



RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA YAZISI

# Teachers' Mental Health: A Mixed-Method Study on Spirituality, Well-Being, and Distress in the Workplace

## Öğretmenlerin Ruh Sağlığı: İşyerinde Maneviyat, İyi Oluş ve Sıkıntı Üzerine Karma Yöntemli Bir Çalışma

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### Abstract:

The article extends previous research with a dual-model approach to assessing the relationship between teachers' spirituality and mental health in the workplace. Mental health is defined as a high level of psychological well-being and a low level of psychological distress. The mixed methods study surveyed junior and senior high school teachers in East Java, Indonesia. Quantitative data were collected from 117 teachers, while qualitative data were collected from nine teachers. Quantitative data was collected through a spirituality and mental health scale, while qualitative data was collected through interviews. The analysis was performed using statistical analysis and thematic analysis. The results indicated a significant relationship between spirituality and mental health in individuals with a high mental health profile ( $R=.450, p<.005$ ), while the analysis results on other profiles were not significant. The profile of high mental illness ( $R=.185, p>.005$ ), low mental illness ( $R=.215, p>.005$ ), low mental health ( $R=.098, p>.005$ ). The three strategies teachers to develop mental health were being grateful for all gifts, building the meaning of work as a teacher, and being patient in dealing with problems at work. The findings indicate that spirituality has a more significant influence on teachers with good mental health. Educational institutions should develop programs that support teachers' spirituality and psychological well-being holistically.

**Keywords:** Psychological distress; psychological well-being; spirituality, teachers' mental health.

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**Öz:**

Bu makale, öğretmenlerin maneviyatı ile işyerinde ruh sağlığı arasındaki ilişkiyi değerlendirmek için ikili model yaklaşımıyla önceki araştırmaları genişletmektedir. Ruh sağlığı, yüksek düzeyde psikolojik iyi oluş ve düşük düzeyde psikolojik sıkıntı olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Bu karma yöntemli çalışmada, Endonezya'nın Doğu Java bölgesindeki ortaokul ve lise öğretmenleriyle anket yapılmıştır. Nicel veriler 117 öğretmenden, nitel veriler ise dokuz öğretmenden toplanmıştır. Nicel veriler bir maneviyat ve ruh sağlığı ölçeği aracılığıyla toplanırken, nitel veriler görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Sonuçlar, yüksek ruh sağlığı profiline sahip bireylerde maneviyat ve ruh sağlığı arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir ( $R=.450$ ,  $p<.005$ ), Diğer profillere ilişkin analiz sonuçları ise anlamlı değildir. Yüksek ruhsal hastalık profili ( $R=.185$ ,  $p>.005$ ), düşük ruhsal hastalık ( $R=.215$ ,  $p>.005$ ), düşük ruh sağlığı ( $R=.098$ ,  $p>.005$ ). Öğretmenlerin ruh sağlığını geliştirmeye yönelik üç stratejisi, tüm hediye için minnettar olmak, bir öğretmen olarak işin anlamını inşa etmek ve işteki sorunlarla başa çıkmada sabırlı olmaktır. Bulgular, ruh sağlığı iyi olan öğretmenler üzerinde maneviyatın daha önemli bir etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Eğitim kurumları, öğretmenlerin maneviyatını ve psikolojik esenliğini bütünsel olarak destekleyen programlar geliştirmelidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Psikolojik sıkıntı; psikolojik iyi oluş; maneviyat, öğretmenlerin ruh sağlığı.

**Introduction**

The high workload of teachers in schools has led to low levels of mental health. High levels of psychological distress and low levels of psychological well-being characterize mental health. Some studies show that too much school administrative work takes up teachers' time and attention, leading to burnout (Hayes, 2020). Research on the teacher shows that the prevalence of burnout ranged from 25% to 74%, stress ranged from 8% to 87%, anxiety ranged from 38% to 41%, and depression ranged from 4% to 77% (Mucci et al., 2022). The inability to solve students' problems has burdened teachers. In addition, teachers' low level of financial well-being adds to the complexity of the issues they face (Jeon, 2020; Vertanen-Greis, 2020) This condition undermines the urgency of addressing problems related to teachers' mental health in the workplace.

