



“Resilience fosters sustainability!”: Exploring Vietnamese pre-service EFL teachers’ emotional experiences in a school-based teaching practicum from the lens of Resilience Theory

Phan Nhat Hao ^{1*} , Truong Thai Thanh Tam ¹ 

¹ Can Tho University, Ninh Kieu District, Can Tho City, VIETNAM

* Correspondence: phannhathao85@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Teacher emotion has garnered increasing scholarly attention as a critical catalyst shaping professional performances and sustained professional development. This qualitative case study, anchored in Resilience Theory, investigated the emotional experiences and regulation strategies of Vietnamese pre-service EFL teachers during a school-based teaching practicum in the Mekong Delta region. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with ten pre-service teachers and five teacher mentors and analyzed through thematic analysis. Findings uncovered a spectrum of participants’ emotional fluctuations influenced by teaching responsibilities, feedback from stakeholders, and administrative tasks. Participants reported emotional uncertainty in dynamic real-life teaching settings, a feeling of being overwhelmed caused by multiple roles, and emotional conflicts in professional identity formation. To regulate these complex emotions, participants employed agent-based and antecedent-based emotional regulation strategies. These strategies aimed at mitigating self-doubt, cultivating emotional resilience, optimizing teaching practices, and fostering their sustainability in the teaching profession. These findings subsequently shed light on the emotionally intensive nature of the practicum and call for the integration of emotion-based assistance to enhance pre-service teachers’ overall well-being. Pedagogical implications were also proposed to advise relevant stakeholders to better their teacher education and training programs.

Keywords: teacher emotions, emotional experiences, teaching practicum, pre-service teachers, resilience theory

INTRODUCTION

As the latest few decades have witnessed the 21st-century's significant educational developments and emergent tendencies, empirical research into second and foreign language teacher education has increasingly prioritized the critical role of emotions in understanding teachers' professional practices and their continuing professional development (henceforth called CPD) (Hargreaves, 2000). Traditionally, emotions are perceived as personal and psychological responses, generally regarded as peripheral to professional competencies. Nonetheless, a growing body of literature has challenged this notion, instead conceptualizing emotions as socially situated, culturally mediated, and inherently intertwined with teacher identity and agency (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Drawing from Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), emotions are seen as mediated through social interactions and cultural tools. From this perspective, teachers' emotional experiences are continuously shaped and reshaped by their internal feelings in conjunction with the social, institutional, and cultural contexts in which they occur. Extending beyond this view, poststructuralist theories of emotion (Zembylas, 2005) frame emotions as discursive and power-laden, constructed through language, positioning, and ideology. In this sense, teachers do not exclusively experience emotions but are simultaneously subjected to emotional norms and expectations shaped by institutional and social discourses. Emotional expressions, therefore, become emotional performances. Building on these perspectives, Benesch (2012) proposed a critical emotional approach, asserting that teachers' emotions are influenced by macro-level socio-cultural forces. In the context of language teacher education, emotions serve a critical role in shaping pre-service teachers' professional experiences, especially during school-based teaching practicums. These practicums require them to partake in various teaching-related and school-related responsibilities, which probably generate a complex array of emotional experiences. Whether highs or lows, such experiences possibly have long-lasting effects on their professional self-concept and commitment to teaching as a profession. Therefore, comprehending how these pre-service teachers experience and regulate their emotions in a school-based practicum is necessary for supporting their personal development and long-term CPD trajectories.

In Vietnam, the significance of English language education has grown markedly since the launch of the renovation policy introduced in 1986. The country's accession to ASEAN in 1997 and the WTO in 2007 further intensified efforts toward international integration, positioning English proficiency as a national priority (Bui & Nguyen, 2016) to enhance workforce and polish competitiveness at the international labor market. To operationalize this vision, the Vietnamese government implemented major initiatives such as Decision No. 1400/QĐ-TTg in 2008 establishing the National Foreign Language Project 2020 and Decision No. 2080/QĐ-TTg, extending the project to 2025. These projects were expected to improve English language education through curriculum reform, innovative assessments, and enhanced teacher education training (Nguyen & Hall, 2017). Central to these reforms is the quality of English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teacher education in which pre-service teachers are trained via professional experiences, one of which is a school-based teaching practicum. Such a practicum serves as the capstone experience connecting theoretical knowledge with practical classroom application. Although the practicum is purposefully designed to ease the transition from coursework to real-life professional practices, it is recognized as a period of significant emotional labor of those who involve as main characters. Pre-service EFL teachers must navigate pedagogical demands, institutional expectations, and socio-cultural norms surrounding their teaching profession. Nonetheless, despite its significance, their emotional dimension of the practicum remains under-explored. As Nguyen (2014) emphasized, emotional experiences during the practicum are more likely to influence whether pre-service EFL teachers develop a confident professional identity and sense of agency or instead internalize self-doubt and disengagement from the teaching profession.

