

ERD 2021
9th International Conference Education, Reflection, Development

EMOTIONAL CULTURE IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN ISRAEL

Avinoam Yomtovian (a)*, Ticu Constantin (b)
*Corresponding author

(a) Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iasi, Romania, avinoam@gordon.ac.il
(b) Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Iasi, Romania, tconst@uaic.ro

Abstract

The aim of this study was to characterize the emotional culture in nine Israeli educational organizations, as perceived by the professional staff, and to propose ways of improving it. The study involved 322 individuals, including educators, coordinators, counsellors, and division administrators from three elementary schools, three high schools, and three informal education institutes. The study was carried out using a quantitative methodology, employing the Emotional Culture Questionnaire alongside a comparative statistical analysis of the findings. The main findings of the study validate the use of a Hebrew translation of the Emotional Culture Questionnaire in Israel with minor structural adjustments. As for the characteristics of emotional culture in educational organizations, it was found that in educational organizations that conduct professional development programs for the staff, that focus on social and emotional aspects, an emotional culture of companionate love is manifest, whereas, in educational organizations that do not conduct professional social and emotional development programs and focus mainly on cognitive achievements, there is a stronger emotional culture of anger. In addition, the study revealed no significant differences in the characteristics of the emotional culture between the primary and secondary formal and informal education organizations.

2672-815X © 2022 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Emotions in teamwork, Emotional culture, Emotions in educational organizations



1. Introduction

The concept of emotion comes from the world of psychology and is defined as a psychological and physiological response of a person to an object, a person, or a situation that has a positive or negative value element. Emotions are expressed by physical changes (facial expressions, blood pressure), behaviorally (crying, anger), and by patterns of thought (Butler et al., 2003).

The most prominent component of emotion is the subjective experience of how a situation is perceived and made explicit. Another important component is the social context in which a person learns how to experience, manage, and express emotions. Although emotions are subjectively experienced, they are often influenced by society and by the culture that shapes the interpretation one gives to his feelings and the form of expression (Frijda, 2004).

For many years, research in the field of emotions has dealt with the psychological aspects at the level of the individual and has neglected to investigate it in the context of organizational culture and teamwork. One reason for this is the "illusion of rationality," the belief that the behavior of employees is essentially rational (Oplatka, 2018). But emotions are an inseparable part of team life (Barsade & Knight, 2015), and the expression of emotions in the workplace is an important and significant component of teamwork that can positively or negatively impact it and its outcomes (Barsade & Gibson, 1998). Beyond the emotions experienced by each individual, the team members bring their unique emotional dispositions to the group. The connections and interactions among these emotions form a "group emotion" in a top-down as well as a bottom-up process; group emotion is influenced by expectations at the group level and by the unique combination of feelings brought up by each individual team member (Barsade & Gibson, 1998). Group emotion has been found to be a designer of social norms and as a generator of group cohesion (Barsade & Knight, 2015).

1.1. Emotional culture

Emotional culture is defined as the sum of the values, norms, and common symbols that influence which emotions are desirable for employees in the organization to express or repress and in what manner (Barsade & Knight, 2015). O'Neill and Rothbard (2017) define emotional culture as "the behavioral norms and artifacts, as well as the underlying values and assumptions, that guide the expression (or suppression) of specific emotions and the appropriateness of displaying those emotions within a social unit" (O'Neill & Rothbard, 2017, p. 78). These emotional codes are considered a part of the organizational culture that determines the way people think and behave and is regarded as highly important for the organization's success. Although emotional culture influences teamwork, task performance, and organizational efficiency, it is often not consciously managed (Barsade & O'Neill, 2016).

Research on the subject of emotional culture has only developed over the last two decades, mostly in business organizations and public safety organizations like fire departments, and health and rehabilitation institutions (Barsade & Gibson, 1998; Barsade & Knight, 2015; Barsade & O'Neill, 2016). In the education world, emotional expression, and emotional management have been studied mainly in the context of positive and negative feelings in teacher-student relations (e.g., Sutton & Wheatley, 2003;

Sutton, 2005; Sutton & Harper, 2009). To date, no research has been conducted in educational settings examining the emotional culture on the collective level in the organization.

