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CONTRIBUTOR FACTORS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG LECTURERS IN THE ASPECTS OF TEACHING MOTIVATION AND CAREER SATISFACTION

Jeevanithya Krishnanⁱ Sunway University,

Malaysia

Abstract:

Universities and higher education institutions are important organizational units in our country. Higher education is the platform where young adults prepare themselves with knowledge and skills for the work field. A healthy working environment is essential to encourage lecturers to provide a good quality of education for future working adults. Lecturer well-being is a key factor that supports a good education system. Lecturer wellbeing has been a topic that gain much attention in recent times, especially during the last few years, when the education system has transformed drastically to accommodate the changes that occurred during the Coved-19 pandemic. Psychological well-being is a function of positive and negative emotions (Bradburn and Caplovitz, 1965). Positive emotions have been found to lead to positive thoughts and behaviours. Positive emotions increase cognitive abilities (Fredrickson and Joiner, 2002). This case study is intended to determine the positive and negative contributing factors to lecturers' psychological wellbeing, in the context of teaching motivation and mental health in the workplace. The qualitative research study was conducted among three lecturers working in a private university in Malaysia. Research findings suggest that teaching innovations, number of years of teaching experience, facilities and working environment, and relationships with co-workers positively contribute to the well-being of lecturers. Meanwhile, relationship with superior, performance appraisal, and lack of student engagement contributes negatively to the emotional well-being of lecturers in the workplace.

Keywords: psychological well-being, education, working environment, emotions, teaching motivation, mental health

1. Introduction

Mental health plays a very important role in shaping a person's life as it determines how a person thinks, feels, and acts. It is an integral component of health that helps a person

ⁱCorrespondence: email <u>jeevak@sunway.edu.my</u>

handle the stress associated with others and make the correct choices in life. It shapes the world a person lives in. Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." Mental health is essential for leading a happy life as it has impacts on the following aspects of our life; relationships, physical health, emotional well-being, productivity and financial stability, quality of life, social life, and overall community well-being.

Psychological well-being which is strongly related to mental health is defined as how an individual view his life, being able to make his own judgements and evaluation based on his past experiences and life achievements (Tamara Turashvili and Marine Turashvili, 2015). According to Diener (1997) these evaluations may be in the form of cognitions or in the form of effect. The cognitive part refers to evaluating life-based on knowledge and understanding from past experiences, while the affective part is more to the influence of pleasant or unpleasant emotions toward the overall satisfaction of life. In overall, psychological well-being allows an individual to make judgements on his own life subjective to his own accumulation and interpretation of facts and the frequency of their own emotions. Therefore, quality psychological well-being is very important to make sure an individual has a positive outlook on life.

2. Carol Ryff's Well-Being Theory

There are six dimensions in Carol Ryff's well-being theory which are self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, and autonomy. All these categories can be related to the educational field in different contexts.

Self-acceptance refers to an individual's ability to accept himself and his attributes regardless of the positive and negative. They view their strengths and weaknesses equally. People with a good measure of self-acceptance should be able to embrace their flaws with an open mind and be contented with their life, accepting their past for what it is. In the educational context, a lecturer with high self-acceptance would be able to have a positive outlook toward his teaching profession and accept constructive feedback openly. A moderate level of self-acceptance will ensure a lecturer moves forward in his profession towards his goal regardless of his failures and past. Lack of self-acceptance creates dissatisfaction with certain aspects of life and is critical to own self, leading to the urge to be different occasionally.

Personal Growth refers to the attributes of a person who is motivated to learn new things and open to new experiences. Lecturers with strong personal growth are willing to try new teaching methods and upgrade their teaching and learning to adapt to the current trend in education. Strong personal growth develops a person's emotional

intelligence and productivity. Lack of personal growth creates boredom and stagnation, being unable to cope with life changes.

