






## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Improving Teacher Mental Health through Work Meaningfulness: Counselling Program Implications

Retno Mangestuti<sup>a</sup>  Rahmat Aziz<sup>a</sup>  Forbis Ahamed<sup>b</sup> 

<sup>a</sup> State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Malang, Indonesia. <sup>b</sup> Management and Science University, Shah Alam, Malaysia

## ARTICLE HISTORY

**Received:** 25/05/2024

**Accepted:** 19/07/2025

## KEYWORDS

Meaning of work, Mental Health, Mixed-Method Sequential Explanatory, Psychological Distress, Psychological Well-Being.

## ABSTRACT

This research examines how deriving meaningfulness from work relates to teachers' mental health, particularly in light of the challenges inherent in the teaching profession. As part of a mixed-methods design, the study collected quantitative data from 928 teachers in 15 schools throughout East Java, Indonesia, employing the Work and Meaning Inventory and the Brief Mental Health Inventory-12 (MHI-12). Semi-structured interviews with nine purposively selected teachers provided qualitative insights into their experiences and perceptions. Data triangulation ensured the validity and robustness of the findings. Analysis outcomes show a notable correlation between perceived meaningfulness and psychological well-being, backed by solid statistical validation. Strategies such as valuing educational roles, commitment to responsibilities, and engagement in personal growth were pivotal in cultivating work-related meaningfulness. These findings highlight the potential for enhancing teacher mental health by fostering a profound sense of professional purpose and offer valuable contributions to educational guidance and counselling, outlining practical approaches to support teachers in managing psychological burdens.

The substantial responsibilities borne by teachers as pedagogical leaders contribute to various psychological issues. Teachers face significant stress from cumulative workloads, including classroom management, administrative duties, curriculum planning, and meeting diverse student needs. The substantial responsibilities borne by teachers as pedagogical leaders contribute to various psychological issues. Research indicates that teachers face significant stress due to their demanding and cumulative workload (Asaloei et al., 2020; Hojo, 2021). Additional stressors include lack of administrative support, time constraints, large class sizes, and pressure to achieve standardized testing goals. Studies reveal that such demands can lead to burnout, anxiety, and depression among teachers. Additional studies reveal that such intense work demands also lead to depression among teachers (Cabezas-Heredia, 2021; Rodrigues, 2020). These psychological challenges reduce job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness and contribute to high turnover rates, affecting the overall quality of education. The findings emphasize that supporting teachers' mental well-being is essential to their professional development. Experts suggest that fostering mental well-being through meaningful work, professional growth opportunities, and institutional support is vital to mitigate these stressors. These findings highlight critical concerns regarding teachers' mental health, underscoring their essential role in their

**CORRESPONDING AUTHOR** Rahmat Aziz, [azira@uin-malang.ac.id](mailto:azira@uin-malang.ac.id), ORCID: 0000-0002-1094-0501, State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

This is an article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License. As the original work is properly cited, reproduction in any medium is permitted.

© 2025 The Authors. Turkish Journal of Counseling Psychology and Guidance is published by Turkish Psychological Counselling and Guidance Association

professional development. Research indicates that participation in meaningful professional activities positively affects teachers' mental health.

Recent studies have explored the link between meaningful work and teachers' mental health, identifying three main methodological approaches. Firstly, quantitative studies have shown a significant impact of work meaning on teachers' well-being, suggesting that those who find deeper meaning in their tasks experience higher satisfaction and happiness at work (Csordás et al., 2022; Zhu, 2022). Secondly, qualitative inquiries delve into how teachers interpret and integrate their work experiences into their mental health, often through interviews and case studies that provide insights into personal coping strategies against job-related stress (Aziz et al., 2023; Byrne & Carthy, 2021). Thirdly, mixed-method design combines these analyses to offer a holistic view of how work meaning affects mental health (Aziz et al., 2024; Kupers, 2022). This research emphasises practical implications for guidance and counselling practices in schools, aiming to develop interventions that enhance teachers' ability to manage work demands effectively, thereby fostering a supportive and enriching work environment.

Recent research on the mental health of educators has significantly progressed. Initially, studies primarily used a unidimensional design that focused solely on specific aspects of mental health. However, with the growth of positive psychology, the concept of mental health has expanded to include both positive and negative dimensions. Positive dimensions of mental health are characterised by psychological attributes such as feelings of contentment, life satisfaction, and strong interpersonal relationships (King et al., 2021; Pei, 2022). On the other hand, negative dimensions are defined by the absence of mental disorders, including anxiety, depression, and behavioural dysregulation (Herman, 2020; Liu, 2020). This comprehensive dual-theory model has become crucial in capturing the full breadth of mental health within educational settings.