Despite the fact that the concept of teacher emotions has gained considerable international attention, empirical research on the emotional experiences of pre-service EFL teachers remains limited within Vietnamese settings. Furthermore, how this teacher population regulates their emotions during practicum is

still limited. To address these gaps, the present qualitative case study, grounded upon Resilience Theory, aims to explore the emotional experiences of this teacher population during a two-month school-based practicum in the Mekong Delta region. Upon its completion, this study contributes theoretically and pedagogically to the field of English language teacher education and training in Vietnam and beyond. It, subsequently, seeks to inform relevant stakeholders on how to better support the professional development and emotional resilience of pre-service EFL teachers as they are prepared to educate future generations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Experiences of Pre-service Teachers

Emotions have long been recognized as a central yet elusive concept in educational research. Emotions are approached from a variety of epistemological standpoints (Fried et al., 2015). Whereas much of the early research adopted a psychological lens, Vygotskian theory (1978) offered a more integrated and socio-cognitive interpretation, positing that emotions are not isolated internal states but are intrinsically embedded in social, cultural, and historical contexts. In the field of education, teacher emotion refers to the internal feelings that, whereas contained within the individual, hold a crucial role in shaping their interactions and relationships with students, colleagues, and parents (Chen, 2016). Within teacher education and training, the emotional dimension of teaching practices has gradually gained traction, particularly in relation to pre-service teachers. This teacher population, often encountering the realities of classroom teaching for the first time, experience a wide range of emotions which can dramatically shape their identity formation and negotiation and particularly their ongoing CPD as their emotional experiences are characterized by feelings of ups and downs (Benesch & Prior, 2023).

What renders these experiences particularly salient is the novice status of pre-service teachers. As they lack established coping strategies, they tend to struggle to navigate the emotional dissonance between their idealistic conceptions of teaching and the complex, dynamic, and unpredictable nature of classroom practices (Sutton et al., 2009). Whereas unmanaged emotional experiences can undermine self-efficacy and lead to disillusionment and even pre-service attrition, it is evident that such experiences, if appropriately scaffolded, can serve as catalysts for effective learning and transformation. Furthermore, through self-reflection, emotional regulation, and support networks, pre-service teachers can cultivate their resilience and emotional awareness, which is crucial for long-term stability and sustainability in the teaching profession (Anttila et al., 2016; Frenzel et al., 2021).

School-Based Teaching Practicums

Teaching practicums are regarded as a critical prerequisite of teacher education and training programs as it aims to provide pre-service teachers with an indispensable professional platform to transition from theoretical learning to authentic in-classroom practices (Ulum, 2020). Immersed in the complex socio-cultural dynamics of real-life classrooms, pre-service teachers as teacher mentees are encouraged to partake in a rich process of classroom observation, instructional delivery, and critical self-reflection. As a result, such practicums function as both a testing ground and a developmental arena which bridges the divide between academic theories and the lived realities of teaching.

Within the Vietnamese contexts, the practicum is a mandatory and credit-bearing component of teacher education curricula, particularly in English language teacher training programs (Nguyen & Hudson, 2010). Typically lasting two months and equivalent to five academic credits (Nguyen, 2014), this phase immerses pre-service teachers in authentic school-based environments under the dual supervision of tertiary lecturers and in-service teacher mentors. Teacher mentees are placed in groups and progressively entrusted with greater

instructional responsibilities, including assuming the role of a homeroom teacher, refining their pedagogical techniques, and producing a comprehensive final practicum portfolio. Central to the practicum experiences is the enactment of teaching itself, which affords the highest level of importance and occupies most of the practicum period. As stipulated by practicum guidelines, teacher mentees are required to undertake a range of professional tasks. Specifically, they should engage in long-term instructional planning, observe mentor-led lessons, co-construct lesson planning with feedback, and gradually move toward autonomous teaching. Each teacher trainee must observe a minimum of two lessons, formulate and revise lesson plans under teacher mentors' supervision, conduct at least eight supervised teaching sessions, and independently deliver their own full-length lessons (Nguyen, 2014). Alongside these teaching-related activities, teacher mentees are encouraged to participate in administrative tasks such as joining school-level events, following institutional regulations, and supporting the practicum department by attending weekly meetings and collaborating to develop and share teaching materials. Upon teaching practicum completion, pre-service EFL teachers receive feedback from stakeholders for their personal and professional doings. Overall, these structured activities are designated to foster pedagogical competencies, reflective practices, and a more well-grounded understanding of the everyday challenges and demands of the teacher change (Nguyen, 2009).

Related Studies on Pre-service EFL Teachers' Practicum Experiences

Acknowledging the importance of emotions and emotional regulation during teachers' early-career stage, numerous studies, both implemented internationally and within Vietnam, have shed light on how emotional experiences influenced teacher learning, identity construction, and professional adaptation.