There are three main trends in research on the influence of spirituality at work on mental health in teachers. First, teachers with a solid spiritual connection tend to experience lower stress levels (Chirico, 2020). Support from spiritual beliefs helps them face challenges better. Second, spirituality can increase the sense of meaning and purpose in the teacher's work. Motivation and job satisfaction increase when they feel connected to a higher purpose (Mahipalan, 2019). Third, through spirituality, teachers can develop better mental health (Ramakrishnan, 2018). This fortitude helps them cope with the pressures and difficulties in teaching tasks. This article elaborates on the three types of research by considering the mental health profile of teachers.

Many factors have affected teachers' mental health in the workplace, both external and internal. In the outer aspect, The research found that the principal's leadership, social relations between teachers, opportunities for career development, and the amount of teacher salaries are external factors that affect mental health (Huang, 2020; Zhang, 2022). Other studies have found that job satisfaction, gratitude, meaningfulness, and teacher spirituality are internal factors affecting mental health (Troesch, 2017; Aziz et al., 2023). This article elaborates on the spiritual aspect as an internal factor influencing teachers' mental health in the workplace.

There are two approaches to understanding mental health. The first approach defines mental health as a single concept. This approach understands an individual's mental health as a healthy or sick condition (Bradbury, 2020; Berry, 2021). In other words, health and illness are two discrete issues. The second approach defines mental health as a dual concept. Healthy and sick are not discrete things but a continuum of conditions (Zhou et al., 2020)(Aziz and Mangestuti, 2023). The second approach allows the emergence of four mental health profiles: healthy and not sick, healthy but sick, unhealthy and not sick, and unhealthy and sick individuals. In other words, this second approach understands mental health as having two positive and negative sides. Mental health based on dual model theory explains continuum conditions (well-being and distress). The presence of one state does not negate another or vice versa.

The concept of 'spiritual health' is problematic because 'spiritual' and 'health' have undergone considerable development and revision in recent years. Classical definitions of spirituality have tended to focus on the religious or soul-related. However, current spirituality studies adopt broader reports integrating all aspects of human life and experience (Schneiders, 1986; Muldoon and King, 1995) There has been a similar broadening in understanding of health and well-being, as the current emphasis in medicine tends to be on the whole person rather than just the treatment of disease. Wellness reflects a sense of well-being derived from a heightened awareness of wholeness and integration of all dimensions of one's being, including the spiritual elements of life.

Several studies have found that many previous researchers have seen a positive influence of spirituality on teachers' mental health. For example, research was conducted on company employees (Sharma, 2020; Badri, 2023). The research was conducted in schools both on students (Smith, 2021) and teachers (Ramakrishnan, 2018). However, these studies focus more on mental health with a single approach. Based on previous research, mental health in this study is a dual model approach for junior and senior high school teachers.

The article examines the influence of spiritual health on teachers' mental health. This study studied mental health based on dual model theory, which makes four mental health profiles. In line with that, the purpose of this study includes the question of how the influence of spiritual health on mental health profiles is high mental health, high mental illness, low mental illness, and low mental health. Qualitative data was used to explain teachers' strategies for developing their mental health based on spiritual health in the workplace.

The hypothesis tested in this study is that spirituality in the workplace affects teachers' mental health. The higher the level of spirituality, the higher their level of mental health, and vice versa. The proposed hypothesis consists of four points, namely:

H<sub>1</sub>: Spiritual health affects teachers' mental health in high mental health profiles, spiritual health affects teachers' mental health. A higher level of spiritual health causes a higher level of mental health, and vice versa.

H<sub>2</sub>: Spiritual health affects teachers' mental health in a high mental illness profile. A higher level of spiritual health causes a higher level of mental health, and vice versa.

H<sub>3</sub>: Spiritual health affects teachers' mental health in low mental illness profiles. The higher the level of spiritual health causes, the higher their mental health, and vice versa.

H<sub>4</sub>: Spiritual health affects teachers' mental health in low mental health profiles. The higher the level of spiritual health causes, the higher their mental health, and vice versa.

## Materials and Methods

Mixed method research on the influence of spirituality in work on teachers' mental health is a research that combines quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data was addressed to measure teachers' levels of mental health (well-being and stress) and spirituality in the workplace. The qualitative data delves deeper into how spirituality influences teachers' perceptions of work and mental health through interviews. A mixed-method approach addresses the limitations of a single study to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the influence of spirituality in work on teachers' mental health in the workplace.

This research has three main stages. First, profiling teachers' mental health is based on the theory of dual models of mental health. This profiling process produces four mental health profiles, namely high mental health, high mental illness, low mental illness, and low mental health. Second, examine the effect of workplace spirituality on mental health. Testing was performed four times according to four mental health profiles. The third stage is looking for qualitative data to explain the effect of workplace spirituality on mental health and what strategies teachers use to improve their mental health.