A person with a strong purpose in life will have plans and ambitions that will work for them. People with a strong purpose in life will have their own life direction that keeps them going. They have long-term and short-term plans and their life is organized, moving toward their target. Being confident with their life direction, their life tends to be meaningful in the past, present, and future. Purposeless people find their life meaningless with nothing to look forward to.

Positive social relations refer to how an individual relates to others, capable of strong empathy, a high concern for others, strong affection, and intimacy. People with strong positive social relations have satisfying and nurturing relationships. Relating to the educational context, positive social relations make lecturers have cordial relationships with their co-workers, as well as their students, enhancing the quality of the environment in educational institutions. Moreover, they have harmonious personal relationships at home which makes them a pleasant individual to be with. Lack of positive social relations has been linked with frustration, isolation, and lack of support.

Environmental mastery refers to the ability to handle the challenges and demands of the surroundings and create opportunities that benefit one's own needs and values. People with good environmental mastery will be competitive in nature and never fails to use the opportunities that come their way to upgrade themselves. Lack of environmental mastery is associated with the feeling of helplessness.

Autonomy is mainly the capability of a person to resist social pressure on their decisions in life. People with good autonomy skills will be able to maintain their convictions despite the influence of others. They have their personal standards for assessing themselves and regulating their behaviour from time to time. They will be able to make decisions based on their own capabilities and beliefs for a higher quality of living. In short, people with high autonomy skills have their own originality, free from peoples' judgements and expectations. People with low autonomy skills will be much more inclined towards people's judgements in making decisions. Their behaviours and actions are much influenced by the expectation of others. They pay much attention to what other people think of them.

3. Literature Review

Education is a huge field consisting of different groups of people in one place; stakeholders, administrators, educators, and students. Teachers, being the main pillars of education has a huge responsibility to integrate education and prepare students for the future world. The quality of university education depends to a large extent on the key figure of the educational process – a university teacher, and not only on his professional competence but also on physical and psychological health (Fitmaurice, 2010).

There are a few factors that influence the overall well-being of lecturers. The working environment plays a huge role in shaping up the career world the lecturer lives

in. A positive working environment enhances staff motivation and productivity in work. The study findings from Tri Na'imah, Heru Kurnianto, and Tjahjono Abd. Madjid (2020), indicate that teachers' workplace place well-being has a huge impact on their overall psychological well-being. The dimensions of teacher workplace well-being discussed in the study are the dimension of dedication, positive emotional dimensions, dimensions of appreciation, dimensions of cooperation, dimensions of job satisfaction, and dimensions of social closeness. All these factors emerge as contributors to teacher well-being in school.

Mixed-method research conducted by Agota Kun and Peter Gadanecz (2019) shows that the main pillars of teachers' workplace happiness were the realization of goals, feedback, and finding meaning in work and social relationships. The results of the quantitative study by Agota Kun and Peter Gadanecz (2019) indicated that workplace well-being and happiness correlated with inner psychological resources, hope, and optimism in particular. Overall findings from Agota Kun and Peter Gadanecz (2019) have demonstrated that perceiving work as meaningful appears to play an important role in teachers' happiness. Meaning is derived from different aspects of teachers' work such as knowledge sharing, interesting and motivating the children and experiencing flow in their work. Another main dimension that contributes to teachers' well-being referred to social relationships with children, colleagues, and parents. Analysis of teachers' responses revealed that not only good personal relationships but also a positive overall workplace climate are necessary for workplace happiness.

School climate is a powerful determinant of teacher and student outcomes. Teachers' perceptions of school climate are related to teachers' stress factors, teaching efficacy, and job satisfaction. All these factors make a huge impact on teachers' motivation, effectiveness, and psychological well-being. According to the findings from Cimen and Ozgan (2018), a supportive organisational climate, collaboration, communication, convenient physical conditions of the school, parent engagement, professional characteristics, and positive experiences emerged as contributors to teachers' psychological well-being. Additionally, a strict bureaucratic focus and ongoing interference by school principals; inadequate physical conditions of the school; negative attitudes of parents and colleagues; the poor reputation of the teaching profession; and negative experiences of teachers were identified as damaging factors to the psychological well-being of teachers (Cimen and Qzgan, 2018).