Several international studies have mentioned pre-service EFL teachers' emotional experiences during their practicum experiences. Marav (2022) explored the emotional labor of pre-service EFL teachers in Indonesia, underlining the psychological demands of classroom teaching and the need for emotion management strategies. Expanding upon this idea, Orlova and Kamenická (2024) echoed this perspective, suggesting that fostering emotional awareness is essential for recognizing emotional triggers and maintaining a productive learning atmosphere. The ability to regulate emotions was vital not only for teachers' mental health but also for sustaining effective teaching practices. Similarly, Purwanto et al. (2024) found that pre-service teachers tend to struggle to regulate their emotions due to the inherent stressors of the teaching profession. These included performance expectations, emotional investment in students, and time constraints. Kırmızı and Irgatoğlu (2024) advocated for the explicit inclusion of emotional intelligence and resilience training in teacher education curricula, arguing that these elements significantly enhance teacher well-being and professional satisfaction. Meanwhile, Heng et al. (2024) examined emotion regulation strategies among Chinese middle school teachers. They found that situation modification was the most effective followed by attention deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation. These findings collectively explained the multifaceted nature of emotional regulation and the need for teacher preparation programs to systematically support pre-service teachers in this regard.

Within Vietnam, research on pre-service EFL teachers' emotional experiences during their teaching practicum is still limited. Nguyen (2024) conducted a qualitative case study to explore the practicum experiences of three pre-service EFL teachers through the lens of complexity theory. Using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations, this study revealed that participants' learning trajectories were shaped by the dynamic interconnections of student characteristics, curriculum demands, limited resources, and contextual constraints. These findings highlighted the contextualized and self-organizing nature of teacher learning and emphasized the critical influence of local school-based environments on pedagogical decision-making.

While previous studies have acknowledged the complexities of pre-service EFL teachers' practicum experiences, there remains a lack of focused research on their emotional dimensions, particularly within the Vietnamese settings. Most existing literature does not sufficiently explore how these teachers regulate and

make sense of their emotions in response to practicum challenges. Moreover, few studies have employed a theoretical lens that captures the dynamic and affective aspects of this journey. Therefore, the current research, using Resilience Theory as the theoretical framework, bridges this gap by investigating how Vietnamese pre-service EFL teachers experience and regulate emotional challenges during their school-based teaching practicum.

Theoretical Framework: Resilience Theory

The current research adapted Resilience Theory as its theoretical framework. As defined in this theory, resilience refers to individuals' capacities to adapt positively in the face of adversity, hardship, or significant pressure (Van Breda, 2018). In contrast to early views that framed this concept as a fixed psychological trait or an innate quality, contemporary perspectives regard it as a dynamic and context-dependent process which unfolds over time and is shaped by contextual influences (Gu & Day, 2007). Within teacher education and training, resilience is recognized as a vital element for understanding how teachers cope with professional challenges, persist through academic difficulties, and grow individually and professionally.

Resilience Theory offers a multidimensional framework for conceptualizing how individuals respond to adversity. It emphasizes three interrelated components:

- (1) The presence of adversity or risk factors,
- (2) The mediating processes that influence individuals' responses, and
- (3) The better-than-expected outcomes (see [Figure 1](#)).

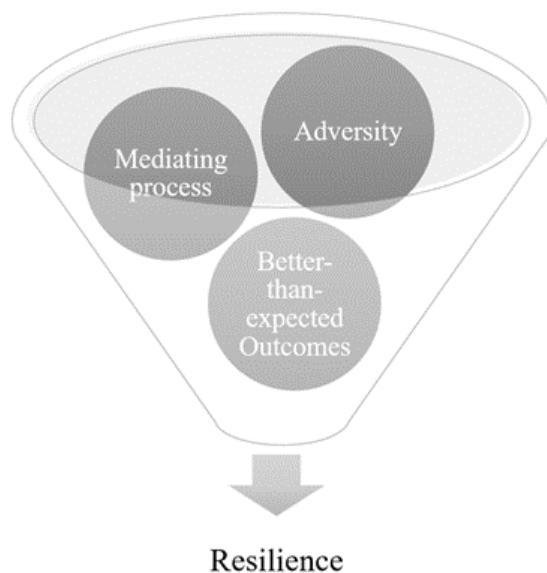


Figure 1. Resilience as a process and outcome

In this resilience-building process, the concept of “resilience” is defined as not a linear journey, but a self-organizing and adaptive process shaped by an ongoing negotiation between personal attributes and contextual influences. Mediating processes hold a central role in transforming potentially debilitating adversities into opportunities for people’s growth and identity formation. As a result, people’s resilience as a better-than-expect outcome should be best understood as a continuous effort to make sense of emotionally charged and complex professional experiences (Greene et al., 2004).

Given the emotionally charged nature of the teaching practicum, Resilience Theory provides a compelling lens through which to explore how pre-service EFL teachers in Vietnam experience and respond to their emotional ups and downs. Instead of viewing resilience as a fixed trait, this study adapted a process-focused approach to examine the emotional experiences and coping strategies that shape pre-service teachers' adaptation. Through focusing on the mediating processes underlying emotional experiences, this research seeks to uncover how pre-service EFL teachers construct meanings, sustain intrinsic motivation, and regulate affect in a complex and precarious practicum environment.

