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Afghan University EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Their Psychological Wellbeing at Workplace

Mir Abdullah Miri, Herat University

Khadijeh Timori, Herat University

Abstract

The present study explored the Afghan English teachers' psychological well-being (PWB) at Higher Education and their perception toward PWB through a qualitative inquiry to collect the required data. The study participants were seven Afghan EFL university teachers, four from a public university and three from a private university in a western province of Afghanistan. A qualitative research design was employed in this study. The participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews, and the data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis of the interviews indicated that the limitations of organizational workplace influenced the teachers' performances in the classrooms, and their PWB was primarily influenced and decreased. Additionally, the results revealed that the teacher participants deal with many socio-cultural and institutional mandates that intervened and negatively impacted their PWB. The results also showed there was no fixed organizational approach to enhance or maintain the teachers' PWB. The authors assert that Afghan EFL teachers need more attention and support from educational authorities and policymakers to improve their psychological wellbeing and professionalism.

Introduction

To preserve teachers' mental well-being and to provide them with conditions to flourish their professional and personal development, it is a must to evaluate their psychological well-being (Özü et al., 2017). Like every other career in the world, language teaching has tensions and challenges that affect teachers' well-being (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). In order to understand the cognitive and social processes that occur in classrooms, it is crucial to examine teachers' psychology (Mercer, 2018) as it influences the (re)shaping of teachers' self-perceptions (Fairley, 2020).

Teachers' PWB is influenced by multiple factors, such as social, institutional, and interpersonal mandates (Guidetti et al., 2018) and can impact teachers in various ways (Kidger et al., 2016). Such factors contribute to teachers' personal decisions about themselves, their jobs, and their relationship with others (Nazari et al., 2021; Yazan, 2018). Effective teaching depends on the teachers' psychological wellbeing. This peace of mind originates from their well-being, especially from the teachers' PWB. This perspective has informed the focus of this study in the context of Afghanistan, where teachers' voices are rarely heard in sociopsychology and education fields. Because the concept has not been explored in the Afghan context, teachers, and researchers both at K-12 and higher education levels in Afghanistan and similar EFL settings would benefit from the findings of this study. In order to narrow the scope and focus our research, we focused on English language teachers at public and private universities. The study would investigate the influential factors, both positive and destructive, that affect the participants' PWB. It is important to note that a significant body of research (e.g., Nazari & Alizadeh, 2021; Özü et al., 2017; Macintyre et al., 2020, among others) has investigated this research strand in different countries. However, the topics related to teacher psychological wellbeing and job satisfaction have been untapped in the Afghan context, and the voices of Afghan EFL teachers are underrepresented in the psychosociology of education.

Research Purpose and Questions

This study aimed to explore the attitudes and reported experiences of Afghan EFL public and private university teachers in a western city of Afghanistan concerning the factors that affect their psychological wellbeing. This study also investigated the strategies that these teacher participants employ to cope with the factors that impede their psychological wellbeing.

The study specifically investigated the following research questions:

How Afghan EFL public and private university teachers perceive their psychological wellbeing?

How do these teacher participants cope with the issues that negatively affect their psychological wellbeing?

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Well-being and Psychological Well-being

Well-being is generally defined as the state of being happy, healthy, and prosperous (Wang & Hall, 2019; Veronese et al., 2018). Literature about well-being is diverse. Well-being deals with various life characteristics, such as health, literacy, and numeracy (Campbell et al., 2020). Hedonistic and eudemonic are two broad states of well-being that cover social, emotional, and mental health factors (Bower & Carroll, 2017). Well-being includes two perspectives: 1) life satisfaction and happiness from its subjective view, which is related to the hedonic perspective, and 2) functioning positively from its psychological viewpoint and successful relationships with others, which are linked with the eudemonic perspective (see Stewart-Brown & Janmohamed, 2008; Tennant et al., 2005; Samman, 2007; Kallay & Rus,

2014). Considering this, two types of well-being, namely physical and mental well-being, are more pronounced in investigating well-being types (Harding et al., 2019). From a psychological view, Seligman (2012) mentioned it more precisely:

I used to think that the topic of positive psychology was happiness, that the gold standard for measuring happiness was life satisfaction, and that the goal of positive psychology was to increase life satisfaction. I now think that the topic of positive psychology is well-being, that the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing. (p. 13)

Psychological well-being covers life trends combining good feeling and properly functioning (Huppert, 2009). Moreover, the author emphasized that well-being does not necessarily mean that individuals feel good continually and do not suffer from negative emotions like disappointment which is a required part of normal life. It is where psychological well-being manages all these emotions. He also propounded, "The concept of functioning effectively (in a psychological sense) involves the development of one's potential, having some control over one's life, having a sense of purpose (e.g., working towards valued goals), and experiencing positive relationships" (p. 138).