The subjects of the study numbered 117 teachers. They are teachers at three junior high schools and three senior high schools in East Java province. Junior high school teachers totaled 54 teachers, and senior high school teachers counted 63 teachers. The selection of subjects is random.

Before filling in the research data, the subject fills in the willingness to be a research subject. Qualitative data were obtained from nine teachers. The selection of the nine teachers was performed purposively. The criteria used are those who have a profile of high mental health and a high level of spiritual health.

Data was collected through scales and interviews. The two scales used were the brief spiritual and mental health scales. The short scale of spiritual health consisted of ten questions covering the four theoretical domains of spiritual health (others, self, nature, transcendent). Teachers responded using a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important) for each item. The responses to these items could be summed up to give an overall unidimensional score ranging from 10 to 50. Cronbach's alpha coefficients have been estimated, with values greater than 0.8 indicating good internal consistency (Shaver et al., 2020). Mental health scale based on dual model theory to reveal aspects of psychological well-being and psychological distress. Each element has six items. The reliability of this scale shows that the Alpha Cronbach for psychological factors is .886 while for psychological stress is .785 (Aziz and Zamroni, 2020). The interview technique was conducted on three purposively selected teachers. The interview focused on two themes: the teacher's opinion on the importance of spirituality in developing mental health and the teacher's strategy for developing mental health based on spiritual health.

Data analysis is performed using descriptive, inferential, and thematic analyses. A descriptive study was conducted to determine the teachers' mental health profiles. The analysis technique used categorizes mental health into four categories. The step taken is to group aspects of mental health (psychological well-being and psychological distress) into two categories: high and low. High scores are obtained when the subject's score is higher than the group's average score, and low scores are when the subject's score is lower than the group's mean. Inferential analysis was conducted through regression analysis techniques to examine workplace spirituality's influence on mental health. Mental health scores are obtained by summing psychological well-being scores with psychological distress scores (psychological distress data is used as unfavorable data). Regression analysis testing was performed on all four health profiles of teachers. Thematic analysis was performed on qualitative data obtained from purposively selected teachers.

## Results

This section describes the results of data analysis containing the profile of research subjects, the results of mental health profiling analysis, a description of spirituality in workplace and teacher mental health, the influence of workplace spirituality on mental health, and teacher's strategy in developing mental health based on spirituality in the workplace.

### Profile of the research subject

This section describes the composition of the 117 research subjects regarding gender, job status, certification, age, and work period (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Profile of the research subjects (N = 117)

Research subject	Study 1 (N=35) Profile HMH		Study 2 (N=40) Profile HMI		Study 3 (N=13) Profile LMI		Study 4 (N=29) Profile LMH	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Gender</b>								
Male	13	11.11	9	7.69	5	4.27	14	11.97
Female	22	18.80	31	26.50	8	6.84	15	12.82
<b>Civil servant</b>								
Yes	11	9.40	15	12.82	2	1.71	7	5.98
No.	24	20.51	25	21.37	11	9.40	22	18.80
<b>Certified</b>								
Yes	23	19.66	27	23.08	7	5.98	19	16.24
No.	12	10.26	13	11.11	6	5.13	10	8.55
<b>Marriage</b>								
Not yet	16	13.68	16	13.68	7	5.98	16	13.68
Marriage	19	16.24	24	20.51	6	5.13	12	10.26
<b>Age</b>								
Less than 30 years	19	16.24	19	16.24	7	5.98	8	6.84
30 to 45 years	10	8.55	9	7.69	4	3.42	13	11.11
More than 45 years	6	5.13	12	10.26	2	1.71	28	23.93
<b>Period of work</b>								
Less than 5 years	14	11.97	16	13.68	7	5.98	14	11.97
5 to 10 years	12	10.26	24	20.51	3	2.56	9	7.69
More than 10 years	9	7.69	0	-	3	2.56	6	5.13

HMH=High mental health, HMI=High mental illness, LMI=Low mental illness, LMH=Low mental health

Table 1 explains that the subjects were primarily female and had the status of non-civil servant teachers, but they had the quality of certified teachers. The marital status is that most of them are married. Most subjects are between 21 and 30 years old, and the service period was less than five years.

**Spiritual and teacher’s mental health**

This section describes the result of a descriptive analysis of the teachers’ spiritual and mental health. This section displays four descriptive data types: mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum score (Table 2. Spiritual health and mental health).