According to the dual continua model, mental health is understood as comprising both positive and negative components, offering a comprehensive perspective on psychological well-being. The positive dimension includes three main aspects, namely positive emotions, supportive social relationships, and life satisfaction. Emotional states such as joy, happiness, and calmness play an essential role in promoting mental health. Additionally, nurturing strong connections with family, friends, and the broader community fosters a profound sense of belonging and offers indispensable social support, enabling individuals to navigate life's challenges more effectively. Life satisfaction includes an individual's favourable evaluation of life circumstances, such as achieving personal goals and maintaining fulfilling relationships (Smith et al., 2020; Zang, 2022). Enhancements across these dimensions are essential for achieving optimal mental health, emphasising the importance of a strength-based model in mental health advancement.

Conversely, the negative dimensions include anxiety, depression, and loss of control, which indicate deviations from optimal mental health. Anxiety is characterised by persistent worry or unease that significantly affects daily functioning. Depression manifests as pervasive sadness, hopelessness, and despair, often altering one's appetite, sleep patterns, and interest in enjoyable activities. Loss of control is characterized by a diminished sense of personal agency, which fosters feelings of helplessness and reduces effectiveness in coping with stressors (Cabezas-Heredia, 2021; Heine, 2019). Recognising and addressing these adverse aspects are crucial for mental health interventions aimed at alleviating symptoms, restoring balance, and enhancing resilience and adaptive coping mechanisms to improve overall mental health and functioning.

This study establishes three vital research objectives concerning teachers' mental health and their professional roles. The first objective is to offer a detailed exploration of mental health, focusing on the well-being and psychological distress experienced by teachers. The second objective examines how work meaningfulness relates to teachers' well-being and psychological distress.. The third objective is to develop a model that outlines mental health strategies centred on the significance of meaningful work in teaching. Achieving these objectives will provide essential insights and introduce alternative methods for enhancing teacher mental health. Ultimately, the findings and strategies derived from this research are expected to contribute significantly to the practices in guidance and counselling within educational settings.

## Method

This section outlines the study's design, participants, and methods of data collection and analysis.

## Research Design

The research adopted a mixed-methods approach using a sequential explanatory strategy. The first process is for researchers to conduct quantitative research to test the influence of work meaning on mental health, then continue with a qualitative study that aims to deepen, elaborate, and strengthen the results of the quantitative analysis. The reason for using this methodology is that, in addition to analyzing how work meaning affects mental health, the study investigates how teachers promote their mental well-being through purposeful engagement in their profession.

## Participant characteristics

We collected data from teachers in 15 schools across East Java, Indonesia, including five primary, five lower secondary, and five upper secondary institutions. The study involved 928 teachers (261 from primary education, 316 from lower secondary education, and 351 from upper secondary education. Random selection was applied among individuals who agreed to participate. In the quantitative phase, teachers had diverse demographics, with an average age of 35,72 years, and 63,36 % female and 36,64% male teachers. Additional data, such as teaching experience and educational background, were included. After quantitative analysis, nine teachers with high job meaningfulness and mental health were selected for the qualitative phase. The participants included 340 males and 588 females, averaging 41.23 years of age, and provided insights into how working conditions and mental well-being affect teaching performance. The Faculty of Psychology's Research Ethics Committee at the State Islamic University of Malang granted ethical approval on February 8, 2023.

**Table 1.** Demographic of the Participant (N=928)

No	Participant	N	Meaning of work		Mental Health			
			Mean	SD	Well-being		Distress	
1	Gender							
	Male	340	41.87	4.31	25.33	2.89	11.98	4.74
2	Civil servant							
	Yes	370	42.42	4.22	25.53	2.83	10.65	4.55
3	Certified							
	Yes	264	42.70	4.12	25.92	2.97	9.51	3.84
4	Marriage							
	Not yet	311	41.49	4.41	25.01	2.98	11.79	4.58
5	Level of teaching							
	Primary	261	40.32	3.70	24.43	2.79	12.17	4.21
6	Age							
	< 30 years	403	41.25	4.09	25.00	2.89	12.48	4.74
7	Work period							
	< 5 years	371	41.37	4.38	24.89	2.98	12.52	4.65
8	Marriage							
	Ever	24	42.95	4.17	25.50	2.91	12.37	4.47
9	Marriage							
	Ever	24	42.95	4.17	25.50	2.91	12.37	4.47
10	Marriage							
	Ever	24	42.95	4.17	25.50	2.91	12.37	4.47
11	Marriage							
	Ever	24	42.95	4.17	25.50	2.91	12.37	4.47
12	Marriage							
	Ever	24	42.95	4.17	25.50	2.91	12.37	4.47
13	Marriage							
	Ever	24	42.95	4.17	25.50	2.91	12.37	4.47
14	Marriage							
	Ever	24	42.95	4.17	25.50	2.91	12.37	4.47
15	Marriage							
	Ever	24	42.95	4.17	25.50	2.91	12.37	4.47

Table 1 suggests that being older, more experienced, certified, and working at higher education levels are associated with finding more meaning in work, experiencing better overall mental health, and encountering less distress. This comprehensive analysis can help identify key areas for support and intervention to enhance teacher well-being and address specific stressors affecting different groups of educators.