Teachers' Psychological Well-being

To preserve a high level of mental health and high level of productivity, teachers` PWB needs to be assessed. Özü et al. (2017) asserted, "Assessing teachers' psychological well-being is the first step in protecting teacher's mental health and providing them an environment that helps flourish their professional and personal development" (p. 144). Moreover, these scholars believed that well-being affects teacher-student interactions and increases students' self-efficacy, abilities, and mental health. They also claimed little research had been done on PWB. Similarly, Gozzoli et al. (2015) noted that individuals' success depended on their well-being and that teachers' PWB as an influential working class affect individuals' lives. Aldrup (2018) proved that students' behavior was linked to teachers' well-being: "teacher and student perspectives on behavior problems in the classroom and investigated the role of the teacher-student relationship as a mediator between student misbehavior and teacher well-being" (p. 133).

In an attempt to investigate PWB among teachers of three countries, namely the U.S.A., Turkey, and Pakistan, Özü et al. (2017) found that teachers' age was influential on their level of PWB. Teachers' experience in teaching is also considered another main facet that determines their well-being. In other words, more experienced teachers have a higher level of psychological well-being (Ilgan et al., 2015; Korkmaz & Sadık, 2011). It is also shown that stress and dissatisfaction at work significantly affect teachers' PWB (Kidger et al., 2016). Additionally, the level of PWB varies among males and females; men are considered to have a higher score of well-being at the workplace (Hori, 2010; Kirkcaldy et al., 2010).

Huppert (2009) studied the relationship between positive emotions and cognitive progress, neuroscience of psychological well-being, neurochemical effects, psychological well-being, genetic factors, demographic factors, socio-economic factors. The results further showed that psychological well-being is related to versatile and inventive thinking, pro-social behavior, and smart physical health. Somebody's level of mental capital and psychological well-being is powerfully influenced by her/his early atmosphere, notably maternal care. Whereas an adverse early atmosphere will manufacture prolonged impairments in behavior

and neurobiologically, compensation is feasible at later stages within the life course. External circumstances affect our well-being; however, our actions and attitudes might have a more considerable influence. Interventions that encourage positive actions and attitudes have a vital role to play in enhancing well-being. Targeting interventions to those with a disorder or at high risk might alleviate misery temporarily. However, a universal approach might enrich the lives of normal individuals, not simply those with pathology. In the long term, a universal approach may decrease the number of individuals with common mental disorders. The science of well-being, which focuses on what makes individuals flourish, on human assets instead of deficits, could be a promising new analysis space. Advances in understanding the behavioral, biological, and social pathways to well-being can profit people, organizations, and society (Huppert, 2009).

In a survey on two groups of British and Iranian educators, Greenier et al. (2020) claimed that emotion regulation and PWB had significant relationship with work engagement for the entire sample, though PWB was a stronger predictor of labor engagement. What is more, regarding society variations within the regression coefficients, it had been shown that the association of PWB with work engagement was stronger for British language teachers. Similarly, Aldrup et al. (2018) argued, "teachers' perceptions of behavior problems in their classroom are more closely related to their well-being than student ratings of misbehavior" (p. 133). Considering Greenier et al.'s (2021) study on emotion regulation and psychological well-being in teachers' work engagement and Aldrup et al.'s (2018) assertion on student misbehavior and teacher well-being, bilateral cooperation and understanding between students and teachers is the solution that has not been investigated yet.

Özü et al. (2017) compared well-being among teachers in the U.S.A., Turkey, and Pakistan and claimed that in the U.S. and Turkey, teachers had higher levels of PWB. In contrast, in Pakistan, it was less due to its conditions, education, and job conditions. Hence, these scholars claimed that each country's educational system affects teachers' PWB, which contradicts potential conflicts being addressed earlier. Studying the relationship between teachers' psychological well-being and their quality of schoolwork-life, Ilgan et al. (2015) pointed out officials should focus more on teachers' social interaction and the school's environment to increase teachers' PWB.