**Table 2.** Spiritual health and mental health

	Spiritual health				Mental health			
	Mean	SD	Max.	Min	Mean	SD	Max.	Min
High Mental Health	50.22	5.98	41.00	58.00	26.34	2.95	20.00	30.00
High Mental Illness	49.77	6.37	39.00	59.00	25.40	3.94	12.00	30.00
Low Mental Illness	50.61	4.83	42.00	57.00	23.61	3.90	13.00	29.00
Low Mental Health	50.34	5.04	41.00	58.00	25.24	4.09	18.00	30.00
Total	50.14	5.72	39.00	59.00	25.44	3.74	12.00	30.00

Table 2 explains that the highest average of spiritual health is low mental illness, while the lowest average is high mental health. In mental health variables, the highest average is high mental health, while the lowest is low mental health profiles.

**Teacher mental health profiling**

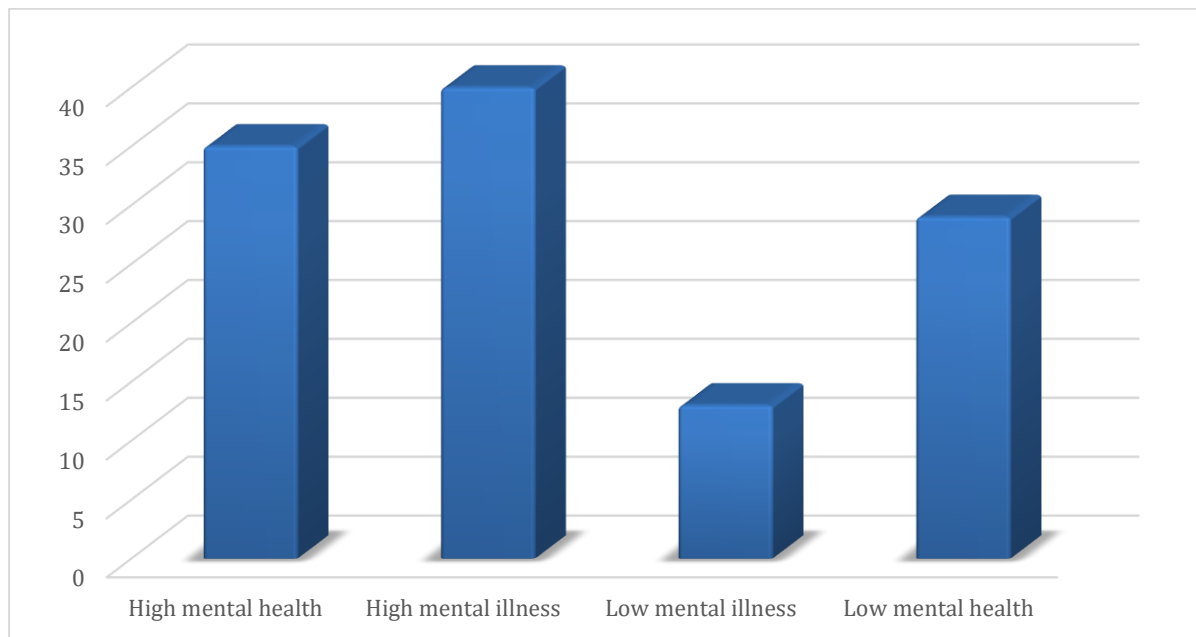
Furthermore, the results of a mental health profiling analysis of 117 teachers found four types of mental health. The four types are high mental health, high mental illness, low mental illness, and low mental health. The results of the analysis are displayed in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Teachers’ mental health profiling

Profile	N	%	Mental health characteristics	
			Psychological well-being	Psychological distress
High mental health	35	29,9	High	Low
High mental illness	40	34,2	High	High
Low mental illness	13	11,1	Low	Low
Low mental health	29	24,8	Low	High
Total	117	100		

Table 3 explains that the most common mental health profile is high mental illness. They are teachers who have a high level of well-being and also a high level of psychological pressure. The second profile is high mental health. They are ideal teachers because they have a high level of psychological well-being and a low level of

distress. The third profile is low mental health. They are teachers who have problems with their mental health. The last profile that has the least number is common mental illness. They don't matter under psychological pressure, but they also don't have a high level of psychological well-being (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Mental health profiling

