most consistently reported impacts of emotional labour on early childhood educators is psychological strain.

Teachers who are required to constantly regulate their emotions may experience stress, anxiety, frustration, and feelings of being overwhelmed.

Uwadiae and Owie (2019) study revealed that persistent emotional demands, combined with workload pressure and limited institutional support, significantly contributed to psychological stress. Teachers reported symptoms such as constant worry, emotional tension, irritability, and reduced enthusiasm for teaching. The authors emphasized that when emotional stress is not managed effectively, it poses a serious threat to teachers' psychological well-being.

Similarly, Uwadiae et al. (2021) conducted a study on rating perceived sources of job stress among primary school teachers in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State. Their findings identified emotional demands, including managing children's behaviour, responding to parental expectations, and maintaining emotional composure, as major sources of job stress. The study further established that prolonged exposure to these emotional demands led to psychological outcomes such as emotional instability, reduced concentration, and feelings of inadequacy among teachers.

Empirical evidence from additional studies supports these findings. Yin et al. (2016) found that teachers who engaged extensively in surface acting experienced higher levels of

psychological distress and emotional dissonance. Chang (2013) also reported that early childhood educators who frequently suppressed their true emotions were more likely to experience anxiety and depressive symptoms. These findings suggest that emotional labour, particularly when it involves surface acting, negatively affects teachers' psychological well-being.

Emotional exhaustion is a core component of burnout and is closely linked to emotional labour. It refers to feelings of being emotionally drained, fatigued, and unable to give any more of oneself psychologically. Early childhood educators are particularly vulnerable to emotional exhaustion because their work requires constant emotional engagement with young children who demand high levels of attention, care, and emotional responsiveness.

Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023) noted that emotional exhaustion was one of the most prevalent outcomes of occupational stress among early childhood educators. Teachers reported feelings of persistent fatigue, emotional numbness, and loss of motivation. The authors observed that teachers who experienced high emotional demands without adequate emotional support were more likely to detach emotionally from their work, which negatively affected their wellbeing and teaching effectiveness.

Maslach and Leiter (2016) further explained that emotional exhaustion results from prolonged exposure to emotionally demanding work environments. In early childhood settings, teachers often have little opportunity for emotional recovery due to continuous interaction with children throughout the school day. Jennings and Greenberg (2019) also found that emotionally exhausted teachers were more likely to experience reduced job commitment and increased intentions to leave the profession.

Emotional labour does not only affect teachers psychologically but also has significant implications for their physical well-being. Physical wellbeing includes teachers' energy levels, sleep quality, general health status, and resistance to illness. Chronic emotional stress can

trigger physiological responses that negatively affect physical health.

Uwadiae and Owie (2019) reported that teachers experiencing high levels of stress frequently complained of physical symptoms such as headaches, chronic fatigue, body pains, and sleep disturbances. These symptoms were attributed to prolonged emotional strain and the absence of effective coping strategies. The study highlighted that emotional labour, when combined with large class sizes and inadequate teaching resources, exacerbated physical health challenges among teachers.

Supporting this view, Erickson and Ritter (2018) found that teachers who engaged in high levels of emotional labour reported more physical health complaints, including exhaustion and frequent illness. Similarly, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) established a strong relationship between emotional exhaustion and somatic symptoms such as dizziness, muscle tension, and general weakness among teachers.

Job satisfaction is a key indicator of teacher wellbeing and reflects teachers' overall evaluation of their professional roles. Emotional labour can influence job satisfaction positively or negatively depending on how teachers perceive and manage emotional demands. When teachers feel emotionally fulfilled and supported, emotional labour may enhance job satisfaction. However, excessive emotional demands often result in dissatisfaction.

Uwadiae et al. (2021) found that teachers who perceived their emotional efforts as unrecognized or undervalued reported lower levels of job satisfaction. Teachers expressed frustration when emotional regulation was treated as an invisible aspect of their work. The study concluded that lack of recognition and support intensified the negative effects of emotional labour on teachers' well-being.

Taxer and Frenzel (2015) reported that teachers who engaged in deep acting experienced higher job satisfaction compared to those who relied heavily on surface acting. However, in many early childhood centres in Benin City, teachers face contextual constraints such as

limited resources and high workloads, which may limit opportunities for deep acting and increase reliance on surface acting.

Social and professional wellbeing refers to teachers' ability to maintain healthy relationships with colleagues, administrators, parents, and the wider school community. Emotional labour significantly shapes these interactions. When emotional demands are excessive, teachers may experience strained relationships, withdrawal, or feelings of isolation.

Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023) reported that emotionally strained early childhood educators often experienced reduced collegial interaction and diminished professional collaboration. Teachers who felt emotionally overwhelmed were less likely to seek social support, thereby intensifying stress. The study emphasized that supportive professional relationships can buffer the negative effects of emotional labour.

Kelchtermans (2017) also noted that emotional labour affects teachers' professional identity. Teachers who consistently suppress their emotions may feel disconnected from their authentic selves, leading to reduced professional confidence and sense of belonging. This erosion of professional identity negatively impacts overall well-being.

Burnout is a long-term consequence of unmanaged emotional labour and poses a serious threat to teacher wellbeing and retention. Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Early childhood educators experiencing burnout may become detached from their work and less responsive to children's emotional needs.

Contextual Factors Influencing Emotional Labour and Teacher Wellbeing

Teaching, particularly in early childhood education (ECE), is widely recognized as an emotionally demanding profession. Early childhood educators are required not only to deliver curriculum content but also to manage young children's emotions, behaviors, and developmental needs, while simultaneously responding to expectations from parents, school

administrators, and society at large. Emotional labour, which refers to the regulation and management of one's emotions to meet professional expectations, is therefore an inherent aspect of early childhood teaching. However, the extent to which emotional labour affects teachers' wellbeing is largely shaped by contextual factors operating within the educational environment.

In Benin City, Edo State, early childhood educators work within specific institutional, cultural, socio-economic, and policy contexts that significantly influence how emotional labour is experienced and managed. These contextual factors may either support teachers' emotional wellbeing or intensify stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion. This section reviews empirical and theoretical literature on contextual factors influencing emotional labour and teacher well-being, with particular attention to studies conducted in Nigeria and comparable settings. Emphasis is placed on institutional conditions, workload, administrative support, cultural expectations, economic realities, and policy frameworks affecting early childhood educators in Benin City.