Barsade and Knight (2015) argue that while research seems to be deepening the understanding of how emotions affect and influence employee behavior in an organization, emotional culture is frequently left unmanaged as purposefully as the cognitive organizational culture. The researchers (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014; Barsade & Knight 2015; O'Neill & Rothbard, 2017) found that emotional culture has an impact on the sense of job satisfaction, teamwork, burnout, absences, creativity, involvement, commitment to the organization, and decision-making. Positive emotions affect the quality of task performance and organizational efficiency while negative emotions, such as group anger, sadness, fear, etc., will lead to destructive damage to the organization (Dougherty & Drumheller, 2006; Härtel et al., 2009).

1.2. Aspects of emotional culture

Emotional culture of suppression: All organizations have an emotional culture, whether it is consciously or not, even if it is one of suppression. An emotional culture of suppression is defined in the literature as “shutting off,” “not expressing,” or “not showing” emotions (Gross, 1998).

An emotional culture of suppression carries negative consequences both at the organizational level, leading to an abundance of conflicts at the individual level, as well as impacting health and well-being, with potential effects on cognition, mental health, and quality of interpersonal relationships (Butler et al., 2003).

The optimal emotional culture, as identified in the research by Barsade and colleagues, was a culture of “companionate love” which they defined as the degree to which employees express affection, concern, empathy, and compassion for each other (Barsade & Knight, 2015; Barsade & O'Neill, 2016). The researchers also claimed that in an optimal organizational culture, staff members have a sense of mutual responsibility and a relationship to their feelings, even up and down the hierarchical ladder. It was found that in organizations with optimal emotional culture, there is a lower percentage of absenteeism, lower burnout, and better teamwork. Employees report significant work satisfaction, stronger organizational commitment, and an increase in success, efficiency, and organizational performance. In this culture, workers also find support during personal crises that they undergo (Barsade & Knight, 2015; Barsade & O'Neill, 2016). In addition, fewer health problems were found among employees in organizations with strong cultures of companionate love, and O'Neill and Rothbard (2017) found an association between high companionate love and a lower tendency for risk-taking behavior outside of work.

Companionate love is far from romantic love. It is not based on passion but rather on warmth. It is the connection we feel for people with whom our lives are deeply involved, promoting interdependence and sensitivity toward other people (Barsade & O'Neill, 2016). Gonzaga et al. (2001) defines companionate love as a social emotion shaped by social context. Much like the concept of cognitive organizational culture, a companionate love culture can be ranked as strong or weak. A strong culture is characterized by collaborative work among colleagues who express caring, compassion, and affection for one another. They include and absorb each other's feelings and express empathy when things do not work

out as needed, and so it is throughout the organization. In a culture where companionate love is frail, expressions of affection, caring, consideration, or tenderness among employees are minimal or non-existent, and employees show indifference or even callousness toward each other (Barsade & O’Neill, 2016). Companionate love can spread in the organization in a managed and deliberate manner when employees play-act the expression of the desired feelings, thus creating norms and behavior patterns expressing the desired emotion in the organization consciously, consensually, and with mutual responsibility. This normative “performance” enhances conformity with group expectations without consideration of how they actually feel (Levy, 1973).

Additional dimensions of emotional culture: A culture of anger is characterized by feelings of anger, annoyance, frustration, grumpiness, and irritation. A culture of fear is characterized by feelings of anxiety, fear, nervousness, and being scared. A culture of joy is characterized by feelings of cheerfulness, enthusiasm, excitement, happiness, and joy.

