

Exploring the Contribution of Loving Pedagogy to Teacher Well-Being in EFL Classrooms through the Lens of Self-Determination Theory

Roqayeh Enferad¹ , Gholamreza Zareian^{1*} , Mohammad Davoudi¹ , Seyed Mohammad Reza Amirian¹ 

¹ Hakim Sabzevari University, Sabzevar, Khorasan Razavi, Iran



10.22080/iselt.2026.31238.1171

Received

February 9, 2026

Accepted

April 19, 2026

Available online

April 24, 2026

Keywords:

Loving Pedagogy,
Teacher Well-being,
EFL Classrooms,
Self-Determination
Theory.

Abstract

Despite acknowledgment that teacher well-being (TWB) emerges from relational and contextual dynamics rather than individual factors alone, research has paid comparatively little attention to relational pedagogical antecedents such as loving pedagogy (LP) particularly in ELT within Iran. This study, therefore, examines how teachers' LP and its components contribute to TWB through the impact of teachers' demographic features, and their teaching context. To that, through convenience sampling, 210 EFL teachers voluntarily accepted to respond the questionnaire including two scales. The findings of this study showed that Iranian EFL teachers experienced a high level of LP and WB in their work. However, female teachers reported higher levels than their male counterparts. The findings also indicated that despite a weak impact of teachers' age on their WB, it did not affect their LP. Regarding the other teachers' demographic feature, teaching experience, and their teaching context, they did not significantly impact the teachers' LP and WB. Furthermore, the results showed that LP significantly contributed to TWB, while none of the teachers' demographic features and contextual factors moderated their relationship. The results, discussed through the lens of Self-Determination Theory, recommend that teachers' basic psychological needs, particularly their relatedness needs, be satisfied to foster their WB.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence of positive psychology in second language acquisition (SLA), the significant benefits that positive emotions can bring to teachers and learners have received considerable attention. Although teacher WB—which includes positive emotional experiences—can play a pivotal role in enhancing the quality of teachers' lives, research on this topic and its antecedents remains underdeveloped, especially within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) (e.g., Mercer, 2021; Mercer et al., 2016; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024). While there is no straightforward definition for psychological WB (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012), it was primarily viewed as equivalent to happiness and pleasure in the hedonic perspective (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Subsequently, the concept evolved into notions of flourishing and self-actualization within the

* **Corresponding Author:** Gholamreza Zareian, Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Hakim Sabzevai University, Tohid Shahr, Sabzevar, Razavi Khorasan province, Iran, **Email:** g.zareian@hsu.ac.ir



eudemonic perspective (Ryan & Deci, 2001). More recently, the PERMA model—which integrates earlier conceptualizations of well-being and comprises positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment—has been examined in educational contexts (Seligman, 2011). However, the examination of work-related WB was still insufficiently addressed in such models (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012), despite the importance of context in TWB, particularly in ELT (Mercer, 2021). Although teaching is a demanding and stressful job, language teachers experience additional stressors, including language anxiety, workload under time pressure, and, more importantly, student-related factors such as students' demotivation and indiscipline (Caruana & Borg, 2020). Those interpersonal factors shed light on social and relational dimensions of TWB that had been overlooked for decades. Informed by positive psychology (Seligman, 2011) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017), this study investigates LP — an emerging concept in ELT — to explore how positive teacher-student relationships, which fulfill the need for relatedness, predict TWB in educational settings. LP is defined as “the care, sensitivity, and empathy that teachers have toward their students’ needs, learning experiences, and development” (Zhao & Li, 2021, p. 2). It is worth mentioning that the word “loving pedagogy” or “love” is used here to include all similar and overlapping words that have been used by researchers in their studies, such as passion, care, intimacy, and compassion, to discuss effective relationships between teachers and students (same as Barcelos & Coelho, 2016).

Although LP is believed to play a key role in students’ emotional and educational achievements, including their engagement (Lavy & Namma-Ghanayim, 2020; Zhao & Li, 2021), WB (Noddings, 1984), self-esteem (Lavy & Namma-Ghanayim, 2020), learning (Noddings, 1992), and enjoyment (Wang et al., 2022), little is known about teachers’ side (Wang et al., 2025), its association with teachers’ emotions, particularly their WB. Moreover, researchers have called for more situated studies related to teachers’ psychological factors within their local contexts (Derakhshan, 2025a; Mercer, 2021) such as Iran, in this study. Furthermore, insufficient attention has been given to the influence of teachers' demographic information, such as age, gender, teaching experience, and teaching contexts, on their LP and WB, as well as on their association (Culshaw & Kurian, 2021; Naama & Lavy, 2022).

This study, therefore, is aimed to advance the existing body of research in three principal ways: theoretically, contextually, and practically. Theoretically and contextually, in light of the increasing prevalence of teacher burnout, stress, depression, and other mental health concerns across educational settings, this study is a response to the urgent need to conceptualize TWB as a protective and preventative resource (e.g., Mercer, 2021). In parallel, LP has remained comparatively underexplored in education, particularly in ELT, often due to cultural, religious, and social sensitivities (e.g., Derakhshan, 2025a; Loreman, 2011). Addressing this gap, this study explored the extent to which WB and LP are experienced by Iranian EFL teachers in public and private sectors. Moreover, by integrating LP into TWB through situating the inquiry in the specific sociocultural context of Iran, this study responds to calls for more localized and contextually grounded investigations (e.g., Derakhshan, 2025a; Mercer, 2021). Another important theoretical contribution of this study is grounded in Abraham Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of needs, which positions love and belonging as essential foundations for reaching self-actualization. Viewed through this lens, and grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017), solely pursuing academic goals, neglecting individuals as whole persons and their emotional and relational needs, falls short of humanistic education's wider aspirations. Accordingly, this study emphasizes the role of LP in meeting teachers’ relational needs as a pathway toward realizing their full well-being and professional potential.

From a practical perspective, the findings of this study may guide teacher education programs and teacher educators in incorporating coursework focused on LP, its development, and

its sustained implementation in EFL classrooms. Such initiatives may contribute to enhancing TWB and mitigating negative emotional experiences such as stress, boredom, and burnout. In addition, school administrators and language institute managers may draw on these findings to create supportive classroom environments that enable and encourage the enactment of LP. Ultimately, LP may equip teachers and educational leaders with strategies to address learners' emotional challenges, thereby promoting their psychological well-being.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher well-being

Theoretical background of teacher well-being

With the emergence of positive psychology (PP), WB has been a core concept within this framework (MacIntyre et al., 2019), and its conceptualization has evolved over the last two decades (MacIntyre et al., 2019). Over time, three main approaches have been acknowledged in conceptualizing WB in various studies (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012). Primarily, within the hedonic perspective, WB is viewed as equivalent to a positive mood, such as happiness and pleasure in the absence of a negative mood and suffering that one experiences by pursuing self-interest to achieve personally desired outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Although subjective well-being (SWB) as a modern operationalization of this view, has received attention, it still lacks a focus on personal growth (Zhou et al., 2024), leading to the emergence of the second tradition of WB, the eudemonic perspective. This view considers WB more than just happiness, but equivalent to flourishing, self-actualization, realizing one's true nature, pursuing a meaningful and purposeful life, and achieving one's potential (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Zhou et al., 2024). Ryff's (1989) six-dimensional model of psychological well-being (PWB) is the most operationalized model of this approach, which includes autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Later, due to the lack of consensus on a definitive framework for guiding empirical studies, the third approach has been proposed—integrating elements of the two earlier models—to enhance the theoretical foundation of PWB (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Within the framework of PP, Seligman (2011) was one of those who relied on the integrative approach of WB in his PERMA model to conceptualize a multidimensional PWB intended to increase flourishing. This popular framework consists of five domains: positive emotions (feeling pleasure, comfort, and warmth), engagement (being in a state of flow and absorbed in work), relationships (connecting to others) to assist coping with everyday challenges, meaning (having purpose beyond one's self), and accomplishment (pursuing an achievement) (MacIntyre et al., 2019; Seligman, 2011).

