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WELLBEING IN MALAYSIA**Nur Izzati Mat Zin¹, Rose Manisah Sulong^{2*}, Zaida Nor Zainuddin³, Ahmad Fauzi Mohd Ayub⁴¹ Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Email: gs64516@student.upm.edu.my

² School of Education, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

Email: rose.manisah@uum.edu.my

³ Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Email: zaidanor@upm.edu.my

⁴ Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Email: afmy@upm.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

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DOI: 10.35631/IJEPC.1061042**This work is licensed under** [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

The psychological well-being of teachers is a critical factor influencing not only individual health but also the effectiveness and sustainability of educational systems. Guided by Ryff's multidimensional model of Psychological Well-Being (PWB), this study examined the levels and dimensions of psychological well-being among Malaysian teachers across primary and secondary schools. A total of 479 teachers participated in the study, and data were collected using the 42-item Ryff's PWB scale. Descriptive statistics revealed that overall psychological well-being among Malaysian teachers was moderate to high ($M = 3.8483$, $SD = 0.38413$), with the highest mean observed in the dimension of Purpose in Life ($M = 4.0653$), followed by Positive Relations with Others ($M = 4.0095$), and Personal Growth ($M = 3.9970$). Autonomy registered the lowest mean ($M = 3.3749$), suggesting a potential area of concern. Additionally, an independent samples t-test showed no statistically significant difference in psychological well-being between primary ($M = 3.8803$) and secondary school teachers ($M = 3.81$), $p = .055$, though a marginal trend was observed favouring primary school teachers. The findings highlight the strengths and vulnerabilities in teachers' psychological functioning, with implications for policy and school leadership practices aimed at promoting teacher well-being. Enhancing autonomy-supportive environments and reinforcing personal growth opportunities may serve as strategic interventions to improve overall teacher well-being and retention. These insights contribute to the increase in growing on international literature related to teachers' mental health and provide empirical evidence from the educational context of Southeast Asian countries.

Keywords:

Psychological Well-Being, Ryff's Model, Malaysian Teachers, School Level Comparison, Teacher Mental Health

Introduction

Teacher psychological well-being (PWB) has gained increasing scholarly attention as a critical construct in educational research, largely due to rising concerns about teacher stress, fatigue, and declining professional commitment across the globe (Diener et al., 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2001). In Malaysia, similar challenges have become evident, where emotional exhaustion, work-related stress, and mental health difficulties among educators are increasingly documented (Munusamy et al., 2024; Pau et al., 2022). These psychological strains do not merely undermine teachers' individual well-being but also compromise the overall quality of instruction and the broader learning environment (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Within this context, Ryff's multidimensional model of psychological well-being (1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) remains one of the most influential theoretical frameworks, encompassing six key dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance, that together define optimal psychological functioning. Although this framework has been extensively validated across diverse populations worldwide, its empirical application and contextual adaptation within the Malaysian education system remain relatively underexplored (Mohamed et al., 2020).

The Malaysian educational landscape presents distinctive socio-cultural and systemic factors that influence teachers' psychological well-being. Contemporary studies reveal that teaching professionals increasingly face mental health concerns associated with policy shifts, evolving pedagogical demands, and heightened community expectations (Chan et al., 2021). Additionally, limited opportunities for upward mobility and professional advancement within the hierarchical structure of the Malaysian education system have been found to diminish teachers' sense of purpose and professional growth, both of which are integral components of psychological well-being (Thien & Liu, 2024). The growing burden of non-teaching administrative tasks further exacerbates work-related stress and fatigue, negatively affecting teachers' performance and, by extension, student outcomes (Jalil et al., 2023; Chan et al., 2021). Nonetheless, evidence suggests that supportive workplace environments, effective coping strategies, and transformational leadership can play a pivotal role in reducing burnout and enhancing teacher resilience and mental health (Iliško et al., 2020). Therefore, a systemic approach involving policy-level reforms such as promoting work-life balance, improving access to mental health support services, and fostering collaborative professional learning communities are essential to safeguard and enhance teachers' psychological well-being (Jalil et al., 2023; Chan et al., 2021).