O’Neill and Rothbard (2017) study found that for some organizations, a simple, solitary description of the emotional culture may not be sufficient. There may be interactions and combinations among different emotional culture characteristics. Multiple dimensions of emotional culture can coexist within an organization, and so it is highly likely that attributes such as joviality and companionate love—the two strongest instances of positive affect (Sauter et al., 2010) can be found simultaneously.

2. Problem Statement

- Education is a highly challenging profession that requires intense interaction and communication with a diverse population having different ability levels and needs. Teachers experience stress and anxiety by the very nature of their positions as they are directly or indirectly involved in events and situations that arouse emotions—whether positive or negative. This emotional arousal may affect their attitudes, behavior, and reactions in the immediate or long term (Hargreaves, 2001). Characteristics such as emotional expression and emotion management in school settings have been studied considerably, but primarily in the specific context of teaching. That is, with regard to the teacher’s expression of positive and negative feelings regarding her work with the students. (See, for example, Oplatka, 2007; Oplatka & Golan, 2011; Sutton, 2005). These studies provide knowledge about teachers’ feelings during educational reforms and classroom instruction. However, despite the widespread statement that teachers are overwhelmed by feelings - guilt, anger, frustration, enthusiasm, and concern (Oplatka, 2015), the authors have not found a comprehensive study on the rules of expression of emotions in the interactions among educational-staff-members.
- In addition, education systems like many other organizations are still coming to terms with the COVID-19 crisis and its many consequences. This research could help overcome the emotional challenges experienced by educational staff and understand the ways to create the emotional culture needed to develop resilience.

3. Research Questions

Examine the characteristics of emotional culture in the sampled educational organizations.

4. Purpose of the Study

The present study has three basic purposes: First, to characterize the emotional culture in nine educational organizations in the north, center, and south of Israel. The second purpose is to examine whether there are significant differences in the emotional culture and organizational climate between elementary schools, high schools, and informal education settings. The third purpose is to examine the interrelationship between emotional culture and the type of professional development program implemented in a particular setting.

5. Research Methods

To characterize the emotional culture in educational institutions, we used a Hebrew translation of the Emotional Culture Questionnaire, based on previous research done by Barsade and O'Neill, "What's Love Got to Do with It? (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014). The questionnaire has been used thus far in the United States in the English language. This is the first time that a Hebrew language version has been utilized in Israel. The questionnaire is based on Shaver et al. (1987) prototype model of emotion, which includes 20 types of emotions: Cheerfulness, Enthusiasm, Excitement, Happiness, Joy, Affection, Caring, Compassion, Tenderness, Anger, Annoyance, Frustration, Grumpiness, Irritation, Anxiety, Fear, Nervousness, being scared, Envy, and Jealousy (Shaver et al., 1987). Four "basic" emotions from this prototype—anger, fear, joy, companionate love—and one other, envy, have received the most attention in the organizational behavior literature (Barsade & Gibson, 2007).

The participant is asked to answer, "To what degree do other employees in your organization express (not feel) the following emotions at work?" The stem of this question prompts the respondent to serve as a reporter of the expressed (i.e., not felt) emotions of the employees around him or her. The items are measured on a 1–7 scale, where 1 = Never, 4 = Sometimes, 7 = Very Often).

5.1. Participants

322 participants from nine state secular educational institutions in northern, central, and southern Israel agreed voluntarily to participate in the study. They represented different positions in the schools and in informal educational organizations. three elementary schools (N = 116), three high schools (N = 107) and three Informal educational organizations (N = 99). Each of the three sampling categories is comprised of:

1-An educational organization that promotes the dissemination of knowledge and excellence without including a social aspect in the organization's vision or goals and without training in the subject.

2- An organization that declares itself to be a value-based social organization, but in practice, does not undergo any training in the subject.

3- An organization that declares itself to be a value-based social organization and undergoes institutional training that deals with soft communication skills.