Several concerns still exist regarding this model: firstly, of the five elements in PERMA, positive emotions and relationships have been more prevalent in teachers' experiences than the others (Weiland, 2021). Secondly, some empirical studies have relied on the integrative approach to merge two dimensions of hedonic and eudemonic measures rather than validating a new comprehensive measure and examining its content validity (Dagenais-Desmarais & Savoie, 2012). Thirdly, the explicit consideration of systemic and contextual factors has still been overlooked in this model, as it is more focused on the subjective side of WB (Mercer, 2021). Therefore, many of the conceptualizations of TWB have failed to adequately reflect the influential characteristics of the educational setting (Mercer, 2021). Thus, to be focused on occupational WB, particularly its positive aspects, a more work-related model of WB has been suggested by Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie (2012, p.670), embracing five domains: interpersonal fit at work (positive relationships

with others), thriving at work (perception of engaging in meaningful work that fosters one's personal growth and self-actualization), feeling of competency at work (perception of having adequate competence to perform the required tasks efficiently), perceived recognition at work (perception of being appreciated at work), and desire for involvement at work (willing to involve in and contribute to the success of the organization). In this view, TWB is defined as teachers' positive work experiences when their contextual factors align with their desires and needs (McInerney et al., 2015; Morin et al., 2015). Since this model has also been examined in the ELT context (e.g., Ismail et al., 2023), the current study, in response to Mercer's (2021, 2023) call for more context-specific research in ELT, adopted this conceptualization of teacher WB.

Empirical background of teacher well-being

The literature on TWB reveals that empirical studies have investigated three primary domains: antecedents, consequences, and correlates of TWB (Zhang et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2024). Numerous studies (e.g., Derakhshan et al., 2024; Greenier et al., 2021; Ma & Liu, 2024; Wang et al., 2022; Zhang, 2023) have investigated the consequences of TWB (e.g., higher levels of life satisfaction, hope, immunity, foreign language teaching enjoyment, work engagement, teacher-student relationship, and less burnout). However, this study shifts the focus to the antecedents of TWB, especially personal, interpersonal, and contextual factors. Regarding the first aspect, given that emotional labor and stressors like heavy workload, work time, and economic hardship negatively impact TWB (MacIntyre et al., 2019), research has shown that EFL/ESL teachers' personality traits, such as clear sense of their professional identity and self-efficacy (Ismail et al., 2023), self-compassion and exchange of compassion with others (Mairitsch et al., 2023), intentional emotion regulation and deep acting rather than surface acting (Peng et al., 2023) can alleviate EFL/ESL teachers' emotional labor and reduce stress, and ultimately promote their WB. Nevertheless, Gregersen et al. (2023) suggested that teachers' perceived health plays a more critical role in their WB than the negative impact of stressors. More importantly, they emphasize cultivating positive interpersonal relationships with others at the workplace or home for teachers' physical health and perceptions of health. In addition, Demir (2024) recommended that EFL teachers enhance and maintain their WB by dedicating time to self-care activities, such as exercising, following a balanced diet, pursuing hobbies, and engaging in professional development.

Interpersonal factors also play a pivotal role in TWB, particularly in ELT, which requires a more communicative atmosphere. Demir (2024) and Weiland (2021) indicated that teachers' socializations and positive relationships with their colleagues and manager motivated students, as well as having a supportive and appreciative manager, positively impact their WB by reducing their stress, promoting a sense of belonging, and enhancing job satisfaction. According to Turner et al. (2022), when teachers provide emotional and social support to their colleagues, it promotes their own WB by fostering reciprocal support, meaningful friendships, and opportunities for professional development. More related to this study, Rakıcioğlu-Söylemez (2024), similar to Collie and Martin (2023), has highlighted that when teachers feel less related to their students and experience a silent classroom, their stress and emotional labor are intensified, leading to reduced job satisfaction and WB. Nevertheless, the existing literature on how the positive relationships between teachers and students may lead to TWB in ELT is sparse.

Regarding the context-related factors, Mercer's (2023) investigation of EFL TWB through an ecological perspective revealed that profit-driven ELT contexts, neoliberal policies, and precarity, coupled with conflict between an EFL teacher's cultural values and what exists in a macrosystem, have been the most pivotal issues negatively affecting teachers' job satisfaction and

WB. [Sadeghi and Purbahram \(2024\)](#) found that the microsystem is also the backbone of EFL TWB. Research suggests that EFL teachers' perceptions of their status, prestige, and respect within the workplace hierarchy or in social comparisons, opportunities for progress, along with positive relationships with others, enhance their WB ([Mercer, 2023](#); [Sadeghi & Purbahram, 2024](#)). The exosystem likewise has been found contributing to teachers' wellbeing when they balance their life and work through a manageable workload and schedule with satisfactory payment. In this way, the EFL teachers can socialize, pursue their hobbies, and invest in their professional development ([Sadeghi & Purbahram, 2024](#)).

Teachers' loving pedagogy

Theoretical background of loving pedagogy

'*Loving pedagogy*', a term used first by scholars like [Loreman \(2011\)](#), is very close to [Noddings' \(1988\)](#) concept of '*caring*' by emphasizing teachers' understanding, respect for students, and sensitivity to their needs to help them achieve their fullest potential ([Uusiautti et al., 2013](#); [Yin et al., 2019](#)). [Loreman \(2011\)](#) conceptualized *loving pedagogy*, incorporating [Sternberg's \(1986\)](#) three-dimensional framework of *love*, consisting of intimacy, passion, and decision with commitment. According to [Loreman \(2011\)](#), true education should be the main focus of schooling, which takes place through a nine-dimensional model of LP, including *passion, kindness, empathy, intimacy, bonding, sacrifice, forgiveness, acceptance, and community*. Each of the elements of this model stems from three fields of philosophy, psychology, and religion since teachers and students are spiritually influenced (religion) by experiencing those elements individually but external to themselves in relation to each other (psychology) in their path into a moral and ethical life (philosophy) ([Loreman, 2011](#); [Yin et al., 2019](#)). [Yin et al. \(2019\)](#) refined and validated a 29-item scale measuring disposition toward LP, drawing on [Loreman's \(2011\)](#) model while adding demographic items and excluding the element of passion due to its being both an overarching construct that permeates the other elements and a concept challenging to operationalize in quantitative measures. [Yin et al. \(2019\)](#) found that, in their specific context, women placed greater value on kindness, empathy, and acceptance of diversity than men—a difference likely shaped by contextual interpretations of gender roles and associated social expectations. In this study, we also utilize this scale to extend its operationalization to English as a foreign language teaching in Iran.

Love in SLA emerged when the humanistic movement in the 1970s found its way into language education, by emphasizing emotions, relations, responsibility, and students' and TWB in the classroom ([Barcelos & Coelho, 2016](#)). LP in SLA refers to care, sensitivity, empathy, and respect that language teachers have toward students by noticing each student's interests, needs, learning experiences, emotions, and seeing potential in all students to develop them to their best capabilities in language learning despite their differences ([Barcelos & Coelho, 2016](#); [Pavelescu & Petric, 2018](#); [Wang et al., 2022](#); [Zhao & Li, 2021](#)). [Barcelos and Coelho \(2016\)](#), guided by affective pedagogy, came to a six-dimensional model of LP in language education, comprising *ethics, growth, care, respect, freedom, and dialogue*. [Zhao and Li \(2021\)](#) highlighted the social dimension of LP in language education, which takes place between teachers and students, although they experience its impact individually. Moreover, [Chabot \(2008\)](#) conceptualized love as a social disposition that emerges, evolves, and is sustained through teachers' interactions and communication with students during educational activities. Similarly, [Barcelos and Coelho \(2016\)](#) draw on [Fredrickson's \(2013\)](#) definition of love as positivity resonance, or a micro-moment of love, that is, in language education, teachers harmonize their emotions with their students' feelings, which leads to their mutual care, concern, compassion, and respect. Likewise, [Barcelos \(2020\)](#), in

an empirical study, identified English teachers' love as an emotion, relational, a response to situational stimuli, and praxis consisting of care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge.