Recognizing these gaps, the present study seeks to examine teachers' psychological well-being in Malaysia through the lens of Ryff's multidimensional model. The study aims to provide empirical evidence that captures both the general level and structural profile of well-being among Malaysian teachers, thereby contributing to the limited body of local research on this topic. Specifically, this study pursues the following objectives:

1. To determine the mean scores and standard deviations for all 42 items of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale among teachers in Malaysia.
2. To assess the overall level of psychological well-being based on the six dimensions outlined in Ryff's model.
3. To compare the levels of psychological well-being between primary and secondary school teachers in Malaysia.

In alignment with these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the mean scores and standard deviations for each item of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale among Malaysian teachers?
2. What is the overall level of teachers' psychological well-being across Ryff's six dimensions?
3. Are there significant differences in psychological well-being between primary and secondary school teachers in Malaysia?

It is anticipated that the findings of this study will provide robust empirical insights to guide the design of targeted interventions, inform educational policy development, and strengthen institutional strategies to promote teacher mental health and psychological well-being. By doing so, this research aligns with national educational priorities that emphasize sustainable teacher development and quality education outcomes, while advancing the scholarly discourse on psychological well-being within the Malaysian context.

Literature Review

Psychological Wellbeing Theory

According to Mondy and Reynolds (2022), psychological well-being consists of interconnected components that contribute to overall life satisfaction. The theory of Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) by Ryff gives a valuable view of the individual's well-being (1989). This theory combines various points of view, including developmental health, therapeutic and mental health. Ryff paradigm (1995) incorporates developmental psychological principles such as the stage of Erikson's psychosocial development, Buhler's goal oriented behavior, and maturity related personality changes. In addition, this theory also integrates Maslow's self-esteem, Carl Rogers' view of the fully functioning individual, and Carl Jung's clinical psychological knowledge of the individual's personality. As a result, Ryff (1989) has categorized six factors in measuring psychological well-being, self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purposes, and personal development (Volkova et al., 2019).

Psychological well-being is defined as a situation where one is mentally healthy and able to accept his own strengths and weaknesses. According to Ryff's approach, psychological well-being is not just the absence of mental illness, but also involves the full achievement of the potential in various aspects of life. A person's quality of life is largely determined by the six dimensions underlined by Ryff (1989):

1. Self-Acceptance: The ability to receive oneself, including advantages and disadvantages.
2. Positive relationships with others: The importance of building healthy and supportive social bonds with the surrounding community.

3. Autonomy: Individual ability to make own decisions without being affected by social pressure.
4. Environmental Mastery: The ability to adapt and control the environment effectively.
5. Purpose in life: Has directions and meanings that motivate one to achieve personal goals.
6. Personal Growth: The process of continuous development to realize the potential for life.

These six dimensions contribute to the individual psychological wellbeing and are a major measure of mental health. The PWB Theory offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing individual wellbeing. This theory has also been widely used in the study of individual wellbeing, including organizational psychology, education, and employee well-being (Anastasia & Hardiyanto, 2022; Garcia et al., 2019). Strong psychological well-being in education can increase teacher dedication, job satisfaction, and reduce workplace stress. Ryff and Singer (1996) found that individuals with strong psychological wellbeing tend to have high self-confidence, active involve in their environment, and the ability to develop positive social relationship. They can balance their personal and professional lives and have high self-esteem. In this regard, recognizing the importance of psychological wellbeing helps to identify strategic measures in improving the wellbeing of teachers in the education sector. Figure 1 describes the dimensions of Ryff's thesis on psychological wellbeing.

