

**Factors Affecting the Psychological Well-Being of Educators:
A Study on Private College Lecturers Succeeding COVID-19 Pandemic**

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Abstract

Teaching is a noble profession. Owing to pandemic crisis disruption, uncertainties, and higher work demands, educators were found to experience unusual anxiety, depression, and stress. Research studies revealed that the psychological well-being of educators influenced the teaching quality and well-being of students in academic performance. Hence, this study aimed to explore the subjective contributory factors that affect the psychological well-being of educators teaching in the higher education institution. The study applied a cross-sectional qualitative research design and utilised a purposive sampling method to select three participants from a private college in Kuching Sarawak to join the semi-structured interview in July 2022. The data collected via one-to-one interviews were transcribed and analysed via ATLAS.ti software by using a thematic approach. The finding revealed a total of twelve themes that determine the contributory factors to address the key research question, which were positive relationships, positive attitude, personal development, personal autonomy, conducive work environment, leadership support, religious and spiritual support, technology, work demand, training support, self-efficacy, and engagement. This finding also asserted that psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct and there is no sole determinant factor. Most importantly, this paper contributed to the existing literature about the psychological well-being of educators in higher education and provided a model for future psychological studies among educators.

Keywords: Contributory Factors, Multidimensional Construct, Pandemic Crisis, Psychological Well-Being

Introduction

Teaching is, without a doubt, a challenging and unique profession, even before the invasion of the pandemic crisis. Succeeding the spread of COVID-19 worldwide, the lockdown or staying-at-home strategy was imposed on 18 March 2020 in Malaysia, the unplanned closure of educational institutions, and the elimination of physical classes to curb the spread of viruses caused educators to be on the verge of burning out. Rather than deferring the classes and affecting the learning progress of students, educators from primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of education were working hard to shift the contents to online teaching and learning for ensuring continuity in learning in the “new norm” era. For institutions of higher learning, several advisory notes were distributed by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) to provide guidelines to providers of higher education (HEPs) for carrying out their teaching, learning, and assessment activities online during the pre-MCO and the post-MCO. For any learning components that were not appropriate

to be carried out online, HEPs were advised to shift them to another semester or when suitable approaches were in place (Bernama, 2021).

Although stress is not a new agenda for educators in the teaching profession, such an unprecedented event has caused these teaching professionals to experience the usual stress like a walk in the park (Raj, 2021). The implementation of social distancing and lockdown was found to have resulted in feelings of isolation and loneliness (Smith & Lim, 2020). In addition, studies have shown that educators from education institutions experienced an increase in technostress during the pandemic as a result of online teaching and learning (Wahab, Mahat, Razali, Daud, & Baharudin, 2022; Abilleira, Rodicio-García, Deus & Mosquera-González, 2021). The main challenges in online teaching and learning that created stress for educators included the teaching platforms, internet accessibility, and assessment methods (Rosli & Bakar, 2021; Kee & Adamu, 2020). The reviews carried out by Holguín (2021) discovered that the physical, mental, and social health of educators had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In a study conducted by Ong and Khan (2022) among 250 Malaysian school teachers, they revealed that teachers showed high turnover intention amidst the pandemic, which obliquely exemplified high dissatisfaction and poor well-being. Moreover, because of the poor enrolment of students in certain private higher institutions, pay cuts, and other related deductions were also imposed on teaching staff (Fong, 2021; Siti, 2020). The implementation of pay cuts reduced psychological well-being and job satisfaction if compared to those who were not affected (Drakopoulos & Grimani, 2015).

Furthermore, for educators who have returned to physical face-to-face teaching in Spain, the researchers discovered that educators exhibited symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression (Ozamiz-Etxebarria, Santxo, Mondragon & Santamaría, 2021). A study conducted among 355 high school teachers in Malaysia reported extremely severe levels of psychological well-being in terms of depression, anxiety, and stress (Ibrahim, Zalam, Foster, Afrizal, Johnasyah, Saputra, Bakar, Dagang, & Ali, 2021). Similarly, the findings from Ganaprakasam, Humayra, Cosmas, and Ganasegaran (2021) also indicated high psychological distress among the primary school teachers in Kedah. In the context of higher education institutions in Malaysia, students under the Higher Education Ministry were permitted to return to campus in stages from 70 percent to 100 percent of institution capacities starting on the 1st of March 2022 (Bernama, 2022). From reviews of the literature, there is still a knowledge gap or lack of study to explore and understand the psychological well-being of educators in higher education institutions when campuses are reopened to students amidst the endemicity phase of COVID-19, particularly in Sarawak, which is the largest state in Malaysia. Since educators are central to students' success, the psychological well-being of educators shall be well taken care of as it is a crucial element that influences educator performance, educator retention, and the well-being of learners (Song, 2022). In addition to that, improving well-being among educators is paramount as it can also bring about the success of an institution of learning (Giorgi, Shoss & Fabio, 2017).

Research Question

The research question to be addressed in this study is as follows:

- i. What are the perceived contributory factors that lead to the psychological well-being of educators teaching in the higher education institution succeeding the COVID-19 pandemic?