Psychological Well-being and Physical Health

Different physical activities may influence teachers` PWB. "Competitive conditions of today's global world put workers under a lot of stress. Consequently, this stress influences their psychological well-being" (Ilgan et al., 2015, p. 159). For instance, MacIntyre et al. (2020) found out that "during the Covid-19 pandemic, the rapid conversion to online teaching, the blurred lines between work and home coupled with the omnipresent concern for the health of family and oneself, has produced high levels of stress" (p. 12). Moreover, the work environment is linked with health and positive psychological well-being, and both PWB and physical health can be promoted by healthy work (Turner et al., 2002). If individuals have poor interpersonal relations, this is because the stressors that occurred in their workplace influenced their PWB (Sliskovic & Sersic, 2011).

Similarly, long-term experiences such as burnout, sympathy, occupational tiredness, especially when the focus of occupations is more on people, sickness affects well-being (Van Petegem et al., 2005; Çelik & Tabancalı, 2012). Ajala's (2013) findings demonstrated the quality-of-life work and work correlate with higher well-being. PWB positively covers various aspects of life. overall well-being includes personal and work-life; PWB requires being away from negative senses containing anxiety, frustration, loneliness, tension, and boredom (Al-Qutop & Harrim, 2011). Teachers' PWB is significantly influenced by schoolwork-life quality (QSWL) (Rathi, 2009; Chan & Wyatt, 2007; Warr, 2005).

Stress, coping, and well-being are not the opposite, but their relationship is complex (Gkonou et al., 2020; Herman et al., 2020; Mercer & Gregersen, 2020). Lazarus (2003) linked PWB to emotional senses like happiness, and claimed that PWB is a complex concept which has been a quest of the utmost importance in psychology and philosophy. Drawing on Seligman (2012), MacIntyre et al. (2020) examined the effectiveness of language teachers' coping strategies and found 10 potential indicators, five of which were positive. The positive indicators included: "resiliency, growth, perceived health, and a composite eudemonic wellbeing index called PERMA" (p. 4). Hence, negative consequences are stress, anxiety, anger, sadness, and loneliness that both negative and positive outcomes are essential in well-being (MacIntyre et al., 2020).

Teachers' Psychological Wellbeing and Teaching and Learning

Although people may know that specific achievements result in favorable outcomes, this conception becomes useless if they do not trust their abilities in producing such actions (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Drawing on the concept of power of people's beliefs, Dweck (2008) asserted that there is a direct relationship between individual's beliefs and their achievements. If people's beliefs change, they will experience profound effects (Dweck, 2008). Hence, people's behaviors, including their actions and words, have their own messages. These profound effects usually arise at the school time because, "children love praise. And they especially love to be praised for their intelligence and talent. It does give them a boost, a special glow—but only for the moment" (Dweck, 2008, p. 97). Then she elaborated that, to praise children, the best way is to encourage children when they are done with their homework and boost their self-esteem. Accordingly, all these will occur when the teachers` psychological well-being is at a high level.

Additionally, Siegel (2007) asserted the importance of well-being in learning and said, "With mindfulness practice, the intentional creation of a state of mindful awareness enables the individual to differentiate previously inseparable streams in the flow of information of the mind." The author also propounded, "The essential capacities to monitor one's own intentional states and the focus of awareness onto itself are central features of mindful practice" (p. 261). This author's finding suggested that training on mindfulness may result in increasing well-being. Similarly, Siegel (2007), in research about mindfulness training and neural integration, said, "Learning the 'mindsight' skill of seeing the mind in oneself and others enables the individual to discern different streams of awareness" (p. 260). Zee and Koomen (2016,) in their study on the teachers' self-efficacy and its effects on classroom processes, students' academic adjustment, and teacher well-being found:

TSE [teacher self-efficacy] is not directly related to teacher attrition and retention. Rather, teachers with low self-efficacy seem to experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion and

lower levels of satisfaction and commitment, ultimately leading them to quit their job. These indirect effects imply that positive feelings of well-being, such as commitment and satisfaction, are the mechanism through which TSE exerts its influence over teachers' intention to stay or leave. Overall, positive aspects of teachers' psychological well-being can thus be more mutable due to their self-efficacy than negative aspects. (p. 26)

They concluded that TSE in classrooms requires various facets, such as emotional support of students, emotional climate, student-teacher relationship quality, and regard for student perspectives.