Institutional factors within schools play a major role in shaping teachers' emotional experiences and well-being. These include leadership style, school climate, and availability of resources, class size, workload, and interpersonal relationships within the school system. Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023) survey revealed that inadequate instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, and poor administrative support were significant stressors for teachers. These conditions increased emotional strain and required teachers to constantly suppress feelings of frustration in order to maintain a calm and nurturing disposition toward young learners. The study concluded that unfavorable institutional conditions heighten emotional labour demands and negatively affect teacher well-being.

Similarly, Uwadiae et al. (2019) found that heavy workload, poor school facilities, lack of recognition, and ineffective school leadership as major contributors to job stress. Teachers

reported that they were often expected to display patience, enthusiasm, and emotional stability despite working under challenging conditions. This expectation intensified emotional labour and contributed to emotional exhaustion and reduced job satisfaction.

Supporting these findings, Kyriacou (2015) noted that school environments characterized by limited resources and weak administrative support tend to increase teachers' emotional regulation demands. When teachers lack institutional backing, they are more likely to experience emotional dissonance, where their genuine feelings conflict with the emotions they are expected to display. This dissonance has been linked to stress, burnout, and declining psychological well-being.

In the Nigerian context, Ofoegbu and Nwadiani (2017) emphasized that ineffective school management practices often place additional emotional burdens on teachers. In many public and private early childhood centres, teachers are required to multitask, manage large classes, and handle administrative duties without corresponding support. Such conditions compel teachers to engage in sustained emotional labour, often at the expense of their mental and emotional health.

Workload and role expectations are critical contextual factors influencing emotional labour and teacher well-being. Early childhood educators in Benin City frequently perform multiple roles, including teaching, caregiving, classroom management, counseling, and sometimes health-related duties.

Uwadiae and Owie (2012), in their study *The Need for Stress Management in the Teaching Profession: Implication for National Development*, highlighted excessive workload as a major source of stress among teachers. The study found that teachers were expected to meet academic targets while simultaneously managing pupils' emotional and behavioral challenges. For early childhood educators, this pressure is even more pronounced due to the age and dependency level of the children. The authors argued that persistent workload stress

contributes to emotional fatigue and undermines teachers' overall well-being.

Other studies align with these findings. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017) reported that high workload and time pressure significantly predict emotional exhaustion among teachers. When teachers are overwhelmed with responsibilities, they are more likely to experience difficulty regulating emotions, leading to burnout and reduced professional effectiveness.

In Benin City, large class sizes are common, particularly in public early childhood centres. Adeyemi (2016) observed that overcrowded classrooms increase teachers' emotional demands, as managing young children's behavior requires patience, empathy, and constant emotional control. Teachers in such environments often suppress negative emotions such as anger or frustration to conform to professional norms, thereby increasing emotional labour. Furthermore, role ambiguity and conflicting expectations also contribute to emotional strain. According to Okeke and Dlamini (2020), unclear role definitions force teachers to navigate competing demands from school administrators, parents, and education authorities. This situation heightens emotional labour, as teachers must continually adjust their emotional responses to satisfy different stakeholders.

Economic conditions and socio-economic realities significantly influence teacher wellbeing and emotional labour. In Nigeria, teachers' remuneration, job security, and social status remain critical issues affecting their emotional experiences.

Uwadiae and Owie (2012) reported that inadequate salaries and delayed payment of wages contribute to chronic stress among teachers. For early childhood educators in Benin City, many of whom work in private schools with minimal job security, financial instability exacerbates emotional strain. Teachers are often required to display dedication and emotional commitment despite economic hardship, leading to emotional dissonance and dissatisfaction. A study by Alabi and Ofoegbu (2018) found that poor remuneration reduces teachers' motivation and increases emotional exhaustion. Teachers who struggle to meet basic

financial needs may find it difficult to sustain positive emotional displays in the classroom, thereby affecting both their wellbeing and teaching effectiveness.

Additional literature also supports the link between economic stress and emotional labour. Yin et al. (2018) observed that teachers experiencing financial strain are more vulnerable to emotional burnout, particularly in emotionally demanding roles such as early childhood education. The pressure to appear caring and enthusiastic despite financial hardship intensifies emotional labour and undermines psychological well-being.

Cultural norms and societal expectations play a significant role in shaping emotional labour among teachers. In many Nigerian communities, teaching is viewed as a moral and service-oriented profession, particularly at the early childhood level, where teachers are expected to act as surrogate parents.

Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023) noted that cultural expectations in Benin City place a strong emphasis on patience, self-sacrifice, and emotional restraint among teachers. Early childhood educators are expected to remain calm and nurturing regardless of personal stress or workplace challenges. This cultural expectation increases emotional labour, as teachers must suppress negative emotions to conform to societal ideals.

Similarly, Afolayan (2019) observed that societal undervaluation of the teaching profession contributes to emotional strain. While teachers are expected to demonstrate high emotional commitment, they often receive limited social recognition and support. This imbalance can lead to feelings of frustration and emotional exhaustion.

Cross-cultural studies further highlight the impact of cultural norms on emotional labour. Hargreaves (2017) argued that emotional expectations embedded in cultural values shape how teachers manage emotions and perceive their professional roles. In collectivist societies, such as Nigeria, teachers may prioritize communal expectations over personal well-being, thereby intensifying emotional labour.

Educational policies and regulatory frameworks also influence emotional labour and teacher well-being. Policies related to curriculum standards, teacher evaluation, and accountability can increase emotional demands on educators.

Uwadiae et al. (2019) reported that frequent policy changes and lack of clear implementation guidelines contribute to teacher stress. Early childhood educators in Benin City often struggle to adapt to new curriculum requirements without adequate training or resources. This situation increases anxiety and emotional strain, as teachers feel pressured to meet expectations despite limited support.

According to Darling-Hammond (2017), supportive education policies that prioritize teacher wellbeing can reduce emotional labour and enhance job satisfaction. However, in contexts where policies emphasize performance outcomes without addressing teachers' emotional needs, emotional exhaustion is likely to increase.