6. Findings

A statistical reliability test was done for each factor of emotional culture.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics: Alpha Cronbach Coefficients for all Scales

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha: α
Companionate Love culture	0.94
Joy culture	0.94
Anger culture	0.91
Fear culture	0.74

The measurement tool in table 1: Emotional Culture Questionnaire measures the factor being examined consistently. The index is reliable and reflects the true values it is supposed to measure. That is, it has almost no measurement errors at all.

Table 2. Statistical Distribution - Emotional Culture Characteristics for All Nine Organizations

Type of emotional culture Type of organization		Joy culture		Companionate Love culture		Fear culture		Anger culture	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
High School	1	3.03	0.47	3.63	0.64	3.42	0.51	5.09	0.42
	2	5.62	0.83	6.09	0.61	1.93	0.38	2.22	0.47
	3	6.62	0.37	6.79	0.24	1.16	0.2	1.32	0.23
Elementary School	1	3.71	0.8	3.41	0.94	2.7	0.92	3.33	1.17
	2	5.38	0.46	5.02	0.45	2.54	0.72	3.13	0.39
	3	6.32	0.41	6.5	0.44	1.6	0.4	2.06	0.4
Informal education	1	3.73	0.53	3.74	0.66	2.22	0.7	3.48	0.75
	2	5.36	1.16	5.6	1.1	2.9	1.51	2.81	1.46
	3	6.55	0.32	6.6	0.26	1.82	0.31	2.45	0.41

The results now provide evidence of a diverse distribution of the factors among the organizations. As in the table above (Table 2), a high positive score was obtained in factors of companionate love culture and joy culture. However, there is an exclusion in high school type #1 with a high outcome of $M = 5.09$ ($SD=0.42$) in anger culture. Moreover, there is a noticeable difference within schools of type #1 and types #2 and #3: The highest outcome of positive factors comparing all organizations of type #1 is $M = 3.74$ in the informal organization on Companionate love culture ($SD = 0.66$) while the lowest outcome of the same parameters in organization type #2 and #3 is 5.36 in joy culture, also in the informal org. ($SD=1.1$). In general, all type #3 organizations have an almost one-point higher outcomes than type #2. Another notable result is the slightly higher outcome of the informal education #1 in anger culture ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.46$) as compared to #1 elementary school in the same factor ($M = 3.33$ $SD = 1.17$). High school number one is found to have an emotional culture of anger significantly higher compared to other

educational organizations. High School No. 3, Elementary School No. 3, and Informal Educational Organization No. 3 are characterized by an emotional culture of companionate love.

Table 3. Correlations

	Anger culture	Fear culture	Joy culture	Companionate Love culture
Anger culture	1	.818**	-.571**	-.515**
Fear culture		1	-.530**	-.524**
Joy culture			1	.877**
Companionate Love culture				1

Table 3 shows the relationships among the four factors. A positive correlation between an emotional culture of fear and emotional culture of companionate love, and the emotional culture of Joy. Also, a positive correlation between an emotional culture of anger and emotional culture of fear and a negative correlation between an emotional culture of fear and emotional culture of companionate love. These results can indicate the reason for the convergence of only two factors in the structure tests.

7. Conclusion

As the importance attributed to emotions in educational organizations increases, the need for a device for measuring emotional culture has become more pertinent. The Emotional Culture Questionnaire was found to be a promising tool for characterizing the emotional culture in educational organizations in Israel, similar to its original use in the United States in the context of welfare services and business organizations (Barsade & O'Neill, 2014). Thus, its value in educational institutions and its applicability in an Israeli context have been shown.

As for the characteristics of the emotional culture in the sampled educational institutions, one can see that in High School No. 3, Elementary School No. 3 and the Informal Educational Organization No. 3 of the sample in which social programs and professional development on the subject of emotional culture take place, one finds an emotional culture of strong companionate love. These organizations value the display of compassion, affection and caring. This culture is ultimately reflected in behavior and stabilizes norms of mutual help and support, ultimately paving the way for productive teamwork and organizational efficiency. In contrast, in High School No.1, Elementary School No.1, and Informal Educational No.1 the emotional culture of anger is higher than in the other institutions. This means that negative emotions are stronger in those organizations and the principals must take precautions to prevent those emotions from contaminating the whole organization.