Grounded in this theory to achieve its aim, this research strives to answer two questions:

- RQ1:** What emotions do Vietnamese pre-service EFL teachers experience in their school-based teaching practicum?
- RQ2:** What strategies do Vietnamese pre-service EFL teachers utilize to regulate their emotions in their school-based teaching practicum?

On the one hand, the first research question seeks to explore the emotional experiences of Vietnamese pre-service EFL teachers during their school-based teaching practicum, aiming to identify the types of emotions which they commonly encountered. The second research question, on the other hand, focuses on the strategies which these teacher population implemented to regulate their emotions in response to the challenges of real-life classroom teaching. Collectively, these questions aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how pre-service teachers experience and manage their emotions throughout the practicum and offer valuable insights for enhancing teacher education programs and emotional assistance mechanisms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study adopted a qualitative case study design in order to delve into an in-depth comprehension of emotional experiences and regulation strategies utilized by Vietnamese pre-service EFL teachers during their two-month school-based teaching practicum in the Mekong Delta Region. This methodological design was regarded as well-aligned with the interpretivist paradigm through which the significance of subjective meanings and socially situated experiences are emphasized. As Yin (2003) evaluated, a case study is appropriately carried out since the explored phenomenon is intimately embedded within its real-world circumstances and the contextual conditions are wished to influence the phenomenon itself. Furthermore, a case study offers significant insights into the "particularity and complexity" of participants' lived experiences, rendering them suitable for shedding light on emotionally charged and pedagogically well-rounded processes.

Official participants were recruited through purposive sampling technique which enables the deliberate selection of information-rich cases which are especially knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2014). To recruit official participants, potential participants must meet two criteria:

- 1) Participants had recently completed a two-month teaching practicum at public high schools, and
- 2) They voluntarily consent to participate in the study.

Eventually, ten pre-service EFL teacher were selected from a cohort of final-year undergraduates majoring in English teacher education at a public university. They consisted of male and female participants aged between 22 and 25.

To enhance data triangulation and enrich contextual insights, the research also included five teacher mentors who directly supervised these participants during their practicum. These mentors, each with over five years of teaching and mentoring experience, provided professional perspectives on the emotional challenges and regulatory behaviors observed among their teacher mentees. The demographic details of all participants are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

No.	Mentees (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Mentors (Pseudonym)
1	Anna	Female	22	Ms. Rose
2	Tim	Male	25	
3	Lily	Female	23	
4	Brian	Male	22	
5	Peter	Male	22	Ms. Lisa
6	Sarah	Female	22	
7	Meghan	Female	22	Mr. Liam
8	Selena	Female	22	Mr. Charles
9	John	Male	23	
10	Diana	Female	22	Ms. Summer

Data was qualitatively collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with all fifteen participants. These interviews were selected for their methodological merits in eliciting reflective and contextually grounded information and simultaneously allowing for flexibility in follow-up questions. The interviews with pre-service teacher participants followed a protocol with three elements:

- (1) Emotionally significant events during the practicum,
- (2) Perceived causes and meanings of these emotional experiences, and
- (3) Strategies employed to regulate emotions in response to turning points.

Interviews with teacher mentor participants followed a similarly structured protocol but emphasized their perspectives on the emotional experiences of their teacher mentees, the types of emotional support provided, and institutional and cultural constraints affecting their teacher mentees' emotional experiences. Before official interviews, written consent forms were gathered, and all participants were provided with the current research's aim and their rights to withdraw without consequences. All interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to ensure participant comfort and linguistic authenticity. Each interview was audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim. Interview transcripts were then translated into English for analytical purposes and stored in a password-protected personal computer.

As for qualitative data analysis, thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. First and foremost, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts. Secondly, initial codes were generated manually to capture emotional experiences and regulation strategies. Next, these codes were organized into preliminary themes which reflected common patterns across participants. Moving forwards, these themes were reviewed and refined for internal coherence and relevance to the research questions. Fifthly, each theme was clearly defined and named to capture its central meaning with sub-themes developed where appropriate. Finally, an analytical report was constructed, supported by participants' direct quotations, to present a coherent account of their emotional experiences and emotional regulation strategies during the practicum.