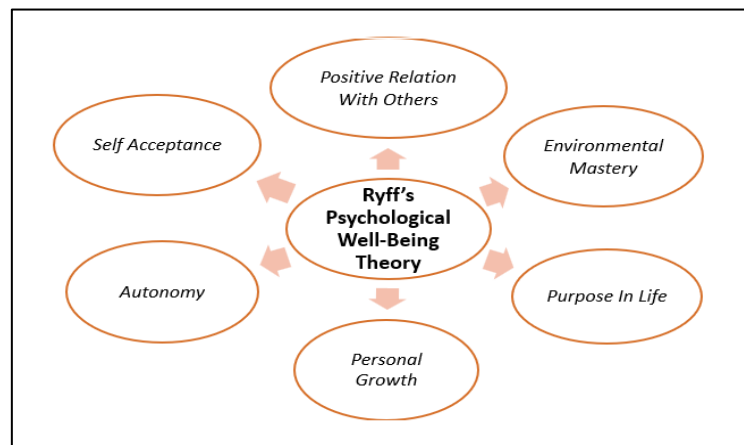


Figure 1: Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Theory

Previous Literature related on Teacher's Psychological Wellbeing

Previous research has focused on teacher psychological well-being, especially in response to crisis around the world such as the Covid-19 pandemic. The literature examines on factor effecting teacher well-being, including stress levels, mechanisms of action and educational policy. Past research shows that teachers face a higher amount of stress than other professions significantly affecting their mental health. A comparative study found that out of 26 types of jobs, teachers' careers report the lowest levels of psychological well-being, in line with the findings that link direct work stress with health, well-being, and teacher job satisfaction (Jerrim et al., 2020).

In addition, work stress has also worsened by the lack of training in stress management strategies during the Teacher Education Program. This has led to new teachers often lacking an effective action mechanism to cope with emotional demands in college careers (Hepburn et al., 2021). From the specific factors that influence the well-being of teachers, the study emphasized the multi-dimensional approach. For example, the PERMA framework provides a comprehensive perspective on understanding the well-being of the teacher by emphasizing elements such as positive emotions, engagement, social relations, life purposes, and achievement (Ozturk et al., 2024). However, there is a criticism that the current literature has not yet described this well-being of the well-being of the well-being of the holistic representation of the well-being of well-being (Ozturk et al., 2024; Falecki & Mann, 2020). In addition, issues of education systems such as excessive workload and lack of resources have also been identified in various studies as major stress factors related to the decline of teacher well-being (Muzakki & Arum, 2022; Lemon & Turner, 2024).

Furthermore, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has made the issue of teacher well-being more complex. Reports show that increasing emotional stress due to the transition to online teaching and ongoing uncertainty in the educational environment negatively affects the psychological wellbeing of teachers (Conte et al., 2024; Dabrowski, 2020). Action to strengthen the wellbeing of teachers through adequate support and the provision of mental health resources is important in reducing the risk of fatigue (Nong et al., 2025). Awareness-based training and resilience are also recognized as an effective intervention to reduce stress and improve teacher mental health as a whole (Hepburn et al., 2021; Neumann & Tillott, 2022).

Cultural context also has a significant impact on teacher's wellbeing around the world. For example, a comparative study of preschool teachers in various countries, has revealed variations in stress and approaches taken, indicating that the local education environment has a significant impact on the well-being of teachers (Byun & Jeon, 2023; Wang, 2022). The need for local approaches is highlighted by the specific difficulties faced by educators from a variety of cultural backgrounds, which have an impact on their feelings and the effectiveness of their teaching (Wang, 2022). In conclusion, although the well-being of teachers is increasingly recognized as an important factor in improving educational outcomes, it is still facing various challenges due to the issue of education systems and broader cultural factors. In this regard, increasing awareness and implementation of practical strategies such as establishing support networks, reducing workloads, and strengthening the mechanism of action is important to build a healthier teaching environment, both during and after the pandemic.

Method

Research Design

This study used quantitative methods with cross-sectional design to evaluate the psychological well-being among teachers in Malaysia. This design was selected because it was suitable for self-reported data from the teacher's respondents at a certain point. In addition, through this method, it allows researchers to compare psychological well-being between primary and secondary school teachers. Based on the methods used, descriptive analysis is also considered accurate to describe the psychological well-being of the large sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Population and Sample

The study involved 479 teachers across Malaysia. 252 sample were primary school teachers (SK) and 227 sample were secondary school teachers (SMK) from government schools in Malaysia. The random sampling methods were used in this study to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Eligibility criteria for participation include: (a) Serve full-time in primary or secondary schools under the Ministry of Education Malaysia, (b) have at least one year teaching experience, and (c) voluntarily consented to participate in the study. Demographic information such as age, gender, and duration of teacher service are also included, but are not used as control variables in the main analysis.

