

CHAPTER

2

PRACTICAL TEACHERS' EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND REGULATION STRATEGIES

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

A growing body of literature highlights the powerful role of well-being and emotional regulation in helping teachers navigate obstacles and flourish in their profession. This view underscores a key reality: When educators are supported in their well-being, they become more resilient, adaptable, and able to grow, even in the face of stress and change.

This consideration is especially urgent in the Malaysian context. The country is currently experiencing a shortage of English teachers, alongside a rise in cases of early retirement driven by stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction (Jain, 2023). Amid these pressures, it becomes increasingly important to explore the unique challenges faced by English practical teachers who are the future of the teaching workforce, and to better understand their well-being during their initial years in the profession.

In Malaysian education, numerous studies have examined the well-being of in-service teachers (Leow et al., 2020), but the experiences of practical teachers remain largely underexplored. A study by Ong et al. (2004) highlights some of the struggles that these future educators face, noting that supervision, heavy workloads, and gaps in pedagogical

and content knowledge can undermine their confidence and undermine their ability to perform effectively. The well-being of practical teachers is more than just a personal matter as it profoundly influences their future performance in the classroom and their decision to stay in the profession. Consequently, understanding the factors affecting their well-being is a crucial first step toward offering constructive support and strengthening their readiness for a lifelong career in education.

A rich body of research has investigated contributors to teacher burnout, identifying stressors such as heavy workloads (Talbot & Mercer, 2018), challenging student behaviours (Aldrup et al., 2018), and teacher-student relationships (Dicke et al., 2014) as key factors affecting their emotional health. Nevertheless, there are still gaps in our understanding particularly when it comes to the unique, lived experiences of English practical teachers.

This study aims to fill these gaps by investigating the emotional well-being of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) practical teachers. It seeks to illuminate not only the pressures and struggles they face but also the strategies and resources they use to manage their emotions effectively. By deepening our understanding of these experiences, we can better prepare and empower future English teachers to flourish in their roles and make a lasting contribution to education.

2.2 TEACHERS EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRATEGIES

This study draws on a theory of subjective well-being (SWB), which highlights a key principle: Well-being is subjective because individuals independently assess their own happiness and life satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2006). Study by Diener et al. (1997) suggest that SWB encompasses how people view their lives, from their satisfaction with marriage and overall life, to the presence of happiness and the absence of sadness or anxiety and further explained that a person is considered to have a high level of SWB if they feel content with their life and rarely experience persistent unhappiness or negativity.

The presence of strong positive emotions plays a crucial role in well-being, as subjective well-being is often used to measure 'happiness'. Research on SWB has frequently investigated its determinants from personal traits to lifestyle and social factors. Kahneman et al. (1999) viewed SWB through a hedonistic perspective, suggesting that well-being depends on experiencing happiness and avoiding suffering. Nevertheless, life satisfaction involves more than just hedonics; a more accurate view of hedonic well-being focuses on the balance of positive and negative emotions to gauge happiness.

To maintain or increase happiness and reduce negativity, people employ habits and strategies, known as emotional regulation strategies (Brajsa-Zganec et al., 2017). Study by Richter and Hunecke (2021) explained that developing the ability to recognise and manage emotions can help foster more happiness and aid in adapting to life struggles. Therefore, subjective well-being underscores the role of these strategies in strengthening happiness and improving overall well-being.

2.2.1 Teacher Emotional Well-being

Teachers constitute one of the professional cohorts particularly susceptible to experiencing job-related fatigue, which may escalate into burnout syndrome, a prevalent consequence of prolonged occupational stress (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016). Study by Küçüköğlu (2014) posited that nearly all discussions regarding teacher burnout suggest that it arises from a blend of environmental and personality factors. This notion is further found that work-related stress led teachers to experience lower job satisfaction, physical well-being, and psychological health compared to the general population. Besides, a different study that investigated the issues faced by Malaysian practical teachers revealed that the majority of them experienced significant anxiety when they started teaching practice, more emotions were then generated as they expressed having self-doubt and feeling a lot of pressure during their teaching practice.

Therefore, in exploring the emotional demands and stressors faced by English teachers, the concept of subjective well-being (SWB) has