In Nigeria, Yusuf and Adigun (2021) observed that limited professional development opportunities for early childhood educators negatively affect emotional well-being. Teachers who lack access to training on stress management and emotional regulation may find it difficult to cope with the emotional demands of their work. The interpersonal relationships within and outside the school environments serve as important contextual factors influencing emotional labour. Supportive relationships with colleagues, administrators, parents, and family members can buffer the negative effects of emotional labour.

Uwadiae and Owie (2012) emphasized the importance of stress management strategies and social support in promoting teacher well-being. Their study found that teachers who received emotional support from colleagues and school administrators reported lower stress levels and better emotional adjustment.

Similarly, Johnson et al. (2019) found that positive collegial relationships reduce emotional exhaustion by providing opportunities for emotional expression and shared coping. In

contrast, poor interpersonal relationships increase emotional suppression and stress.

In the context of Benin City, Iyamu (2022) noted that strained relationships with parents, particularly in private early childhood centres, increase emotional labour. Teachers are often required to manage parental expectations and complaints while maintaining professionalism, which adds to emotional strain.

Coping Strategies Adopted by Early Childhood Educators

Teaching in early childhood settings is widely acknowledged as emotionally demanding, requiring educators to constantly regulate their feelings while meeting the academic, emotional, and social needs of young children. Emotional labour, when unmanaged, often leads to stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced wellbeing among teachers. As a result, early childhood educators adopt various coping strategies to manage emotional labour and sustain their well-being. Coping strategies refer to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural efforts individuals use to manage internal and external demands perceived as stressful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the context of early childhood education, these strategies are crucial for maintaining professional effectiveness and psychological balance.

Research evidence suggests that early childhood educators in Benin City employ both personal and institutional coping strategies to manage occupational stress and emotional demands. These strategies range from emotional regulation techniques, social support systems, professional coping mechanisms, to organizational and spiritual approaches.

Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023) conducted a study on occupational stress among early childhood care and development teachers in Benin City, Edo State. Their findings revealed that teachers frequently experienced emotional strain due to workload, classroom management challenges, and role conflict. To cope with these pressures, many teachers adopted emotion-focused coping strategies such as emotional suppression, patience, and conscious emotional regulation when dealing with children and parents. The study emphasized that while these

strategies help teachers maintain classroom harmony, prolonged emotional suppression may negatively affect their psychological wellbeing if not balanced with adequate support systems. Similarly, Uwadiae and Owie (2012), in their study titled *The Need for Stress Management in the Teaching Profession: Implication for National Development*, examined stress management practices among teachers in Edo State. Their findings indicated that teachers commonly relied on personal coping strategies such as time management, relaxation techniques, and positive self-talk to reduce stress. The study further highlighted that teachers who actively engaged in stress management practices demonstrated better emotional stability and job satisfaction. This implies that effective coping strategies are not only beneficial for teachers' wellbeing but also contribute to improved educational outcomes.

In another related study, Uwadiae et al. (2019) rated perceived sources of job stress among primary school teachers in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area of Edo State. The study revealed that teachers experienced stress from large class sizes, inadequate teaching resources, administrative pressure, and emotional demands from pupils. To cope with these stressors, teachers reported using strategies such as seeking social support from colleagues, engaging in informal peer discussions, and drawing emotional strength from family members. The study concluded that social support plays a significant role in buffering the negative effects of occupational stress among teachers.

Beyond local studies, international literature also provides insight into coping strategies adopted by early childhood educators. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) noted that teachers often employ emotional regulation strategies such as deep acting, surface acting, and emotional distancing to manage classroom interactions. While surface acting involves suppressing true emotions, deep acting allows teachers to genuinely align their emotions with professional expectations. The authors argued that deep acting is a healthier coping strategy compared to surface acting, as it reduces emotional dissonance and burnout.

A study by Kyriacou (2011) emphasized problem-focused coping as a critical strategy for managing teaching-related stress. According to the study, teachers who actively addressed the sources of stress such as improving classroom management skills or seeking professional development—were more resilient and emotionally balanced. This finding is relevant to early childhood educators in Benin City, where limited resources and overcrowded classrooms necessitate adaptive problem-solving skills.

In a related study, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) examined teacher self-efficacy and coping strategies. Their findings showed that teachers with high self-efficacy were more likely to use adaptive coping strategies, including seeking help, planning lessons effectively, and maintaining emotional boundaries. This suggests that strengthening teachers' professional confidence can enhance their ability to cope with emotional labour.

Research by Montgomery and Rupp (2005) further identified emotional regulation and cognitive reappraisal as key coping strategies among teachers. Cognitive reappraisal involves reframing stressful situations in a more positive or manageable way. For early childhood educators, this may include viewing challenging children as opportunities for professional growth rather than sources of stress.

In the Nigerian context, Adeyemo and Ogunyemi (2018) found that many teachers relied on spirituality and religious practices as coping mechanisms. Prayer, faith, and participation in religious activities were reported as sources of emotional comfort and resilience. This finding is particularly relevant in Benin City, where spirituality plays a significant role in daily life and emotional coping.

Similarly, Olusegun and Olaniyan (2017) reported that teachers often used social and emotional coping strategies such as humor, emotional expression, and informal peer interactions to manage workplace stress. These strategies help reduce emotional tension and foster a sense of belonging among educators.

A study by Ofoegbu and Nwadiani (2019) highlighted the importance of institutional coping strategies, including administrative support, workload distribution, and access to counseling services. Teachers who perceived strong institutional support reported lower levels of emotional exhaustion and higher job satisfaction. However, the study noted that such support systems are often inadequate in many public schools in Nigeria.

In another empirical study, Eze and Chinedu (2020) examined coping strategies among early childhood educators in urban Nigerian settings. The study found that teachers adopted a combination of emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies, including classroom routines, peer mentoring, and professional collaboration. The authors emphasized that collaborative coping strategies promote emotional resilience and reduce feelings of isolation. Further supporting this view, Akinwale (2016) observed that mentorship and professional networking serve as effective coping mechanisms for early childhood educators. Teachers who engaged in mentoring relationships reported better emotional regulation and professional satisfaction.