Instrumentation

This study utilized Ryff Psychological Well-Being (PWB) scale containing 42 items (Ryff, 1989). This scale evaluates the six main dimensions of psychological well-being, namely autonomy, environmental mastery, personal development, positive relationships with others, life goals, and self-acceptance. For this study, the scale was modified into a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale is modified from the 6-point Likert scale to a 5-point Likert scale to ensure a clearer and more consistent response among the respondents. Inverse items have also been reviewed and adjusted in advance to ensure the accuracy of the score. This PWB scale is widely recognized because of the strength of its psychometric features and its strong theory in the concept of Eudaimonic well-being. Previous research also demonstrates their conceptual validity and reliability in various cultural and employment contexts (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Abbott et al., 2006). In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the six subscales is at an acceptable level (0.7 to 0.9), indicating that this scale is a reliable for use in the Malaysian context.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection in this study was conducted in full cooperation from the Ministry of Education Malaysia as well as all State Education Departments (*Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri*, JPN). The research team prepared the questionnaire form in print and sent it to the JPN office, before it was distributed to teachers in various districts. This process ensures wider coverage and teacher involvement from various school contexts. The use of printed surveys was intentional to ensure participation from teachers in remote or low-connectivity regions, thereby improving inclusivity and data coverage. Respondents were guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of their answers, and participation in the survey was entirely optional. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained, and all procedures adhered to ethical research guidelines. The standardized distribution of surveys followed recommendations by Dillman et al. (2014) to ensure consistency and minimize administration bias.

Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics version 29 was used to evaluate the data that was gathered. To investigate the distribution and core patterns of responses, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated for every item and aspect of psychological well-being (Pallant, 2020). An independent samples t-test was used to evaluate group differences, specifically between primary and secondary school teachers. Before running the t-test, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was carried out to check whether the assumption of equal variances was met. The threshold for statistical significance in this study was set at $p < .05$, meaning that findings with less than a 5% chance of error were considered significant.

Findings and Discussion

The Mean Scores and Standard Deviations of the 42 Items Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Instrument in The Context of Teachers in Malaysia.

This study analyzes the mean score and standard deviation of 42 items in PWB Scale in the context of teachers in Malaysia. Teacher psychological well-being is not only important for their mental health and balance, but also influences the professional effectiveness and sustainability of their careers in the long term (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2001). By examining the mean scores and standard deviations for these scale items, this study provides an empirical picture of the psychological health of teachers in Malaysia.

For autonomy dimensions, the findings indicate that the mean score is at a moderate level across all items. The highest mean score was recorded on item A2, "My decision is usually not influenced by what others do" ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.84$), which illustrates that teachers have a moderate level of freedom in decision making. On the other hand, item A4R, "I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions" ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.04$), recorded the lowest mean score, indicating that some teachers are still influenced by social pressure from the outside environment. This finding is in line with previous studies that found that while teachers generally appreciate autonomy, systemic stress and organizational constraints often limit the freedom they can practice (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Environmental mastery emerged as a particularly strong dimension among the respondents. Item EM1: "*In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live*" received the highest mean score across the entire dataset ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.64$), demonstrating teachers' perceived control and competence in managing daily life. This result supports the assertion by Lent and Brown (2006) that perceived environmental mastery is closely linked to self-efficacy and career satisfaction. In contrast, item EM5R: "*I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities*" scored lower ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.13$), suggesting that while most teachers feel competent, workload and responsibility remain a stress factor for some.

The personal growth domain also reported high mean values, particularly for item PG6: "*For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth*" ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.72$). This underscores a strong growth orientation among teachers, a finding echoed by King and Napa (1998), who found that educators often associate well-being with lifelong learning and personal development. However, item PG7R: "*I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago*" recorded a lower mean ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.30$), reflecting that not all teachers share the same level of aspiration for personal transformation.

This dimension reported relatively high levels of well-being, with item PO4: "*I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members or friends*" achieving a strong mean score ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.72$). This is indicative of the importance of social connectedness in Malaysian culture, where collectivist values emphasize harmony and relationships (Hofstede, 2011). Meanwhile, item PO2R: "*Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me*" had a slightly lower mean ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.10$), which still suggests overall positive relationship experiences, though certain interpersonal challenges exist.