### Data Collection and Tools

To assess how individuals perceive the meaningfulness of their work, this study utilized the Hungarian version of the Work and Meaning Inventory, initially created by Steger et al. (2012). Later, it was adapted by Csordás et al. (Csordás et al., 2022) for cultural relevance. The scale contains 10 items, each scored on a 5-point Likert continuum from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (5), encompassing three conceptual areas: positive meaning (1, 2, 3, 9), meaning-making through work (4, 5, 6), and motivation toward a greater cause (7, 8, 10). In this research, internal consistency was acceptable ( $\alpha = .843$ ). Previous research by Csordás and colleagues confirmed the scale's structural validity and its applicability across different cultural contexts.

The BMHI-12, a brief measure created by Aziz and Zamroni, applies the dual-factor model—integrating well-being and distress—to assess mental health. It contains 12 items, each rated on a 4-point Likert scale with responses from “never” to “very often.” Psychological well-being includes three indicators: positive emotion (items 1 and 2), love (items 3 and 4), and life satisfaction (items 5 and 6). Psychological distress also comprises three indicators: anxiety (items 7 and 8), depression (items 9 and 10), and loss of control (items 11 and 12). The BMHI-12 demonstrated strong psychometric properties in this study, with an overall Alpha of .824. The sub-scale of well-being showed reliability of .886, while the distress reached .785. Reliability values across indicators ranged from .584 to .842, confirming the BMHI-12 as a valid and reliable tool to measure both aspects of mental health (Aziz & Zamroni, 2019). These findings support the BMHI-12 as a reliable tool for assessing both positive and negative dimensions of mental health.

### Data Collection Process

Data were gathered from teachers in 15 districts across East Java, Indonesia, over a six-month period from March 1 to August 31, 2023. The sample included educators from five primary, five lower secondary, and five upper secondary schools. Access to participants was granted through official approval from school administrations, and participants were randomly chosen from those who agreed to be involved. Before data collection, participants were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time. Both quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews were employed to collect the data.

Qualitative data were gathered through structured interviews focusing on teachers' actions to enhance their well-being and reduce workplace stress. The interview form was developed through a multi-step process, beginning with a literature review on teacher well-being and stress management to identify key themes and relevant questions. Three educational psychology experts drafted and reviewed a preliminary set of questions to ensure content validity and clarity. Pilot testing of the guide was conducted with a small set of teachers outside the main study sample, and feedback from this trial refined the questions for clarity and relevance. During the interviews, teachers described strategies such as mindfulness exercises, collaborative engagements with colleagues, and modifications to their work environments to create healthier, more supportive school atmospheres. This method provides deep insights into educators' proactive measures to maintain mental health and job satisfaction, which are essential for their effectiveness and longevity in teaching.

### Data Analysis

This study utilized quantitative and qualitative analyses to explore the impact of work meaningfulness on mental health. Quantitatively, descriptive analysis provided an overview of teachers' mental health statuses, while inferential analysis, using linear regression, examined the effect of work meaningfulness on mental health. Before regression analysis, preliminary checks such as normality of data distribution and outlier analysis were conducted to ensure the suitability of the data for parametric testing. Qualitatively, through thematic analysis, patterns and themes were derived from the interview transcripts, centring on teachers' methods for sustaining mental health. The critical analysis examined how these strategies reflected broader professional and institutional contexts. Member checking with participants and peer debriefing with

independent scholars were used to confirm thematic accuracy, thereby supporting the validity and reliability of the qualitative analysis. The integration of mixed methods facilitated a deeper investigation of how work meaning relates to educators' mental health.

## Results

The results detail findings on the role of work meaningfulness in promoting teachers' mental health, including demographic data, its association with psychological well-being and psychological distress, and approaches to strengthening mental health through meaningful work.