The content analysis from Ana Isabel Mota, Joao Lopes, and Celia Oliveira (2021) suggests that organization is the most relevant dimension contributing to teachers' burnout. On the other hand, the classroom category appears to be the most challenging context for teachers to manage. The results highlight the need to consider the dynamics and interdependency between personal, organizational, and classroom dimensions in the development and prevalence of burnout.

The transition from traditional to online learning has also become an influential factor in shaping psychological well-being among teachers. Research finding from Frances Ann Whittet (2020) suggests that online teaching has a mixture of positive and

negative impacts on teacher well-being. Due to the nature of flexibility in online learning, the lecturer's health is enhanced by the enjoyment of autonomy, and freedom, ensuring quality and best practice, enabling engagement with learners and colleagues. At the same time, health is compromised by a mismatch of time allocation and workload, long periods of sitting and working intensely through a computer, and a lack of recognition by colleagues, management, and faculty.

4. Aim and Research Methodology

This case study utilised a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of lecturers' perspectives regarding the contributing factors to their psychological well-being, focusing on their teaching motivation and well-being in the workplace. The case study is intended to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the contributing factors to psychological well-being in the workplace among lecturers?
- 2) Which factors impact positively the well-being of lecturers in the workplace?
- 3) Which factors impact negatively the well-being of lecturers in the workplace?
- 4) What are the factors that affect a lecturer's teaching motivation?
- 5) Which factors have significant effects on the lecturer's motivation and emotional well-being and need attention?

4.1 Participants, Sampling, and Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in form of interviews which lasted about 40 minutes each. The participants were three lecturers working in a private institution in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia with more than 5 years of teaching experience (see Table 1). All lecturers are teaching undergraduate students in the subject area of Psychology, Mathematics, Business, and Economics. The gathered data were coded manually (Basit, 2003) and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis.

Lecturer (L)	Gender	Age	Race	Years of Service
L1	Male	32	Indian	8
L2	Female	50	Indian	20
L3	Female	40	Chinese	13

Table 1: Demographic Summary of Lecturers

5. Results and Findings

5.1 Teaching Experience, Workload, and Student Response in Online Learning

All lecturers have the same thoughts on the impacts of online learning. They agreed that online learning causes lots of stress in the beginning, in terms of content preparation and more coordination compared to traditional face-to-face classes, but lecturers have settled themselves in online learning and it doesn't affect their well-being anymore. It was very

difficult during the initiation of online learning, since the content preparations demand a lot of time, with insufficient amount of IT skills among the lecturers.

"It is more work but it is different now." (L1)

"Asynchronous learning causes a lot of work." (L2)

"The content and preparation do not cause any stress, because I like my job." (L3)

"After a few cycles, online learning is more manageable." (L1)

Online subject delivery requires a different approach to presentation, and the process of getting mingled with online learning affected the mental well-being of lecturers to some extent. Moreover, students' different level of perception and adaptation to online learning, and the drop in academic results among students in the online education system has hugely affected lecturers emotionally. Generally, all lecturers are grateful that they passed through the "tough time" and that things are within control. Within a few cycles of online learning, lecturer find that the conductance of online delivery classes doesn't affect their motivation or mental health anymore.

5.2 Student Attitude and Student Engagement

All lecturers feel that a higher number of students generally affect the mood of their teaching, as they find large classes difficult to manage. Their workload increases in terms of marking answers scripts which causes them a certain amount of stress during the assessment and final exam period. Additionally, Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 claim that it is hard to track students and keep them engaged in large classes, as each student will have different expectations. They find that teaching larger group of students are not so effective because students are not receiving attention equally. This problem does occur in small classes but in a minimal way. All lecturers feel that the average class size shouldn't be more than forty, to ensure that a quality amount of attention is given to every student to achieve the learning outcomes equally.