Research Objective

Thus, the study was conducted to achieve the following research objective:

- i. To determine the perceived contributory factors that affect the psychological well-being of lecturers who teach in a private college in Kuching Sarawak succeeding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature Review

Well-Being and Its Inferences on Educators

Even before the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, well-being is already a favoured concept and concern globally, with its definition remaining nebulous to date. Seligman (2011) defined well-being as an effort to enjoy life and connect to life to his or her satisfaction for the purpose of making life valuable and peaceful. The individual's satisfaction depicts positive feelings about the future and living life functionally. However, Simons and Baldwin (2021) argued that the definition of well-being needs to consider cultural differences and international comparisons cannot be made. Thus, one feels is in his or her perfect state of well-being is completely different from another person.

Well-being is a complex construct that covers multiple dimensions and can be divided into two large domains: objective and subjective. The objective domain involves investigating the quantitative indicators of quality of life or needs such as material resources (e.g. salary and economy) and social attributes (e.g. social networks and connections), whereas the subjective domain refers to people's own perspectives or qualitative evaluations of their lives, particularly life satisfaction (cognitive aspect), happiness (positive affect), and unhappiness (negative affect) (Western & Tomaszewski, 2016). Ruggeri, Garcia-Garzon, Maguire, Matz, and Huppert (2020) asserted the measure of well-being encompasses all the major components of well-being, objectively and subjectively instead of a single item of salary, life satisfaction, or happiness. They emphasised that the measure of well-being shall also go beyond the perspectives of hedonism and eudaimonism. Both concepts are central in the present era to understand the aspect of human well-being (Huta & Waterman, 2014).

According to Lipińska-Grobelny and Narska (2021), the hedonic perspective of well-being assumes a person exhibits a high level of positive emotions and a low level of negative emotions, in the meantime demonstrating a high level of life satisfaction. On the other hand, they mentioned that a person achieves the eudaimonic perspective of well-being when he or she owns the opportunity for personal development and achieves the value of life. Thus, eudaimonic is beyond the pleasure from life, which is about meaningfulness, purposefulness, and value in life. Ryan and Deci (2001) described eudaimonic well-being as self-realisation and the ability to live life with full functionality, which creates psychological well-being. Nonetheless, Heintzeman (2017) suggested that both perspectives of eudaimonic and hedonic well-being are strongly associated with one another, and with different time frames.

Taking care of the well-being of educators is a worthwhile endeavour, particularly when the entire nation is in the transition from the pandemic to the endemic new normal. The unprecedented situation of crisis with sudden lockdown and movement control order had caused educators to accumulate psychological symptoms since the beginning of the pandemic (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). Teaching is a profession of high stress and thus, promoting the well-being of educators is paramount (Herman, Hickmon-Rosa, & Reinke, 2017; Nakada, Iwasaki, Kanchika,

Nakao, Deguchi, Konishi, Ishimoto, & Inoue, 2016; Kyriacou, 2001). Referring to various studies, the psychological well-being of educators is a significant variable that can affect student outcomes. A study carried out by Carroll, York, Fynes-Clinton, Sanders-O'Connor, Flynn, Bower, Forrest, and Ziaei (2021) depicted that improved well-being of educators led to improved students' well-being, academic self-perceptions, and academic environment. The psychological well-being of educators was also discovered to strongly affect their health, effectiveness, and quality of instructional strategies in the classroom (Hascher & Waber, 2021). The well-being of educators was discovered to be correlated with the relationships with students, colleagues, families, and the academic results of students (Benevene, De Stasio, & Fiorilli, 2020). According to Othman and Subramanian (2019), depressive symptoms among educators were found to be negatively associated with the quality classroom learning environment. The researchers also discovered that the quality classroom learning environment mediated the relationship between the depressive symptoms of educators and the student's achievement.

Furthermore, psychological well-being is vital for educational institutions as it was also found to affect the job performance and creativity of educators (Lin, Yu, & Yi, 2014). A creative educator will promote creative learners. Infusing creativity elements in the academic environment is significant as creativity is one of the important skills in the toolkit for 21st-century learners (Egan, Maguire, Christophers, & Rooney, 2017). Other than that, the finding from Dreer (2021) indicated the well-being of educators significantly predicted job satisfaction and job retention. Thus, promoting the well-being of educators is one of the good solutions to solve the shortage of teaching workforce that not only benefits the learning institutions but also the education industry nationwide (Perimbanayagam, 2022). In sum, educators are nation builders and human engineers. Consequently, understanding the factors leading to the improved psychological well-being of educators is undoubtedly crucial, particularly in the present new normal era of teaching and learning.

Architectural Elements of Psychological Well-Being

The psychological well-being of educators is a complex construct that includes a variety of subjective indicators or dimensions. Butler and Kern (2016) noted that there is no consensus on what well-being is although there is plenty of definitions and theories. There are theories that focus on the hedonic perspective, whereas there are some researchers that prioritise the eudaimonic perspective, and alternatively, there is also a blend of both concepts when investigating the well-being context (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Nonetheless, Pöysä, Pakarinen, & Lerkkanen (2021) asserted that there are individual differences in factors that contribute to an individual's well-being. A good life for an individual may not be the good life for another individual.

