



Teachers' Subjective Well-Being Across Educational Levels

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ABSTRACT

Educational reform in Indonesia is characterized by frequent curriculum changes, which require teachers to continuously adjust to new pedagogical, administrative, and policy demands. While intended to enhance the quality of education, these changes often increase workload and create psychological pressures that may affect teachers' subjective well-being (SWB). This study aims to examine differences in teachers' SWB across educational levels at Foundation X. A quantitative design was employed with total sampling of the accessible population, involving 128 teachers from early childhood education, primary education, and lower secondary education. Data were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare SWB among different educational levels. Descriptive analysis indicated that primary school teachers reported the highest mean SWB, followed by lower secondary and early childhood teachers. However, one-way ANOVA showed no significant differences across levels, suggesting that teaching level alone does not determine SWB. This finding indicates that teachers' subjective well-being (SWB) is relatively consistent across all educational levels. Therefore, efforts to enhance teachers' SWB should focus on strengthening personal and organizational factors comprehensively, rather than merely adjusting interventions according to school level.

Keywords: Subjective well-being, Teachers, Educational levels

ABSTRAK

Reformasi pendidikan di Indonesia ditandai dengan seringnya perubahan kurikulum, yang mengharuskan guru untuk terus menyesuaikan diri dengan tuntutan pedagogis, administratif, dan kebijakan yang baru, bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kualitas pendidikan, perubahan ini seringkali menambah beban kerja dan menciptakan tekanan psikologis yang dapat memengaruhi kesejahteraan subjektif (SWB) guru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti perbedaan SWB guru di berbagai jenjang pendidikan di Yayasan X. Desain kuantitatif digunakan dengan pengambilan sampel total dari populasi yang dapat diakses, melibatkan 128 guru dari pendidikan anak usia dini, pendidikan dasar, dan pendidikan menengah pertama. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis varians (ANOVA) untuk membandingkan SWB antara jenjang pendidikan yang berbeda. Analisis deskriptif menunjukkan bahwa guru sekolah dasar melaporkan rata-rata SWB tertinggi, diikuti oleh guru menengah pertama dan guru pendidikan anak usia dini. ANOVA satu arah menunjukkan tidak ada perbedaan yang signifikan di berbagai tingkat, yang menunjukkan bahwa tingkat pengajaran saja tidak menentukan Kesejahteraan Subjektif (SWB). Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kesejahteraan subjektif guru (SWB) relatif konsisten di semua tingkat pendidikan. Oleh karena itu, upaya untuk meningkatkan SWB guru harus fokus pada penguatan faktor pribadi dan organisasi secara menyeluruh, daripada hanya menyesuaikan intervensi berdasarkan tingkat sekolah.

Kata Kunci: Kesejahteraan subjektif, Guru, Tingkat Pendidikan

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Introduction

Educational reform in Indonesia is characterized by frequent curriculum changes, sometimes occurring almost every year. These constant adjustments require teachers to adapt to new policies, teaching methods, and administrative demands. While such reforms aim to improve the quality of education, they simultaneously create additional challenges that may affect teachers' psychological conditions and professional performance. In this regard, subjective well-being (SWB) defined as individuals' cognitive and affective evaluation of their lives has gained growing attention in educational research (Diener et al., 2018; Renshaw et al., 2015).

Preliminary findings from twelve teachers at Foundation X illustrate this issue. About 57% reported an increased workload following the implementation of the new curriculum, mainly due to the demand to teach programming and artificial intelligence, which they perceived as complex and unfamiliar. Meanwhile, 43% expressed enthusiasm about the new curriculum. Regarding confidence, 42% felt less confident, 21% were uncertain, and 37% reported high confidence. These results suggest that curriculum reform influences not only professional tasks but also teachers' psychological conditions and, consequently, their subjective well-being.

The importance of teacher well-being has been consistently emphasized in the literature. Teachers with high SWB demonstrate stronger engagement, more positive classroom interactions, and greater resilience in coping with job stress (Benevene et al., 2020; Simbula et al., 2022). Conversely, low SWB is associated with emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, and lower teaching quality, which in turn affects student outcomes (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). These findings confirm that teacher well-being is a key determinant of both individual and institutional success in education.