Recent literature by Yusuf and Afolayan (2021) revealed that teachers increasingly use self-care practices such as rest, leisure activities, and boundary-setting to manage emotional labour. These practices help educators recover emotionally and maintain work-life balance. Additionally, Salami (2019) found that emotional intelligence significantly influences teachers' choice of coping strategies. Teachers with high emotional intelligence were more likely to adopt adaptive coping strategies such as emotional awareness, empathy, and constructive communication.

A study by Farber (2018) emphasized the role of reflective practice as a coping strategy. Reflective practices, such as journaling and self-evaluation, allow teachers to process emotional experiences and develop effective coping responses.

In a related study, Hobfoll et al. (2018) introduced the Conservation of Resources Theory,

which suggests that individuals strive to acquire and protect emotional, social, and professional resources. Early childhood educators who actively build supportive relationships and professional competence are better equipped to cope with emotional labour.

Moreover, McCarthy et al. (2020) found that organizational coping strategies, including professional development workshops and stress management training, significantly reduced teacher burnout. The study recommended that educational institutions prioritize teacher wellbeing as part of school management practices.

Support System Available to Early Childhood Educators

A support system in education refers to the formal and informal structures, resources, and processes that enable teachers to perform their duties effectively, manage occupational stressors, and maintain mental well-being. For early childhood educators, support can include workplace policies, collegial networks, professional development, supervisory practices, social support from family and community, and access to psychological and material resources. The availability and effectiveness of these support mechanisms have been identified as pivotal influences on teacher emotional labour and well-being.

Broadly, teacher support systems encompass both organisational and social dimensions. According to the job demands-resources (JD-R) framework, resources such as organisational support, personal coping strategies, and social relationships can buffer the negative effects of job demands (such as emotional labour) on wellbeing (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In early childhood settings, where emotional labour is intrinsic to daily practice, support systems become even more critical for promoting resilience and job satisfaction.

Uwadiae and Owie (2012) emphasise that stress management and workplace support are core to sustaining teaching performance and national development. They argue that when educators receive adequate support, including stress-management training and organisational care, their capacity to handle complex emotional demands improves, thereby contributing to

better teacher wellbeing and educational outcomes. Their findings foreground the importance of systemic support for teachers operating in high-stress environments such as early childhood classrooms.

Research by Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023) on occupational stress among early childhood care and development teachers in Benin City revealed that teachers often experience moderate to high levels of stress associated with workplace conditions, salary delays, and resource constraints. These stressors were seen as undermining wellbeing and overall job satisfaction. However, the study also noted that where support was present—particularly among collegial peers and supportive administrators—teachers reported better coping with occupational stress. This linkage underscores that even limited support structures can have measurable positive effects on teacher morale.

In a related context, research by Uwadiae, et al (2022) on sources of job stress among primary school teachers in Ikpoba-Okha Local Government Area identified poor administrative support, lack of professional development opportunities, and inadequate psychological support as key contributors to stress. Although this study focused on primary rather than early childhood settings, the parallels in teacher support challenges highlight systemic gaps that likely extend to ECE contexts in Benin City and neighbouring area.

Organisational support in schooling systems includes policies and programmes that promote teacher well-being. Formal support mechanisms may consist of structured induction programmes, counselling services, peer mentoring, and professional development on

emotional regulation and stress management.

International literature has shown that perceived organisational support is a significant protective factor for teachers handling emotional labour. For example, Early childhood teachers' emotional labour: The role of job and personal resources in protecting wellbeing (2024) reported that organisational support positively predicted educators' wellbeing and helped moderate the adverse impact of emotional labour (such as surface acting) on psychological health. The authors argue that institutions that recognise teacher effort and provide support resources enhance job satisfaction and help reduce burnout.

Similarly, systematic reviews indicate that teachers require support from school leadership, colleagues, and institutional policies to manage the emotional and cognitive demands of teaching (li et al., 2023). Such support contributes to stronger job engagement, social-emotional competence, and a reduction in stress.

In the Benin City context, formal support structures are often limited in private early childhood settings, constrained by resource limitations and regulatory gaps. Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023) recommend that private operators and government regulators establish teacher support initiatives such as timely remuneration, structured professional support programmes, and wellbeing services to improve educators' job satisfaction and reduce occupational support.

Social support goes beyond formal institutional mechanisms to include interpersonal relationships among teachers, peers, family, and community stakeholders. Social support is recognised in teacher wellbeing literature as a buffer against stress and burnout.

Research on preschool teachers demonstrates that social support moderates emotional labour outcomes and is positively associated with career commitment and emotional resilience.

Specifically, wellbeing can promote emotional labour efficacy when educators have high social support, strengthening their career commitment and capacity to cope with stress.

In the early childhood context of Benin City, collegial networks among teachers often serve as informal support systems. Teachers share strategies for coping with challenging behaviours, emotional fatigue, and resource scarcity. These peer support structures can enhance emotional resilience and reinforce a sense of professional identity. Although understudied within Nigeria specifically, international research confirms that supportive colleague relationships are linked to improved emotional regulation and reduced stress among educators.

Professional development is an essential component of teacher support systems. Training in stress management, emotional intelligence, and classroom management equips educators with skills to handle emotional labour demands.

Uwadiae and Owie (2023) stress the need for stress-management education as part of professional growth for teachers. They argue that equipping teachers with coping strategies not only improves their personal wellbeing but also contributes to national development goals by enhancing teaching effectiveness and reducing turnover. Such training includes workshops, seminars, and continuous professional learning opportunities tailored to early childhood teaching contexts.

Globally, research supports embedding social-emotional learning (SEL) training into professional development to strengthen teacher competencies in managing emotional labour. SEL programmes have been shown to improve teaching quality, enrich teacher-child interactions, and support teacher well-being.

In Benin City, although there are sporadic professional development activities, systematic

and sustained training on emotional wellbeing and stress management remains limited. Strengthening partnerships between educational institutions, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations could expand access to professional support resources.

Support from family and community can mitigate the psychological burden experienced by early childhood educators. Family support serves as a personal resource, providing emotional sustenance and practical assistance that buffers against occupational stress. While there is limited empirical research on family support specific to ECE teachers in Benin City, global literature affirms its importance for teacher well-being. Educators who perceive strong family support report lower levels of burnout and higher job satisfaction.

