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Professional issues

The psychological well-being of school teachers in South Africa: A critical review

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Teaching is a stressful occupation associated with various challenges that may adversely affect school teachers' psychological well-being (PWB) and the provision of quality basic education. The nature and effects of teacher PWB may depend on their work context. This critical review aimed to synthesise and evaluate the evidence from available scientific literature on school teacher PWB within the South African context. We searched the following databases: African Journals, NWU-IR, Academic Search Complete, Africa-Wide Information, APA PsycInfo, OALster, Directory of Open Access Journals, Library Catalogue, SciELO, SocINDEX with Full Text, MEDLINE, ERIC, CINAHL with Full Text, Springer Nature Journals, Teacher Reference Center, SPORTDiscus with Full Text, and Business Source Complete. For rigour of the search and analysis process, we employed the Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis (SALSA) method. This critical review research study included a final sample of 12 studies. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, and the following themes were identified: teaching as a stressful occupation; intrapersonal factors that affect teachers' PWB; contextual factors that influence teachers' PWB; differences in levels of teacher PWB; and the consequences of high or low levels of teacher PWB. To work towards the provision of quality basic education, it is vital to first acknowledge the importance of school teachers' PWB in South Africa. With a clear and comprehensive understanding of teacher PWB, it is possible to implement interventions to promote and enhance teachers' PWB in schools in South Africa.

Keywords: critical review, mental well-being, psychological well-being, school teachers, South Africa

Introduction

School teachers' psychological well-being (PWB) is foundational to their education services (Bentea, 2015; Burke et al., 1996; Özü et al., 2017; Spilt et al., 2011; Van Horn et al., 2004). PWB may improve given psychological working resources that enhance reflective teaching practices. These would include character strengths such as gratitude, creativity, love of learning, bravery, and others (White, 2021). Conversely, PWB would be adversely affected by the occupational stress associated with the teaching profession (Brouskeli et al., 2018; Özü et al., 2017; Turner & Thielking, 2019). This may pose a threat to the provision of quality basic education, as low levels of teacher PWB have been associated with teacher burnout and attrition (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Collie et al., 2015; Hwang et al., 2017; Kim & Burić, 2020; Lever et al., 2017; MacIntyre et al., 2019; McCarthy et al., 2020; Özü et al., 2017; Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016; Schonfeld et al., 2017).

Teachers' PWB has far-reaching implications and necessitates careful consideration, investigation, and possible future intervention (Brouskeli et al., 2018; Cherrington, 2017; Collie et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2018; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Özü et al., 2017). According to De Klerk and colleagues (2013), the importance of teachers' PWB is increasingly recognised. Teacher well-being is a growing area of research that has seen a steady increase in publications in recent years (Dreer, 2023). It is evident that developing a clear and comprehensive understanding of teacher PWB is vital due to its extensive consequences

(Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016). The subsequent need to synthesise and structure this existing research has been articulated and addressed by a handful of systematic research reviews (Dreer, 2023; Hascher & Waber, 2021; Puertas Molero et al., 2019; Vo & Allen, 2022). Therefore, we aimed to for this critical review of scientific literature to synthesise and evaluate the evidence of school teachers' PWB within the South African school teaching context.

Teacher psychological well-being

School teacher PWB refers to educators' overall mental and emotional health in the context of their work. It encompasses various factors influencing a teacher's mental state, job satisfaction, and emotional resilience (Corrente et al., 2022). Critical components of teacher PWB include job satisfaction (De Klerk et al., 2023b), work-related stress (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016), emotional resilience (Puertas Molero et al., 2019), work-life balance (Johari et al., 2018), sense of efficacy (Zee & Koomen, 2016), supportive work environment (Benevene et al., 2020), professional developmental opportunities (Postholm, 2021), and finally autonomy and control (Lawson, 2004). Addressing teacher PWB is essential not only for the individual teacher's health and job satisfaction but also for the overall effectiveness of the education system. A mentally healthy and satisfied teaching workforce is better equipped to provide quality education and support school learners' well-being.