Another major concern that affects a lecturer's teaching motivation is student response in classes. Less engaging students hugely affect lecturers in terms of their motivation. Lecturer 3 mentioned that she implements different methods of teaching to accommodate her students in classrooms. However, student ignorance and lack of interaction cause emotional stress, leading to her doubting her teaching purpose. Lecturer 1 claimed that he does have unresponsive classes from time to time, but it is not fully to be blamed on the students, as he admits that certain topics tend to be tedious. In those cases, he tries to engage students by collaborating with technology tools such as Quizizz to perform short activities during class hours. Lecturer 3 mentioned that she asks questions from students individually and walks around the classes if she finds that the class is unusually quiet. However, Lecturer 2 responded differently, claiming that with

many years of teaching experience she is not affected anymore by student attitudes anymore. If she finds the class monotonous, she casually jokes in the class and moves on with the flow. Instead, Lecturer 2 claims to feel affected by the student's low academic score in her subjects. This is in contrast with the opinions of Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 3, where they are emotionally affected only by student engagement but not by student marks.

"At the beginning, I want to make my students happy. Over the years I understand that different students will have different expectations, that is where the application of different teaching methods comes in." (L2)

"But if students scored low marks in their assessments, I feel affected." (L2)

"Student attitude does affect my mood; I try my best to accommodate my student in learning." (L3)

5.3 Increasing Age and Years of Teaching Experience

All three lecturers claimed that increasing age and years of teaching experience doesn't impact negatively their teaching motivation. A number of teaching years have made them more confident and solid in their teaching practice. Both Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 2 claimed that taking up new subjects from time to time has given them the motivation for continuous learning. Lecturer 1 quoted that by teaching a variety of subjects, teaching doesn't sound to be monotonous or doing the same thing for a continuous period of time. Lecturer 2 likes to take challenges by taking up new subjects as she sees the teaching profession as a life-long learning process. Lecturer 3 feels that teaching for a prolonged period is not monotonous as she meets new students every semester with different characteristics. She modifies her teaching methods to fulfil the different needs of different students each semester. She finds motivation by experimenting with new teaching pedagogies and observing student feedback. Overall, with the increase in age and years of teaching experience, all three lecturers find that they are more stable emotionally and psychologically with the acquisition of pedagogical knowledge in terms of teaching.

"I improvise using new teaching methods." (L2)

"I take challenges by taking new subjects." (L2)

"I apply a different way of approaches in teaching as I meet new students every semester." (L3)

"I find another objective in work and spend time to explore other teaching pedagogies." (L3)

"I always try a different teaching style. I teach a variety of subjects." (L1)

5.4 Leadership and Recognition from the Superior

Lecturer 1 and Lecturer 3 agreed that yearly appraisal has affected them emotionally towards their motivation in the department. Both of them feel that their efforts are not being fully recognized and appreciated. Both of them claimed that more importance is given to the department's benefits rather than individual benefits. Recognition is only given to those efforts which are aligned with the institutions' goal, whereas individual achievement for personal career progress is ignored. Lecturer 3 does not share some of her individual achievements with her superior because she finds it demotivating when her superior doesn't appreciate it. She is firm in her belief that motivation is more about herself and her continuous learning for self-improvement rather than the department's recognition.

"I feel sad for a while, but after that, I choose to overcome it. I look at myself and I know where I need to improve." (L3)

"Performance appraisal causes stress at the beginning of my career, but now I understand the nature of appraisals and I know what to do and where to put a full stop." (L2)

"Leader only sees if our efforts benefit the departments, but do not really care if it benefits the individual. Whatever I do must be in line with their goal. I cannot rely much on appraisals, as it is a kind of demotivation." (L1)

Lecturer 1 tries to mix and match his attitude with his superior's departmental requirement and move on with it, concentrating on his personal progress at the same time. He doesn't rely much on the yearly appraisal because it is a kind of demotivation as it only concentrates on the organization's benefits. With the number of years of teaching experience, Lecturer 2 knows her boundaries when it comes to yearly appraisal and relationship with the superior. She doesn't take misunderstandings too personally and has learned to accept them. In general, all lecturers admit that the relationship and recognition from their superiors have affected them emotionally, but they have learned to live with it.