Recent studies have identified several internal and external factors influencing teacher well-being. Social support, especially from family, is an important predictor (Putra & Suryani, 2024). Resilience also shows a positive contribution, explaining about 11% of the variance in SWB (Santoso, 2023). In addition, work motivation and self-efficacy significantly enhance teacher well-being (Nurhadi & Fitria, 2022). Intrinsic religiosity has recently been found to foster teacher well-being through the mediating role of self-efficacy (Arifin, 2025). Conversely, various studies have shown that personal attitudes (e.g., self-efficacy), coping strategies, working conditions, as well as collegial and organizational support play a more dominant role in influencing teachers' SWB than structural differences such as educational level (Li et al., 2024; Nwoko et al., 2023).

Despite increasing attention to this topic, studies specifically examining differences in teachers' SWB across educational levels within a single institutional context remain limited. Most previous research tends to focus on one particular level (Sri Lestari & Muarifah, 2022; Qisthy et al., 2023) or treat teachers as a homogeneous group without considering variations across school levels (Song et al., 2020; Dias-Viana et al., 2023). This lack of comparative evidence leaves a research gap, particularly in the Indonesian context, where frequent curriculum reforms and varied organizational supports across school levels are prevalent.

To address this gap, the present study investigates differences in teachers' subjective well-being across educational levels at Foundation X. The study involves 128 teachers from early childhood education, primary education, lower secondary education. By focusing on this context, the research aims to provide empirical evidence on how educational level influences teacher well-being and to offer practical insights for school leaders and policymakers in designing more targeted interventions to support teachers across different educational levels.

Material and Method

This study employed a quantitative approach to investigate differences in teachers' subjective well-being (SWB) across educational levels at Foundation X. A quantitative design was chosen because it allows for systematic measurement of psychological constructs and facilitates comparison between groups using statistical analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach is particularly suitable for identifying variations in SWB, as it enables researchers to test hypotheses objectively and derive generalizable findings from large samples.

Participants

The study population comprised all teachers at Foundation X ($N = 207$), including 69 teachers from early childhood, 80 teachers from primary, and 58 teachers from lower secondary. From this population, valid responses were obtained from 128 teachers, consisting of 34 preschool teachers, 66 elementary school teachers, and 28 junior high school teachers.

The sampling technique employed was total sampling of the accessible population, which refers to all teachers who could be reached and were willing to participate in the study. According to Sugiyono (2017), total sampling is a technique in which all members of the population are included as research respondents. However, in practice, researchers are often only able to reach a portion of the population; therefore, the accessible population is used instead (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Data Collection

The instrument used in this study was the Teacher Subjective Well-Being Questionnaire (TSWQ) developed by Renshaw, Long, and Cook (2015). The TSWQ is a brief and psychometrically sound tool specifically designed to assess teachers' subjective well-being within school settings. It conceptualizes teacher SWB through two key dimensions: (1) school connectedness, which reflects teachers' sense of belonging and positive relationships within the school community, and (2) teaching efficacy, which refers to teachers' perceptions of their own effectiveness in promoting student learning.

The TSWQ consists of 8 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (almost never) to 4 (almost always). Higher scores indicate greater levels of teacher subjective well-being. Previous validation studies have demonstrated that the TSWQ possesses strong psychometric properties, with internal consistency reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) ranging from 0.82 to 0.88 across different samples (Renshaw et al., 2015).

This instrument was considered appropriate for the present study because it provides a context-specific measurement of teacher well-being, is relatively brief to administer, and has been widely used in educational research internationally. Its focus on the professional aspects of teachers' well-being makes it particularly relevant for examining the impacts of curriculum changes and school-level variations in the Indonesian context.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare teachers' subjective well-being across educational levels (early childhood education, primary education and lower secondary education). ANOVA was chosen as it is appropriate for testing mean differences among three independent groups.

The normality assumption was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The results showed that the data were normally distributed, $W(128) = 0.981$, $p = .068$, indicating no significant deviation from normality. In addition, the skewness (-0.031) and kurtosis (-0.200) values were close to zero,

further supporting the conclusion that the distribution of scores was approximately normal. Therefore, the assumption of normality was considered met.

The assumption of homogeneity of variances was tested using Levene's test. The results indicated no significant difference in variances across groups, $F(2, 125) = 1.421$, $p = .245$. Therefore, the assumption of homogeneity was considered met.

The Pearson correlation test showed that all items were positively related with low to moderate strength ($r = 0.013\text{--}0.502$), confirming the validity of the instrument as the items consistently measured the same construct. The reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.796, exceeding the 0.70 threshold and indicating satisfactory internal consistency. The average inter-item correlation (0.330) fell within the ideal range of 0.20–0.40, while corrected item-total correlations (0.438–0.616) surpassed the minimum criterion of 0.30. Furthermore, the Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted (0.757–0.783) suggested that removing any item would not meaningfully improve reliability. Thus, the Subjective Well-Being instrument can be considered valid, reliable, and suitable for further research.