Teacher PWB research has focused on deficits and concepts such as stress, coping, burnout, and teacher attrition (Brouskeli et al., 2018; Özü et al., 2017; Turner & Thielking, 2019). The related studies considered how teachers' lack of well-being may contribute to teacher attrition, adversely affecting the provision of quality education (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Collie et al., 2015; Hwang et al., 2017; Kim & Burić, 2020; Lever et al., 2017; MacIntyre et al., 2019; McCarthy et al., 2020; Özü et al., 2017; Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016; Schonfeld et al., 2017). Low teacher well-being is associated with a greater risk of developing mental illness (Harding et al., 2019; Kidger et al., 2016) and quality of instruction supporting school learners' self-efficacy beliefs, social skills, and mental health (Özü et al., 2017). Thus, poor teacher PWB has the potential to pose a threat to the provision of quality basic education (Collie et al., 2015; Özü et al., 2017), whereas high levels of teacher PWB have been associated with increased teacher commitment and improved educational outcomes for school learners (Turner & Thielking, 2019).

The literature on positive teacher well-being documents that teachers are central within the educational context for school learners' success (Kaur & Singh, 2019). Teacher PWB is predictive of positive teacher-learner interaction and may affect the provision of quality education and school learners directly regarding their self-efficacy beliefs, social skills, and mental health (Özü et al., 2017). Research conducted by Sisask and colleagues (2014) found that, among other things, increased teacher PWB enabled teachers to better respond to school learners' mental health problems, thereby strengthening the argument for whole-school approaches to mental health promotion. Similarly, positive PWB affects the context in which learning occurs and teacher-learner interaction favourably (Nel, 2020).

Teacher well-being in the South African context

Within the South African context, there are approximately 447 123 qualified school teachers (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2023). According to research, teachers' poor morale and the significant occupational stress of the teaching profession, along with burnout and attrition, are challenges that have a negative impact on education in South Africa (Mlambo & Adetiba, 2020). Teachers' lack of well-being from increasing organisational demands, long working hours, low salaries, poor working conditions, and difficulties in working would hurt school learners (Mlambo & Adetiba, 2020; Voss & Kunter, 2020). Furthermore, schools are noticeably racially divided and resource distribution between schools is fragmented (Du Toit & De Klerk, 2023).

Teachers facing excessive demands and long working hours may experience burnout (Jackson & Rothmann, 2005). Burnout can lead to decreased motivation, increased absenteeism, and a decline in the quality of teaching (Schwab et al., 1986). This, in turn, affects the learning experience for school learners as they may receive less engaging and practical instruction. Low salaries and poor working conditions can decrease teachers' morale (Lawrence, 2019). When educators feel undervalued and unsupported, their enthusiasm for teaching may diminish. This lack of morale can be

transmitted to school learners, impacting the classroom atmosphere and overall learning environment. Teachers overwhelmed by organisational demands and difficult working conditions may need help to be as practical in the classroom as possible (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). The quality of instruction and the ability to provide individualised attention to school learners may need to improve, hindering the overall educational experience. Difficulties in teaching, including low salaries and poor working conditions, can contribute to high turnover rates (Lawrence, 2019). When experienced teachers leave, it disrupts the continuity of education and deprives school learners of the benefits of experienced and seasoned educators. Overburdened teachers may need more time and energy for extracurricular activities, which can deplete the overall learning experience for school learners. The PWB of teachers can also influence school learners' emotional and social well-being (Carroll et al., 2021). With stress, exhaustion, or dissatisfaction, teachers may find it challenging to provide the emotional support and guidance that school learners need, potentially impacting their mental health and overall sense of security.

Goal of the study

This critical appraisal well-being study aimed to review the scientific literature regarding the PWB of school teachers within the South African context. Understanding teachers' PWB levels is necessary to protect their psychological health and personal and professional development (Jacob & Kiran Babu, 2021). Our specific research question was: What does the research evidence suggest regarding teacher PWB within the South African context?

Method

Research approach

It is essential to ensure that the correct methodology is implemented to answer the research question of a research study (De Klerk et al., 2023a). This critical review design (De Klerk & Pretorius, 2019) enabled the researchers to search for various literature, evaluate the search quality, recognise patterns, and make meaning of the patterns found. Ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University (NWU-00234-21-A1).