5.5 Working Environment and Cordial Relationship with Colleagues

All lecturers agreed that a positive working environment enhances emotional well-being among lecturers. This includes the overall facilities, location, working space, and teaching facilities. A good working environment enhances the motivation among lecturers to perform better. A good relationship with co-workers does not only increase well-being in the workplace, but it enhances the well-being of a lecturer as a person.

"I like a happy working environment. Positive relations with co-workers are very important for me." (L2)

"Good relations with co-workers improve my well-being on a whole not only in the office but also personally." (L3)

"I want to come to a happy place." (L2)

"The laptop is not meant for the workload that we are doing." (L1)

However, Lecturer 1 suggested that there is a need for improvement in providing better IT support to the lecturers. With the implementation of online learning, it is important to equip the lecturer with a heavy-duty laptop with the latest version of technological software in it. This is to ensure that lectures are conducted smoothly with good quality of delivery. Lecturer 3 showed her gratefulness for having peers with whom she can share her problems, to reduce her emotional burden from time to time.

5.6 Self-Esteem, Physical Health, and Personal Issues

Lecturer 1 claims to be affected by health and personal issues in terms of his teaching quality. He makes sure that he shares his feelings with the students before they can sense them. He practices transparency in sharing his current situation with his students to avoid any misconceptions among them. Lecturer 2 on the other hand, will not let health problems affect her teaching because she doesn't want to go through the stress of replacing classes. She also quotes that she doesn't bring personal problems to work. Lecturer 3 is not affected at all by her health or personal issues.

"Physical health affects me minimally, but I share with my student before they sense it." (L1)

"I don't let physical health affect my classes, because replacing classes is even more stressful. (L2)

"I don't bring my personal problems into class." (L3)

On the aspect of self-esteem, all three lecturers agreed that they experienced a certain level of anxiety during their first year of teaching experience. Not to forget, language also appeared to be a barrier for them at the beginning of their career. With the increase in years of teaching experience, the confidence level increased and lecturers were more comfortable in delivering their content.

"Language proficiency was an issue for me in the beginning years as I was new to the education line. I improved myself with time, as more or less we are using the same terms in teaching." (L3)

"I had a problem teaching students with different levels. I had to adjust my teaching level according to the students. So, I decided to learn different teaching methods. (L2)

5.7 Administrative Work

Integration between teachers' workload and well-being is always debated (Zakaria et al., 2021). Lecturer 1 mentioned that administrative work doesn't affect his emotional well-being much, but at the same time didn't deny the fact that it does interrupt his workflow to a certain extent on some occasions. Lecturer 3 doesn't mind doing administrative work within her expertise and liking, as irrelevant administrative work causes stress due to inexperience and lack of interest in the subject field.

"On administrative work, we must be assigned with something that we like and within our expertise." (L3)

All three lecturers agreed that academic staff should be given the flexibility to concentrate on teaching and minimize the burden of administrative work as it demands more time and attention. Utilising the time for teaching preparations and research works gives them a more peaceful and contented working experience as they do what they are good and passionate about.