Research Method

Recently, many alterations have occurred in English language instructions at Afghan public and private educational centers. Most of these reforms concern teaching methods and updated strategies, whereas few intervene with the teachers' PWB. This condition has resulted in sensible tension and job burnout among Afghan teachers, decreasing the teachers` PWB. Hence, it is fair to say that Afghan teachers need a better mental state than anything else in such a circumstance.

A qualitative research design is used in this study to collect in-depth information about the participants' reported experiences. We recruited seven English teachers from two universities in the western part of Afghanistan, the same city, including a public university and a private university for this study. Four participants (two males and two females) were teaching at the public university, and three participants (one female and two males) were teaching at a private university (see Table 1). Using convenient purposeful sampling, we selected teachers of different experience ranges (two to ten years) to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the ways they encountered challenges affecting their psychological well-being. They were chosen from diverse socio-economic backgrounds to show potential differences in a better way. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews.

Table 1

Demographic Information of the Participants

No.	Setting	Participants (Pseudonym)	Gender	Qualifications	Teaching Experience
1	Public University	Ali	Male	MA in TESOL	Ten years
2	Public University	Reza	Male	MA in TESOL	Ten years
3	Public University	Maryam	Female	MA in TESOL	Five years
4	Public University	Zahra	Female	MA in TESOL	Ten years
5	Private University	Mohsen	Male	MA in TESOL	Fifteen years
6	Private University	Laleh	Female	MA in Translation	Seven years
7		Ahmad	Male	MA in TESOL	Ten years

After obtaining the consent from each participant, the interview was recorded. The language of the interview was Persian because the participants felt more comfortable

presenting their experiences in their mother tongue. Upon collecting the data, the interviews were transcribed. Afterward, with the research questions in mind, the transcriptions were coded using thematic analysis. The codes were merged into categories, and next, the themes were created based on the categories.

Results

From teachers' responses to teacher psychological well-being threatening factors, three main subthemes were retrieved: institutional factors, socio-cultural factors, and recommended coping strategies.

Institutional Factors

All participants in this study have reported various factors affecting their satisfaction, such as many students, job responsibilities, economy, and facilities available in the workplace and organizational policies and bylaws. However, all of them said that being satisfied with a job depends only on individuals' interests. For instance, Zahra said, "I am satisfied with my job because from the beginning, my goal was to be a university professor and I achieved this goal, and I am happy." Despite encountering many challenges, all participants are so enthusiastic about continuing teaching. "I am 60% satisfied with my job. If the teachers' professional development enhances, I would be satisfied with my career to 90 or 95%," said Reza. He also mentioned that teachers begin to teach very willingly, whereas their satisfaction decreases facing institutional challenges:

Lack of educational facilities, for example, not having an internet connection in all classes. When students do not have access to the internet, it puts a significant extra burden on the teachers, making them discouraged from their job. Lack of a learning management system is another factor affecting teachers' psychological well-being. More responsibilities are given to the teachers than what is determined in their job description. I do not feel stressed when the learning process goes well, and the students learn the lesson.

Teaching large classes is mentioned by all participants as an influential factor in job satisfaction except for Ahmad. For example, Ali highlighted, "a large number of students in a language class challenges the spirit of a teacher." At the same time, Ahmad said that job satisfaction has nothing to do with the number of students in a class. He has never been disturbed or annoyed by many students since he had believed that having satisfaction in a job like teaching is merely depends on the teachers' experience. Ahmad also is the only participant who observes fewer disturbances in his job due to his excellent management and adequate experience in his career, but the other participants claimed job's responsibilities affect teachers' satisfaction in different ways: "the majority of students are not motivated to study and only want to get a university degree, so the teachers may think their time is wasted, and have no prestige and merely want to pass the time" Zahra said. Similarly, Maryam stated, "my teaching method is a great concern for me when I realize it does not work for students." In terms of job responsibilities, only two participants' ideas, Maryam and Laleh, are in common: "Missed hours of teaching due to meeting sessions in departments also decrease my concern."

Socio-cultural Factors

All the participants reported that socio-cultural factor has nothing to do with their job satisfaction except for three participants who stated various views. As an example, Zahar declared, "students participate the classes with different personalities from different environments with different customs and traditions, and it is difficult to encounter them. It makes the teaching more challenging, but it is not very prominent compared to other affecting factors on teachers` PWB". At the same time, Laleh believed, "a teacher should consider every aspect like how to talk with students, how to teach, and even how to look them" she also mentioned, "students are from different families with different reactions, so we need to be aware of family various traditions." For example, she said, "I was embarrassed because of the way a student was sitting on a chair in my classroom. Maybe this student does not know the culture of being in a class".