The purpose in life dimension demonstrated strong scores overall, with item PL6: *"Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them"* reporting one of the highest means ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.60$). This implies that the majority of teachers have a clear sense of direction, which is in line with research by Steger et al. (2006) showing a favorable correlation between purpose and life satisfaction and job engagement. In contrast, the lowest score across all items was found in item PL7R: *"I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life"* ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.01$), highlighting that most teachers still maintain forward-looking aspirations and goals.

The self -acceptance dimension shows mixed patterns. For example, the item, *"In general, I feel confident and positive about myself"* ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.67$), showing that most teachers have their self -confidence and positive views. However, the SA3R item, *"I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have "* ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 0.97$), recorded a much lower mean score. This shows that some teachers are still facing a tendency to compare themselves to others, which sometimes cause dissatisfaction. This difference is in line with the discovery of Diener et al. (1999), which asserted that self -acceptance is often influenced by cultural expectations and social contexts related to achievement.

Overall, teachers in Malaysia show a modest level of psychological well-being across the six dimensions. The highest scores are recorded on the dimensions of the environment, the purpose of life, and personal development, which highlights the direction, control, and continued efforts to grow among teachers. On the other hand, autonomous dimensions and self-acceptance record lower average scores, which are likely to be influenced by institutional and cultural factors that limit self-expression and self -assessment. These findings have important implications for educational policies and practices. Initiatives to improve teacher well-being can be focused on the formation of a school environment that supports autonomy (Reeve, 2009), encourages reflection practices that can strengthen self-acceptance, as well as provide continuous professional development opportunities to support personal growth. Given that the well-being of teachers is closely related to the permanent rates of professions, work performance, and student achievement (Collie et al., 2015), such initiatives are crucial to ensuring the sustainability of education quality in Malaysia. Table 1 shows a summary of the mean score and standard deviation for all items.

Table 1: Malaysian teachers' Psychological Wellbeing

Code	Dimension & Item	Mean	SD
<i>A</i>	<i>Dimension: Autonomy</i>		
A1	I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people.	3.72	0.88
A2	My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing.	3.78	0.84
A3R	I tend to worry about what other people think of me.	3.00	1.03
A4R	I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.	2.97	1.04
A5	I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus.	3.51	0.92
A6R	It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters.	3.01	1.01

A7	I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.	3.63	0.91
EM	Dimension: Environmental Mastery		
EM1	In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live.	4.63	0.64
EM2R	The demands of everyday life often get me down.	3.70	1.11
EM3R	I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me.	3.99	1.04
EM4	I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life.	4.23	0.89
EM5R	I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities.	3.52	1.13
EM6R	I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me.	3.52	1.17
EM7	I have been able to build a home and a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking.	4.02	0.95
PG	Dimension: Personal Growth		
PG1R	I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons.	4.11	0.99
PG2	I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.	4.13	0.87
PG3R	When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years.	4.19	0.90
PG4	I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time.	3.97	0.81
PG5R	I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things.	3.62	1.08
PG6	For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.	4.49	0.72
PG7R	I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago.	3.47	1.30
PO	Dimension: Positive Relations with Others		
PO1	Most people see me as loving and affectionate.	3.90	0.87
PO2R	Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me	3.80	1.10
PO3R	I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns.	3.94	1.10
PO4	I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members or friends.	4.42	0.72
PO5	People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.	3.92	0.88
PO6R	I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others.	4.06	0.94
PO7	I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me.	4.03	0.87
PL	Dimension: Purpose In Life		
PL1R	I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future.	4.24	1.09
PL2	I have a sense of direction and purpose in life.	4.53	0.78
PL3R	My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me.	4.40	0.84

PL4R	I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life.	4.08	0.99
PL5	I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality.	4.28	0.75
PL6	Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.	4.54	0.60
PL7R	I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life.	2.39	1.01
SA6	<i>Dimension: Self-Acceptance</i>		
SA1	When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out.	4.20	0.71
SA2	In general, I feel confident and positive about myself.	4.34	0.68
SA3R	I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have.	2.45	0.97
SA4	I like most aspects of my personality.	4.07	0.75
SA5R	In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.	3.93	1.01
SA6R	My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves.	3.13	1.09
SA7	When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am.	3.77	1.02

The Level of Teachers' Psychological Well-Being in Malaysia According to Each Dimension.