Community involvement, through parent-teacher associations and local stakeholders, can also enhance support systems. Engagement with parents and community members fosters collaborative relationships, reinforcing shared responsibility for early childhood development. Formal community support networks can provide additional resources, such as caregiving support, mental health services, and recognition of teacher contributions.

Despite the recognition of various support mechanisms, significant gaps remain in the availability and effectiveness of comprehensive support systems for early childhood educators in Benin City. These include:

- Limited institutional support: Many private early childhood centres lack formal teacher support structures such as counselling services, peer mentoring programmes, or formal induction for new teachers.
- Inadequate professional development: Training opportunities are irregular and often do not focus on emotional labour and stress management specific to early childhood education.
- Economic constraints: Delayed salaries and insufficient remuneration undermine teachers' financial security and contribute to stress that is not adequately addressed by

workplace support.

- Policy and regulatory gaps: The absence of robust regulatory frameworks for private early childhood education in Benin City constrains the implementation of standard support initiatives.

Collectively, the literature reveals that support systems for early childhood educators are multifaceted, spanning organisational, social, personal, and community dimensions. Uwadaiae and Iyamu (2023) underscore that occupational stressors in Benin City's early childhood context are significant, but within these challenges, support systems—even if informal—play a critical role in sustaining teacher well-being.

International research reinforces that organisational support, professional development, and social support significantly influence how educators manage emotional labour and maintain well-being. Teacher support as conceptualised by the JD-R model and SEL frameworks indicates that bolstering resources can reduce stress, enhance job satisfaction, and improve retention.

For Benin City, leveraging existing support structures while systematically strengthening formal supports through policy, regulation, and professionalisation could significantly improve early childhood educators' wellbeing and capacity to manage emotional labour effectively.

Summary of Literature Reviewed

This chapter reviewed relevant literature on emotional labour and teacher wellbeing with a focus on early childhood educators. The reviewed studies indicate that emotional labour is a central aspect of early childhood teaching and has significant implications for teachers' well-being. Contextual factors such as institutional conditions, cultural expectations, and policy gaps intensify emotional demands, while coping strategies and support systems remain largely informal. Despite the intensity of emotional related labour experienced by early

childhood teachers, there is not much study to focusing on coping strategies and the role of support systems in this regard. Consequent upon this identified gap in the literature, the current study becomes imperative.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the methodology of the study under the following subheadings:

- Research Design
- Population of the study
- Sample and Sampling Techniques
- Research Instrument
- Validity of the Instrument
- Reliability of the Instrument
- Methods of Data Collection
- Method of Data Analysis

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The survey design was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to collect data from a large number of respondents at a single point in time to describe existing conditions, attitudes, and perceptions. In this study, the descriptive survey design enabled the researcher to gather information and describe emotional labour and the wellbeing as experienced by early childhood educators in Benin City.

The choice of a quantitative survey design was suitable because the study sought to quantify teachers' perceptions, experiences, and coping strategies using structured questionnaire items. The design also enabled the use of statistical techniques to analyse the data, thereby enhancing objectivity and clarity in interpreting the findings.

Population of the Study

The study population comprised all early childhood educators currently working in public and private early childhood education centres in Benin City, Edo State. Benin City is

administratively divided into three Local Government Areas: Oredo, Egor, and Ikpoba-Okha. These local governments host a significant number of public nursery and early childhood education centres under the supervision of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and the Ministry of Education, Benin City.

Based on available statistics from the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and the Ministry of Education, Benin City, the number of public early childhood educators in Oredo Local Government Area is 159. (159), Egor local Government Area has seventy-eight (78), while Ikpoba/Okha has one hundred and fourteen (114), making a total of three hundred and fifty-one (351). These educators were part of the study's target population. The population was considered appropriate because early childhood educators are directly involved in emotional interactions with young children and are therefore well-positioned to provide relevant information for the study. For the private schools, there were no available statistics on the early childhood teachers.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size for this study was 142, comprising 83 public and 59 private early childhood teachers, selected from Benin City, Edo State, using a multistage sampling technique. The stages were conducted as follows:

Stage one involves clustering Benin City into three Local Government Areas: Oredo, Egor, and Ikpoba-Okha. This was done to ensure adequate geographical representation. In stage two, a proportionate allocation was used to determine the number of respondents selected from each local government, based on the population of early childhood teachers. Subsequently, the systematic sampling technique was used to select. In the public schools, thirty-eight (38) early childhood teachers were selected from Oredo, eighteen (18) were selected from Egor and twenty-seven (27) from Ikpoba-Okha Local Government, thus resulting in eighty-three (83) respondents. For the private schools, which do not have reliable

statistics, twenty-seven (270) early childhood teachers were selected from Oredo, thirteen from Egor and nineteen (19) from Ikpoba-Okha. Consequently, a sample size of one hundred and forty-two (142) early childhood teachers was selected for the study.

Research Instrument

The data collection instrument was a questionnaire developed by the researcher following a thorough review of relevant literature. The questionnaire was designed to align with the study's objectives and research questions.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections: A and B. Section A collected data on respondents' demographic characteristics, including gender, age, educational qualifications, years of teaching experience, and school type. Section B collected data on the stated research questions, focusing on emotional labour, perceived impact on teacher wellbeing, contextual factors influencing emotional labour, coping strategies, and available support systems among early childhood educators in Benin City.

The items in Section B were structured using a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. This format enabled respondents to express the extent of their agreement with each statement.

Validity of the Instrument

The research instrument was subjected to face and content validity through expert judgment of three lecturers, comprising Early Childhood and Health Educators and a counselling psychologist. Their suggestions and corrections were incorporated to ensure that the items adequately covered the concepts of emotional labour and teacher wellbeing.

Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha on pilot data from 50 early childhood educators selected outside the sample of interest but who shared the same characteristics as the population of interest. A Cronbach's Alpha reliability index of 0.89 was obtained.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher collected data for the study by administering the questionnaire directly to the respondents. The questionnaires were distributed personally to the early childhood educators in their various schools and collected after completion. This method ensured a high return rate and allowed the researcher to clarify any issues that arose during the administration process. Respondents were assured of confidentiality, and participation was voluntary. Adequate time was given to the respondents to complete the questionnaire. Informed consent was also obtained.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as means and standard deviations, in IBM SPSS version 23.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This chapter focused on the analysis of data, presentation of results and discussion of findings.