### Overview of teachers' mental health

The descriptive analysis outlines teachers' mental health conditions, including indicators of psychological well-being (positive emotions, social relationships, life satisfaction) and psychological distress (anxiety, depression, loss of control), as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' mental health overview

	Male (340)		Female (588)		Total (928)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Psychological well-being						
1. Positive emotion	8.30	.18	8.29	1.21	8.30	.20
2. Positive relationship	8.36	.16	8.28	1.20	8.31	.18
3. Life satisfaction	8.66	.07	8.61	1.10	8.63	.09
Psychological distress						
1. Anxiety	4.24	.76	4.06	1.70	4.13	.72
2. Depression	4.00	.76	3.58	1.59	3.74	.56
3. Loss of control	3.73	.72	3.39	1.57	3.52	.53

*M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation

Table 2 presents data on psychological well-being and distress, categorized by gender. Both males and females show similar positive emotions and slightly divergent experiences in positive relationships and life satisfaction, with males reporting marginally higher values. In terms of psychological distress, males also report higher levels of anxiety, depression, and loss of control compared to females. The standard deviations indicate moderate to considerable variability in these measures among participants, suggesting a diverse range of psychological states within the sample. Overall, while both genders exhibit relatively high well-being, they also face notable psychological distress, highlighting the complexity of mental health, where high well-being can coexist with significant psychological distress.

### The prediction of meaning on mental health

This study examined the role of work meaning in predicting various aspects of mental health using linear regression analysis. The dual-factor model, encompassing positive and negative dimensions of mental health, was applied to analyze three outcomes: overall mental health, psychological well-being, and psychological distress. This approach provides a more holistic perspective on the connection between meaningful work and psychological functioning. The analysis aimed to test whether individuals who perceive greater meaning in their work experience have better mental health outcomes. Table 3 presents the regression results, highlighting the strength and direction of the associations.

Table 3. Work meaning in relation to teachers' mental health

Outcome	Unstandard. Coef.		Standard Coef.	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>sr</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$			
Mental health	.655	1.790	.448	15.233	.000	.448
Well-being	.446	.018	.629	24.601	.000	.629
Distress	-.209	.036	-.189	-5.868	.000	-.189



Table 3 indicates that meaning in work significantly predicts overall mental health ( $B = .655$ ,  $\beta = .448$ ,  $p < .001$ ), suggesting a moderate positive association. Specifically, it strongly predicts psychological well-being ( $B = .446$ ,  $\beta = .629$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that individuals who find more meaning in their work often indicate higher well-being. Conversely, meaning in work negatively predicts psychological distress ( $B = -.209$ ,  $\beta = -.189$ ,  $p < .001$ ), implying that meaningful work correlates with reduced distress. The semi-partial correlations ( $sr$ ) further support these findings, showing a stronger unique contribution of meaning in work to well-being (.629) compared to distress (–.189). These results confirm that meaningful work contributes positively to mental health, particularly by enhancing well-being and reducing distress.

### Teachers' strategies for mental health development

The analysis led to the identification of three main themes and several related subthemes, all of which describe the strategies teachers use to maintain their mental health by finding meaning in their work.

#### *Theme 1: Pride in the teaching profession*

This theme captures how teachers internalize pride and gratitude for their role in shaping future generations. Teachers reported strong emotional ties to their profession, marked by personal fulfillment and societal contribution.

**Subtheme 1.1: Gratitude for contributing to student development.** Teachers often described feelings of emotional satisfaction when seeing their students grow and succeed. This sense of gratitude stemmed from the awareness that their work contributes meaningfully to students' academic and personal development. For many, such moments reinforced the value of their profession and served as a reminder of their purpose as educators. The experience of positively impacting students' lives fostered a sense of pride and fulfillment, which in turn strengthened their own psychological well-being.

*Participant 1. Alhamdulillah, I am grateful to be able to engage in the development of children. I am also thankful for learning from children about the meaning of patience, forgiving each other, and socializing with each other.*

*Participant 2. I am grateful because I felt that life was more beneficial to others during my time as a teacher. I can share my knowledge with the students.*

**Subtheme 1.2: Teaching as a calling.** One participant expressed that teaching is not merely a profession but a personal calling that enriches their life. For this teacher, the role of educator aligns closely with their inner values and passions, making the work feel significant. This sense of calling contributed to a strong emotional connection to the profession and served as a source of motivation and psychological strength. Despite the everyday challenges of the job, the belief that they were meant to teach helped sustain their well-being and professional commitment.

*Participant 3. Teaching is my passion. Within me was an enthusiasm and passion for teaching. Therefore, I feel grateful to be a teacher. In my opinion, the teaching profession is a noble job.*

#### *Theme 2: Professional responsibility in teaching duties*

Teachers described the importance of responsibility and commitment in their professional activities. This theme underscores how responsible engagement in teaching practices contributes to their mental well-being.