Moreover, Mohsen emphasized a different aspect of socio-cultural factors in Afghan society, "Coeducation is also a concern for me since my male students do not feel free with female ones and vice versa." Therefore, all these mentioned affecting factors on teachers' PWB originated from the inadequate, poor, and insufficient educational centers. As Mohsen said, "Newcomers to university do not yet have the culture of studying at the university. They still behave like a primary student".

Recommended Coping Strategies

The findings revealed that most teacher participants preferred coping strategies to enhance their psychological well-being originated firstly from their own experiences then from laid down rules by the ministry. All the participants in this study suggested that the more teachers expand their psychological wellbeing related knowledge, the less they are disturbed by affecting factors. For example, Ali said, "Teachers themselves can read in this field regularly beside their career and try to enhance their awareness. It may also be an effective avenue." Then he emphasized, "Providing seminars or workshops by psychologists to improve the level of teachers' psychological well-being at the university should be done by the university."

Zahra carried the same notion but made it more specific. She asserted, "I feel that the student-centered approach is more effective in my classes for students to learn, and I feel more comfortable seeing their comfort. My teaching is student-centered." Accordingly, she thinks that an appropriate teaching method can decrease challenges and enhances psychological well-being. Subsequently, Zahra recommended, "establishing a counseling center will be effective, the way when with the updating of rules and bills, when changes are made, it is better to consider programs for teachers to be aware of these changes." She noted that bringing changes by the ministry is effective, but it would be more influential if the updated policies and rules are transparent for everyone in charge, especially for the teachers. Reza also asserted that firstly he could reduce stress and tension by himself through various technics:

The advice and support that colleagues give to each other are efficient. For example, when a novice teacher enters the department and starts teaching, they may face many challenges. If the novice teachers consult with their colleagues, they will be better able to

cope with their challenges and have good psychological well-being. Teachers themselves have self-assessments of challenges to find their reasons and scheduled them to resolve with particular methods.

Besides teachers' supporting each other, Reza accounted for a personal strategy he utilized in classrooms and said, "I try to reduce the number of assignments in each semester to one or two so that I can manage well and give constructive feedback and comments." , like other participants, his recommendation for the ministry and the university is as follow:

The university should create more professional development opportunities for teachers, such as educational seminars, workshops, etc. because the knowledge of the universe is constantly changing. As English instructors, we should move forward accordingly, and these educational programs can significantly administer the tension we face during teaching.

"I try to be well prepared before going to class and have self-study to eliminate predictable stress and tension which may occur during teaching," mentioned Maryam. She and Mohsen proposed an identical coping strategy, a well-organized lesson plan. Furthermore, Mohsen highlighted more strategies:

Creativity in teaching is essential for each teacher to use in classrooms. Having a proper lesson plan, talking to students privately while facing problems is also an effective way. At the beginning of each semester, I make a contract about what I expect from my students and their expectations. I mean need assessment. And I suggest this to all teachers.

Similarly, applying Zahra's proposed strategy in his classrooms, Ahmad suggested, "Teachers should attempt to travel to observe more variety of teaching method, behaviors, etc. to learn more themselves rather than dictating to them." Laleh's recommendation coping strategy is focused on the students rather than the teachers. She said, "Our education system is mostly based on lectures, so I want the culture of reading to take root among the students and give the book to the students without any PowerPoint slides and encourage them to read the book. I want other teachers to do the same" she subsequently wanted the university to take steps toward decreasing the mental tension of teachers: "universities by seminars and workshops can enhance the academic knowledge of teachers."

Discussion

The data analysis indicated that teachers' psychological well-being depends on various factors that motivate them in their job. Most teachers as participants in this research reported that although they were highly motivated at the beginning of their career, they gradually were demotivated as they encountered different internal and external factors. "The concept of functioning effectively (in a psychological sense) involves the development of one's potential, having some control over one's life, having a sense of purpose (e.g., working towards valued goals), and experiencing positive relationships" (Huppert, 2009, p. 138). Accordingly, the teachers can be motivated both by the institution and the teachers themselves. Almost all the teachers reported the level of their knowledge, having lesson plans, ability in work management were main motivating factors. Contrasting the two university teacher types, we figured out that both teachers maintained a high-level motivation toward teaching due to their interest in teaching. "I am so satisfied with my job because it is my favorite job and whatever I have in my life is due to my job," said Mohsen,

one of the private university participants. Similarly, Maryam, another public university participant, said, "I am 95% satisfied with my job because it is my favorite job."