This study examines the mean and standard deviation of each dimension of PWB among teachers in Malaysia, thus providing a deeper picture of their psychological conditions and emotional well-being. In recent years, the issue of teacher well-being is increasingly focusing on global education discourse, especially as the education system faces growing demands, emotional fatigue, and alarming rates of teachers (skaalvik & skaalvik, 2017). Psychological well-being plays an important role in shaping the efficiency, resilience, and the willingness of teachers to remain in the profession. It is not only the absence of stress, but also includes the existence of positive functions and self-satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

The sampled population exhibited a moderate to high level of psychological well-being, as indicated by the overall composite mean score of $M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.38$ among Malaysian teachers. This suggests that, on average, teachers in Malaysia maintain a relatively positive psychological state. This finding is consistent with previous literature emphasizing that despite high job demands, many teachers exhibit adaptive psychological functioning due to intrinsic motivation and purpose-driven career values (Collie et al., 2015; Lent & Brown, 2006).

Among the six dimensions, Purpose in Life reported the highest mean score ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.46$), suggesting that most teachers possess a strong sense of direction, goal orientation, and personal meaning in their work. This aligns with the notion of eudaimonic well-being, where fulfillment is derived from purposeful living and goal pursuit (Steger et al., 2006). Given the culturally collectivist and value-driven nature of the teaching profession in Malaysia, it is unsurprising that teachers find intrinsic value and long-term direction in their roles (Hofstede, 2011). The high level of purpose is also linked to reduced emotional burnout and increased career longevity (Day & Gu, 2010).

The second highest mean was observed in Positive Relations with Others ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.58$), indicating that teachers generally experience healthy interpersonal relationships and social support. This supports the literature emphasizing the role of collegiality and trust in enhancing school climate and teacher satisfaction (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). In collectivist societies like Malaysia, social harmony and relational connectedness are culturally emphasized, which may contribute to elevated scores in this dimension (Kim et al., 2008).

Personal Growth also reported a high mean ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.56$), reflecting that teachers perceive themselves as continually evolving and developing. This supports the findings of King and Napa (1998), who argue that individuals who are actively engaged in learning and self-improvement report higher levels of well-being. Teachers often face dynamic classroom environments and pedagogical demands, which may foster ongoing self-development and learning, contributing to personal growth.

The fourth-ranked dimension was Environmental Mastery ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.61$), which suggests that teachers feel generally competent in managing their daily responsibilities and controlling their environments. This finding is aligned with Lent and Brown's (2006) social cognitive model of well-being, where environmental mastery is closely related to perceived self-efficacy and coping resources. However, given the rising complexity of teaching tasks and administrative workload, this dimension also reflects a potential area of pressure if support systems are lacking.

Self-Acceptance recorded a moderate mean of $M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.49$, indicating that while most teachers maintain a generally positive view of themselves, there may be underlying tendencies toward self-criticism or comparison. According to Diener et al. (1999), self-acceptance plays a critical role in subjective well-being and is influenced by both personal and contextual factors, including achievement expectations and social comparison. Within the Malaysian education system, the pressure on achievement and comparison with peers may influence the way teachers evaluate themselves.

Among the six dimensions of psychological well-being, autonomy recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.52$), thus marking a relatively weak aspect of teacher well-being. These findings indicate that teachers may feel bound by institutional regulations, administrative controls, or expectations of society that limit their freedom to make decisions independently. As emphasized by Deci and Ryan (2000), autonomy is a basic psychological requirement, and when it is blocked, intrinsic motivation and teacher job satisfaction can be affected. Research by Reeve (2009) has shown that autonomy-supportive environments foster greater engagement and well-being among educators. Thus, the relatively lower autonomy levels indicate a need for school policies that promote teacher agency and participative decision-making.