Search procedure

We searched the following databases: African Journals, NWU-IR, Academic Search Complete, Africa-Wide Information, APA PsycInfo, OAlster, Directory of Open Access Journals, Library Catalogue, SciELO, SocINDEX with Full Text, MEDLINE, ERIC, CINAHL with Full Text, Springer Nature Journals, Teacher Reference Center, SPORTDiscus with Full Text, and Business Source Complete. The following keywords were used in the search: "psychological well-being", "mental well-being", "teachers", "South Africa", and "critical review". A Boolean search ("AND", "NOT", "*", and "OR") was employed to identify scientific literature relevant to the research study. Additionally, Google Scholar was used to identify relevant scientific literature that might have been excluded in the initial search. This process was conducted by the primary

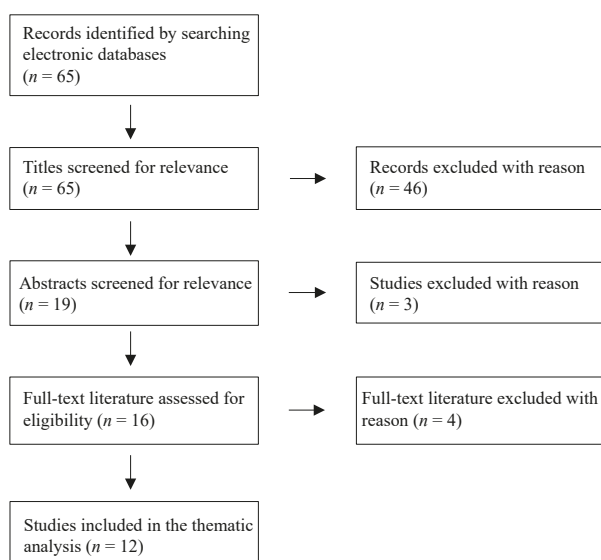


Figure 1. Identifying sources of relevant scientific literature

reviewer (first author) and supervised by the secondary reviewer (second author).

Inclusion criteria

The following types of scientific literature were included: journal studies, peer-reviewed studies, quantitative studies, qualitative studies, mixed-method studies, review studies, doctoral theses, and master's dissertations or mini dissertations. Both English and Afrikaans scientific literature were included. The time frame of available scientific literature used for this critical review research study was literature published from 2010 to 2020. In terms of the target population of the research study, the PWB of primary or secondary teachers within the South African context was studied. This was justified by the aim of the research study, which was to synthesise and critically evaluate the current existing body of scientific literature on school teacher PWB within the South African context and, in doing so, identify recurrent themes and directions for future research.

Exclusion criteria

Literature focusing on other aspects of well-being rather than PWB was marked as irrelevant and excluded.

Search results

Initially, the search yielded 65 results. However, as illustrated in Figure 1, only 12 of the 65 initial results were ultimately included for critical review in this research study.

After identifying sources of relevant scientific literature, a data extraction table (see Table 1) was constructed to organise the data systematically (see De Klerk & Pretorius, 2019).

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) allowed the researchers to critically evaluate and examine the current scientific literature on school teacher PWB within the South African context. This enabled the researchers to identify recurrent themes in the available scientific literature and identify possible directions for future research, thereby achieving the aims of the critical review research study.

Findings and discussion

The following themes were evident from the scientific literature included in this research study: teaching as a stressful occupation; intrapersonal factors that affect teachers' PWB; contextual factors that affect teachers' PWB; differences in levels of teacher PWB; and finally, the consequences of high or low levels of teacher PWB.

Theme 1: Teaching as a stressful occupation

Teaching is stressful (Bermejo et al., 2013; Braun et al., 2019; Vesely et al., 2014). This was confirmed by a research study conducted by Vazi and colleagues (2013) which found that stress was prevalent among school teachers. Additionally, they found that environmental factors related to role problems and personal factors related to PWB and adverse effects contributed to the participants' experiences of occupational stress (Vazi et al., 2013). The participants in research studies conducted by Boshoff (2014) and Boshoff and colleagues (2018) also reported that teaching was stressful.

Research shows that the stressful nature of the teaching profession can, if not appropriately mediated, result in decreased teacher PWB, which can pose a threat to the provision of quality primary education (Brouskeli et al., 2018; Özü et al., 2017; Turner & Thielking, 2019). Wider (2016) proposes that stress management programmes should be implemented in schools to address the occupational stress teachers face and improve teachers' PWB. More recently, Katsantonis (2020) also found that interventions to decrease the occupational stress associated with the teaching profession were needed. Willers and colleagues (2013) suggested that it might not be the amount of stress experienced that influences teachers' mental health but how they choose to cope with stressors.