i. The Ryff's Six-Factor Model

From both cross-sectional and longitudinal evidence, hedonic and eudaimonic well-being were discovered to be influenced by sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, race, as well as socioeconomic status (Ryff, Boylan, & Kirsch, 2021). Ryff and Keyes (1995) suggested the six theoretical dimensions to determine the psychological well-being of an individual such as self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth could possibly be simplified into five dimensions. Their revisitation and investigation suggested self-acceptance and environmental mastery to be combined due to a high correlation through their quantitative analysis. On the other hand, Ryff et al. (2021) clarified that

each of these dimensions expresses different challenges that one experiences in the process of functioning positively. Self-acceptance articulates recognition of own limitations with positive feelings and positive attitudes (self-acceptance). The individual also seeks to engage in warm, empathetic, and trusting interpersonal relationships (positive relationships) and make use of the surrounding opportunities to fulfil needs and values (environmental mastery). In a diverse and complex social environment, the individual is able to manage social pressure and is self-determined to seek personal autonomy (autonomy). The individual establishes life goals and objectives (purpose in life) and strives toward the goals with continual improvement to maximise his or her own immersed potential (personal growth), which is central in interpreting this model. Ryff and Keyes (1995) highlighted that psychological well-being is more than just being happy and satisfied with own life.

ii. The PERMA Model

In another model of psychological well-being, Seligman (2011) introduced the concept of “flourishing” to derive and promote the well-being of individuals that covers positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA). First, positive emotion refers to a pleasant life with great happiness and life satisfaction for the past, present, and future. Second, engagement describes the flow experience of an individual in which he or she deploys their skills, strengths, and attention to a task fully. Third, social connection with others forms positive relationships and emotional support. The meaning is the fourth element that illustrates serving something that is bigger than the self. Lastly, accomplishment drives the sense of individuals to achieve more and makes them feel good. Schultze-Lutter, Schimmelman, and Schmidt (2016) revealed that the four dimensions of the PERMA model, except the positive emotion, resemble the core dimensions of Ryff’s psychological well-being model. Nonetheless, they denoted that the positive emotion dimension resembles the hedonic term of positive affect in subjective well-being.

The Significance of Psychological Well-Being Models

Reviewing various studies that have been conducted to study psychological well-being, one of the studies conducted by Leng, Assim, and Lim (2021) reported that positive attitudes and spiritual convictions are a few of the contributory factors to the psychological well-being of teachers. The positive traits such as theological, restraint, and interpersonal virtues, and character strengths such as optimism and social responsibility, were also reported to be positively correlated to the well-being of educators (Kim & Lim, 2016). Likewise, Rahimi, Bakar, and Mohd Yasin (2021) discovered individuals who had a high level of positive religious coping tended to accept self-reflection and were optimistic to embrace better psychological well-being. Hence, these pieces of literature appear aligned with the two components highlighted by Seligman (2011) and Ryff, which are about positive emotion and self-acceptance respectively, which could be cultivated through religious virtues in this context.

Furthermore, research findings also discovered a negative correlation between aversive work conditions (such as hindrance demands) with the well-being of educators (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Collie, 2021). Hindrance demands refer to work demands that have excessive or undesirable constraints that interfere with the valued goals of the individual such as role overload, role ambiguity, and role conflict (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling & Boudreau, 2000). Moreover, there is another demand that was reported to affect the well-being of educators, which is job demands (Vandiyia & Etikariena, 2019). Job demands were found to have a significant relationship with

anxiety for educators with lower social support (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Various studies also revealed that job-person fit affects the well-being of individuals in the workplace (Lin et al., 2014; Gallego, Vera, Rodríguez-Sánchez, & Pastor, 2014). On the other hand, Vandiya and Etikariena (2019) revealed that job crafting intervention could significantly help to reduce job demands. Job crafting is the approach that compensates for the demands by changing the responsibilities, interactions, and mind set of employees in accordance with their needs, abilities, and indirectly the meanings (Moore, 2019). These findings have illustrated the vital components of promoting environmental mastery amidst challenges, the importance of having goals in life for creating a sense of accomplishment, and engagement momentum for enabling well-being.

Apart from the above, self-efficacy or competence beliefs in individuals is another important factor that can increase the level of effort in work for ensuring well-being (Bandura, 1997). Studies conducted by Klainin-Yobas, Ramirez, Fernandez, Sarmiento, Thanoi, Ignacio, and Ying (2016) and Naz (2015) revealed self-efficacy strongly predicted psychological well-being. This was consistent with the finding of Jeon, Buettner, and Grant (2018) with their suggestion to help teachers promote their psychological well-being through the enhancement of teaching competence and efficacy. In addition to that, self-efficacy was discovered to relate to teaching performance (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Most importantly, positive relationships between self-efficacy and well-being were detected in a study conducted in India (Siddiqui, 2015).

On the other hand, Yusof (2011) reported a significant relationship finding between the well-being of teachers and the principals' leadership style among primary school teachers in Malaysia. This finding was congruent with Bono, Foldes, Vinson, and Muros (2007) suggestions of fostering positive emotions among teaching staff with suitable leadership styles. In another study carried out by Collie (2021), autonomy-supportive leadership was found to associate with the well-being of educators over autonomy-thwarting leadership. Unquestionably, autonomy is one of the important components that lead to well-being in Ryff's Model. Meanwhile, Rosli and Bakar (2021) revealed that personal development showed the highest impact on psychological well-being. Leng et al. (2021) also argued the importance of family and friends' support, personal growth, and personal responsibility in promoting the psychological well-being of teachers. Having positive interactions with other educators, parents, students, or even top management can influence the autonomous, competent, and related feelings of individuals to enjoy teaching and learning activities (Gagné, 2003). In sum, positive relationships with significant others are crucial as it enables an individual to fully function and grow in promoting personal growth and accomplishment, which is congruent with both Ryff's Model and PERMA model.