In O'Neill and Rothbard study (2017) she points out that in cases of positive emotional culture there will be less conflict not only among staff members, but also between work and home/family which can reduce stress, and burnout, etc. Similarly, an environment characterized by reduced burnout and stress will likely further enhance the emotional culture. This is especially relevant given the fact that more than a few teachers note the stress and strain at work at the expense of the home in general during the Covid-19 pandemic. They reported a direct relationship between negative feelings generated by work from home, leading to high stress levels and even leading to health problems.

We also found that the characteristics of emotional culture in the various educational organizations had no significant difference between informal and formal education, nor was there a significant difference between elementary and high schools. However, a significant difference was found between educational organizations that run social programs in their institutions and those that do not. Educational organizations, whether primary or secondary, and informal educational settings that consciously and consistently operate social programs in their institution are characterized as having a strong emotional culture of companionate love compared to educational organizations that have failed to do so. The latter has been characterized as weak cultures of companionate love or even having a negative emotional culture. Moreover, weak companionate love, as seen in schools that declare to be social without carrying out any such program, could be mistaking the Israeli trait of “warmth toward people you don’t know” with companionate love. Assuming this to be the case, it is recommended to first raise awareness for the importance of emotional culture among principals of educational frameworks and policymakers and, second, to incorporate social programs that promote positive emotions in educational organizations in a planned and structured way.

Positive emotions affect the quality of task performance and organizational efficiency, improve cooperation, and more. We find especially essential the understanding that developing a guided positive culture for the organization can decrease conflicts. This suggests an inverse relationship between an emotional culture of love and emotional culture of anger. We could also say that it points out the illusion of school principals when they operate under the assumption that the culture in their schools is rational. It has been found to be beneficial for managers to develop strategies for shaping an emotional culture of love rather than fighting against an emotional culture of anger. Increasing feelings of affection, empathy, and support will automatically lower the feelings of nervousness, anger and resentment.

7.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings lead to several recommendations. A school principal who seeks to become more efficient will: (A) consider the emotional component as a critical factor in the organization and will manage the emotional culture consciously and actively. (B) Emphasize the development of an emotional culture of companionate love and encourage norms of expressing positive emotions such as affection, concern, joy, and support among team members. Leaders would do well to cultivate rituals, practices, and policies that make companionate love a desirable and achievable aspect of the organization’s culture. (C) Encourage and develop mutual responsibility to the emotional culture and the expression of the desired emotions in the organization among all team members. (D) Encourage the development of interpersonal communication skills among faculty members.

It is advisable to demonstrate broad social support for these recommendations among all stakeholders, from students and parents through faculty and administrators and including teacher and principal training institutions. Dialogue should be encouraged to examine needs and schedules in order to create clear priorities for clarifying the emotional expectation in the organization. At the class level, it is recommended that teachers assist in developing emotional skills among students, including ways of expressing emotions such as empathy and sympathy in relation to students and parents. The

implementation of these strategies does not necessarily require physical changes, high budgets, or changes in curricula from the educational institution.

Although there is increased concern among organization executives about employee well-being, not all are convinced that efforts to create and maintain positive emotions in the workplace do pay off. Understanding the need to manage emotional culture is always essential. However, at the present time, when the educational system is challenged by emotional phenomena related to social distancing requirements and other demands associated with the Coronavirus pandemic, there is a need to develop a social-emotional strategy in the education system.

This study responds to the needs of educational systems in two ways: first, it emphasizes the importance of emotional culture, of understanding its characteristics and gaining an awareness of its implications for teamwork and organizational efficiency. Second, it proposes a set of organizational tools and strategies to create an optimal emotional culture. Bringing empirical data could shed light on what has been done so far based on gut feelings only.