Theme 2: Intrapersonal Factors that affect teachers' psychological well-being

Research indicates that there are intrapersonal factors associated with increased school teacher PWB. A study by Katsantonis (2020) found that self-efficacy and teacher PWB shared a positive association. Self-belief, as identified by Cheung and colleagues (2021), was also identified as contributing to teachers' PWB. Kun and Gadancz (2019) further identified various "inner psychological resources" (p. 187), such as hope and optimism, that positively contribute to teachers' PWB.

A study by Katsantonis (2020) found that intrapersonal factors such as self-efficacy and job satisfaction affected teachers' PWB. This aligns with the findings of an earlier study conducted by Buonomo and colleagues (2017), who found that self-efficacy and job satisfaction acted as protective factors to teacher burnout. Teacher burnout represents low PWB. Similarly, Cheung and colleagues (2021) found that teachers' self-beliefs influenced their perception of the school culture and their experiences of PWB.

Nel (2020) also identified various intrapersonal factors associated with increased PWB. These included teachers' perceptions of the importance of the subject matter they were teaching, teachers' concern for school learners' PWB, teachers' levels of internal motivation, rewarding school learner interactions, and a sense of belonging (Nel, 2020).

Table 1: Data extraction table

Author(s) and Title	Method	Sample	Findings/Results	Conclusion
Boshoff (2014). <i>Self-regulation and psychological well-being in a cohort of black South African teachers: The SABPA study.</i>	The research study is a doctoral thesis consisting of three studies. <i>S1</i> aims to investigate teachers' stress and mental well-being and determine the relationship between the two variables. <i>S2</i> aims: Determine the association between self-regulation and teachers' self-reported levels of mental well-being; determine the association between subcomponents of self-regulation processes and self-reported levels of mental well-being. <i>S3</i> aims: Determine the progression of self-regulation over three years; determine how long-term changes in self-regulation are associated with changes in self-reported stress levels and mental well-being. <i>S1 and 2 Design:</i> Cross-sectional survey. <i>S3 Design:</i> Longitudinal design.	<i>S1:</i> Purposively selected sample ($n = 200$) of black teachers (aged 25-65) from the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District in the North West Province, South Africa. <i>S2 and S3:</i> The purposively selected sample ($n = 173$) comprised 88 males and 85 females of the original participants described above.	<i>S1:</i> Descriptive statistics indicated that the teachers had the perception that their working environments were stressful and reported symptoms indicating the presence of mental disorders. Of the teachers, 28% were flourishing, 70% were moderately healthy, and 1.5% were languishing. An association was found between high levels of stress and symptoms of mental illness. Protective factors may alleviate the stressful nature of the teaching occupation and its effects on mental well-being. <i>S2:</i> Similar levels of stress were found between different groups. High self-regulation was associated with increased mental well-being. A strong association between self-regulation and well-being was found through correlation analysis. Structural equation modelling found that all the subconstructs of self-regulation contributed to the well-being, but 'goal focus', 'self-efficacy', and 'monitoring change' contributed uniquely. The role of self-regulation in well-being was similar in collectivist and individualistic groups. <i>S3:</i> Higher levels of self-regulation, along with lower levels of stress and mental illness, were found. Structural equation modelling showed that changes in self-regulation were predictive of changes in mental health.	Teaching is a stressful occupation, and the participants indicated the presence of symptoms related to mental illness. A correlation between levels of stress and the prevalence of mental illness symptoms was found. Self-regulation and well-being are connected. Improvements in self-regulation were found over three years.
Boshoff et al. (2018). <i>Validation of the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) in a multicultural context: The SABPA study.</i>	<i>Aim:</i> Validate the TSI for use in a South African context. <i>Design:</i> Cross-sectional survey.	The sample ($n = 409$) consisted of 209 white and 200 black teachers from the North West Province, South Africa.	Both the white and the black groups reported occupational stress. However, the black group reported significantly higher levels of occupational stress on the TSI. Differences between the physiological health of the two groups were also found. The results suggested that the black group had poorer physical health and PWB.	The TSI was applicable to determine the stress levels in the sample of South African teachers. Further psychometric evaluation is needed before the TSI can be considered valid in South Africa.
Daniels & Strauss (2010). <i>Mainly I'm driven to tears and feeling totally unappreciated: Exploring the emotional wellness of high school teachers.</i>	<i>Aim:</i> Not stated. <i>Design:</i> Qualitative research approach.	Six teachers (three male and three female) were purposively selected from two former Model C schools and two former mixed-race schools from the Western Cape Province, South Africa.	The findings showed that all six teachers' emotional vulnerability was linked to how they were being acted upon by the school learners, administrators, parents, and the national education department. Their sense of self-worth was being eroded in the workplace, and their mental state negatively impacted their work quality. They all reported a decrease in their productivity and work ethic. Furthermore, these professionals reported that they were exhibiting paranoid-type behaviour that is associated with overwhelmingly negative emotions.	These findings suggest that the educational workplace needs transformation if teachers, as professionals, are to do their work effectively.
De Klerk et al. (2013). <i>The prevalence of well-being among teachers in Afri Twin schools as well as non Afri Twin schools.</i>	<i>Aim:</i> This study explored the prevalence of well-being in Afri Twin and non Afri Twin teachers. <i>Design:</i> Quantitative survey design.	The sample consists of 97 Afri Twin teachers (20 male and 77 female) and 297 non Afri Twin teachers (52 male and 245 female) from 40 schools in South Africa.	Comparable moderate to high levels of teacher well-being were observed across the two school systems.	The objective of this study was to determine the prevalence of well-being (mental health, core self-evaluations and coping self-efficacy characteristics) of teachers at Afri Twin and non Afri Twin schools. The results indicated a moderate to high level of well-being in both Afri Twin and non Afri Twin teachers.