Methodology

As the well-being of educators is of utmost importance for the success of learners, educators themselves as well as the benefits of institutions, this study was conducted to explore the subjective perspectives of the contributory factors to the psychological well-being of educators. Considering the purpose of this research study is to gain an understanding of psychological well-being, the research was carried out using a qualitative phenomenological descriptive method. The phenomenological study is a qualitative research design that illustrates the common meaning based on the lived experiences of several individuals about a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In the context of this study, the phenomenon refers to the lived experiences of educators with their perceived psychological well-being.

For addressing the research question, the researcher adopted one-to-one semi-structured interviews in this study. This research method enabled the researcher to collect extra information via interactive discussion, which was carried out with a set of standardised questions followed by pertinent probing questions to gain deeper knowledge on the topic (Ahlin, 2019). The questions in the semi-structured interview method were designed to be open-ended for eliciting views and opinions from participants to address the research objective (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The interview questions were designed by referring to the interview protocol refinement framework (IPR) recommended by Castillo-Montoya (2016). In this framework, questions were aligned with the research question, but written differently from the research question. The interview questions were organised to mimic ordinary conversation, having a variety of questions and follow-up or prompt questions. A close reading of the interview protocol was carried out to improve the reliability of the interview questions. In the context of this study, the three phases of IPR were adopted.

This study applied a purposive judgment sampling method and the sampling size was three participants from a private college in Kuching Sarawak. This sampling method helped the researcher to best address the research question and fulfil several desired criteria based on his professional knowledge (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Firstly, the researcher ensured the participants have more than five years of experience serving a private higher education institution. Secondly, the participants shall be of the same gender. Thirdly, the participants shall have experience in handling teaching and learning activities during both pre- and post-pandemic. Having the fulfilment of these criteria in research sampling is substantial to ensure the understanding and exploration of the phenomenon can be made fairly, particularly in the gender factor as studies reported that gender difference has varied levels of psychological well-being which are affected by different influential factors (Ryff, Boylan, & Kirsch, 2021; Perry, 2020; Gómez-Baya, Lucia-Casademunt, & Salinas-Pérez, 2018).

In this research study, the data collection was carried out by adopting the interview sequences recommended by Robson and McCartan (2016) which included an introduction, warm-up, main body interview, cool-off, and finally closure. In the first phase, the interviewee was briefed on the purposes of the interview, the confidentiality of data, and their rights in this study. Second, the researcher started the interview with simple questions to ease the situation and make the interviewee feel comfortable. Third, the researcher asked questions on the main topic of the study with probing questions. Fourth, the researcher asked straightforward questions to conclude the session. Lastly, the researcher thanked the interviewee for valuable input and participation in this research study.

Before conducting the interview session, each selected participant was contacted and briefed on the purpose of conducting this study, assured of the confidentiality of the data provided as well as informed the participant about the expected outcomes from the interviews. The participant's identities are protected by assigning a pseudonym to each participant. This session was carried out to make sure the participant felt at ease with the sharing of personal views and any possibly sensitive information. Upon the voluntary acceptance of each participant to participate in this study, a separate session of the one-to-one interview was carried out via Google Meet platforms respectively throughout the month of July 2022. The study chose this online platform as the participants were very familiar with Google Meet and applied this platform in their teaching and learning activities. Thus, this would help to create a comfortable and more relaxed environment for the research participants in the interview session (Alsaawi, 2014).

A day before the actual interview session, a reminder message was sent to each interviewee or participant through WhatsApp to remind them of the date and time of the interview. On the actual day of the interview, the participant was once again informed of the aim of the research and their voluntary role in participating in this study with information contribution. Their rights as the research participants and how the responses would be used in this study were also notified. In addition, each participant was assured of the confidentiality of the information provided and their names will be kept anonymous in this study. The researcher requested permission from the participant to record the entire interview session so that the recorded data could be reviewed repeatedly for writing out the textual documents to perform content analysis and discussions. Each interview session lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes in this study. Each session ended with a follow-up question to check whether there was anything that the participant would like to add or know about the research.

The collected qualitative data in this study were analysed using the thematic analysis approach via ATLAS.ti software, a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). The content thematic analysis applied the three general phases mentioned by Creswell and Poth (2017), which were data preparation and organisation, data reduction to themes with coding condensation, and finally the interpretation of the results. In the first phase, a repeated and full reading of empirical data that has been transcribed verbatim was performed after these documents have been imported to ATLAS.ti. Moving into the second phase, quotations were created and coding was created for the quotations accordingly. The use of Code Manager in ATLAS.ti enables code validation, code retrieval, and the building of the final coding families. In the third phase, the raw data were processed to be meaningful and valid with tables, figures, or diagrams with discussions.