Empirical background of loving pedagogy

Moving toward the operationalization and empirical studies of LP, [Page \(2018\)](#) effectively addressed five steps to apply LP in education, including becoming self-aware, de-centering from one's own needs to others', fully immersing in others' needs through emotional intimacy, building a gradual, authentic, and reciprocal relationship, and finally achieving professional love. [Wang et al. \(2022\)](#), after identifying fifteen elements of LP (kindness, empathy, sacrifice, forgiveness, acceptance, community, ethics, growth, care, respect, freedom, dialogue, bonding, intimacy, and passion) revised [Page's \(2018\)](#) model of deploying love in education to a more comprehensive and appropriate one for the realm of SLA. Given the complex and multifaceted conditions that language teachers experience in the classroom, [Wang et al.'s \(2022\)](#) model considered not only teacher-related factors but also learner-related, context-related, and cultural factors in the deployment of LP in language education. Drawing on an activity-theoretic framework, [Azari Noughabi et al. \(2025\)](#) showed that EFL teachers' dispositions toward LP are formed by complex, dynamic interactions among work-related factors, such as collegial relationships, teaching materials, institutional policies, and curricular objectives. In a complementary line of inquiry, [Derakhshan \(2025a\)](#) investigated LP implementation across the five layers of the ecological system and identified distinct contributing factors at each level, including individual teacher and student variables (micro), organizational structures and rules (meso), socio-cultural and religious norms (macro), community resources and engagement (exo), and historical changes over time (chrono). [Derakhshan \(2025b\)](#), accordingly, suggested several practical humanistic instructional practices to benefit from [Page \(2018\)](#) and [Wang et al.'s \(2022\)](#) conceptual models, including suggestopedia in teaching, decentralization, and using socially interactive activities (e.g., mediation scaffolding, role-play, collaboration, and dialogic interaction), and strength-based instruction.

Although the antecedents to LP, such as resilience, teaching enjoyment, and mindfulness, have been examined in English language teaching ([Alipour et al., 2025](#)), the consequences have also been investigated by scholars. Examining the role of LP among language teachers, [Li and Miao \(2022\)](#) found that although EFL teachers' LP was significantly correlated with their academic engagement, it was TWB—rather than LP—that predicted academic engagement by enhancing job satisfaction. On the other hand, [Derakhshan et al. \(2023\)](#) showed that both EFL/ESL teachers' LP and their teaching for students' creativity significantly predicted their work engagement although teachers' conception of students' creativity was still a stronger predictor than their LP since teachers who believed in students' creativity engaged more in their work through a positive interpersonal relationship to foster students to achieve their potential creativity. [Zhi and Wang \(2023\)](#) suggested that teaching with love cultivates a supportive learning environment, which in turn enhances teachers' creativity and contributes to their professional success through self-efficacy, environmental support, social values, and students' potential. Despite the mentioned studies, the direct contribution of EFL teachers' LP on their WB has scarcely been investigated. LP is widely acknowledged as a driving force in language learning, as it fosters and sustains students' engagement even when classroom enjoyment is lacking or tasks are highly demanding, thereby contributing to language achievement ([Pavelescu & Petric, 2018](#); [Zhao & Li, 2021](#)). Teachers' LP, besides their organizational commitment, has also been identified as enhancing ESL students' achievements ([Ye et al., 2022](#)).

The contribution of loving pedagogy to teacher well-being through the lens of Self-Determination Theory

We draw on SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017) to strengthen our conceptual framework for better understanding how LP affects teachers' WB. This multifaceted framework posits that fulfilling three basic psychological needs, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness within interpersonal and cultural contexts, leads to observable and meaningful positive consequences, in particular, one's flourishing and WB (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). *Need for autonomy* refers to an individual's feeling of ownership and self-regulation of their behavior. It involves acting in a way that resonates with one's internalized process, structures, and values in exchange with the environment (Ryan & Deci, 2017). *Need for competence* is defined as feeling effective in interpersonal relationships in context (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It is experiencing self-actualization and expressing and developing one's capabilities and skills through intrinsic motivations (Ryan & Deci, 2017). *Relatedness* is an intrinsic and basic psychological need grounded in relationship motivation theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017). It is defined as feeling connected and belonging to others, as well as caring about others and being cared for by them (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Despite being independent, these three needs complement and support one another (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Related to this study, it is worth mentioning that the fulfillment of relatedness and autonomy is intertwined as individuals feel greater WB and satisfaction with their relatedness with others when they feel that their own and the other party's care and love in the relationship are autonomous and for intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic benefits, such as rewards or pressure (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

SDT aligns well with our study for four reasons: First, SDT is also intended to promote individuals' WB by satisfying their needs, particularly their relatedness needs. Second, both TWB and LP in this study, akin to SDT, are placed at both personal and interpersonal levels. Third, SDT shows promise in considering the positive relationship between teachers and students, like what occurs in LP (Collie & Martin, 2023). The rewarding and external motivation of LP leading to teachers' feeling of autonomy and competence in doing so is essential for teachers' WB. Fourth, what is more specific to this study that has so far remained unexplored is the SDT potential to be extended to the EFL educational context to unpack how LP might be self-determined by teachers to foster their WB.

In this study, we aimed to answer five research questions:

1. What are the levels of loving pedagogy (LP) and well-being (WB) among Iranian EFL teachers?
2. Do these levels of Iranian EFL teachers' LP and WB differ significantly across demographic (gender, age, teaching experience) and contextual (public vs. private) factors?
3. To what extent does overall loving pedagogy predict EFL teachers' well-being in Iran?
4. To what extent are the components of LP (acceptance of diversity and community, intimacy, bonding and sacrifice, frequency of deliberate kind acts, forgiveness, and valuing kindness) associated with EFL TWB?
5. Do demographic (gender, age, and teaching experience) and contextual (public vs. private) factors moderate the relationship between loving pedagogy and well-being among Iranian EFL teachers?

3. METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Setting

The study was conducted in both public and private settings in Iran for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in 2024. In public schools, formal English language courses are offered only in lower and upper secondary levels, but in private schools, English classes are provided for all age groups, and international content, textbooks, and teaching methods are utilized. Moreover, at universities in Iran, an English language major is provided for those who intend to pursue higher education. Beyond these formal educational contexts, many language learners in Iran benefit from private tutoring, which is designed based on learners' needs and the teacher's preferences. Thus, regarding the existing differences between these settings, teachers were invited to participate in this study from all of the mentioned settings: public schools, private institutes (hereafter, institutes), universities, and private tutoring. However, these are categorized under two overarching terms: private setting (including private institutes and private tutoring) and public setting (including public schools and universities).