Table 1: Data extraction table (contd)

Author(s) and Title	Method	Sample	Findings/Results	Conclusion
Fouché (2015). <i>Well-being of teachers in secondary schools.</i>	The research study is a doctoral thesis consisting of three sub-studies. <i>Aim, S1, S2, and S3:</i> to investigate the PWB of a sample of secondary school teachers and determine the antecedents and outcomes thereof. <i>Design, S1, S2, and S3:</i> Cross-sectional survey.	A stratified sample ($n = 513$) consisting of secondary school teachers in the North West Province, South Africa.	<i>S1:</i> There was a positive association between supervisor support (regarding autonomy, competence, and relatedness) and teachers' psychological needs satisfaction and engagement. A negative association was found between supervisor support and teachers planning to leave. <i>S2:</i> Teachers' autonomy satisfaction affected the positive association between supervisor support and engagement and the negative association between supervisor support and intention to leave the profession. Supervisor support and teachers' psychological needs satisfaction thus play a significant role in teacher engagement and retention. <i>S3:</i> A large percentage of the variance in the experiences of meaning was explained by a calling orientation, job design, and interpersonal relationships among co-workers. A low calling orientation and poor interpersonal relations among co-workers predicted teacher burnout. A calling orientation, a well-designed job, good co-worker relationships, and meaning-predicted work engagement. There was a moderate association between job design and self-ratings of performance. The absence of a calling orientation predicted teachers' intention to leave. High psychological functioning was associated with increased meaning in work. Positive outcomes, such as meaning, engagement, and self-determination, were associated with positive organisational practices. Significantly, increased PWB was associated with meaningful work and inspiration.	Teacher engagement and retention are heavily dependent on supervisor support. A calling orientation in teachers is associated with more meaning. This influences how teachers approach their occupation and interpersonal relationships with co-workers. It also influences the steps teachers take to improve their work experiences. Teachers need organisational support to remain motivated and engaged. Action is required to improve teachers' PWB.
Hansen et al. (2015). <i>Psychological capital, subjective well-being, burnout, and job satisfaction amongst educators in the Umlazi region in South Africa.</i>	<i>Aim:</i> This study sought to investigate the relationship between psychological capital (PsyCap), subjective well-being, burnout, and job satisfaction, and to explore whether PsyCap mediates the relationship between subjective well-being and burnout. <i>Design:</i> Cross-sectional survey.	The sample ($n = 103$) consisted of 14 male and 89 female educators (74 white, 22 Indian, 6 black and 1 mixed race) from KwaZulu Natal Province, South Africa.	Results indicated statistically significant relationships between PsyCap, subjective well-being, burnout, and job satisfaction. PsyCap was found to mediate the relationship between subjective well-being and burnout.	The results highlighted the aiding potential of subjective well-being and the possible resources PsyCap, subjective well-being, and job satisfaction can provide in times of distress.
Kok (2013). <i>Psychological well-being, race, and school setting: A comparative study among South African teachers in the SABPA</i> <i>study.</i>	<i>Aim:</i> Compare PWB and distress in black and white teachers teaching within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province, South Africa. <i>Design:</i> Quantitative research approach and secondary data analysis of the SABPA project (2008-2009).	The sample ($n = 408$) consisted of secondary teachers (200 black and 208 white, aged 25–62) in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province, South Africa.	More differences than similarities between the black and white teachers' PWB and distress were found. The black teachers experienced more stress and depression than the white teachers. Similarities in positive well-being indices were found between the black and white teachers. The effects of stress on positive mental health and depression were different between the two groups. Stress was a significant predictor of positive mental health and depression for black teachers but not for white teachers. Although similar levels of flourishing were found between the two groups, depression was found to be more prevalent among the black teachers.	Significant differences in the black and white teachers' PWB were evident. The black and white teachers experienced stress, depression, emotional well-being, and social support to varying degrees.