In terms of work experience, they did agree that the more knowledge and experience they acquire, the less stress and tension they encounter, and the more enjoyable their job becomes. For instance, Zahra and Ali said that they faced many difficulties initially; they were obsessed with the challenges. Gradually the tensions were decreased since they improved and could manage the tensions very well. Subsequently, Mohsen, Ahmad, and Laleh claimed that identical issues in term of experience, and also, they asserted that not only getting experience in teaching but also attending educational seminars, conferences, and any type of educational program added up to their knowledge and made the job less stressful to them . On the one hand, this is in line with Ilgan et al. (2015) and Korkmaz and Sadık's (2011) findings that demonstrated how more experienced teachers have a high level of well-being psychologically. On the other hand, it collaborates with Özü et al. (2017) notion which emphasized that age of the teachers is influential on the level of PWB. The participants of this study did not directly mention the age factor as an affecting, but they referred to it as work experience.

Although the participants were not familiar with the term burnout, teacher burnout was a more pronounced affecting factor on teachers' psychological well-being in this study. Previous studies demonstrated the same issue on job burnout. When the focus of occupations is more on the people, job burnout affects PWB more (Van Petegem et al., 2005; Çelik & Tabancalı, 2012). All the participants reported various external mandates, such as economic factors, facilities available in the workplace, relations with collogues, socio-cultural factors, institutional policies and laws, and coeducation environment, that negatively affected their psychological well-being, contributing to job burnout. For example, Reza, the public university participant, mentioned:

For example, a large number of students in a class can put additional pressure on the teacher in terms of work. So, the teachers lose their motivation and are spiritually affected. Giving feedback to this large number of students and preparing for the classes take more time than usual. As a result, we have to reduce our social, lifetime, and family psychological tension for teachers.

His assertion affirmed Ajala's (2013), Turner et al. (2002), and Sliskovic and Sersic, (2011) findings that demonstrated the quality-of-life work and work correlate with higher well-being. Also, another study on exploring the role of experience in L2 teachers' turnover intentions/occupational stress and psychological well-being/grit by Nazari and Alizadeh (2021) emphasized the mentioned factors causing teacher burnout. "teachers' psychological variables can range from self-efficacy, stress, burnout, turnover intension, and motivational dynamics, to the multiplicity of their cognitive dimensions" (Nazari & Alizadeh, 2021, p. 2). Teacher burnout was reported as a more common tension among public university participants. For instance, "my job is not stressful. I believe lack of confidence triggers individuals to have stress in their jobs," said, Ahmad one of the participants of the private university. In contrast, Zahra, the public university participant, said, "my job is so stressful teaching itself is stressful." Accordingly, Ali, Reza, and Maryam, the public university participants, declared that their job is stressful, which involves many stressors. In contrast,

all private university participants claimed their job is not very stressful, but they mentioned that institutional policies and rules limiting their job cause job burnout. For example, Laleh pointed out:

Teaching hours are not stressful for me because I do it with interest, but the hours I am told to work only as a duty and do nothing, are annoying to me. I cannot say that my job is easy or stressful because every job requires effort so that one type of work requires more effort, and the other type requires less effort.

Özü et al. (2017) attested Laleh's claim in their study comparing three countries' teachers (the U.S., Turkey, and Pakistan) and showed that the country's institutional condition affected teachers` PWB. Accordingly, in their study, Pakistan's teachers had the lowest level of PWB due to their poor educational environment. Moreover, Ahmad and Mohsen attested the same notion. They said, "Some institutional policies and bylaws are in accordance with the university's real situation due to lack of resources, poor economy, and security. Therefore, there is no enforcement of the rules. It affects my morale." Comparing the data reported by the two university participant types, it can be argued that all participants experienced teacher burnout. However, the tensions public university participants experienced were mostly due to the institutional labors and heavy workload.