#### The effect of spiritual on mental health

The results of hypothesis testing show that spiritual health affects mental health in a high mental health profile is accepted ( $R=.450$ ,  $p<.005$ ), While the results of the

analysis on other profiles are rejected. The profile of high mental illness ( $R=.185$ ,  $p= >.005$ ), low mental illness ( $R=.215$ ,  $p= >.005$ ), low mental health ( $R=.098$ ,  $p= >.005$ ), Full results are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** The effect of workplace spirituality on teacher's mental health

Profile	N	R	R Square	F	Sig.
High mental health	35	.450	.203	8.386	.007**
High mental illness	40	.185	.034	1.344	.253 <sup>ns</sup>
Low mental illness	13	.215	.049	.486	.502 <sup>ns</sup>
Low mental health	29	.098	.010	.259	.615 <sup>ns</sup>

level of significance \*\*=.001, \*=.005, <sup>ns</sup>=no significant

Table 4 shows that spiritual health affects mental health only in subjects who have a high mental health profile, while the influence of spirituality on the other three profiles (high mental illness, low mental illness, and low mental health) is not significant.

#### Teacher strategies for mental health

Based on qualitative data obtained from nine teachers who have a high mental health profile, three strategies for developing spirituality-based teacher mental health were found. The three strategies are being grateful for all gifts, building the meaning of work as a teacher, and being patient in dealing with problems at work. All three findings were revealed from the teacher's statement.

The first statement that gratitude is a strategy for developing mental health is revealed through the teacher's statement as follows:

*The work of a teacher is a very noble job. Extraordinary devotion, in which there are experiences or new things that a teacher must do. However, the teacher is not guaranteed to become financially prosperous. But to become teachers, we must be rich in knowledge (Informant 1, male, age 32).*

*Alhamdulillah is very grateful to be a teacher. Being a teacher is a glorious opportunity to learn. Many life lessons were learned from students as a provision for life for me (Informant 2, female, age 29).*

*I always feel grateful to work as a teacher. Therefore, I strive to make learning fun. I believe that teaching is a field of charity for me later (Informant 3, female, age 31).*

The second statement states that building the meaning of work as a teacher is a good strategy for developing their mental health. The statements are revealed through the teacher's statement as follows:

*While working as a teacher, I felt some improvement in my life. I began to understand the meaning of friendship and the meaning of the life I was living right now. I also discovered a lot of different traits for each individual, and I began to learn how to respond to those traits (Informant 4, male, age 30).*

*At work, I always accept every incident that happens to me sincerely. I also pray and try to motivate and maximize my potential without complaining too much to others (Informant 5, female, 24).*

*Teachers as a job are indeed following what I aspire to. My interest and passion were achieved. Therefore, I am able to fully work and carry out my work as a teacher sincerely (Informant 6, female, age 26).*

The third statement states that patience in dealing with life problems is another strategy for developing mental health is revealed through the teacher's statement as follows:

*Being a teacher is difficult because of flexible working hours, but it is a big task and responsibility. Every day is a challenge, one of which is when faced with various student characters in one classroom. Nevertheless, being a teacher is very entertaining, and children's behavior sometimes causes laughter. Whatever the ups and downs during work, what is certain is that a teacher must be excellent in dedicating his knowledge (Informant 7, male, 28).*

*Being a teacher is something very extraordinary. Being a teacher is difficult, but that doesn't mean you can't. Being a teacher requires patience to face every student's problem. Being a teacher is very valuable when you can instill positive values and students can apply these values (Informant 8, female, age 30).*

*My effort to cope with the pressure of work is to consider tasks as challenges that must be completed and passed well as long as I can be patient with all trials (Informant 9, female, age 26).*

Three findings of teacher strategies in mental health development are the ability to be grateful for God-given blessings, giving meaning to work as a teacher, and patience with trials. Thus, all three strategies are strategies based on spirituality.

## Discussion

The results of this study showed that of the four hypotheses tested, only one hypothesis was accepted, while the other three hypotheses were rejected. The hypothesis accepted in this study is that spiritual health will positively affect the mental health of teachers with a high mental health profile. It means that the higher spiritual health of the teacher will be followed by the higher level of mental health and vice versa. Being grateful for the gifts received, building the meaning of work as a teacher, and patiently facing trials are three strategies to develop their mental

health. These three strategies are mental health development strategies for teachers based on spiritual health.