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, several strategies were implemented based on Guba and Lincoln's (1994) criteria. Credibility was firstly developed through the member checking technique, which allowed participants to verify the accuracy of their transcripts and preliminary interpretations. Transferability was supported by providing rich descriptions of the research context and participants and enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to similar educational settings. Thirdly, to establish dependability, regular academic consultations were maintained with an academic supervisor who holds a Ph.D. in education, hereby enhancing consistency throughout the research process. Lastly, confirmability was established by grounding all themes in participants' direct quotes and maintaining an audit trail from coding to analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section reported findings emergent from the thematic analysis process. As pre-service teacher participants partook in their school-based teaching practicum, under the influences of contextual factors as academic adversities such as teaching responsibilities, feedback from stakeholders, and administrative tasks, they experienced a wide array of emotions. These emotions included emotional uncertainty in real-life dynamic teaching contexts, a feeling of being overwhelmed caused by multiple roles, and emotional conflicts in professional identity negotiation. Concerning the mediating process, to regulate these emotions, participants utilized agent-based and antecedent-based strategies with the purposes of overcoming self-doubt and enhancing teaching practices. As these regulation strategies were utilized, the adaptive outcome was that participants ignited their resilience and strengthened their stronger sense of commitment to their future teaching profession. **Figure 2** introduces this research's findings explained by Resilience Theory.

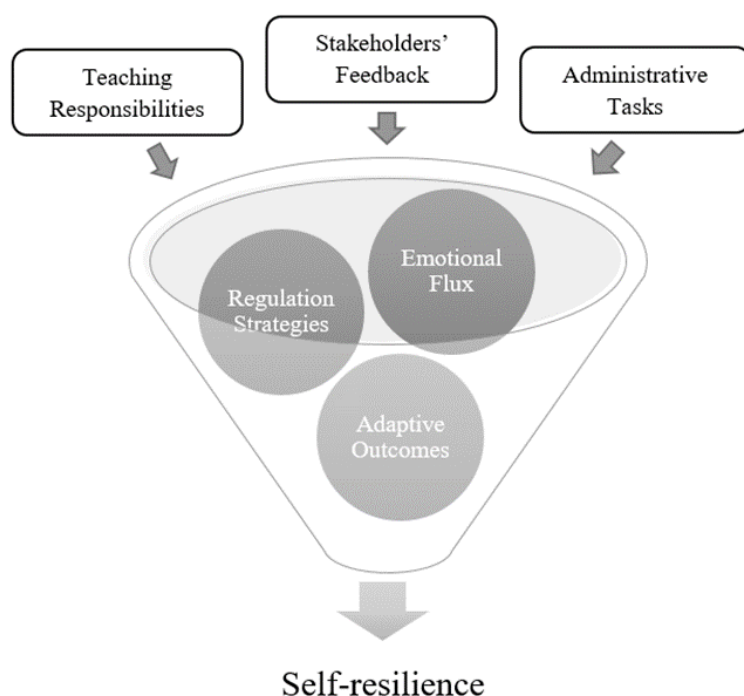


Figure 2. Participants' resilience-building process explained by Resilience Theory

Participants' Emotional Experiences in Their School-based Teaching Practicum

Emotional uncertainty in real-life dynamic teaching contexts

Emotional uncertainty was the participants' most significant emotional experience, particularly during the early and middle stages of the practicum. It manifested their uncertainty about instructional tasks and a deep-seated emotional disorientation surrounding the very act of teaching-related activities. Participants expressed difficulties in navigating the ambiguity of classroom expectations, institutional standards, and inconsistent feedback from stakeholders. They found themselves caught between theoretical ideals instilled during tertiary coursework and unpredictable realities of in-classroom practices. Anna encapsulated,

“First of all, at the middle of the practicum, I have no criteria to evaluate whether I am teaching high school English according to the standards. This leads me to constantly question myself whether what I am doing is meaningful. Another point is, without a clear goal, I find myself incapable of carrying out my classroom teaching. These obstacles exacerbate my confusion.” (Anna, interview 1)

This reflection revealed a suspension of pedagogical agency rooted in systemic vagueness and an overburdened sense of accountability. Further intensifying this was the tone-deaf feedback from mentor participants. Mr. Charles commented,

“I appreciate my mentees’ effort to make the class more engaging and real, but I worry that too much focus on interaction might compromise content coverage. Students need structure and clarity, not just fun activities. They should stick closer to the textbook they are using.” (Mr. Charles, interview 4 with teacher mentor participants)

Aligning with Marav’s (2022) and Nguyen’s (2024) findings and interpreted through Resilience Theory, such uncertainties as emotional adversities can be conceptualized as an emotionally charged indicator of disrupted identity formation. At its core, confusion arose when participants’ internal schema collides with the ambiguities of practice. This collision generates cognitive disequilibrium, emotional vulnerability, and, if unsupported, can erode their self-efficacy. Resilience Theory reminds that such ups and downs are more likely to catalyze transformative learning. The critical key lies in whether the school-based environment allows confusion to be externalized, shared, and critically examined. In environments where teacher mentors validate negative emotions and co-construct solutions, confusion becomes an incubator for reflective growth. It signals intellectual engagement with complexity, and positions participants as active meaning-makers rather than passive implementers. Moreover, consistent with Benesch (2012), participants’ emotional uncertainty also suggests that the affordances for personal development were uneven. In the absence of scaffolded self-reflection, sustained dialogic supervision, and constructive feedback, their confusion hardens into chronic self-doubt.