Participants

In this study, a total of 210 EFL teachers (64 males, 146 females; age range: 19–57 years, $M = 33.41$, $SD = 9.83$) voluntarily participated in this study. Participants were from large public channels and represented diverse socio-economic backgrounds, educational degrees, work experiences, and both public and private sectors across Iran. Given the accessibility of over 3,000 EFL teachers through these channels, a non-probability convenience sampling method was employed. More than half of the teachers, approximately 61.9%, taught the English language in various institutions or privately at home to students of different age groups and levels (from beginner to advanced). Of all participants, 38.1 % were teaching in the public sector. The majority of the teachers had less than five years of teaching experience (41.4). Although teaching English in Iran does not require a degree specifically in ELT, a significant proportion of the participating teachers held or were pursuing an MA in ELT (53.8%), with 78.6% of all participants holding degrees in ELT. The remaining participants held university degrees in English-related disciplines, such as English Language and Literature, English Translation Studies, and Linguistics. A small number of the EFL teachers, however, had graduated in fields unrelated to English, such as engineering. [Table 1](#) summarizes the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Participants in the First Phase

Variable	Frequency
Gender	Male = 64 (30.5%)
	Female = 146 (69.5%)
Age	19-25 = 65 (31%)
	26-32 = 40 (19%)
	33-40 = 51 (24.3%)
	41-50 = 40 (19%)
	Older than 50 = 14 (6.7%)
Teaching experience	3 months- 5 years = 87 (41.4%)
	6-10 = 36 (17.1%)
	11-15 = 44 (21%)
	16 and above = 43 (20.5%)
Field of Study	Teaching English as a Foreign Language = 165 (78.6%)
	English Language and Literature = 15 (7.1%)
	Linguistics = 6 (2.9%)
Academic Degree	Other = 7 (3.3%)
	Bachelor's degree (graduate or student) (BA) = 62 (29.5%)
	Master's degree (graduate or student) (MA) = 113 (53.8%)
	Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) = 32 (15.2%)
Teaching Context	Other = 3 (1.4%)
	schools = 58(27.6%)
	Private institutes = 104 (49.5%)
	Universities = 22 (10.5%)
	Private tutoring = 26 (12.4%)

Design and procedures

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design to examine Iranian EFL teachers' loving pedagogy (LP) and well-being (WB) using three questionnaires. Specifically, the study investigated teachers' levels of LP and WB, examined group differences across demographic and contextual variables, explored the relationships between LP components and WB, and tested a theoretically grounded model of prediction and moderation using structural equation modeling approaches.

In August 2024, EFL teachers from all four language education settings in Iran (public schools, private institutes, universities, and private tutoring) were invited to participate in the study. The online questionnaire, being developed in Google Forms in four sections, was sent to the participants via email or professional networks on social media (Telegram, WhatsApp, and ETTA). In the first section of the online questionnaire, after explaining the purpose of the study to the participants and obtaining their consent, we assured their privacy. In the second section of the questionnaire, the participants were asked to answer eight demographic questions, such as their age, gender, academic degree, work experience, and work context. In the third section, the teacher WB questionnaire with 25 items was included. The last section of the online questionnaire was the teacher LP scale with 29 items. All teachers participated voluntarily and signed informed consent

forms before completing the questionnaire. They were also informed about the ethical considerations in the study and their anonymity.

Instruments

The psychological well-being at work scale (PWBW)

To measure TWB, a 25-item scale originally developed by Dagenais-Desmarais and Savoie (2012) was used. Although the scale was validated by Wang et al. (2022) in the EFL context of several Asian countries, including Iran ($\alpha = 0.95$), we examined its reliability ($\alpha = 0.92$) (see Table 3). The scale includes five underlying components, including interpersonal fit at work (e.g., “I value the people I work with”), thriving at work (e.g., “I find my job exciting”), feeling of competency at work (e.g., “I feel confident at work”), perceived recognition at work (e.g., “I feel that my work is recognized”), and desire for involvement at work (e.g., “I want to take initiative in my work”). The Participants were asked to rate each item on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 0 “disagree” to 5 “completely agree”.

The dispositions towards loving pedagogy scale (DTLP)

Although a Loving Pedagogy Questionnaire for EFL teachers in Iran has been recently developed and validated by Derakhshan (2025a), it was not published at the time of doing current study. Therefore, we used the 29-item scale of Dispositions towards Loving Pedagogy (DTLP) produced and validated by Yin et al. (2019). In the current study, we also checked and reported the reliability of DTLP in Table 3 ($\alpha = 0.91$). This scale encompasses seven aspects of LP: “Acceptance of Diversity and Community” (e.g., *All students, no matter what their individual differences are, are welcome in my classroom*), “Intimacy” (e.g., *I encourage students to ask for and provide forgiveness*), “Bonding and Sacrifice” (e.g., *I undertake specific activities in my classes aimed at promoting bonding between students*), “Frequency of Deliberate Kind Acts”, “Familiarity with Students, and Empathy” (e.g., *I try to get to know my students better*), “Forgiveness” (e.g., *I am obliged to forgive students when they ask for it*), “Valuing Kindness” (e.g., *Being kind to students is important to me*). Participants were asked to rate the scale on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 4 “strongly agree”.

Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted in three stages using SPSS (v.26), AMOS (v.26), and Smart PLS 3. In the preliminary stage, univariate normality was assessed by examining skewness (−3 to +3) and kurtosis (−10 to +10), Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic (Sig value greater than 0.05), and multivariate normality was evaluated using Mardia’s coefficient (Kline, 2016). Moreover, the absence of outliers, multicollinearity, and correlations between variables was tested. The homogeneity of variance was checked using Leven’s test (P-Value greater than 0.05). Additionally, the internal consistency of the measurement scales was confirmed through Cronbach’s Alpha; the composite reliability (CR) was run to ensure it met the expected minimum value of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). Convergent validity was assessed to ensure the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded the threshold of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

In the second step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to examine the validity of each construct. In the third step, various statistical techniques were employed to address the research questions. To answer the first research question, a descriptive study was conducted to examine the levels of EFL teachers’ LP and WB. Then, to answer the second research question,

we used an independent t-test to examine whether there was a gender difference in those levels. To investigate differences in teachers' LP and WB levels by age, teaching experience, and context, one-way ANOVA was conducted.

To address the third and fourth research questions, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique in AMOS was applied to test the hypothetical relationships between TLP and TWB, as well as between the components of TLP and TWB. Multiple fit indices were considered to evaluate the model fit, including Chi-square/degree of freedom (χ^2/df) ≤ 5 , Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) $\geq .90$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) $\geq .90$, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) $\geq .90$, Normed Fit Index (NFI) $\geq .90$, Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) $\leq .08$ and Standardized Root Mean Square (SRMR) $\leq .08$ (Bentler, 2007; Hu & Bentler, 1998). The magnitude and significance of each hypothesized path were examined by bootstrapping with provided criteria for standardized path coefficient (β) (small effect: 0.1–0.2, moderate effect: 0.3–0.5, and strong effect: ≥ 0.5), t-values: ≥ 1.98 , and p-values ≤ 0.05 (Hair et al., 2019; Subhaktiyasa, 2024).

To address the fifth research question, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed, as it is suitable for analyzing complex models involving moderation effects. It is also more appropriate for smaller sample sizes (Hair et al., 2019). The evaluation of the structural model focused on Coefficients of Determination (R^2), Predictive Relevance (Q^2), and Effect Size (f^2). The interpretative thresholds presented by Hair et al. (2019) for these measures were utilized: Q^2 values indicating small (0–0.24), medium (0.25–0.49), and large (≥ 0.50) predictive relevance; f^2 values representing small (0.02–0.14), medium (0.15–0.34), and large (≥ 0.35) effect sizes; and R^2 values classified as small (≥ 0.25), medium (≥ 0.50), and substantial (≥ 0.75).