Presentation Results Research Question One

To what extent do early childhood educators in Benin City experience emotional labour?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Extent to Which Early Childhood Educators in Benin City Experience Emotional Labour

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
My job requires me to remain calm even when I feel upset or stressed	3.56	.66	Agree
I often hide my true feelings in order to appear patient and caring to children	3.55	.64	Agree
Expectation to always show positive emotion while teaching	3.60	.62	Agree
Dealing with children's behaviours requires a lot of emotional effort from me	3.58	.54	Agree
Interaction with parents increases my emotional responsibilities at work	3.28	.88	Agree
Cluster	3.51	0.67	

Table 1 shows the mean responses on the extent to which early childhood teachers in Benin City experience emotional labour in carrying out their professional roles. The item "Expectations to always show positive emotion while teaching" recorded the highest mean score (M=3.60, SD=0.62), suggesting that teachers perceive a strong expectation to demonstrate positive emotions during classroom interactions, with relatively low variability in response. Similarly, "Dealing with children's behaviours requires a lot of emotional effort" (M=3.58, SD=0.54), indicating that managing children's behaviour demands a high mean score. Moreover, the item "ethical responsibility to maintain composure despite challenging situations" recorded a score reflecting teachers' perception of the need to

regularly regulate their emotions to meet professional expectations, even in the face of difficulties. The item "Often hiding true feelings to appear patient and caring to children" had a mean score of 3.55 (SD=0.64), indicating that teachers regularly regulate their emotions to meet professional expectations, even in the face of difficulties. The item "Interaction with parents increases early childhood teachers' emotional responsibilities at work" had the least mean score (M=3.28, SD=.88); however, it was higher than the criterion mean of 2.50, implying that while teachers generally acknowledged that interactions with parents intensify their emotional responsibilities, the level of agreement among participants is relatively lower compared to other aspects of emotional labour. The relatively higher standard deviation further reflects greater variation on the issue.

A cluster mean of 3.51 indicates that early childhood teachers in Benin City experience a relatively high level of emotional labour in the course of carrying out their professional role.

Research Question Two

What are the perceived impacts of emotional labour on the wellbeing early childhood teachers in Benin City?

Table 2: Perceived Impacts of Emotional Labour on the Wellbeing Early Childhood Teachers in Benin City

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the school day	3.33	.71	Agree
My work causes me frequent stress or anxiety	3.31	.72	Agree
Emotional stress from teaching affects my physical health	3.19	.88	Agree
I feel emotionally drained due to the emotional demands of my job	3.01	.89	Agree
I have considered leaving teaching because of emotional stress	2.95	.95	Agree

Table 2 presents the mean responses on the perceived impact of emotional labour on the wellbeing of early childhood teachers, with mean scores ranging from 2.95 to 3.33. The item "Feeling emotionally exhausted at the end of the school day" recorded the highest mean score ($M=3.33$, $SD=.71$), indicating that teachers' perception of emotional exhaustion at the end of the school day was relatively strong, with low variability among participants. Correspondingly, "work causes frequent stress or anxiety" had a high mean score ($M=3.31$, $SD=.72$), reflecting teachers' acknowledgement of the stress associated with their work. In addition, the item "emotional stress from teaching affects teachers' health" had a high mean score ($M=3.19$, $SD=.88$), suggesting the acknowledgement that emotional stress affects teachers' physical health. The item "feeling of emotionally drained due to emotional demands of teaching job" had a mean score ($M=3.01$, $SD=.89$), indicating that teachers perceive daily accumulated emotional exhaustion from their job. However, the item "Considering leaving teaching because of emotional stress" had the lowest mean score ($M=2.95$, $SD=.95$), suggesting that teachers generally do not contemplate quitting the job despite the emotional stress associated with teaching. The level of agreement among participants is generally low compared to other items; the relatively higher standard deviation suggests variability on the issue among the participants.

The overall results indicate that early childhood teachers in Benin City perceived that emotional labour impacts their wellbeing, as indicated by mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50.

Research Question Three

What are the contextual factors influencing the emotional labour of early childhood educators in Benin City?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Contextual Factors Influencing the Emotional Labour of Early Childhood Educators, Benin City

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
My workload increases my emotional demand	3.20	.77	Agree
Poor salary affects my emotional stress	3.09	.85	Agree
Large class size makes emotional stress control difficult for me	3.07	.79	Agree
School management policies contribute to my emotional stress	2.97	.89	Agree
Cultural expectations of teachers increase emotional pressure on me	2.90	.95	Agree

Table 3 presents the contextual factors influencing the emotional labour of early childhood educators in Benin City. The item "Workload increases my emotional demand" had the highest mean score ($M=3.20$, $SD=.77$), suggesting that workloads increased teachers' emotional stress, with relatively low variability in responses. Similarly, the item "Poor salary affects emotional stress" had a high mean score ($M=3.09$, $SD=.85$), indicating that poor salary contributes to teachers' emotional stress. In addition, the item "Large class size makes emotional control difficult for me" had a mean ($M=3.07$, $SD=.79$), indicating that teaching and managing a large number of children affects their ability to regulate their emotional stress. The item "School management policies contribute to my emotional stress" had a mean score of 2.97 ($SD = .89$), indicating that school management policies contributed to teachers' emotional stress. Moreover, the "cultural expectations increases emotional pressure on the teacher" had a mean score ($M=2.90$, $SD=.95$), indicating that while the teachers generally agreed that expectations of teachers as not only drivers of classroom instructions but as agent whose roles include social, moral and caregiving has a multiplier impact on the emotional pressure experienced, the relatively low variability in response demonstrated with high standard deviation suggest greater variation on the issue among participants.

The overall results indicate a relatively strong influence of contextual factors on the emotional labour of early childhood educators in Benin City, as reflected in mean scores above a criterion mean of 2.5

Research Question Four

How do early childhood educators cope with the emotional demands of their work in Benin City?