A feeling of being overwhelmed caused by multiple roles

Another prominent emotional burden reported by participants was a deep sense of being overwhelmed by multiple professional roles during the practicum. Beyond the expected demands of teaching activities, participants juggled administrative and personal responsibilities. The compounding effect of these overlapping roles resulted in emotional saturation, cognitive fatigue, and a pervasive sense of inadequacy. Brian’s reflection captures:

“Because in the practicum at school, for us, it is mandatory to complete the practicum project in the same semester. Besides, I have to handle some administrative tasks at the practicum school. At the same time, I also worked part-time to teach to earn more money to pay tuition fees, so it sometimes leads to me being overloaded and feeling frustrated that I did not do well in everything that was supposed to be my duty.” (Brian, interview 4)

Similarly, Peter reflected on how balancing multiple expectations, both professional and personal, led to his emotional experiences,

“I usually stayed up until midnight preparing for my upcoming classes. During the next day, I taught at the practicum school, and in the evening, I had to give private lessons to support my family financially. I knew I was trying my best, but I still felt like I was failing on all fronts. It was exhausting, mentally and physically.” (Peter, interview 5)

As Resilience Theory explains, the emotional state of being overwhelmed can be seen as a consequence of cumulative micro-stressors, an accumulation of demands that, while individually manageable, collectively exceed participants' adaptive capacity. In Brian's case, the collision of academic, professional, and financial responsibilities left little space for reflective thinking or emotional regulation. The sense of "not doing well in everything" is emblematic of an internalized performance discourse in which worth is measured by productivity, multitasking, and visible success. Such beliefs are frequently internalized in teacher education cultures that facilitates "readiness" and "resilience" without examining what support structures are required to sustain them. Within this theory, this sense is an alert system indicating that external demands have outpaced internal resources. When institutions recognize this signal and respond by re-calibrating expectations, fostering peer solidarity, and offering time-management support, they help re-establish equilibrium and protect their emotions. This finding is also consistent to that of Kirmızı and Irgatoğlu (2024).

Emotional conflicts in professional identity formation

For many participants, this practicum was a site of professional learning and even critical for identity formation and negotiation. Some entered the teaching field with strong beliefs about what kind of teacher they wanted to become. However, when they encountered rigid institutional structures and test-oriented curricula, these ideals were repeatedly challenged. They began to question their practices but their entire sense of belonging to the profession. Selena shared,

"I focus on ensuring that students feel comfortable with the vast amount of knowledge presented each day and that they develop problem-solving skills. However, according to some reputable scholars whose articles I read, this approach is time-consuming, particularly in cases where students are uncooperative in the learning process. This realization led me to question the meaning of my teaching. I began to doubt whether I possessed the determination required to pursue this career." (Selena, interview 8)

Such self-questioning was not isolated. Other participants reported a rising disconnect between their imagined teacher selves and the constrained realities of school-based practices. Sarah reflected,

"I want to someone who really teaches. This practicum causes me some emotional lows and highs and sometimes I lose my motivation to step into the class." (Sarah, interview 6)

As Ms. Rose remarked,

"They need to learn to be realistic. What works in theory doesn't always apply here. In this school, your job is to deliver the lesson, manage the class, and keep results up. There's no room for experimentation." (Ms. Rose, interview 1 with teacher mentor participants)

Resilience Theory serves to illuminate the psychological turbulence which arises as participants' professional identity collides with an external system that restricts its expression. Selena's and Sarah's experiences reflected a disruption not of task competence, but of meaning, motivation, and direction. Without opportunities to examine these tensions, participants might internalize them as personal fiascos, possibly leading to attrition. Moreover, when teacher mentor participants prioritized compliance over criticality, they inadvertently shut down the very reflective practices which built emotional resilience. Professional identity should not be built by telling participants who to become but by supporting them as they negotiate who they are becoming. In the absence of such assistance, identity negotiation becomes a process of silent erosion.

Participants' Emotional Regulation Strategies

As participants experienced a wide range of emotional ups and downs, they implemented a mediating process to regulate their emotions with the utilization of agent-based and antecedent-focused strategies. While the

former were more commonly used and centered on active responses to emotional challenges, the latter reflected preventive efforts which aimed at modifying emotional intensity before it fully emerged.