4. RESULTS

Preparation of data, reliability, validity, and pre-assumptions

Since answering all the items of the online questionnaire was required to complete the response, no missing values were found. Data preparation also verified that no extreme outliers were present. To examine the reliability, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were reported in Table 3 for both of the scales, including PWBW and DTLP. The reliability was verified by Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.92$ and $CR = 0.93$ for PWBW and $\alpha = 0.91$ and $CR = 0.88$ for DTLP. Both main scales and the factors of LP met the recommended cutoff of .70 for good internal consistency (Hair et al., 2010). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to examine the validity of the measurement models for the TWB and their LP scales. CFA led to the removal of seven items from the TWB scale and six from the TLP scale as a result of having low factor loadings. The model fit indices presented in Table 2 indicated an acceptable fit, with the χ^2/df ratios below 3 and acceptable GFI, NFI, TLI, and CFI close to or above .90, RMSEA, and SRMR met the .08 requirement as an acceptable fit against criteria based on previous studies (Bentler, 2007; Hu and Bentler, 1998). Convergent validity was evidenced through an average variance extracted (AVE) of greater than .50 for both measures (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), confirming that the indicators for TWB and LP fully captured the latent constructs of interest. Similarly, AVEs related to the factors of LP that predicted the TWB indicated around .50 (See Table 2). It is worth mentioning that the pilot study in smaller-scale was conducted prior to the main study to ensure the effectiveness and validity of the procedure and instruments of the study.

The pre-assumptions of independent t-test and one-way ANOVA were examined prior to the analysis. Normality was assessed through skewedness and kurtosis as shown in Table 3 and

Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic (Sig value greater than 0.05). The homogeneity of variance was checked using Leven’s test (P-Value greater than 0.05). The results indicated that the pre-assumptions were verified.

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis of the Variables

	χ^2	χ^2/ df	<i>p</i>	<i>df</i>	GFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA [90% CI]	SRMR
TWB	282.844	2.281	.000	124	.877	.879	.910	.927	.078 [.066, .090]	.053
LP	336.429	1.558	.000	216	.880	.860	.934	.944	.052[.041, .062]	.056

Note. **TWB:** teacher well-being, **LP:** loving pedagogy

Descriptive statistics for teacher well-being and loving pedagogy

The first research question of this study examined the levels of EFL teachers’ WB and LP in Iran. The descriptive statistics, as shown in Table 3, indicated that the mean score of TWB on a 6-point Likert scale showed 3.77 (SD=.76), and the mean score of EFL teachers’ LP on a 4-point Likert scale demonstrated 3.17 (SD=.42). These findings suggest that Iranian EFL teachers reported high levels of WB and LP in their work. In terms of distribution of the data, skewness and kurtosis for all variables remained within acceptable ranges (skewness between -3 and +3, kurtosis between -10 and +10), supporting the assumption of normality for the following analyses. The correlation matrix presented in Table 2 shows a significant positive relationship between TWB and TLP ($r = .54, p < .01$), indicating a moderate to strong association between TWB and their LP practices.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, Reliability, and Validity Indicators for Study Variables

	TWB	TLP	N of item	AVE	CR	Cronbach’s α	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	SD
TWB	1	-	25	.73	.93	.92	-.97	1.30	3.77	.76
TLP	.54**	1	29	.55	.88	.91	-.33	.85	3.17	.42
Acceptance & community	.56**	-	9	.45	0.80	.79	-.19	-.75	3.22	.49
Intimacy	.37**	-	6	.87	.62	.88	-.72	.47	3.03	.71
Bonding and sacrifice	.49**	-	7	.84	.43	.83	-.35	.99	3.06	.49
Frequency of kind acts	.44**	-	3	.91	.77	.76	-.37	.61	3.07	.56
Forgiveness	.29**	-	2	.69	.53	.70	.00	-.67	2.86	.69
Valuing kindness	.33**	-	2	.79	.65	.78	-.77	1.05	3.51	.51

Note. ** $p < .01$

Teacher well-being and loving pedagogy across demographics

To answer the second research question, Table 3 displays inferential statistics for differences of the participants’ level of LP and WB across their demographic (gender, age, teaching experience) and contextual (public vs. private) factors. Regarding gender, female teachers reported significantly higher levels of both TWB ($t(208) = 2.54, p = .012$) and TLP ($t(208) = 3.11, p = .002$) compared to male teachers. Age demonstrated a small but significant positive correlation with TWB ($r = .15, p = .03$), indicating that older teachers tended to report higher WB. However, age was not significantly related to TLP ($r = .08, p = .25$).

Teaching experience was divided into four groups: 1–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15 years, and more than 15 years. One-way ANOVA showed no significant differences in TWB ($F(3, 206) = 1.09, p = .35$) or TLP ($F(3, 206) = .85, p = .47$) among these groups.

The teaching context was also broken down into four groups: public schools, private institutes, language centers, and online learning. ANOVA results indicated no significant differences in TWB ($F(3, 206) = 2.03, p = .111$) or TLP ($F(3, 206) = .19, p = .90$) across these contexts.

Table 4: Demographic and Contextual Effects on TWB and LP Scores

Variable	Test	TLP score	TWB score
Gender	Independent t-test	$t(208) = 3.11$ $p = .002$	$t(208) = 2.54$ $p = .012$
Age	Pearson correlation	$r = .08,$ $p = .25$	$r = .15$ $p = .03$
Teaching Experience	One-way ANOVA	$F(3, 206) = .85$ $p = .47$	$F(3, 206) = 1.09$ $p = .35$
Teaching Context	One-way ANOVA	$F(3, 206) = .19$ $p = .90$	$F(3, 206) = 2.03$ $p = .111$

Note. TWB: teacher well-being, TLP: loving pedagogy

Structural equation modeling of loving pedagogy, its components and teacher well-being

In response to the third research question, we first examined the predictive relationship between teachers’ LP and TWB through SEM analysis (See Figure 1). The model exhibited an acceptable fit to the data with the following indices: $\chi^2 = 80.377, df = 43, \chi^2/df = 1.869, p < .001$; GFI = .940; NFI = .920; TLI = .949; CFI = .960; RMSEA = .064 (90% CI [.042, .086]); and SRMR = .053.

To answer the fourth research question, we examined whether all the components of LP, including acceptance of diversity and community, intimacy, bonding and sacrifice, frequency of deliberate kind acts, forgiveness, and valuing kindness, equally predicted EFL teachers’ WB (See Figure 2). Structural equation modeling (SEM), as shown in Figure 2, demonstrated an acceptable fit of the model to the data with the following indices: $\chi^2 = 36.791, df = 29, \chi^2/df = 1.269, p = .152$; GFI = .971; NFI = .963; TLI = .984; CFI = .992; RMSEA = .036 (90% CI [.000, .067]); and SRMR = .032.

The results revealed that among the six components, acceptance of diversity and community ($\beta = 0.389, SE = 0.104, p < .001$) and frequency of deliberate kind acts ($\beta = 0.187, SE = 0.104, p = .038$) significantly predicted TWB. The other components—including intimacy,

bonding and sacrifice, forgiveness, and valuing kindness—did not show statistically significant predictive power ($p > .05$), as detailed in Table 4.