Table 1: Data extraction table (contd)

Author(s) and Title	Method	Sample	Findings/Results	Conclusion
Kruger (2019). <i>Well-being for whom? Unpacking the teacher well-being discourse of the South African Department of Basic Education.</i>	<i>Aim:</i> As personal well-being is considered a subjective appraisal, this analysis aims not to examine teachers' experience of the DBE's understanding and implementation of well-being-advancing measures. Analysing the discourse in the reports uncovers the department's reading of its role in looking after teacher well-being. <i>Design:</i> Discourse analysis.	Two reports of the DBE.	The analysis indicates that the texts portray a relationship of care and a desire to create a well-resourced and safe learning organisation where teachers can be inspired to grow professionally and personally. However, this is a transactional relationship, and in return for investing in teacher well-being, the employer expects a commitment to the aims and objectives of the state.	The neoliberal rationality necessitates balancing the well-being of teachers as autonomous persons with teachers as economic-rational actors transforming well-being into self-care, which is defined and controlled by the employer.
Nel (2020). <i>The experience of psychological well-being among high school Life Orientation teachers within the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District.</i>	<i>Aim:</i> Explore and describe Life Orientation teachers' experiences of PWB in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province, South Africa. <i>Design:</i> Qualitative research approach.	The sample ($n = 7$) comprised four female and three male Life Orientation teachers aged between 24 and 62.	Thematic analysis yielded the following four main themes and various sub-themes: 1) Intrapersonal experiences of identity as a Further Education and Training Life Orientation teacher (experience of responsibility and guilt, teachers' role of guardian or parent, personal and professional identity, and powerlessness). 2) Experiences of contextual factors and the effects thereof on experiences of PWB (adverse impact of time constraints, lacking resources, lacking learner commitment and motivation, work overload, and pressure resulting in stress, poor physical health, and a lack of support). 3) Protective factors enhancing Life Orientation teachers' PWB (perceived importance of subject, concern for school learners' well-being, teachers' motivation, rewarding interactions, and belonging). 4) PWB and its role in the classroom (positive PWB, overall learning environment, and school learner interaction, whereas negative PWB detracts from an optimal learning environment).	The Life Orientation teachers' educational experiences were affected by their PWB. Both protective and contextual factors influenced the teachers' PWB. The teachers' PWB had an impact on the teaching or classroom environment.
Peral & Geldenhuys (2016). <i>The effects of job crafting on subjective well-being amongst South African high school teachers.</i>	<i>Aim:</i> The study investigated the relationship between job crafting and subjective well-being amongst South African high school teachers. Subjective well-being comprises psychological meaningfulness and work engagement. <i>Design:</i> Cross-sectional survey.	The sample ($n = 251$) comprised 75 male and 176 female high school teachers (66.5% white and 31.9% black) within the Gauteng Province, South Africa.	A positive relationship was found between job crafting (increasing structural resources and challenging job demands) and work engagement. Furthermore, psychological meaningfulness mediated the relationship between job crafting and work engagement amongst the sampled high school teachers.	This study highlights the importance of job crafting to the PWB of teachers.
Vazi et al. (2013). <i>The relationship between well-being indicators and teacher psychological stress in Eastern Cape public schools in South Africa.</i>	<i>Aim:</i> Assess the relationship between well-being indicators and teacher psychological stress and assess the importance of well-being indicators in explaining psychological stress variance. #Design: Cross-sectional survey.	The sample ($n = 562$) consisted of primary and high school teachers from the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.	Occupational stress was prevalent among the teachers. Subjective and PWB factors added significantly to the stress variance. Stress was positively correlated with negative affect and role-related problems, while PWB had a strong inverse relationship with stress, although this did not imply causality.	Environmental factors related to teachers' roles and personal factors such as PWB and negative affect contribute to teacher stress.