The dimensional analysis of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being model reveals that Malaysian teachers generally exhibit moderate to high levels of psychological well-being, particularly in areas related to purpose, positive relationships, and growth. However, lower levels of autonomy and moderate self-acceptance suggest areas where systemic and organizational support could be enhanced. Educational leaders and policymakers should prioritize autonomy-supportive school environments, structured professional development programs, and mental health resources that promote holistic teacher well-being. Recognizing psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct enables a deeper understanding of the strengths and

challenges teachers face. As psychological well-being is closely tied to teacher retention, classroom effectiveness, and student outcomes (OECD, 2021; Collie et al., 2015), fostering it is essential for sustaining a high-quality education system. The results of the study are summarized in table 2 as shown below:

Table 2: The Level of Teachers' Psychological Well-Being in Malaysia According to Each Dimension

Psychological Wellbeing Dimension	Min	SD
1. Autonomy	3.37	0.52
2. Environmental Mastery	3.95	0.61
3. Personal Growth	3.99	0.56
4. Positive Relation with Others	4.01	0.58
5. Purpose In Life	4.07	0.46
6. Self-Acceptance	3.70	0.49
Overall	3.85	0.38

Comparison of Psychological Well-Being Between Primary and Secondary School Teachers

An independent samples t-test was used to ascertain whether there is a significant difference in psychological well-being between Malaysian primary school and secondary school teachers. Table 1 displays the findings. According to descriptive statistics, the mean psychological well-being score of primary school teachers ($N = 252$) was marginally higher than that of secondary school teachers ($N = 227$, $M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.38$). This suggests that, descriptively, primary school teachers perceive themselves to have marginally higher psychological well-being than their secondary school counterparts.

The Levene's Test for Equality of Variances produced a non-significant result ($F = 0.74$, $p = .39$), indicating that the assumption of equal variances was met. The t-test findings were interpreted using the expected row with equal variances. The t-test for equality of means yielded a t-value of 1.93, with 477 degrees of freedom, and a p-value of 0.055. Although the mean difference of 0.07 shows that primary school teachers reported higher psychological well-being, it was not statistically significant at the standard alpha threshold of 0.05 ($p > .05$). The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference was -0.00 to 0.14, which included zero, indicating that the difference is not statistically significant.

Although primary school teachers demonstrated slightly higher levels of psychological well-being than secondary school teachers, the difference did not reach statistical significance. This finding may indicate that both groups experience similar levels of psychological functioning, possibly due to shared systemic pressures, workload expectations, and institutional demands within the Malaysian education system (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Collie et al., 2015). However, the near-significance ($p = .055$) may warrant further exploration. Previous literature has indicated that primary school teachers often benefit from closer student relationships and more structured classroom environments, which could positively influence well-being (Day & Gu, 2010). In contrast, secondary school teachers may face additional academic pressures, disciplinary issues, and content delivery complexity, potentially impacting psychological resilience (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Although there isn't a statistically significant difference in psychological well-being between Malaysian primary and secondary school teachers, the marginal p-value points to a tendency that might become more noticeable in longitudinal research or with a bigger sample. Future research should investigate contextual and role-based

stressors that may differentially affect well-being across school levels and explore potential moderating factors such as teaching experience, leadership support, and school climate. The information displayed in the table 3 below:

Table 3: T-Test Table for Comparing Teachers' Psychological Well-Being by School Level.

School	Number of teachers	Min	Standard Deviation	T value	Degree of Freedom	Significant
Primary School Teacher	252	3.88	.39	1.93	477	.055
Secondary School Teacher	227	3.81	.38			

Theoretical and Practical Considerations

This study adds to the current literature by reinforcing Ryff's (1989) multidimensional model of Psychological Well-Being (PWB) as a strong theoretical framework for investigating teacher well-being in Malaysia's educational setting. The identification of Purpose in Life, Positive Relationships with Others, and Personal Growth as the strongest dimensions suggests that well-being among teachers in collectivist cultures is closely related to meaning-making, social connectedness, and continuous development core constructs within eudaimonic well-being theory (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Steger et al., 2006).

The lower mean score observed in Autonomy indicates a tension between internal motivation and external demands, reinforcing self-determination theory's proposition that the thwarting of basic psychological needs particularly autonomy can undermine motivation and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000). From a practical perspective, these results suggest that structural or hierarchical school cultures may limit teacher agency, affecting psychological health over time. Furthermore, the absence of significant differences in psychological well-being between primary and secondary teachers underscores the pervasive nature of systemic stressors, regardless of school level. It highlights the necessity of addressing well-being through a whole-school and systemic lens, rather than targeting segmented teacher populations.