6. Discussion

The case study has given some in-depth understanding of the contributing factors of psychological well-being among lecturers in both constructive and destructive ways. It is found that overall teaching experience has a positive impact on lecturers' teaching motivation and well-being in the workplace. Challenges faced by the lecturers during the emerge of online learning increased their level of self-acceptance and personal growth eventually. The perfection and flaws in student engagement, being the main determinant for teaching motivation, have increased teaching innovation among lecturers in pedagogical and technical aspects. Lecturers accept students' feedback constructively and continue to engage with students efficiently to enhance their learning experience as it provides career satisfaction and enhances their teaching motivation in general. Teaching innovations also enhance lecturers' emotional intelligence and productivity and promotes personal growth among them. According to Ainley and Carstens (2018), innovativeness in educational contexts refers (1) to innovative instructional practices, (2) to the adoption of innovative practices by educators in order to foster change in educational systems, and (3) to schools that are supportive of innovation. Empirical research has shown that innovativeness is closely connected to greater well-being

(Honkaniemi, Lehtonen, & Hasu, 2015). In overall, it is found that student behaviour and engagement contribute to motivation among lecturers to be creative and willing to learn new things, adapting to the current trends of the education system.

In addition, positive relationship with co-workers and a healthy working environment has proven to enhance psychological well-being among lecturer not only on the professional front but also in the personal context. A teacher with good psychological well-being tends to have a high level of quality of life (Nor Af'Idah Rameli et al., 2017). Good psychological well-being will influence a positive attitude, feeling of satisfaction, intimacy in a relationship, feeling of dependency, having a purpose in life, and feeling strong in life (Refahi, et al., 2015).

Relationship with superior, performance appraisal, and recognition from the department has significantly impacted lecturer's mental health in a negative way. However, it has been observed that the negative impact of leadership and recognition has been reduced to a minimal as the lecturer's years of working experience increase. Although teacher performance appraisal has gained in popularity over the last decade as a tool for measuring teacher effectiveness (Berliner, 2013; Konstantopoulos, 2012), they are unlikely to provide the solution to building teacher capabilities (Valli & Finkelstein, 2013). A failure to acknowledge the many aspects that contribute to teacher quality and student outcomes (OECD, 2005) - including the role school, peers, former teachers, preservice programs and experiences play - makes performance appraisal problematic (Berliner, 2013). This issue appears to be a concern, and further research needs to be done across participants involving different organizations to gain a more in-depth perspective regarding the effect on psychological well-being among lecturers.

Lecturers' emotional well-being has remarkably improved with their increasing age, as their maturity and autonomy skills improve with the number of years of teaching experience. Lecturer's self-esteem has significantly improved over the teaching years. Lecturers with a higher amount of working experience have a strong purpose in life with good autonomy skills. A good mastery of autonomy skills enables the lecturers to set boundaries and maintain their convictions despite the negativity that arises from the leadership of their department. It is generally found that more experienced lecturers have learned the art of assessing themselves in a constructive way in the context of their own originality and life purpose without being influenced by the judgement of external parties. In short, they work smart, having a good environmental mastery in fulfilling the needs of the department as well as their own personal needs.

Physical health and personal issues have received mixed responses on their effect on the psychological well-being of lecturers. This context is subjective to a person's capability, individuality, and personality as it makes an individual view the same content differently. Again, it has been observed that lecturer with a higher amount of teaching experience handles personal affairs and career more efficiently. This implies to the suggestion of conducting further research among lecturers across diverse demographic groups to investigate the impact of physical and personal health on lecturers' psychological well-being.

7. Conclusion

The present study seems to suggest that leadership and appraisal factors appear to be a more powerful reason for the inflated levels of psychological well-being among lecturers. This study provides clear evidence that teaching innovations, and a positive working environment with a good relationship with colleagues, support psychological well-being among lecturers. Most importantly, the lecturer's years of teaching experience are found to be strongly related to enhanced teaching motivation and mental well-being in the workplace. The validity of this suggestion should be further investigated in future research involving a higher number of samples coming from a broader range of age groups and teaching experiences.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Jeevanithya Krishnan is a Physics lecturer in Sunway University. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Physics and Master's Degree in Materials Science and Engineering. Currently she is pursuing PhD specializing in Education. Her current research interests include the areas of teaching pedagogies, Education 4.0, educational psychology, and instructional technology in education. Her main scope of research is to explore different elements of higher education and identify the strength and gaps for improvisation towards the betterment of education.

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