Findings & Discussions

Three participants of the same gender who owned more than 5 years of experience in teaching in a private college in Kuching Sarawak were purposively selected by the researcher to participate in this study to eliminate the gender difference factor in the perceived well-being responses. The findings revealed that the selected participant owned a minimum of 6 years of teaching experience in the private college, with a maximum teaching experience of up to 14 years. Apart from that, the researcher discovered that all participants have similar religious beliefs, which is Christianity. The brief demographic details of the participants who were selected to participate in this study are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Brief Demographic Details of Participants

Name	Lyn (Pseudonym)	Mary (Pseudonym)	Amy (Pseudonym)
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Teaching Experience	6	13	14
Religion	Christianity	Christianity	Christianity
Position	Lecturer	Lecturer	Lecturer
Programme Taught	Foundation, Diploma, and Undergraduate	Foundation, Diploma, and Undergraduate	Diploma and Undergraduate

Source: Author (2022)

Roles and Responsibilities

From the findings, all three participants were discovered to play an important role in conducting teaching, learning, and assessment activities for students in the college, based on the allocated courses in their respective teaching programmes. Two of the participants highlighted other important roles in supporting the well-being of students both inside and outside the classrooms. Apart from that, it was discovered that one of the participants was required to carry out some extra duties such as being involved in marketing, course syllabus review, and communication with external stakeholders.

Because I'm teaching in higher learning education. So, basically, I'm teaching those who are from foundations, degree level, the undergraduates. Besides academics, I also teach soft skills. Especially when they do presentations, I'll comment... and ask for improvement. Sometimes, looking at their confidence level, how can they improve? I like to see how they improve by semester and how they grow. (Lyn, Line 24-29)

Other than teaching the subject itself, we have to be involved in work outside the teaching, for example, marketing. There are quite a lot of things other than teaching the subject itself, we have to be involved in work outside teaching. For example, in contributing ideas to the syllabus and a lot of other paperwork, we will also need to be involved including talking with external sources and so on. (Mary, Line 28-33)

As an educator, the main role is definitely teaching, literally delivering knowledge to students or to other anyone who needs teaching or helps. I noticed that apart from teaching, I also have another important role which is to give advice or act as a counselor and advise students when they face problems. (Amy, Line 22-25)

Factors Affecting the Psychological Well-Being of Educators

By applying the three phases of content thematic analysis by Creswell and Poth (2017) via ATLAS.ti software, the open coding method has identified a total of twelve themes to denote the contributory factors that affect the psychological well-being of educators in a private college in this study, namely positive relationships, positive attitude, personal development, personal autonomy, conducive work environment, leadership support, religious and spiritual support, technology, work demand, training support, self-efficacy, and engagement. The generated Sankey diagram from the three participants or educators involved in this study through ATLAS.ti software is presented in Figure 1 below.

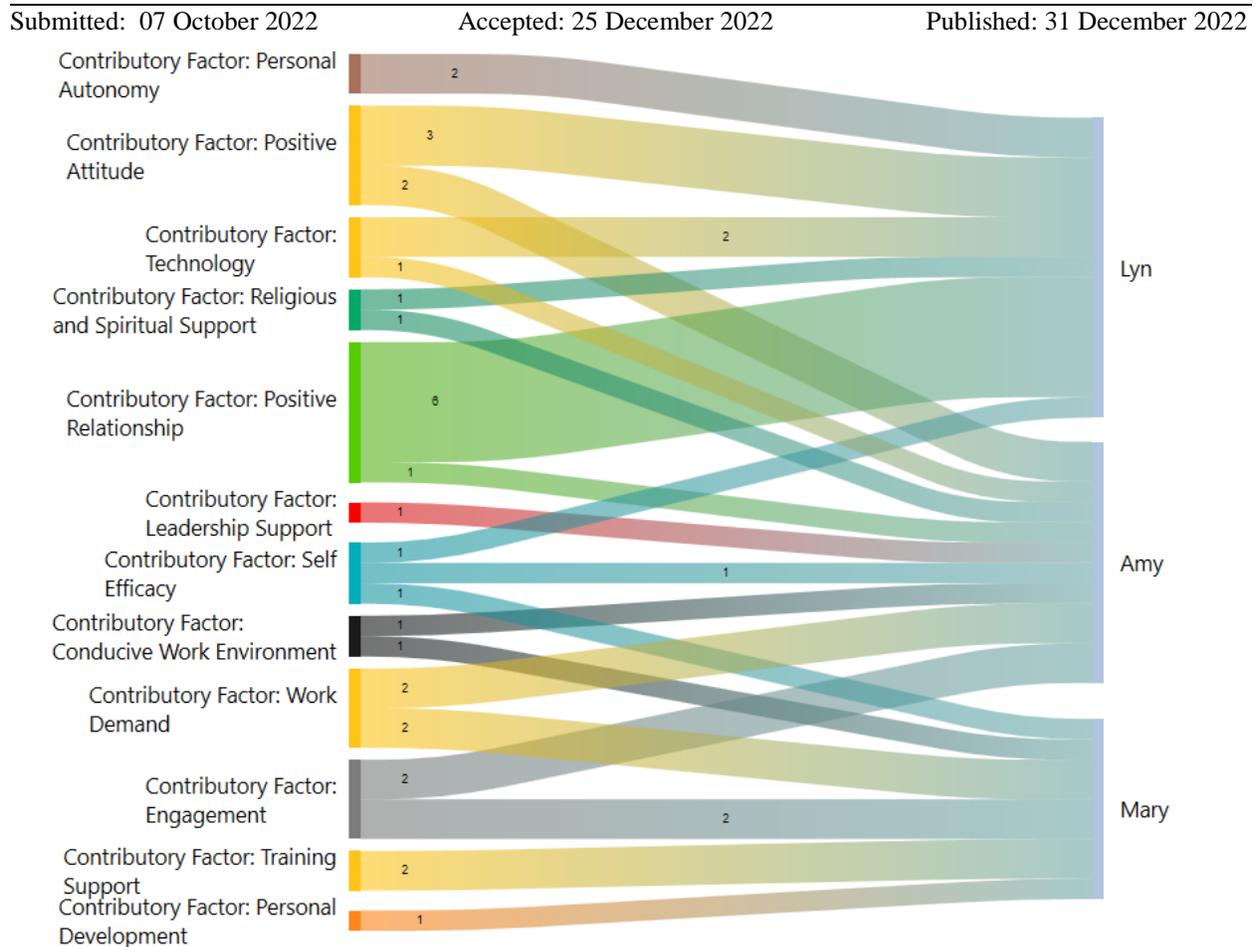


Figure 1: The Twelve Themes Derived from the Participants in This Research Study
 Source: Author (2022)