Data analysis was carried out using JASP version 0.95.1.0. A one-way ANOVA was applied to compare SWB scores among teachers from different levels. ANOVA was selected because it is an effective statistical technique for examining mean differences across more than two groups, while controlling for error variance (Field, 2018). This test was used to determine whether there were significant differences in mean subjective well-being among preschool, elementary, and junior high school teachers.

Result

Descriptive analysis indicated differences in mean levels of subjective well-being across educational levels. Table 1 shows that the mean scores of teachers' subjective well-being were relatively similar across levels. Teachers at the primary reported the highest mean ($M = 3.157$), followed by Lower Secondary; $M = 3.107$, and early childhood; $M = 3.055$.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics of Subjective Well-Being by Educational Level

Educational level	N	Mean	SD
Early childhood	34	3.055	0.468
Primary	66	3.157	0.411
Lower secondary	28	3.107	0.333

To test whether these differences were statistically significant, a one-way ANOVA was conducted (Table 2). The results showed no significant difference in subjective well-being among teachers across the three educational levels, $F(2,125) = 0.704$, $p = 0.496$, $\eta^2 = 0.011$. The small effect size indicates that the contribution of educational level to subjective well-being was negligible.

Table 2.
One-Way ANOVA of Subjective Well-Being by Educational Level

Source	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2
Educational level	2	0.119	0.704	0.496	0.011
Residual	125	0.170			

These findings suggest that teachers' subjective well-being does not significantly differ across early childhood, primary, and lower secondary education levels. The results indicate a relatively consistent level of subjective well-being among teachers across different educational settings.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that teachers' subjective well-being (SWB) does not significantly differ across early childhood, primary, and lower secondary education levels. This suggests that teaching level alone is not a determining factor in shaping teachers' well-being. Instead, SWB appears to be influenced more strongly by broader factors that cut across educational levels, such as workload, curriculum reform, and institutional demands. This result aligns with previous studies highlighting that teacher well-being is closely linked to working conditions, coping strategies, and organizational support rather than to structural differences such as grade level (Smith & Lee, 2022; Zhao & Li, 2024).

The consistency of SWB across levels may reflect shared challenges in the Indonesian educational system, particularly frequent curriculum changes. As highlighted in the introduction, teachers are often required to adapt to new policies, administrative tasks, and subject demands, such as integrating programming and artificial intelligence into their teaching. These systemic pressures are experienced across all levels of schooling, which could explain why teachers' well-being does not vary significantly between educational stages. At the same time, this uniformity may also suggest a certain stability in teachers' well-being across contexts, indicating that despite differences in teaching content and student age, teachers are able to maintain comparable levels of well-being. This stability can be seen as a strength of the teaching profession, showing resilience in the face of systemic demands.

At the same time, the results suggest that factors outside of teaching level—such as social support, resilience, motivation, and religiosity—may play a stronger role in shaping well-being. Previous studies confirm that these internal and external resources are more predictive of SWB than job position or school level (Putra & Suryani, 2024; Santoso, 2023; Arifin, 2025). Therefore, rather than focusing interventions solely on teachers in specific educational levels, schools and policymakers should prioritize strategies that strengthen these protective factors across the entire teaching workforce.

From a practical standpoint, the findings emphasize the importance of system-wide policies to enhance teacher well-being. Professional development programs, workload management, and supportive school leadership may provide more effective means of promoting well-being than interventions targeting only particular school levels. Future research should extend this work by examining how personal resources and organizational culture interact with systemic factors, such as curriculum reforms, to influence teachers' well-being. Longitudinal designs may also provide a deeper understanding of how well-being changes over time as teachers navigate ongoing reforms in the Indonesian education system.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that teachers' subjective well-being (SWB) does not differ significantly across early childhood, primary, and lower secondary education levels. This finding confirms that teaching level is not a decisive factor in shaping teachers' well-being. Instead, other factors such as social support, resilience, motivation, and organizational conditions are likely to play a more substantial role in influencing teachers' SWB. Although no significant differences were found, this uniformity may also reflect a certain stability in teachers' well-being across levels, which can be regarded as a potential strength of the system.

The practical implication of this finding is the need for comprehensive strategies to enhance teacher well-being across all educational levels. Efforts should focus on professional development, workload management, and supportive school leadership as key drivers for sustaining teachers' well-being.

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