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of how early childhood educators cope with emotional demands of their work in Benin City

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
I use prayer or spiritual activities to cope with work stress	3.40	.64	Agree
I talk to my colleagues to reduce emotional stress	3.18	.69	Agree
I try to stay positive even during emotional difficult situation	3.32	.55	Agree
I take personal time to relax after work	3.23	.64	Agree
I can manage emotional stress effectively	3.26	.63	Agree
I take supplements to cope with emotional stress	2.81	.78	Agree
I exercise to reduce the effect of emotional stress	3.01	.76	Agree

Table 4 presents the mean responses regarding how early childhood educators cope with the emotional demands of their work in Benin City. The item "Use of prayer or spiritual activities to cope with work stress" had the highest mean score ($M=3.40$, $SD=.64$), indicating that teachers agreed that focusing on supernatural beings through prayers and spiritual activities serves as a buffer against work stress. Similarly, the item "Staying positive even during emotionally difficult situations" had a high mean score ($M=3.32$, $SD=.55$), suggesting that displaying a positive outlook in the face of challenging situations enables teachers to cope with the emotional demands of their work. Moreover, the item "Able to manage

emotional stress effectively" had a high mean score ($M=3.26$, $SD=.63$), indicating the teachers' perception of their ability to manage stress effectively. The item "Taking personal time to relax after work" had a mean score ($M=3.23$, $SD=.64$), suggesting that personal responsibility for self-managing work-related stress after daily cushion stress. The item "Exercising to reduce the effect of emotional stress" had a mean score ($M=3.01$, $SD=.76$), suggesting that engaging in exercise serves as a coping strategy for reducing the effects of emotional stress. Lastly, the item "Taking supplements to cope with emotional stress" had the lowest mean score ($M=2.81$, $SD=.78$), suggesting that teachers use supplements as a coping strategy for emotional stress.

The overall results indicate that participants in Benin City use a relatively high level of coping strategies to manage the emotional demands of their work.

Research Question Five

What support systems are available for early childhood educators in Benin City?

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Support Systems Available for Early Childhood Educators in Benin City

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remarks
My school management provides emotional support to teachers,	2.97	.80	Agree
I receive encouragement and support from my colleagues	3.06	.64	Agree
training and workshops help me manage emotional stress	3.17	.71	Agree
Family and friends help me manage the emotional effects of work stress	3.34	.74	Agree
I felt the need to seek religious/spiritual counsel to cope with emotional stress	3.11	.84	Agree

Table 5 presents the mean responses on the support systems available to early childhood educators in Benin City, with mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating a strong support system. From the table, the item "Family and friend help manage work stress"

had the highest mean ($M=3.34$, $SD=.74$), suggesting that family and friends are instrumental in providing a support network for teachers to manage emotional stress arising from work. The item "Training and workshops help manage emotional stress" had a high mean score ($M=3.17$, $SD=.71$), indicating that teachers' participation in training and workshops helps in providing support for managing emotional stress. The item "Seeking religious/spiritual counsel to cope with emotional stress" had a high mean score ($M=3.11$, $SD=.84$), indicating that teachers agreed that seeking supernatural counsel is a useful coping strategy for emotional stress. The item "Received encouragement and support from my colleagues" had a mean score ($M=3.06$, $SD=.64$), suggesting that teachers receiving encouragement and support from co-workers serve as a cushion and coping strategy for emotional labour. Moreover, the item "School management provides emotional support to teachers" had the lowest mean score ($M=2.97$, $SD=.80$), suggesting that teachers agreed that school management providing emotional support serves as a coping strategy for emotional labour.

Discussion of Findings

The study investigated emotional labour and the wellbeing of early childhood educators in Benin City. The findings revealed that early childhood educators experience a relatively high level of emotional labour in their professional roles. This emotional labour is evident in their constant need to remain calm, display positive emotions, and suppress negative feelings while interacting with children and parents. These findings are consistent with Hochschild's (1983) conceptualisation of emotional labour as the regulation of feelings to meet job expectations. The result also aligns with Grandey (2015) and Sutton and Wheatley (2003), who emphasised that teaching is an emotionally demanding profession requiring continuous emotional regulation. Furthermore, the tendency of teachers to hide their true feelings supports Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023), who maintained that teachers constantly suppress their

feelings of frustration in order to perform their daily task of nurturing and caring for children. The findings revealed that emotional labour's impact on teachers' wellbeing indicates that it affects the psychological and physical health of early childhood educators. Teachers reported experiencing emotional exhaustion, stress, anxiety, and physical health challenges such as fatigue. This supports the findings of Uwadiae and Owie (2019), who identified psychological strain as a major outcome of occupational stress among teachers. Similarly, Chang (2009) and Yin et al. (2016) found that emotional labour, particularly surface acting, is strongly associated with burnout and emotional exhaustion. Although teachers reported stress and exhaustion, the relatively lower agreement on leaving the profession suggests a strong sense of commitment, which aligns with Day and Gu (2014), who noted that teachers with a strong professional identity often endure emotional challenges despite adverse conditions.

The study further revealed that contextual factors, including workload, low salaries, large class sizes, school management policies, and cultural expectations, influence emotional labour among early childhood educators. Workload emerged as the most prominent factor contributing to emotional stress, reinforcing the findings of Uwadiae et al. (2019), who identified heavy workload and role conflict as major stressors in the teaching profession. The influence of poor remuneration and inadequate institutional support also corroborates the findings of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2017), which highlight how unfavourable working conditions increase emotional pressure, reflecting the Nigerian societal context where teachers are expected to demonstrate patience, moral uprightness, and emotional stability at all times. These contextual realities collectively heighten emotional labour and negatively impact teacher wellbeing.

In terms of coping strategies, the findings indicate that early childhood educators use

various mechanisms to manage emotional demands, with prayer and spiritual activities emerging as the most prominent. This finding aligns with Akinboye (2014) and Kyriacou (2011), who emphasised the role of personal coping strategies, including spirituality, in managing stress within the Nigerian context. Teachers also relied on positive thinking, peer interaction, relaxation, and exercise, which support the findings of Uwadiae and Owie (2012) who noted that teachers often depend on informal support systems and personal regulation strategies to cope with emotional labour. The use of these strategies suggests a combination of emotion-focused and problem-focused coping mechanisms that help mitigate the negative effects of emotional demands, even though they may not eliminate stress.