Positive Relationships

The findings in this study revealed the importance of promoting positive relationships in higher education for developing psychological well-being among the educators, such as between friends and colleagues in the workplace. Furthermore, one of the participants also highlighted positive relationships between educators and learners can make the learning environment more pleasant and happier. Thus, this contributory factor is congruent with the relationship dimension described in Ryff’s Model and PERMA model. Some of the responses quoted,

Friends are also important as they can help you, you can talk to them, and you feel your well-being. We will feel less stressed if we have someone to listen to and can talk to people we trust. Friends or colleagues! (Amy, Line 93-95)

My communication with the students. I think it's very important. If I have good communication with students, like easy to communicate...easy for me to deliver the message. This helps me to be happier. (Lyn, Line 49-51)

Positive Attitude

Another contributory factor to psychological well-being discovered in this study is the significance of staying positive and optimistic among educators, which is through the understanding of own limitations and coping with the difficult situation positively. This contributory factor is consistent with the self-acceptance dimension in Ryff's model that describes the recognition of weaknesses with positive feelings and attitudes, as well as the meaning dimension in the PERMA model (Schultze-Lutter et al., 2016). The participants described,

I think I'm a very positive person. And no matter what is the situation, I will try to treat it as something that I can handle. Slowly, I always think it can be better. (Amy, Line 55-57)

We are human beings. We must know what our weaknesses is and recover from there. Especially when we face a situation that is stressful, we have to quickly recover from there...find a channel, this is very important! Our energy will drain out in teaching, but we have to have to learn how to cope with it by applying what we have learned before. (Lyn, Line 116-120)

In addition, one participant asserted by having a positive attitude can make the teaching and learning activities in classes to be conducted more effectively. She emphasised positive attitude can help to foster better interaction with students, which is one of the contributory factors to psychological well-being discussed earlier. Her response quoted,

This is very important because as an educator, we need the energy to interact with the students. So, we have to prepare and we have to make sure we are happy. (Lyn, Line 105-107)

Personal Development

For maintaining good psychological well-being, one respondent highlighted the eudaimonic perspective, in which she suggested higher education institutions shall give full support to academic staff or educators from time to time to pursue lifelong learning, such as to continue with their postgraduate studies or to upgrade their skills and competencies. In this study, this contributory factor was themed as personal development, which is similar to the personal growth dimension in Ryff's Model, while the accomplishment dimension in the PERMA model. She described,

Being an educator, we would like to continue upgrading ourselves and we would like companies who actually support the teachers when they actually thought of upgrading themselves. Instead of creating challenges for educators, who actually want to upgrade themselves. And also provide enough time for them to do their own studying when they need to. (Mary, Line 77-81)

Personal Autonomy

The capacity of an educator to act according to his or her own interests and values is found to be crucial. In this study, another contributory factor to psychological well-being that emerged was personal autonomy, which is aligned with one of the dimensions in Ryff's Model. The participant

expressed the joy of having the independence of exploring new knowledge to maintain her well-being. Her response quoted,

I think when I learn new things, I get more confidence. I feel the stress of course, but it is positive... I feel satisfied when I can learn something new. (Lyn, Line 40-41)

Conducive Work Environment

The thematic analysis also revealed another contributory factor that affects the psychological well-being of educators, which was given the theme of conducive work environment. A conducive work environment has always been associated with improved productivity and work performance (Swan, Mohd Yunus, Utaberta, Mohd Ariffin, Ismail, & Ismail 2015). However, the findings from this study indicated a supportive and conducive work environment helps to develop the well-being of educators as it is closely related to work stress implication (American Psychological Association, 2018). The participants quoted,

I think the working environment is also another thing that is very important. Having a conducive working environment actually motivates teachers to continue to be passionate about teaching. (Mary, Line 72-74)

A good environment for educators to do their tasks as an educator, such as a supportive and positive environment. When everyone is encouraging each other, you can do better! (Amy, Line 98-100)

Leadership Support

Another theme that emerged from the thematic analysis in this study is leadership support. The well-being of educators is found to be developed when leaders support and encourage the academic team under difficult circumstances in teaching and learning activities. This contributory factor is consistent with the finding of Um-e-Rubbab, Farid, Iqbal, Saeed, Irfan, and Akhtar (2021) about the importance of supportive leadership, or the transformational leadership style in the academic environment (Chan Paul Leong, 2022). One educator quoted,

...the good thing is we have good leaders, we can talk to the leaders, to discuss how to actually settle all these matters. (Amy, Line 80-82)