Agent-based emotion regulation strategies

Agent-based emotion regulation strategies were the most frequently reported and prominently practiced, each of which reflected a proactive attempt to regain control after emotional discomfort had already been experienced. Firstly, self-improvement emerged as the dominant strategy. Participants engaged in deliberate lesson preparation, self-reflection, and motivational self-talking to rebuild self-efficacy after emotionally difficult teaching sessions. John reflected,

“When I have negative emotions when I stand on the podium, I usually take a deep breath and motivate myself. In addition, I often prepare my lessons carefully to be more confident. I also review the content, predict possible situations and how to handle them.” (John, interview 9)

Communication was another frequently used strategy. Participants turned to their stakeholders such as colleagues, teacher mentors, or friends to validate their emotional experiences, and gain practical advice. Anna emphasized the importance of peer discussion,

“when I feel confused after each teaching session... I will discuss with my colleagues... Their experiences give me more perspectives. Through this method, I can regulate my emotions and continue to do my task.” (Anna, interview 1)

Cognitive reframing appeared as a meaningful subsequent form of agent-based strategies. In this case, Anna reassured herself by recalling past successes, reframing current struggles as temporary and manageable. Expanding upon Anna’s case, Diana shared,

“I often share my feelings after each teaching session by discussing with my teammates. When I have a good teaching session, I like to chat with my friends to share my joy and interesting experiences. If I encounter difficulties, I also ask my mentor for advice to learn from them for the next time. For me, emotional regulation is extremely important. If I do not regulate negative emotions, they will eventually explode and affect my work.” (Diana, interview 10)

These strategies reflected an emerging sense of agency among participants and demonstrated the use of emotion regulation as a form of building emotional resilience. In relation to Heng et al. (2024), rather than allowing emotions to derail their teaching efforts, participants engaged in deliberately reflective actions to stabilize their emotional state and maintain focus. From this theory’s perspective, these actions signify adaptive engagement with emotional adversity. These forms of regulation indicate that participants’ resilience is not avoidance of negative emotions but the capacities to respond constructively and grow from emotional strain.

Antecedent-based emotion regulation strategies

While less frequently reported, antecedent-based strategies served a notable subsequent role in how participants managed emotional downs. Initially, expectation lowering was particularly common among them struggling with perfectionism or inflated performance standards. Some participants consciously reminded themselves of their status as teacher mentees to reduce self-imposed pressure. Lily mentioned,

“Sometimes, I set too high expectations for myself, which makes me feel anxious. At that time, I remind myself that I am just a university student and a trainee English teacher... So, for me, honestly, the only thing I can do is focus on the present, reflect on myself and do my best.” (Lily, interview 3)

Cognitive change, and reframing, was used to recontextualize problems. John drew strength from previous successful experiences to manage present anxiety,

“I reflect on my previous teaching experiences and recall how I solved them. That makes me feel more relieved.” (John, interview 9)

Meanwhile, situation selection involved choosing contexts or preparing mentally for emotionally charged moments. Meghan shared how he anticipated feedback but still had to adjust emotionally,

“I was mentally prepared to receive comments from my teacher mentor... I tried to look at it positively. I reminded myself that these comments were opportunities for me to grow.” (Meghan, interview 7)

Moreover, Peter shared his strategies,

“I was mentally prepared to receive comments from my mentor, and also feedback from my students. But when I faced it the next day, I found that I was not strong enough to maintain a positive mood. I might feel a little disappointed at first, but I tried to look at it positively. I reminded myself that these comments were opportunities for me to grow.” (Peter, interview 5)

Such finding is consistent with that of Orlova and Kamenická (2024) and Purwanto et al. (2024) and further reflects the perspectives of Zembylas (2005) and Benesch (2012). Participants utilizing these strategies engaged in internal realignment to manage how they experienced emotionally difficult scenarios before they fully unfolded. Compared to agent-based strategies, antecedent-focused strategies rely on emotional foresight and self-regulatory planning. These strategies signified a maturing an awareness through which participants recognized early signs of potential pressure and proactively adjusted self-expectations, beliefs, and their actual behaviors. According to Resilience Theory, such anticipatory efforts are considered critical markers of adaptive functioning, especially in the high demand teaching profession. Most participants defaulted to reaction-based regulation, possibly due to a lack of structured guidance on individual anticipation and reframing.

Looking from the broader spectrum of their emotion regulation, the implementation of agent-based and antecedent-focused emotion regulation strategies among participants served as important mechanisms for coping with negative emotional experiences and enhancing well-being, improving teaching quality, and igniting the process of resilience-building development, and ultimately nurtured their individual commitment and sustainability in the teaching profession. First and foremost, these strategies enabled participants to improve their emotions, shifting from anxiety, self-doubt, and frustration toward greater clarity, calmness, and confidence. Through self-improvement, participants utilized careful preparation and self-motivation to regain composure and foster a sense of readiness before entering the classroom. Moreover, these strategies helped participants reinterpreted setbacks as learning opportunities. Instead of allowing negative emotions to dominate their experiences, these participants actively transformed emotional struggles into emotional fluctuations. In turn, the regulation of emotions contributed meaningfully to improved professional performances. Participants who are emotionally stable are more likely to deliver effective lessons, manage classrooms competently, and build constructive relationships with students. Most importantly, these strategies laid the groundwork for professional identity formation. Consistent with the theoretical framework, these participants' resilience does not simply refer to the capacity to recover from challenges, but the ability to adapt positively and grow stronger through academic adversities. By taking initiative in regulating their emotions, participants developed a repertoire of personal and professional resources enabling them to alter and adapt to emotionally demanding contexts of teaching.