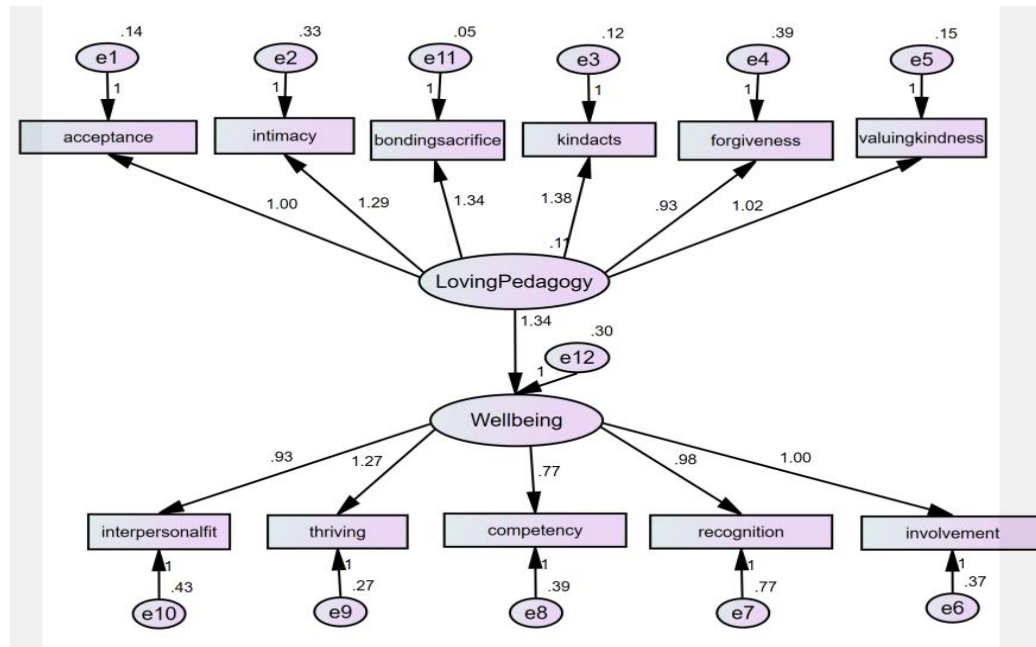


Figure 1: The SEM analysis results

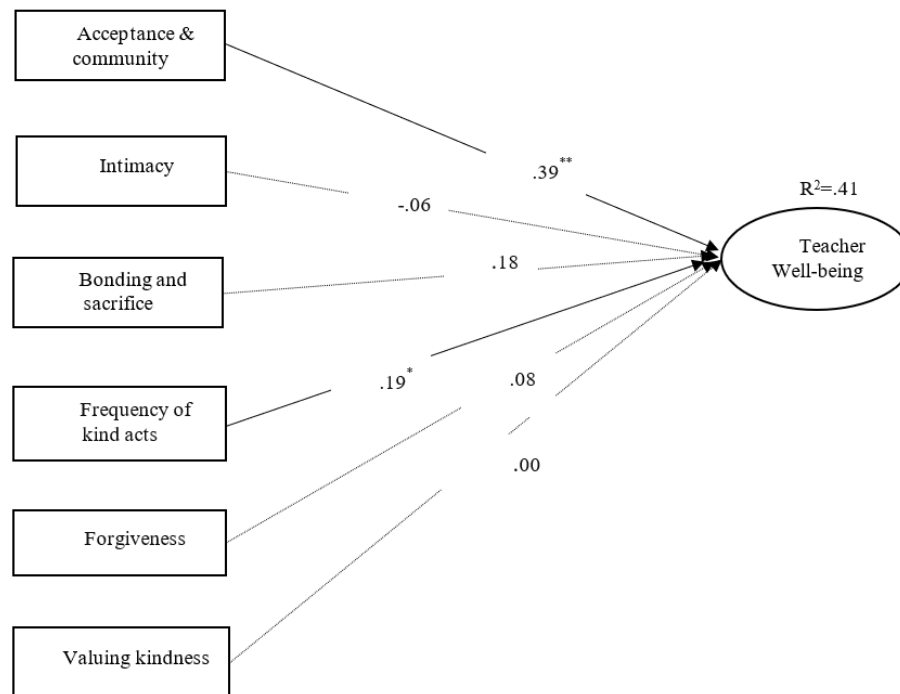


Figure 2: The SEM analysis results

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, Dotted lines in the figure represent non-significant path weights.

Table 5: Path Coefficients of the Components of TLP and TLP on TWB

Predictor	Standardized β (SE)	95% CI	P
LP \longrightarrow TWB	.625 (.198)	[.490, .732]	.000
Acceptance & community \longrightarrow TWB	.389 (.104)	[.234, .542]	.000
Intimacy \longrightarrow TWB	-.061 (.066)	[-.205, .102]	.401
Bonding and sacrifice \longrightarrow TWB	.177 (.135)	[.177, -.017]	.084
Frequency of kind acts \longrightarrow TWB	.187 (.104)	[.187, .012]	.038
Forgiveness \longrightarrow TWB	.077 (.063)	[.077, -.052]	.257
Valuing kindness \longrightarrow TWB	.002 (.098)	[.002, -.177]	.979

Note. TWB: teacher well-being, TLP: loving pedagogy

Moderation analysis of demographic and contextual factors on the relationship between loving pedagogy and teacher well-being with PLS-SEM

To answer the fifth research question, as shown in Figure 3, PLS-SEM analysis was performed to examine the moderating effects of teachers’ demographic characteristics (gender, age, teaching experience) and contextual factors (public vs. private teaching environment) on the relationship between LP and TWB. This analysis model evaluated both the main effect of TLP on TWB and the interaction terms representing moderation effects (see Table 5).

As was the case with previous analyses, findings still suggested that TLP was positively and significantly related to TWB ($\beta = 0.513$, $SE = 0.051$, $t = 9.975$, $p < .001$); however, the demographic and contextual variables tested were not statistically significant moderators. Interaction effects showed standardized β values below 0.20, t-values less than the critical value of 1.96, and p-values greater than .05, indicating no statistically meaningful moderation by gender, age, teaching experience, or teaching context.

Table 6: Structural Path Coefficients with Moderation

Path	Standardized β	SE	t-value	P-value
LP \rightarrow TWB	.513	0.051	9.975	.000**
Age \rightarrow TWB	.119	.062	1.928	.054
LP \times Age \rightarrow TWB	-.094	.075	1.248	.213
Gender \rightarrow TWB	.055	.060	.914	.361
LP \times Gender \rightarrow TWB	-.083	.055	1.508	.132
Teaching Experience \rightarrow TWB	.085	.063	1.348	.178
LP \times Teaching Experience \rightarrow TWB	-.065	.070	.916	.360
Teaching Context \rightarrow TWB	.092	.061	1.492	.136
LP \times Teaching Context \rightarrow TWB	-.008	.061	.138	.890

Note. * : $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, TWB: teacher well-being, LP: loving pedagogy

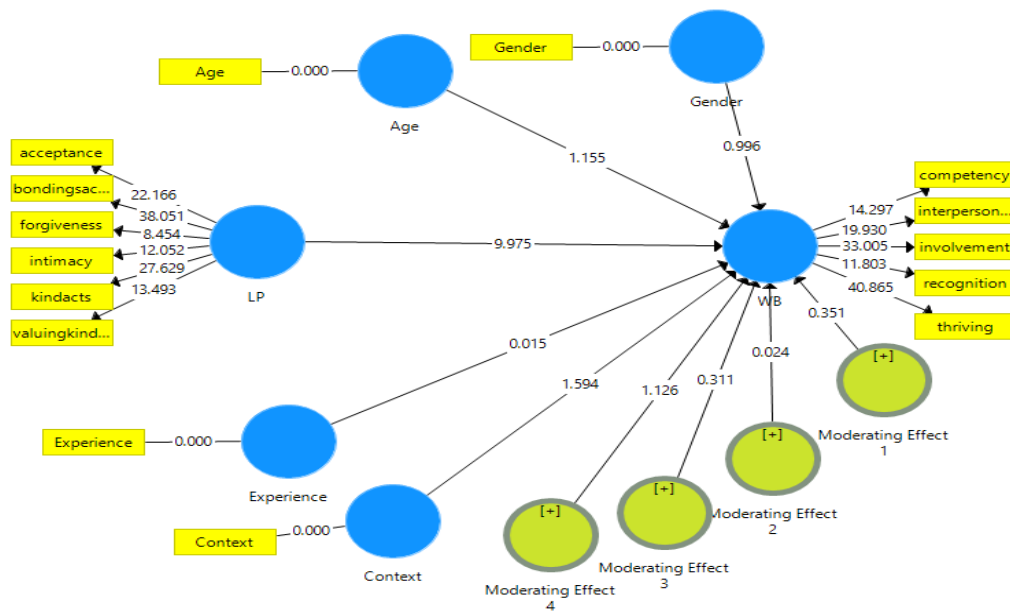


Figure 3: PLS-SEM Model Presenting the Impacts of Four Moderators on Teachers' LP-WB