Table 1: Data extraction table (contd)

Author(s) and Title	Method	Sample	Findings/Results	Conclusion
Willers et al. (2013). <i>Coping and cultural context: Implications for psychological health and well-being.</i>	<i>Aim:</i> The aim of this research was thus to examine the effects of coping behaviour on stress perception and the PWB of a cohort of African individuals. <i>Design:</i> Cross-sectional target population design.	The research sample ($n = 200$) consisted of urbanised black secondary school teachers (101 males and 99 females) residing in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province, South Africa.	Participants were making above-average use of all three coping styles (problem-solving, seeking social support, and avoidance) that were being evaluated. Of these teachers, 2 % were languishing, 28 % were flourishing, and 70 % were moderately mentally healthy. Correlation results indicated significant associations between coping and various aspects of mental health. Subsequent Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) revealed several seemingly unique relations between coping and PWB in this African context and suggested that it might not be the amount of stress experienced that influences teachers' mental health but how they choose to cope with stressors.	These results might inform and help shape practices in the changing and challenging South African educational environment.

Therefore, this study made it clear that motivated teachers who saw value in what they taught their learners and had a genuine concern for school learners' well-being tended to experience higher levels of PWB (Nel, 2020). This aligns with the findings of a research study conducted by Abós and colleagues (2018), which showed that teacher motivation might predict teachers' PWB. Moreover, Boshoff (2014) identified self-regulation as another intrapersonal factor affecting PWB. Hence, teachers' self-regulating ability was found to predict positive mental health outcomes (Boshoff, 2014).

Theme 3: Contextual factors that affect teachers' psychological well-being

Various factors related to the context in which teaching occurs were identified as affecting school teachers' PWB. School learners, parents, administrators, and no support from the DBE can harm teacher PWB (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). However, a factor which positively affecting teachers' PWB was creating an empowering working environment (Suleman et al., 2021). Suleman and colleagues (2021) conducted a research study in Pakistan that found that empowering leadership behaviour was predictive of teachers' PWB and contributed to organisational productivity. In line with this, Katsantonis (2020) found that creating a positive school climate contributed positively to teachers' PWB due to its lower levels of occupational stress. Team innovativeness also affected teacher PWB (Katsantonis, 2020). Cheung and colleagues (2021) confirmed that school culture was influential and suggested that interventions aiming at enhancing school culture may, in turn, enhance teachers' self-belief and, thereby, improve their PWB. This aligns with the findings of Kidger and colleagues (2021), who conducted a research study to determine the effectiveness of interventions to improve teachers' PWB and found that more focus should be placed on creating a positive school environment and culture. Kidger and colleagues (2021) suggested that such interventions should focus on enhancing school culture while improving working relationships and providing increased perceived support.

The importance of positive working relationships and perceived support within the teaching profession was confirmed by Fouché (2015) and, more recently, by Nel (2020). Fouché (2015) found that supervisor support was positively associated with teachers' psychological needs satisfaction and negatively related to teacher attrition. Along with time constraints, a lack of resources, poor school learner commitment and motivation, work-related pressure, and poor physical health, Nel (2020) further identified poor support as contributing to decreased teacher PWB. This indicates that supervisor support plays a vital role in the retention of teaching staff, a well-documented challenge faced by the South African education sector and adversely affecting education (Amnesty International, 2020; Legotlo, 2014; Mlambo & Adetiba, 2020).

Theme 4: Differences in levels of teacher psychological well-being

The available scientific research indicated that there may be differences in school teachers' PWB when comparing different population groups (Boshoff et al., 2018; Kok, 2013).

Kok (2013) conducted a research study in which differences in the levels of PWB and stress were evident between black and white teachers in the South African context. The research study found that black teachers in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District of the North West Province experienced more stress and depression than white teachers from the same district (Kok, 2013). However, flourishing (i.e., positive mental health) was present in both groups to the same degree (Kok, 2013).