The results of this study suggest that the positive influence of spirituality on teachers' mental health was only seen in individuals with high levels of mental health. It marks an innovation in research, breaking down the standard view that assumes the positive impact of spirituality without considering differences in mental health profiles (Pandya, 2018; Turner, Hastings and Neighbors, 2019) By exploring variability in mental health levels, the study provides deep insight into situations where the effects of spirituality are more influential on teacher mental health. These findings suggest that spirituality as a protective factor appears to be more pronounced in individuals with good mental health. Thus, this study provides new and stimulating insights to examine further how spirituality can reinforce teachers' mental health.

Spirituality has a significant impact on a person's mental health. First, one can find inner calm through spiritual practice and promote emotional balance. Various spiritual activities such as meditation, prayer, or spiritual reflection can help reduce stress and anxiety levels that can affect mental health (MacDougall, 2020). Second, spirituality provides meaning and purpose in life that can be a strong foundation for facing life's challenges (Aziz et al., 2023). Spirituality helps overcome feelings of emptiness or disorientation that can often lead to mental problems. In addition, a connection with something bigger than oneself, whether through religious beliefs or a connection with nature, can create a sense of connectedness and community that supports mental well-being (Pandya, 2018; Walt, 2018). Fourth, spirituality can also provide hope and comfort in the face of adversity or failure, providing the necessary psychological endurance (Kehinde, Aliya and Oralbaevich, 2023). Thus, the positive influence of spirituality on mental health proves that the psychiatric aspect has an undeniable role in achieving holistic balance and well-being.

Ignoring the state of mental well-being of teachers in educational practice has the potential to result in severe repercussions for the entire education system. Teachers who face mental stress without adequate treatment can experience a decline in teaching quality, directly impacting student learning (Carroll et al., 2021; Pressley, 2021). The risk of burnout or emotional exhaustion also increases, leading to high turnover in the education profession, which is detrimental to learning continuity (Shackleton, 2019; Khajehnasiri et al., 2022) In addition, neglect of teachers' mental well-being can create an unhealthy work environment, hinder collaboration and communication, and potentially damage school culture (Söderberg, 2020; Drescher et al., 2022). In a long time, this can affect the overall learning atmosphere, creating an environment that is not conducive to the development of both teachers and students. Therefore, supporting teachers' mental well-being is an ethical obligation and essential for maintaining the quality and sustainability of the education system.

The importance of integrating spiritual values and holistic approaches in educational practice in schools becomes clear when facing the challenges of teachers' mental well-being. In reflecting on such conditions, schools should prioritize developing specialized mental well-being training programs for teaching staff (Brick, 2021). It is also worth emphasizing the importance of work-life balance

through flexible working time policies and psychological support (Mulyani, 2021). In addition, schools must create a school culture that supports open communication and cooperation between various parties to reduce stress levels and increase social support in the work environment (Hu, 2019). Through this holistic approach, schools create a positive and productive learning environment and support teachers' professional growth and overall well-being, recognizing that aspects of mental well-being are highly relevant in achieving holistic educational goals.

## Conclusion

The study results indicate that spirituality has a more significant impact on teachers with high mental health. Spiritual practices to achieve mental balance are associated with heightened levels of well-being in the workplace. Teachers with good mental health exhibit the ability to navigate stress, cultivate positive student relationships, and enhance learning outcomes. Thus, this discovery reveals that spirituality has a positive impact not only on the spiritual dimension but also on teachers' mental health. By integrating spirituality into their daily lives, teachers can receive ongoing support to enhance the quality of teaching and improve the learning environment.

The implications of this study for the teaching profession are profound, emphasizing the importance of the spiritual dimension in improving mental health. Education policymakers must consider integrating spirituality into teacher training programs and creating a supportive work environment. Focusing on teachers' mental well-being can lead to policy changes to provide adequate mental health services in educational settings. Thus, the teaching profession can experience improved well-being and job satisfaction, positively impacting the quality of education offered to students.

The main limitation of this study is that the number of subjects was limited to 117 teachers, which may not cover the diversity within the profession. In addition, the correlational research approach used does not allow for definite cause-and-effect inferences to be drawn. It is recommended to replicate it with a larger sample, consider an experimental research design, and include additional relevant variables, such as work environment factors. These steps will increase the validity and generalizability of the results and provide a more holistic understanding of the factors that influence teachers' mental health in an educational context.

## Declarations

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there's no conflict of interest for the manuscript.

### Ethical Approval

The research has been granted ethical clearance by the Research Ethics Commission of the Psychology Faculty at the State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang (Number 220/FPSI.1/KP/00.1/02/2023, dated February 8, 2023).

### Data Availability Statement

The dataset obtained and analyzed during this study is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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