The findings also yielded that all the participants had good collegial relationships. They all believed the collegial relationship is not that notable in affecting their psychological well-being, but it may disturb them just for a few minutes or at least a few hours. Previous research proved that students' behavior is linked to teachers' well-being rather than collegial relationships: "teacher and student perspectives on behavior problems in the classroom and investigated the role of the teacher-student relationship as a mediator between student misbehavior and teacher well-being" (Aldrup et al., 2018, p. 133). Similarly, investigating behavioral factors can be beneficial in PWB, and mentioned advances in understanding the behavioral, biological, and social pathways to well-being can profit people, organizations, and society (Huppert, 2009; Greenier et al., 2021).

Similar to previous research on teachers' psychological well-being, our study demonstrated that the level of PWB is directly related to gender. All male participants from both universities in this study reported less stress, burnout, tension, and challenges in their job than female participants. Gender influences the PWB as well. Research shows that men usually receive a higher score for psychological wellbeing at work, especially in educational settings (see Hori, 2010; Kirkcaldy et al., 2010). Additionally, all three female participants of this study mentioned more affecting factors on their well-being than the number of factors noted by the males. For instance, these three female participants asserted that job security and not having any workplace facilities were their varied factors leading to concern.

The tendency to work in a coeducational environment was common in all male and female teachers of this study. However, not having specific facilities available in the workplace, especially for female teachers, was a significant concern of female participants that brought more worrisome in the Afghan context. As Zahra said, "there is no convenience for female teachers and all the teachers {male and females) work in the same department in one room. So, this makes us not feel emotionally comfortable in the workplace."

Conclusion

This study investigated the English teachers' psychological well-being in Afghan higher education centers. Dealing with interpersonal and institutional tensions, stress, and challenges, Afghan English teachers' PWB was not in proper conditions. The teachers had to encounter and tolerate mandatory institutional complications, which caused tensions and burnout, resulting in decreasing the productivity and quality of work. Such complications may be common in every educational center in the Afghan context, where education frequently faces limitations to observing the institutes' authorities' dictated principles. The present study's result offers several coping recommendations, both personal and institutional, to enhance the teachers' PWB.

The first category of suggestions compromises the resolutions for the teachers themselves, which enhance their psychological well-being. First, all the teachers attested that the level of knowledge significantly affects their confidence level, leading to less stress while teaching. So, they recommended participating in more professional development programs. Second, the teachers' self-study would be influential in their PWB. Third, thoroughly preparing for the classes they aim to teach significantly decreases their tension and stress. Therefore, to maintain a high level of PWB in the teachers, it is crucial to access relevant knowledge, have lesson plans, and take professional development programs.

The second category of suggestions involves the organizational and institutional resolutions. As the teachers recommended, firstly, the institutions need to provide a counseling center mainly for every educator, particularly for the teachers, because this is a required section of each educational institution. Secondly, bylaws and principles should be legislated according to the institutional nature and reality. Regarding this suggestion, all the teachers in this study suffered from some policies and bylaws that are not coincide with the teaching environment. Even their rights were ignored by some of the policies and principles. Thirdly, not only the legislated policies are troublesome, but also the teachers' ignorance of the policies and rules triggers tension. There are teachers who are not aware of the new policies and bylaws. Hence, higher education authorities should take practical steps toward removing barriers of teachers' PWB disorders: establishing counseling centers, legislate principles and policies in accordance with the current conditions of the schools, whenever the policies and laws are updated, notify all the staffs through informative programs. Since teachers' PWB is a new phenomenon in the Afghan context, more research is needed to be conducted on this prominent and issue.

Our study had a few limitations. First, the study explored only a small portion of teacher psychological well-being among Afghan EFL teachers. Further research is required to capture the issues (e.g., socio-cultural, political, institutional factors) that affect teachers' psychological well-being. Furthermore, our study's missing voice was of the policymakers and educational authorities (e.g., department heads, deans, presidents). Future studies should be undertaken to include these stakeholders' voices and better sketch the topic of teacher psychological well-being. We hope that this research paves the way for further study and discussion on teacher well-being in the context of Afghanistan.

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About the Author

Mir Abdullah Miri is a faculty member at Herat University, Afghanistan. He is a PhD candidate in TEFL at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran. He holds a master's degree in TESOL from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. His research interests include teacher identity, second language writing, and emotioncy affordances.

Khadijeh Timori is an English language major at Faculty of Languages and Literature, Herat University, Afghanistan. Her research interests include language pedagogy, teacher psychological wellbeing, and teacher identity construction

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