More recently, Boshoff and colleagues (2018) conducted a research study that found differences between black and white teachers regarding mental health. Although both groups reported occupational stress, the black participants reported significantly higher levels of stress on the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI). When compared to their white counterparts, black teachers were found to be significantly worse off in terms of their PWB (Boshoff et al., 2018).

Theme 5: The consequence of high or low levels of teacher psychological well-being

The importance of school teacher PWB is evident, as it has far-reaching implications for the education sector that relies heavily on its teachers as its leading role players (Kaur & Singh, 2019). Teacher PWB is predictive of positive teacher-learner interaction and may, therefore, affect the provision of quality education and school learners directly regarding their self-efficacy beliefs, social skills, and mental health (Özü et al., 2017). Research conducted by Sisask and colleagues (2014) found that, among other things, increased teacher PWB enabled teachers to better respond to school learners' mental health problems, thereby strengthening the argument for whole-school approaches to mental health promotion. Similarly, positive PWB affects the context in which learning occurs and teacher-learner interaction favourably (Nel, 2020). High levels of teacher PWB were also found to predict positive educational outcomes such as increased teacher commitment and improved school-learner outcomes (Turner & Thielking, 2019). Conversely, whereas positive PWB has a favourable impact on the classroom environment, it was found that negative PWB detracts from the creation of an optimal learning environment (Nel, 2020).

A concerning consequence of poor PWB evident from the research study conducted by Boshoff (2014) was that the stressful nature of the teaching profession resulted in teachers reporting symptoms of psychopathology to a degree that would warrant the need for psychiatric intervention. Research indicates that in comparison to other professions, teachers are at an increased risk of developing mental illness (Harding et al., 2019; Kidger et al., 2016). Teacher stress was also associated with poor physical health (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016; Hwang et al., 2017; Katsantonis, 2020; Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016). As a result, teachers have an increased risk of developing pathology (Harding et al., 2019), which may ultimately result in their leaving the profession, negatively impacting the provision of quality education (Vesely et al., 2014).

Implications for basic education in South Africa

As evident from the above findings, teaching is stressful, with South African school teachers facing various

challenges. As a result, teachers may experience low PWB. Therefore, the implementation of stress management programmes should be considered, as it may benefit the education sector to address the occupational stress associated with the teaching profession (Katsantonis, 2020; Wider, 2016). One of the studies reviewed indicated that improved stress management might result in high PWB among teachers (Vazi et al., 2013). Thus, interventions aimed at directly assessing and promoting teachers' PWB may also be helpful in South Africa.

However, such interventions should consider the cultural differences in the experience and expression of PWB within the teaching population of South Africa (Kok, 2013). Moreover, such interventions should focus on both the intrapersonal development of teachers and whole-school development to succeed (Fouché, 2015).

Most importantly, it is crucial to be aware of the significance of teacher PWB and be proactive in promoting it. To work towards the provision of quality basic education, it is thus vital to first acknowledge the importance of teachers' PWB in South Africa. After that, a clear and comprehensive understanding of teacher PWB is essential to ultimately work towards implementing feasible interventions to promote and enhance teachers' PWB in schools in South Africa.

Limitations and future recommendations

The findings of this critical review research study are limited due to an under-representation of scientific literature on school teacher PWB in the context of South Africa. We identified only 12 relevant research studies. While teachers' well-being has received much international research attention, more research on specifically teacher PWB within the South African context is needed. Research within the South African context on teacher well-being generally focuses on broader conceptualisations of well-being or deficits of well-being, resulting in literature primarily focusing on concepts such as stress, coping, burnout, and teacher attrition as opposed to teacher PWB. Thus, an increased focus on teacher PWB within South Africa utilising positive psychology concepts would be productive.

Conclusion

Teaching is a stressful occupation accompanied by various challenges. Research indicates that the occupational stress associated with the teaching profession can hurt school teachers' PWB. It was found that intrapersonal factors such as self-efficacy, self-belief, hope, optimism, self-regulation, and motivation contribute to teachers' PWB. Contextual factors such as the degree to which an empowering, supportive working culture and environment are established with sufficient support and teachers' working relationships may also impact teachers' PWB. The research studies reviewed in this critical literature review further indicated that there might be differences in teachers' PWB when different population groups are compared. Furthermore, more research into teachers' PWB is necessary to enhance South African teachers' mental and physical health and, ultimately, ensuring the provision of quality primary education in the country.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors report that there are no competing interests to declare.

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