**Subtheme 2.1: Student-focused teaching practices.** Teachers emphasized the importance of aligning their instructional strategies with students' needs and characteristics. They described how thoughtful lesson planning, tailored to students' learning capacities and developmental levels, was essential in fostering academic and personal growth. This student-centered approach was seen not only as a professional responsibility but also as a way to find personal meaning and satisfaction in their work. By focusing on how their teaching could make a positive impact on students' progress, teachers felt more engaged and motivated. The deliberate effort to prioritize student development in their teaching practices also contributed to their own sense of effectiveness and psychological well-being.

*Participant 4. I always plan and carry out the classroom teaching-learning processes according to the students' demands and needs.*

*Participant 6. I strive to teach with heart. Provide a different learning atmosphere in each meeting by combining various learning methods so as not to be boring during the learning process.*

**Subtheme 2.2: Collaborative engagement and follow-up.** Teachers underscored the importance of working collaboratively with colleagues to improve teaching quality and address student needs. They viewed teamwork as a way to share ideas, solve problems, and stay aligned with educational goals. In addition, structured follow-up, such as monitoring student progress and evaluating the effectiveness of instruction, was seen as an integral part of their professional responsibility. These practices helped them stay accountable while enhancing their sense of purpose and psychological well-being.

*Participant 5. I used to evaluate students' learning and psychological development with a team of teachers. After that, make a follow-up plan from the evaluation results, and design learning tools with the teacher work group team.*

### **Theme 3: Commitment to continuous self-improvement**

This theme reflects teachers' active efforts to grow professionally and personally, which in turn supports their psychological well-being.

**Subtheme 3.1: Pursuing professional development.** Teachers described engaging in various learning activities—such as attending training, joining workshops, and independent study—to improve their skills. These efforts were driven not just by institutional requirements, but also by a desire to meet the changing needs of students and the profession. Continuous learning helped them stay confident and resilient, contributing positively to their mental well-being.

*Participant 8. I strive to develop myself by attending training, reading a lot, getting the job done thoroughly, and educating students wholeheartedly according to the planned program.*

**Subtheme 3.2: Innovation and adaptability in teaching.** Teachers emphasized the need to be innovative in delivering lessons to maintain students' interest and motivation. They also highlighted the importance of being adaptable in facing various classroom challenges, such as changing learning environments or student needs. Innovation and flexibility were viewed as essential strategies to ensure effective teaching while supporting their own psychological resilience in a dynamic educational context.

*Participant 7. I do it by trying to improve our quality as educators. By bringing up innovation, children are not bored with the lessons they learn.*

*Participant 9. I make efforts to improve the quality of learning academically and non-academically. The goal is to provide a better and systematic learning experience to the students.*

An analysis of the three strategies employed by teachers to enhance their mental health reveals that the most frequently used approach is cultivating gratitude for the privilege of being a teacher. This reflects how maintaining a positive perception and attitude toward one's role as an educator contributes to mental health development. The second strategy involves carrying out professional duties with commitment and a sense of responsibility, particularly in the context of teaching and learning. The third strategy focuses on continuous self-improvement, especially in adapting to the evolving demands and expectations of the teaching profession. A brief summary of these strategies is presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Teacher strategies for mental health development**

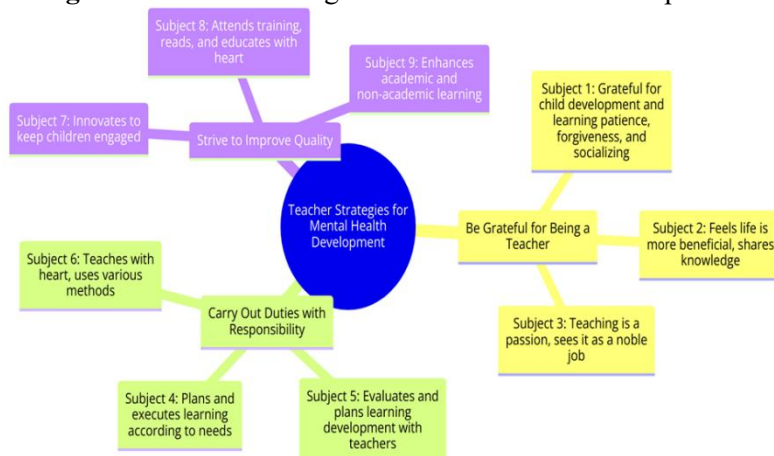


Figure 1 presents three strategies teachers employ to foster mental health through their work. At the centre is the fundamental concept of developing mental health for teachers," branching out to three main strategies: be grateful for being a teacher, carry out duties with responsibility, and strive to improve quality." Each strategy is supported by specific actions or sentiments expressed by different Participants, highlighting gratitude, responsible teaching, and self-improvement as crucial to their mental well-being and professional fulfilment.