5. DISCUSSION

With the emergence of positive psychology, scholars’ focus has shifted from negative emotions to positive approaches in fostering TWB. Since the teacher-student relationship plays a pivotal role in TWB, this study examined how teachers’ LP predicted their WB. As shown in Figure 4, the contribution of teachers’ LP on their WB under the moderation of teachers’ demographic characteristics and context is discussed here. Furthermore, drawing on SDT, we examined how teacher-student relatedness within LP could act as an external motivator of their WB. This, in turn, could foster teachers’ intrinsic motivations for autonomy and competence in LP, ultimately contributing to their WB (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). Therefore, in our model to discuss the findings of the current study, we placed the triangle of SDT as a mediator of the relationship between LP and TWB to explain how LP and its component in fulfilling the teachers’ need of relatedness contribute to TWB.

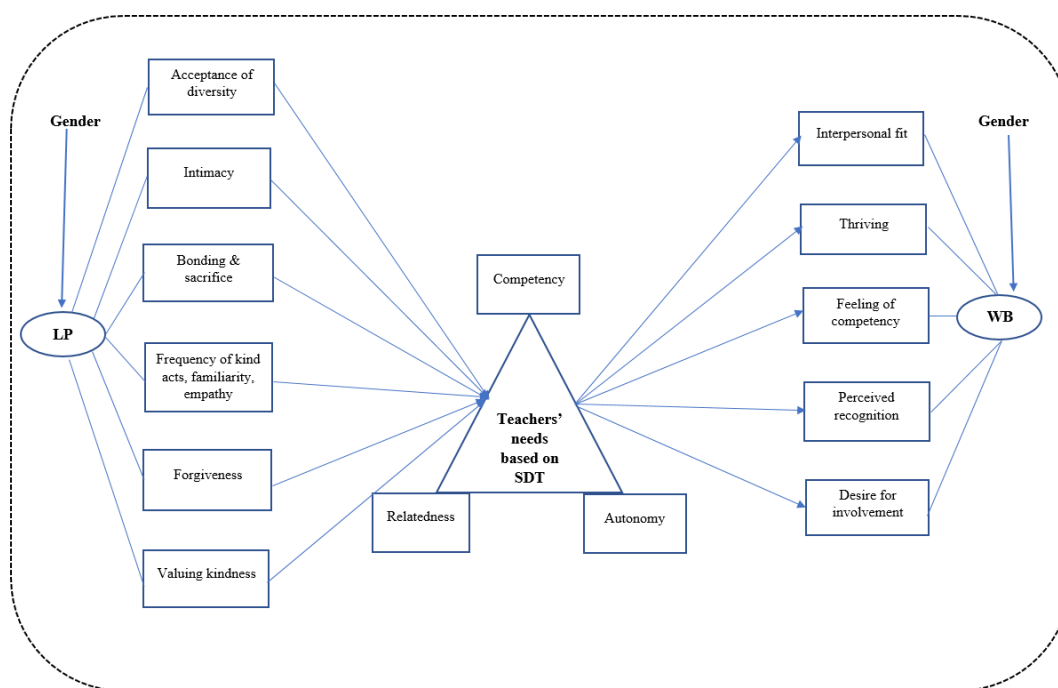


Figure 4: SDT Model: Presenting the contribution of LP on TWB

Since the LP springs from teachers’ need for relatedness to others, a high level of reported Iranian EFL teachers’ LP in this study indicated that they were intrinsically motivated to voluntarily choose caring and kind acts towards their students to feel effective in their relationships. Moreover, aligned with literature, our findings showed that EFL teachers in this study experienced a high level of WB when their needs were met through experiencing positive professional interpersonal relationships (Collie & Martin, 2023; Demir, 2024; Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez, 2024; Sadeghi & Purbahram, 2024; Weiland, 2021), involvement and contribution to the good functioning at work (Demir, 2024), being interested in their work, and being appreciated at work (Demir, 2024).

Furthermore, to our best knowledge, the impact of gender has not been examined on teachers’ LP and WB within the realm of SLA. The higher levels of LP and WB among female teachers than among their male counterparts in this study can be explained by female teachers’

greater need for relatedness, competence, and autonomy. This echoes Mercer's (2023) macrosystem in an ecological perspective, indicating that the cultural values perceived by female teachers in society as more emotional, caring, and empathetic prompt them to practice LP more than male teachers do in the classroom. It can be inferred that female EFL teachers may perceive LP as an opportunity for satisfying their basic psychological needs, itself a path toward development, higher status in social comparison with male teachers, and finally WB.

Corresponding with previous studies, our findings alluded to the contribution of teacher-student relatedness to their WB (Collie & Martin, 2023; Demir, 2024; Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez, 2024; Sadeghi & Purbahram, 2024; Weiland, 2021). It can be explained through the lens of SDT that TWB was nurtured when their three basic needs were satisfied in positive interpersonal contexts, like LP. The interesting finding was that among the six components of the LP, only two of them, including "acceptance of diversity and community", as well as "frequency of deliberate kind acts, familiarity, and empathy", played a pivotal role in that relationship. This finding also highlights the significance of addressing teachers' need for relatedness to achieve WB by attending to needs, such as self-actualization and self-development (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This echoes Derakhshan's (2025a) findings in the micro-level of the ecological system, which indicated that teachers' attitudes and perceptions of forming good relationships with students can influence the implementation of LP in the classroom.

Related to the influence of teachers' demographic characteristics and their work context, the findings of the current study, adding to the limited research, disclosed that despite a weak effect of teachers' age on their WB, neither age, teaching experience, nor context significantly affected their LP and WB. Moreover, contrary to our expectation, none of the teachers' demographic characteristics and their work context moderated the linkage between their LP and WB in Iran. These findings align with the SDT, emphasizing the role of addressing the needs for relatedness, competency, and autonomy rather than teachers' demographic characteristics and work context (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2017). The reason for this may be related to the presence of teachers' LP and WB across different age groups, teaching experiences, and contexts due to intrinsic motivation to fulfill their basic psychological needs. Teachers' LP and WB may be enhanced through achieving relatedness, competence, and autonomy rather than being young or old, novice or veteran, in public or private sectors. This highlights that the experienced and aged teachers are not necessarily competent and autonomous teachers, and teachers' intrinsic motivation that contributes to their internalized values and approaches, self-regulation, and self-actualization in relation to play a critical role in teachers' LP and WB. Although teachers may face challenges of external situation factors, their perceived competence, autonomy, and relatedness can neutralize the impact of negative moderators. Therefore, fostering EFL teachers' WB and the contribution of LP to their WB result from fulfilling their three psychological needs.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study examined the levels of LP and TWB and their relationship in the EFL setting of Iran, considering the moderating effects of teachers' demographic characteristics and their work context. The findings implied that EFL teachers experienced a high level of LP and WB in Iran, and gender differences affected their emotional experiences, highlighting female teachers' higher level of emotional experiences. The implications that arise from these findings are that educational policy makers, teacher educators, and managers at educational settings can benefit the potential of Iranian EFL teachers' high levels of LP and WB. This can improve teaching quality and effectiveness of the EFL instruction leading to students' engagement and learning. Teachers with higher level of LP and WB are more likely to stay energetic and motivated in the class and

experience less burnout and dissatisfaction. However, to raise these levels, the teacher educators or the policy makers may distribute teacher companions and guides that value and instruct strategies and practices of LP in educational settings to assist its development.