References

- Barsade, S. G., & Gibson, D. E. (1998). Group emotion: A view from top and bottom. In D. H. Gruenfeld, B. Mannix, & M. Neal (Eds.), *Research on managing groups and teams: Composition* (Vol. 1, pp. 81-102). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Barsade, S. G., & Gibson, D. E. (2007). Why does affect matter in organizations?. *Academy of management perspectives*, 21(1), 36-59.
- Barsade, S. G., & O'Neill, O. A. (2014). What's love got to do with it? A longitudinal study of the culture of companionate love and employee and client outcomes in a long-term care setting. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 59(4), 551-598.
- Barsade, S. G., & Knight, A. P. (2015). Group Affect. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 2, 21-46.
- Barsade, S. G., & O'Neill, O. A. (2016). Manage Your Emotional Culture. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2016/01/manage-your-emotional-culture>
- Butler, E. A., Egloff, B., Wilhelm, F. H., Smith, N. C., Erickson, E. A., & Gross, J. J. (2003). The social consequences of expressive suppression. *Emotion*, 3(1), 48-67.
- Dougherty, D. S., & Drumheller, K. (2006). Sensemaking and emotions in organizations: Accounting for emotions in a rational (ized) context. *Communication Studies*, 57(2), 215-238.
- Frijda, N. H. (2004). Emotions and action. In: A. S. R. Manstead, N. Frijda & A. Fischer (Eds.), *Feelings and emotions: The Amsterdam symposium* (pp. 158-173). Cambridge University Press.
- Gonzaga, G. C., Keltner, D., Londahl, E. A., & Smith, M. D. (2001). Love and the commitment problem in romantic relations and friendship. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 81(2), 247-262.
- Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of general psychology*, 2(3), 271-299.
- Hargreaves, A. (2001). Mixed emotions: teachers' perceptions of their interactions with students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 16(8), 811-826.
- Härtel, C. E., Zerbe, W. J., & Ashkanasy, N. M. (Eds.). (2009). *Emotions in groups, organizations and cultures*. Emerald Group Publishing.
- Levy, R. I. (1973) *Tahitians: Mind and Experience in the Society Islands*. University of Chicago Press.
- Oplatka, I. (2007). Managing emotions in teaching: Toward an understanding of emotion displays and caring as nonprescribed role elements. *Teachers college record*, 109(6), 1374-1400.
- Oplatka, I., & Golan, R. (2011). The teacher's extra-role behaviors: Some illuminations from a study of the Israeli religious state education system. *Religious Education*, 106(5), 516-536.
- Oplatka, I. (2015). *The essentials of educational administration*. (Third extended edition). Haifa: Pardes (in Hebrew).

- Oplatka, I. (2018). Understanding Emotion in Educational and Service Organizations through Semi-Structured Interviews: Some Conceptual and Practical Insights. *Qualitative Report*, 23(6).
- O'Neill, O. A., & Rothbard, N. P. (2017). Is love all you need? The effects of emotional culture, suppression, and work-family conflict on firefighter risk-taking and health. *Academy of Management Journal*, 60(1), 78-108.
- Sauter, D. A., Eisner, F., Ekman, P., & Scott, S. K. (2010). Cross-cultural recognition of basic emotions through nonverbal emotional vocalizations. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107(6), 2408-2412.
- Shaver, P., Schwartz, J., Kirson, D., & O'Connor, C. (1987). Emotion knowledge: further exploration of a prototype approach. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 52(6), 1061.
- Sutton, R. E., & Wheatley, K. F. (2003). Teachers' emotions and teaching: A review of the literature and directions for future research. *Educational psychology review*, 15(4), 327-358.
- Sutton, R. E. (2005). Teachers' emotions and classroom effectiveness: Implications from recent research. *The Clearing House*, 78(5), 229-234.
- Sutton, R. E., & Harper, E. (2009). Teachers' emotion regulation. In *International handbook of research on teachers and teaching* (pp. 389-401). Springer, Boston, MA.