## Results

This study reveals that enhancing the work environment for teachers significantly supports their mental health by fostering meaningful employment, which substantially contributes to psychological well-being and reduces educator stress levels. These results support earlier studies showing a positive link between work meaningfulness and psychological well-being (Kwok, 2024; Zhu, 2022) and a negative correlation with psychological distress (Gnall, 2023; Schnell, 2020). Employing a sequential explanatory mixed-method that integrates quantitative and qualitative data, this study provides deeper insight into the impact of meaningful work on mental health. The analysis indicates that meaningful work promotes positive emotions, enriches social relationships, increases teacher satisfaction, and mediates organisational constraints' effects on workplace well-being. Moreover, it highlights that meaningful work significantly lowers anxiety, depression, and feelings of loss of control among teachers. These insights emphasise the critical role of meaningful work in enhancing teachers' well-being and mitigating distress, affirming its importance as a key strategy for their professional development.

The three strategies identified for enhancing psychological well-being and reducing distress are supported by prior research. The first strategy involves practising gratitude, which numerous studies have shown to be effective in promoting mental health (Bazargan-Hejazi, 2023). This research used grto examine its attitude as a variable effect on mental health improvements. The second strategy is engaging in professional and responsible work, with supporting evidence from various studies (Woloshyn, 2020). The third strategy involves engaging in self-development activities with personal and professional benefits, as validated by recent studies (Karia, 2024; Roberts, 2020). These strategies contribute significantly to the academic discourse on mental health development.

This research provides significant contributions to the domain of psychological science by accentuating the critical role of meaningful employment as a determinant of teachers' mental health (Aslan, 2021; Lamothe, 2017; Minkkinen et al., 2020). The qualitative insights elucidate how educators utilize both personal and professional values—such as gratitude, responsibility, and self-growth—to maintain their psychological well-being. These findings substantiate the notion that cultivating a profound sense of purpose within the workplace can yield positive outcomes for emotional resilience. Nonetheless, it is crucial to interpret these findings within the confines of the studied demographic. Given that the data were solely acquired from educators, all derived conclusions must be firmly situated within that context. The outcomes do not endorse extrapolations regarding other cohorts, such as students, thereby rendering discussions pertinent to student mental health outside the intended focus of this inquiry.

The findings underscore a distinct opportunity for school counselors to enhance teacher mental health via specialized psychological interventions. Programs aimed at assisting educators in stress management, reflecting on the significance of their roles, and developing emotional coping mechanisms could be seamlessly integrated into pre-existing school counseling frameworks. Such initiatives may encompass peer discussion forums, individualized counseling sessions, and professional development workshops centered on mental health and self-care. By addressing the unique needs of teachers, such interventions can not only bolster emotional well-being but also elevate job satisfaction and motivation (Kang, 2018; Sobolewski, 2024). Crucially, these supportive endeavors should be sustained through collaborative efforts with school leadership to ensure enduring efficacy. Prioritizing teachers as the primary beneficiaries correlates with the empirical foundation of this study and highlights the necessity of positioning teacher mental health as a paramount concern within school mental health paradigms.

While it is plausible to conjecture that healthier, more motivated educators may indirectly bolster school climate and classroom engagement, such outcomes were not scrutinized in this investigation. Consequently,



the potential ramifications of teacher well-being on students should not be inferred from these results. Any discourse regarding student outcomes should be expressly delineated as an avenue for prospective research (Chen, 2024; Leurent, 2021). Future inquiries could examine how enhancements in teacher psychological functioning influence student performance, behavior, or emotional development. For the present, the implications of this investigation remain concentrated on fostering and sustaining teacher mental health through meaningful work. Highlighting educators as the focal point not only preserves the integrity of the research design but also prevents the exaggeration of conclusions beyond the data collected.

This research affirms the significance of teacher well-being in supporting educational environments and offers evidence-based strategies that can be incorporated into school systems (Cui, 2022; Freund, 2022). By highlighting the value of gratitude, professional responsibility, and personal growth, the research presents a focused framework for supporting teacher mental health through meaningful work (Gunawardena, 2024; Moisseron-Baudé, 2023; Morera, 2024). These insights encourage schools to implement structured support systems, such as reflective sessions, mental health workshops, and peer communities, to reinforce resilience and job satisfaction among educators. Maintaining this focus on teachers ensures that the study's implications stay grounded in its data source. While potential effects on students warrant separate investigation, the present findings contribute directly to understanding how meaningful engagement shapes emotional strength and professional fulfillment in teachers' work environments.