Religious and Spiritual Support

Congruent with the finding of Leng et al. (2021), this study also discovered the importance of religious and spiritual support, which has emerged in the thematic analysis. This contributory factor was found to give energy and inner strength to sustain the educator's well-being. In this study, the participants described religious and spiritual support has assisted them to overcome numerous challenges and difficulties during pre- and post-pandemic. They described,

...part of my life because I'm a Christian. I do find the strength and from there, I can move on and then continue my job. (Lyn, Line 77-78)

When things get very... very bad, until I cannot handle them, what I do is to pray. Pray until something comes up from my heart, then it becomes less stressful. (Amy, Line 82-84)

Technology

In this study, it was discovered that the pandemic period had created chaos in the teaching and learning activities when all physical classes were forced to move online due to lockdown and movement control order. Hence, the technological factor emerged and became a significant contributory factor to the psychological well-being of educators as poor infrastructure and internet networks had created disruptions and difficulties in online communication and training participation. The following are quotes from the participants,

...it takes time online. Also, the line is sometimes lagging, so you need to wait, and the interaction is quite difficult. (Lyn, Line 91-92)

Sometimes when the college had meetings or whatever training, I couldn't attend definitely. I hardly get the CPD Point when they use Zoom, Google meet, and so on... For about one year plus I couldn't get those CPD points. So, this was one of the things that make me feel stressed. (Amy, Line 60-63)

Work Demand

This study also revealed the inference of increased work demand, which negatively affects the psychological well-being of educators. For educators with lower social support, increased work demands can lead to anxiety (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Other than the demanding paperwork in higher education, the participant commented that extra roles and responsibilities such as to involve in marketing and management activities in some way impacted the quality of teaching focus. They explained,

I would think that if an educator can focus mainly on teaching and also developing the students, it will be better than getting them involved in management, marketing work, and so on. (Mary, Line 35-37)

*I think it's the paperwork. We have lots of paperwork...
...But when everything is very urgent and with teaching responsibility, it's become a bit difficult. (Amy, Line 84-87)*

Training Support

The unprecedented shift from physical to online mode of teaching had interrupted the teaching and learning activities in higher education institutions locally and globally. For institutions that were not familiar with online teaching, the sudden closure of the campus with remote learning created wicked challenges. Hence, the best strategy to improve the well-being of educators can be through the provision of training which equips educators with the essential skill sets for addressing various challenges. One participant commented,

Although we are very familiar with all these gadgets, however we are never given proper training on how to actually manage our classroom online and how to actually motivate the students. (Mary, Line 57-79)

Self-Efficacy

The next emerging theme from this study is self-efficacy. Feeling confident in own skills is an important aspect for an educator to carry out teaching and learning activities. The emergence of

this theme in the study is consistent with the finding of Klainin-Yobas et al. (2016) and Naz (2015), which was found to influence the well-being of educators. Two participants asserted the importance of possessing intellectual self-efficacy to maintain their well-being. Other than that, another participant was discovered to express her well-being via self-confidence in adopting consistent facilitation in class. Their responses quoted,

...it would be good if the education institution, give the lecturers the subject that they are actually confident in and also competent in. (Mary, Line 86-87)

I can find it difficult when we have to teach a new subject that no one really knows about it yet. Because it's really new and we have few resources that you can find, I have to go through YouTube, websites, and everything. So, it is very challenging. (Amy, Line 77-80)

Not to put too much expectations, I just tried to consistently show them...I love that. I just moving forward or moving consistently because as an educator, we also cannot push too much on the students, we have to assure that we give them support. (Lyn, Line 70-73)

Engagement

Another contributory factor that emerged in this study and was found to affect the psychological well-being of educators is themed engagement. PERMA model describes this contributory factor as the flow experience of an individual with adequate attention to the work assigned or is regarded as the psychological connection to the activities. In this study, career passion was found to improve the satisfaction of educators as it helps to create a flow experience. Apart from that, the participant also commented on a full focus on teaching activities for academic staff instead of involving in other administration or marketing works can enhance the teaching quality and well-being of educators. The participants described,

I really enjoy teaching that is why I stay in the teaching line for many years. This is what we call passion, it doesn't matter whether it is good or not. But when we meet students, it can help us to remove all that negativity that I had. When I talk to them, I feel that satisfaction. (Amy, Line 38-41)

I think we should actually stay focused on teaching or student-related activities that are actually beneficial for our students. (Mary, Line 43-44)

Overall, Figure 2 depicts the summary of themes generated from ATLAS.ti that describe the contributing factors impacting the psychological health of lecturers teaching in a private college in Kuching, Sarawak.