Implications for School Leadership and Policy

The findings offer critical implications for school leaders, education policymakers, and institutional stakeholders seeking to cultivate healthier, more sustainable teaching environments. First, the consistently high scores in Purpose in Life imply that most teachers find value and meaning in their work. School leaders can leverage this intrinsic motivation by aligning school vision, culture, and professional development opportunities with personal teacher goals and values.

Second, the low autonomy scores reveal an important gap in current school practices. Leaders must move beyond managerial control models and embrace transformational and distributed leadership styles, which are shown to enhance autonomy, trust, and well-being (Leithwood et al., 2004; Reeve, 2009). Providing teachers with greater voice in curriculum design, pedagogical decision-making, and policy implementation may enhance both psychological well-being and professional engagement. At the policy level, teacher well-being must be

formally embedded in educational reform agendas. This includes the development of national teacher well-being frameworks, integration of mental health resources in schools, and allocation of time for reflection, collaboration, and stress-reduction practices. The study also supports the adoption of context-sensitive interventions, such as mindfulness programs, coaching, and well-being audits, tailored to the cultural and structural realities of Malaysian schools.

Strengths and Limitations

This study's application of a thorough, empirically supported theoretical model (Ryff's PWB) to a sizable, representative sample of Malaysian teachers is one of its main strengths. By examining well-being across multiple dimensions, the research moves beyond general or unidimensional measures of stress and satisfaction, offering a richer, more holistic portrait of teacher mental health. The inclusion of school-level comparisons (primary vs. secondary) also adds value, providing insights into the universality or variability of well-being trends across different teaching contexts. The study does have several drawbacks, though. First, causal conclusions are limited by the cross-sectional design; whereas connections and differences can be reported, the directionality of relationships is left up to speculation. Second, bias pertaining to self-perception or social desirability may be introduced by using self-report measures. Third, although the sample was sizable and diverse, findings may not be generalizable to other countries or education systems with differing cultural or institutional characteristics. Lastly, while this study provides broad insight into psychological well-being, it does not examine mediating or moderating variables, such as leadership style, workload, or personal traits (e.g., resilience, emotional intelligence). To better understand causal pathways and investigate these dynamics over time, future research should use mixed-methods or longitudinal methodologies.

Conclusion

This study provides a nuanced understanding of the psychological well-being of Malaysian teachers through the lens of Ryff's multidimensional model. The findings show that teachers had moderate to high levels of psychological well-being, with particularly good ratings in Purpose in Life, Positive Relationships with Others, and Personal Growth. These dimensions reflect the intrinsic motivation and social connectedness embedded within the teaching profession in Malaysia. However, the relatively lower mean in *Autonomy* suggests that institutional constraints and external pressures may hinder teachers' ability to act independently, pointing to a critical area for intervention. The near-significant result calls for additional research into the structural and contextual factors that may affect psychological well-being across educational levels, even though there was no statistically significant difference between the psychological well-being of elementary and secondary school teachers. Both groups' high Purpose in Life scores highlight the importance of meaning-making in the teaching profession and are in line with research that shows a connection between purpose and performance, resilience, and satisfaction.

There are important theoretical and practical ramifications to these discoveries. The study supports Ryff's model as a legitimate framework for comprehending well-being in various cultural and vocational contexts from a theoretical standpoint. Practically, the results emphasize the urgent need for autonomy-supportive school environments, well-being policies, and professional development initiatives that foster psychological resilience and long-term career commitment. The recent findings provide important empirical evidence from Southeast Asia and highlight the need of including psychological well-being into educational reform and

leadership agendas, which is crucial given the growing global concern over teacher attrition, burnout, and mental health. To capture the dynamic nature of teacher well-being and investigate the mediating and moderating effects of organizational climate, leadership philosophies, and personal characteristics like resilience and mindfulness, future research should use mixed-method and longitudinal techniques. Ultimately, promoting teacher well-being is not only a matter of individual health but a cornerstone of sustainable, high-quality education systems.

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