### Conclusion

This study uncovers severthendings highlighting meaningfof meaningful work ul work's pivotal role in enhancing teachers' psychological well-being. It confirms that teachers who view their work as meaningful report significantly lower psychological stress, including anxiety, depression, and loss of control. These findings align with previous research, affirming the positive impact of meaning in work on mental health and teachers' well-being. Furthermore, the study identifies gratitude, professional responsibility, and personal and professional development as effective strategies for fostering psychological well-being, suggesting that integrating these elements into the work environment can be beneficial.

This study has some limitations. The data were gathered from a single region in East Java, Indonesia, which may reduce the extent to which the results apply to other cultural or educational contexts. The quantitative part of the mixed-methods design was cross-sectional, so causal links between meaningful work and mental health could not be confirmed. Using self-reported instruments may also have introduced bias, including the tendency for socially desirable responses. While the qualitative data added valuable context, the small number of interview participants limited the diversity of viewpoints. Future research could address these issues by involving larger and more varied samples, adopting longitudinal designs, and incorporating objective measures to improve the strength and generalizability of the findings.

**Financing.** This study received funding from Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs, specifically through the Directorate General of Islamic Higher Education, and was administered by UIN Malang.

**Data Availability.** The dataset is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

**Ethical Approval.** Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the **Faculty of Psychology, State Islamic University of Malang, Ethics Committee** (Meeting No: 01, Decision No: 220/FPSI.I.KP.00.1/02.2023 Date: 08/02/2023).

**Informed Consent.** All teacher participants were informed about the objectives and procedures of the study, and written informed consent was obtained from each of them prior to participation. Their involvement was entirely voluntary, and they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

**Conflict of Interest.** The authors declare no competing financial or personal interests.

**Acknowledgement.** We are grateful to Dr. Andrea Mason Gardner of Idaho University's English Language Department for her valuable feedback and detailed review of our manuscript. Her assistance significantly improved the final version of this paper.

## References

- Asaloei, S. I., Wolomasi, A. K., & Werang, B. R. (2020). Work-related stress and performance among primary school teachers. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 9(2), 352–358. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v9i2.20335>
- Aslan, H. (2021). Relatiop Between Compassion Fa,tigue in Nurses, and Work-Related Stress and the Meaning of Life. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 61(3), 1848–1860. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-020-01142-0>
- Aziz, R., Mangestuti, R., Sholichatun, Y., Ridho, A., & Mukhibat. (2023). Reconstructing the meaning of work to promote teachers' mental health. *Health Education and Health Promotion*, 11(2), 273–278. <https://doi.org/10.58209/hehp.11.2.273>
- Aziz, R., Mulyadi, M., Hadi, M. S., Wahyuni, E. N., & Rubaidi. (2024). Students' well-being development in the classroom: a mixed-method study. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 13(3), 1666–1672. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v13i3.27145>
- Aziz, R., & Zamroni, Z. (2019). Analisis faktor konfirmatori terhadap alat ukur kesehatan mental berdasarkan teori Dual model. *Psikoislamika : Jurnal Psikologi Dan Psikologi Islam*, 16(2), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.18860/psi.v16i2.8199>
- Bazargan-Hejazi. (2023). Hope, optimism, gratitude, and well-being among health professional minority college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 71(4), 1125–1133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2021.1922415>
- Byrne, D., & Carthy, D. A. (2021). A qualitative exploration of post-primary educators' attitudes regarding the promotion of student well-being. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 16(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482631.2021.1946928>
- Cabezas-Heredia, E. (2021). Depression, anxiety, stress in students and teachers: Analysis from covid 19. *Revista Venezolana de Gerencia*, 26(94), 603–622. <https://doi.org/10.52080/rvgluzv26n94.9>
- Chen, S. (2024). Positive school climate and strong school identification as protective factors of adolescent mental health and learning engagement: A longitudinal investigation before and during COVID-19. *Social Science and Medicine*, 348. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116795>
- Csordás, G., Matuszka, B., Sallay, V., & Martos, T. (2022). Assessing meaningful work among Hungarian employees: testing psychometric properties of work and meaning inventory in employee subgroups. *BMC Psychology*, 10(1), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-022-00749-0>
- Cui, L. (2022). The Role of Teacher–Student Relationships in Predicting Teachers' Occupational Well-being, Emotional Exhaustion, and Enthusiasm. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.896813>
- Freund, A. (2022). Optimal educational climate among students at risk: the role of teachers' work attitudes. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 37(1), 207–226. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-021-00545-1>