Finally, the findings on support systems indicate that while early childhood educators have access to various forms of support, such as family, friends, colleagues, and training opportunities, institutional support from school management is relatively limited. This finding supports the assertion by Burić and Frenzel (2020) that institutional support plays a critical role in sustaining teachers' wellbeing. The strong reliance on informal support systems, particularly family and social networks, reflects the socio-cultural dynamics of Africa. However, the comparatively lower perception of administrative support suggests a gap in organisational structures needed to manage emotional labour effectively. This finding is consistent with Uwadiae and Iyamu (2023), who emphasised that the lack of institutional backing exacerbates emotional stress among teachers. Above all, the findings underscore the need for improved institutional support systems to complement existing personal and social coping mechanisms.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study examined emotional labour and teachers' wellbeing, focusing on early childhood educators in Benin City. Five research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do early childhood educators in Benin City experience emotional labour?
2. What are the perceived impacts of emotional labour on the wellbeing of early childhood educators?
3. What are the contextual factors influencing the emotional labour of early childhood educators in Benin City?
4. How do early childhood educators in Benin City cope with the emotional demands of their work?
5. What support systems are available for early childhood educators in Benin City?

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The sample consisted of 142 early childhood Education teachers selected through a multistage sampling technique from metropolitan local government areas, including Benin City. The instrument used to collect data was a questionnaire. The data was analysed with means and standard deviations.

Major Findings:

Based on the analysed data, the study revealed the following key findings;

1. Early childhood educators in Benin City experience a high level of emotional labour in their daily professional activities.
2. Emotional labour impacts on teachers' wellbeing, including emotional exhaustion, stress, anxiety, and physical health.
3. The study identified several contextual factors influencing emotional labour,

including heavy workloads, low salaries, large class sizes, school management practices, and cultural expectations.

4. Early childhood teachers rely on prayer and spiritual activities, positive thinking, peer support, relaxation, and exercise as coping strategies in managing emotional stress.
5. The study revealed that while support systems such as family, friends, colleagues, and training opportunities are available, institutional support from school management is relatively limited.

Conclusion

Based on this study's findings, it was concluded that emotional labour is an inherent and significant aspect of early childhood education in Benin City. Teachers are continuously required to regulate their emotions to meet professional and societal expectations, making emotional labour an unavoidable component of their work. The study further concludes that while emotional labour can contribute to professional fulfilment when properly managed, it can have negative implications for teachers' wellbeing when excessive and unsupported. Emotional exhaustion, stress, and health-related challenges are common among early childhood educators due to the persistent emotional demands of their roles.

Additionally, the study concludes that contextual factors such as workload, remuneration, class size, and institutional policies play a critical role in shaping the extent of emotional labour experienced by teachers. Without adequate institutional support, teachers are left to rely heavily on personal and informal coping mechanisms. Finally, although teachers demonstrate resilience through various coping strategies, the absence of strong institutional support systems limits the effectiveness of these strategies. Therefore, improving working conditions and providing structured support systems are essential for enhancing teacher wellbeing and effectiveness in early childhood education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. School management and educational authorities should establish structured emotional support systems for teachers, such as counselling services, mentorship programs, and regular wellbeing check-ins.
2. Government and school proprietors should reduce class sizes, provide adequate teaching resources, and ensure fair workload distribution to minimise emotional stress among teachers.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Given the scope of this study, the following areas are suggested for future research:

1. Explore the long-term effects of emotional labour on teacher retention and performance in Nigeria.
2. Investigate the impact of specific intervention programs (such as stress management training) on reducing emotional labour among teachers.

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APPENDIX QUESTIONNAIRE

Institute of Education University of Benin Benin City,

Edo State

27th January, 2026

Dear Sir/Ma

REQUEST TO FILL QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a Postgraduate Student of the above named University carrying out a study on **"Emotional Labour and the Well-Being of Early Childhood Educators in Benin City"**.

Your responses to the attached questionnaire will be useful to this study. I assure you that your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Mercy Urhohide

(Researcher)

SECTION A: Demographic Information

Gender: Male () Female () Age Range: Below 25 () 25-34 () 35-44 () 45 and above ()

Highest Educational Qualification: NCE () B.Ed/B.A () M.Ed/M.A () Others () Years of

Teaching Experience: 1-5 () 6-10 () 11-15 () 16 years and above () Type of School:

Public () Private ()

SECTION B: Experience of Emotional Labour

Instruction: This questionnaire is designed to collect information on emotional labour and teacher wellbeing among early childhood educators. Please tick (✓) the option that best represents your opinion. There is no right or wrong answer. All responses will be treated with strict confidentiality and used only for academic purposes. Scale: Strongly Agree (SA)

= 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
1.	My job requires me to remain calm even when I feel stressed or upset				
2.	I often hide my true feelings in order to appear patient and caring to children				
3.	I am expected to always show positive emotions while teaching				
4.	Dealing with children's behaviour requires a lot of emotional effort from me				
5.	Interactions with parents increase my emotional responsibilities at work				

SECTION C: Impact of Emotional Labour on Well-Being

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
6.	I feel emotionally exhausted at the end of the school day.				
7.	My work causes me frequent stress or anxiety				
8.	Emotional stress from teaching affects my physical health.				
9.	I feel mentally drained due to the emotional demands of my job				
10.	I have considered leaving teaching because of emotional stress				

SECTION D: Contextual Factors Influencing Emotional Labour

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
11.	My workload increases my emotional demand				
12.	Poor salary and delayed payment affect my emotional well-being.				
13.	Large class size makes emotional control difficult for me.				
14.	School management policies contribute to my emotional stress.				
15.	Cultural expectations of teachers increase emotional pressure on me				

SECTION E: Coping Strategies

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
16.	I use prayer or spiritual activities to cope with work stress.				
17.	I talk to colleagues to reduce emotional stress.				
18.	I try to stay positive even during emotionally difficult situations				
19.	I take personal time to relax after work.				
20.	I am able to manage emotional stress effectively				

SECTION F: Support Systems

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD
21.	My school management provides emotional support to teachers				
22.	I receive encouragement and support from my colleagues				
23.	Training or workshops help me cope with emotional stress				
24.	Family and friends help me manage work-related stress.				
25.	More support systems are needed for early childhood educators.				

Thank you for your cooperation.