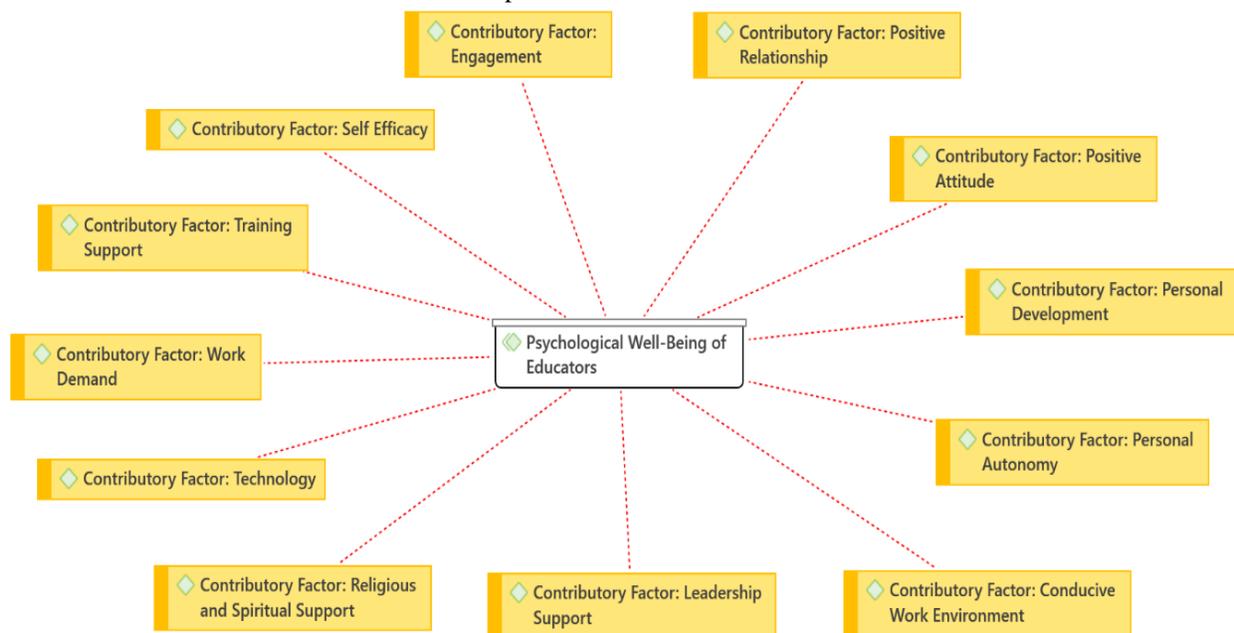


Figure 2: Summary of the Twelve Contributory Factors

Source: Author (2022)

Conclusion and Recommendation

Psychological well-being not only affects the health of educators but also plays a pivotal role in ensuring teaching efficiency and creativity in pedagogies. From this qualitative study, the researcher managed to derive twelve themes or twelve factors affecting the psychological well-being of educators in addressing the key objective of this research study. The identified factors include positive relationships, positive attitude, personal development, personal autonomy, conducive work environment, leadership support, religious and spiritual support, technology, work demand, training support, self-efficacy, and engagement. The research findings revealed and supported the recognition of psychological well-being is a complex and multi-dimensional construct. Part of the derived contributory factors in this study such as engagement, positive relationships, positive attitude, personal development, and personal autonomy is consistent with the dimensions of purpose in life, positive relationship with others, self-acceptance, personal growth, and autonomy respectively in Ryff's model. Thus, these contributory factors were also found congruent with the four dimensions of the PERMA model (Schultze-Lutter et al., 2016). Although the positive emotion factor was not explicitly conveyed by the participants, however, the researcher discovered that this hedonic well-being aspect could be implicitly observed and developed through the positive attitude, positive relationships, and leadership support in the institution under study.

Furthermore, the results from this study also exposed the importance of fulfilling both objective and subjective well-being among educators, which was described by Western and Tomaszewski (2016) that covered social attributes (objective), life satisfaction (subjective-cognitive aspect), happiness (subjective-positive affect), and unhappiness (subjective-negative

affect) domains. Surprisingly, the objective domain of material resources (salary and economy) was not detected in this research study, which could also indicate that educators are more motivated by positive emotions than financial compensation. With the disruption in teaching and learning, unprecedented change, and uncertainty caused by the pandemic crisis, other important factors were discovered to emerge to support the psychological well-being of educators, such as training support, demand for technology as well as spiritual support from leaders and an individual's religion.

Creating a higher education culture that promotes the well-being of educators is challenging but essential. Students learn better and get engaged when they feel at home in the learning institution. As educators play an important role to shape the climate of the learning environment, maintaining psychological well-being is significant because it affects the students' responses in the learning journey and the intended educational learning outcomes. Institutional policies, norms, training programmes, and leadership that support the development of the well-being of educators are recommended to be established from time to time, particularly in the present challenging and uncertain period. When tremendous time is spent and focused on tasks that are not core to their identities as an educator, the sense of well-being for educators is greatly affected as prioritisation and self-actualisation are affected. Hence, higher education institutions are encouraged to reflect on and design interventions that can make sure appropriate job demands and job resources are considered for academic staff.

Moreover, the contribution from this study provided a model for future hypothesis framing and intervention to improve the psychological well-being of educators.

Limitations

The findings from this study were derived based on the cross-sectional qualitative data collected from three participants of a private college located in Kuching Sarawak. Thus, data source triangulation can be used to converge information from several sources, such as including more lecturers and academic leaders at the same institution or other institutions, in order to get numerous views and validate the data provided by the participants (Carter, Bryant, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). Furthermore, the results cannot be generalised to a larger population due to the limited sample size of the qualitative research method used in this study. In the context of this research, the researcher applied qualitative research design because the intention was to have a deeper knowledge of the elements influencing educators' psychological well-being due to the COVID-19 pandemic impact rather than focusing on numerical representability.

Acknowledgement

This study received no funding. The author would like to express gratitude to the three anonymous lecturers for their participation and data input in this research study. A grateful appreciation is also extended to Dr. Sharifah Intan Sharina Bte Syed Abdullah for her kind sharing of the ideas and research frameworks to complete this research project.

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