- Gnall, K. E. (2023). Life meaning and mental health in post-9/11 veterans: the mediating role of perceived stress. *Anxiety, Stress and Coping*, 36(6), 743–756. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2022.2154341>
- Gunawardena, H. (2024). Teachers as first responders: classroom experiences and mental health training needs of Australian schoolteachers. *BMC Public Health*, 24(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-17599-z>
- Heine, C. (2019). Dual sensory loss, mental health and well-being of older adults living in China. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2019.00092>
- Herman, K. C. (2020). Advances in understanding and intervening in teacher stress and coping: The Coping-Competence-Context Theory. In *Journal of School Psychology* (Vol. 78, pp. 69–74). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2020.01.001>
- Hojo, M. (2021). Association between student-teacher ratio and teachers' working hours and workload stress: evidence from a nationwide survey in Japan. *BMC Public Health*, 21(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11677-w>
- Kang, X. L. (2018). Discussion of the relationship between perceived job characteristics and organizational commitment of university PE teachers-from the aspect of job stress. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Mathematics*, 21(2), 317–327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09720502.2017.1420562>
- Karia, C. T. (2024). Peer teacher training develops "lifelong skills." *Medical Teacher*, 46(3), 373–379. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2023.2256463>
- King, N., Davison, C. M., & Pickett, W. (2021). Development of a dual-factor measure of adolescent mental health: An analysis of cross-sectional data from the 2014 Canadian health behaviour in school aged children (HBSC) study. *BMJ Open*, 11(9), e041489. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-041489>
- Kupers, E. (2022). Teaching in times of COVID-19: A mixed-method study into teachers' teaching practices, psychological needs, stress, and well-being. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2022.103724>
- Kwok, S. Y. C. L. (2024). Presence of meaning in life and meaning confusion mediate the effects of adverse childhood experiences on mental health among university students. *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, 16(1), 179–197. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aphw.12478>
- Lamothe, J. (2017). Workplace violence and the meaning of work in healthcare workers: A phenomenological study. *Work*, 56(2), 185–197. <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-172486>
- Leurent, B. (2021). Is favorable school climate associated with better adolescent mental health? Longitudinal study of young people in England. *SSM - Mental Health*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmmh.2021.100033>
- Liu, M. (2020). Anxiety and stress in in-service chinese university teachers of arts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 9(1), 237–248. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v9n1p237>
- Minkinen, J., Auvinen, E., & Mauno, S. (2020). Meaningful work protects teachers' self-rated health under stressors. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 4(2), 140–152. <https://doi.org/10.47602/jpsp.v4i2.209>

- Moisseron-Baudé, M. (2023). Extension of the counseling program based on/about life and work meaning: "Developing the meaning of one's life by cultivating one's ties to others and to social communities." *Pratiques Psychologiques*, 29(3), 175–192. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.prps.2023.03.001>
- Morera, G. E. (2024). Fitcoin Race: a gamification proposal to work on healthy habits in initial teacher training. *Retos*, 51, 1234–1244. <https://doi.org/10.47197/RETOS.V51.98807>
- Pei, L. (2022). Exploring mental health stigma among chinese-english bilinguals: Dual-process model of emotional competence, flipped learning readiness, and academic performance in Mainland Chinese Universities. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2022.1001796>
- Roberts, A. M. (2020). Preschool teachers' self-efficacy, burnout, and stress in online professional development: a mixed methods approach to understand change. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 41(3), 262–283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2019.1638851>
- Rodrigues, L. T. M. (2020). Stress and depression in teachers from a public education institution. *Enfermeria Global*, 19(1), 232–242. <https://doi.org/10.6018/eglobal.19.1.383201>
- Schnell, T. (2020). Meaning in Life and Self-Control Buffer Stress in Times of COVID-19: Moderating and Mediating Effects With Regard to Mental Distress. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2020.582352>
- Smith, N. D., Suldo, S., Hearon, B., & ... (2020). An application of the dual-factor model of mental health in elementary school children: Examining academic engagement and social outcomes. *Journal of Positive School ...*, 4(1), 49–68. <https://doi.org/http://journalppw.com/index.php/JPPW/article/view/186>
- Sobolewski, K. M. (2024). Exploring teachers' perspectives on movement integration using a job-embedded professional development intervention. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2024.102419>
- Steger, M. F., Dik, B. J., & Duffy, R. D. (2012). Measuring meaningful work: The work and meaning inventory (WAMI). *Journal of Career Assessment*, 20(3), 322–337. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072711436160>
- Woloshyn, V. (2020). Increasing teacher candidates' mental health literacy and stress coping skills through an elective mental health and wellness course. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 24(9), 921–935. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1497097>
- Zang, N. (2022). Job load, job stress, and job exhaustion among Chinese junior middle school teachers: Job satisfaction as a mediator and teacher's role as a moderator. *Social Psychology of Education*, 25(5), 1003–1030. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-022-09719-1>
- Zhu, X. (2022). Promotion of Meaning in Life and Well-being Among University Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic via a Service-Learning Subject. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, 924711. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.924711>