CONCLUSIONS

The current research set out to explore the emotional experiences and regulation strategies of Vietnamese pre-service teachers during their school-based teaching practicum. Anchored in Resilience Theory, it sought to understand both what kinds of emotions participants experienced and how they regulated those emotions throughout their professional practices. Findings revealed that the practicum was an emotionally charged journey. Three dominant emotional experiences emerged including emotional uncertainty, a feeling of being overwhelmed caused by multiple roles, and emotional conflicts in professional identity negotiation. These emotional experiences posed great challenges to participants' self-confidence, well-being, and sense of professional purpose. In response to these emotional challenges, participants employed a range of emotion regulation strategies, categorized as agent-based and antecedent-focused ones. Together, these two strategies alleviated emotional strain and contributed to improved teaching performance, reflective growth, and gradual identity negotiation. Critically, this research affirmed that teachers' emotions should not be regarded as peripheral but central to their learning-to-teach process. Through recognizing, validating, and supporting the emotional lives of pre-service EFL teachers, teacher education and training programs can foster competent and emotionally adaptive and resilient future teachers who are capable of navigating the complexities of modern classrooms with empathy and self-efficacy in teaching.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research carry critical pedagogical implications for various stakeholders. First and foremost, tertiary teacher educators are encouraged to integrate emotional literacy and regulation into formal coursework. The emotional challenges encountered during the practicum are not isolated incidents but a part of the developmental process of becoming a teacher. Therefore, equipping pre-service teachers with the language, frameworks, and tools to regulate their emotions should be treated as an essential component of teacher preparation before practicums. In addition to tertiary coursework, teacher mentors at practicum institutions serve a central role in shaping how pre-service teachers interpret and respond to emotional struggles. These mentors should be sensitized to the emotional dimensions of teacher development. Rather than focusing on instructional outcomes, mentors are advised to support pre-service teachers by offering constructive feedback and sharing their own emotional journeys, modeling how emotional challenges can be interpreted as entry points for professional learning. Thirdly, practicum program designers are also in a unique position to support professional development through structural decisions. Also, practicum institutions can implement peer mentoring models, regular emotional check-ins, and access to counseling services to offer systemic emotional support. Last but not least, pre-service teachers themselves can be empowered to take an active role in their own professional development. Developing a personalized emotional toolkit helps manage stress and enact long-term CPD strategies. Collectively, these implications value that emotional regulation should not be regarded as an individual responsibility alone but as a shared pedagogical goal embedded in the design and culture of teacher education and training.

LIMITATIONS

Despite its contributions to the understanding of emotional experiences and regulation strategies among Vietnamese pre-service English teachers, this research is not without its methodological limitations. Firstly, the research adopted a qualitative case study design with a relatively small number of participants, which possibly limits the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the study relied primarily on self-reported data gathered through interviews. While participants shared their experiences openly, self-reporting is inherently influenced by memory recall, social desirability bias, and selective self-reflection. Thirdly, the emotional

experiences reflect a specific cultural and institutional context, that of English language teacher education programs in Vietnam. Cultural norms around emotional expression, hierarchy, and authority may have shaped how participants experienced emotions. Therefore, the findings may not be directly transferable to contexts where educational and cultural expectations differ significantly. Finally, since the interviews were originally conducted in Vietnamese and later translated into English for analysis and reporting, there is a potential for loss of nuance or misinterpretation of culturally embedded expressions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Even though this research has provided meaningful insights into emotional experiences and regulation strategies of Vietnamese pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum, several avenues for future research remain open and deserve further exploration. Firstly, future studies could adopt a longitudinal design to examine how emotional regulation strategies alter over time. Secondly, given that this study focused on English language teacher education in a specific local context, further research could investigate cross-contextual differences. Thirdly, this research employed qualitative methods, so future research could benefit from a mixed-methods approach, incorporating validated instruments to measure emotional regulation and teaching self-efficacy alongside qualitative interviews. Lastly, researchers could also consider exploring emotions in relation to other dimensions of teacher identity, such as gender, prior teaching experience, and beliefs about language teaching. Such studies would shed light on how intersecting personal and contextual factors influence how emotions are experienced and how they are regulated and integrated into identity reconstruction process.

Ethical Considerations

This study delineated the distinguishing features of each participant group. Ethical considerations for research involving human subjects were strictly adhered to. Prior to data collection and analysis, all participants were fully informed of the research's aim. Informed consent was obtained from fifteen participants who were subsequently guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research process. Pseudonyms were used to ensure the protection of their personal identities.

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Data Availability Statement

The qualitative data which supports the findings of this study are not publicly available due to the confidential nature of semi-structured interviews and the ethical considerations with participants. However, anonymized transcripts may be shared upon reasonable request and with appropriate ethical clearance.

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