Regarding our finding related to female EFL teachers' higher level of LP and WB, the whys and how of this gender-sensitivity should be addressed to be also improved in male teachers. The scholars may investigate the factors and strategies that lead to female teachers' higher level of LP and TWB to develop them in male teachers. Due to that teachers' teaching experience and context did not influence the level of their LP and WB, the scholars may concern beyond the traditional factors, to other factors that may play role, such as administrative support, professional development, work-life balance.

The other significant finding of this study was that the EFL teachers' LP practices significantly predicted their WB, but with no impact of their gender, age, teaching experience, or context on the relationship. This finding suggests that LP should be valued and fostered in educational settings to enhance overall TWB. The fact that the contribution of LP to TWB was made regardless of their personal features and teaching context implies the universality of LP and TWB. It implies that what leads to teachers' satisfaction, meaningfulness, and development is their practice rather than personality.

Moreover, the outcomes demonstrated that two of the components of EFL teachers' LP, including acceptance of diversity and community, as well as the frequency of deliberate kind acts predicted TWB. Based on this we can infer that acceptance of diversity in the classroom is at the heart of LP. The more the EFL teachers recognize the differences among the students and the reasons behind them, the better they succeed in LP and making positive relationships with students, in turn, the more they feel WB. Therefore, teacher education programs can involve workshops to develop EFL teachers' abilities to be sensitive and flexible to students' diversity. Furthermore, those programs may encourage the teachers to deliberately apply caring and kind acts in the classroom to model themselves on students. Becoming habitual is a key in fostering LP in educational settings which boosts TWB.

The current study contributes empirical support to the SDT by indicating that teachers' relatedness to their students through LP may satisfy their two other basic psychological needs, autonomy and competence. Teachers with a higher level of LP are better equipped with self-regulation and ownership of their practices to effectively communicate with students in the classroom and deal with challenges they face. Those teachers are more likely to intrinsically develop to their potential, fulfillment, and WB.

7. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The findings of this study should be interpreted cautiously, considering several limitations. First, due to the multidimensional nature of both constructs of this study, LP and TWB, other conceptualizations of them, such as [Barcelos and Coelho's](#) six-dimensional model of LP and [Ryff's \(1989\)](#) six-dimensional model of psychological WB, might lead to divergent outcomes. Moreover, future studies might rely on alternative frameworks like Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) ([Bakker & Demerouti, 2014](#)) to elucidate the relationship between LP and TWB.

Second, this study drew on teachers' self-reported data to explore the constructs and their relationship quantitatively. Future studies may benefit from mixed-method studies and methodological triangulation, such as interviews with teachers, narrative frames, and/or classroom observation to strengthen the credibility of the results.

Third, the cross-sectional nature of this study limited our investigation of teachers' LP and WB to only one point in time. However, longitudinal studies could capture more comprehensive data on fluctuation and changes of teachers' LP and WB over time.

Fourth, given that the participants in this study were EFL teachers in Iran, the findings should be cautiously generalized to other cultural groups, as teachers' relationships with students in educational settings, such as in LP, and their experiences of WB are highly context-related (Mercer, 2023). Therefore, further studies are required in other countries and cultural contexts to validate and/or expand our understanding.

The future studies also may explore when, where, how, and to what extent the EFL teachers should perform LP to benefit from its potential for their own and students' achievements.

References

- Alipour, S., Ghaniabadi, S., & Noughabi, M. A. (2025). Investigating the role of resilience, foreign language teaching enjoyment, and mindfulness in predicting loving pedagogy in English language teaching. *Psychology in Russia*, 18(3), 69-86.
<https://doi.org/10.11621/pir.2025.0305>
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2014). Job demands–resources theory. In P. Y. Chen & C. Cooper (Eds.), *Wellbeing: A Complete Reference Guide* (pp. 1–28). Wiley.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118539415.wbwell019>
- Barcelos, A. M. F. (2020). Revolutionary love and peace in the construction of an English teacher's professional identity. In R. Oxford, M. Olivero, M. Harrison & T. Gregersen (Eds.), *Peacebuilding in Language Education* (pp.96-109). Multilingual Matters.
<https://doi.org/10.21832/oxford9790>
- Barcelos, A. M. F., & Coelho, H. S. H. (2016). Language learning and teaching: What's love got to do with it. *Positive psychology in SLA*, 97, 130-144.
- Bentler, P. M. (2007). On tests and indices for evaluating structural models. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 42(4), 825-829. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2006.09.024>
- Caruana, S., & Borg, M. (2020). Stress-related factors affecting teachers of foreign languages in Maltese state and church schools. *Symposia Melitensia*, 16, 87-100.
- Chabot, S. (2008). Love and revolution. *Critical Sociology*, 34 (6), 803–828.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920508095100>
- Collie, R. J., & Martin, A. J. (2023). Teacher well-being and sense of relatedness with students: Examining associations over one school term. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 132, 104233. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2023.104233>
- Culshaw, S., & Kurian, N. (2021). Love as the lifeblood of being-well: A call for care for teachers in England's schools. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 39(3), 269-290.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2021.1938647>
- Dagenais-Desmarais, V., & Savoie, A. (2012). What is psychological well-being, really? A grassroots approach from the organizational sciences. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 13, 659-684. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-011-9285-3>
- Demir, B. (2024). Exploring English language instructors' perspectives and practices on teacher well-being. *International Journal of Applied Positive Psychology*, 9(3), 1491-1510.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s41042-024-00178-x>
- Derakhshan, A. (2025a). *Loving pedagogy in second and foreign language education: Underlying components, measurement, and ecological systems*. Springer.

- Derakhshan, A. (2025b). Positioning loving pedagogy practice in the heart of second/foreign language (L2) education: Theorization and implementation approaches unveiled. In E. Vanderheiden, C.H. Mayer, & A.M.F. Barcelos (Eds.), *Pedagogical love in adult education*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-82046-5_16
- Derakhshan, A., Greenier, V., & Fathi, J. (2023). Exploring the interplay between a loving pedagogy, creativity, and work engagement among EFL/ESL teachers: A multinational study. *Current Psychology*, 42(26), 22803-22822. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03371-w>
- Derakhshan, A., Setiawan, S., & Ghafouri, M. (2024). Modeling the interplay of Indonesian and Iranian EFL teachers' apprehension, resilience, organizational mattering, and psychological well-being. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 12(1), 21-43. <https://doi.org/10.30466/ijltr.2024.121416>
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104>
- Fredrickson, B. (2013). *Love 2.0*. Hudson Street Press.
- Greenier, V., Derakhshan, A., & Fathi, J. (2021). Emotion regulation and psychological well-being in teacher work engagement: A case of British and Iranian English language teachers. *System*, 97, Article 102446. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102446>
- Gregersen, T., Mercer, S., MacIntyre, P., Talbot, K., & Banga, C. A. (2023). Understanding language teacher wellbeing: An ESM study of daily stressors and uplifts. *Language Teaching Research*, 27(4), 862-883. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820965897>
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis* (7th ed.). Prentice Hall.
- Hair, J.F., Hair, J., Sarstedt, M., et al. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2-24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203>
- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1998). Fit indices in covariance structure modeling: Sensitivity to underparameterized model misspecification. *Psychological Methods*, 3(4), 424-453. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1082-989X.3.4.424>
- Ismail, S. M., Patra, I., Yang, H., & Ajanil, B. (2023). Language teacher psychological well-being: an insight into the impacts of emotion regulation, reflective teaching, self-efficacy, and identity in an EFL context. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 8(1), 44. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-023-00215-3>
- Kline, R. B. (2016). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (4th ed.). Guilford.
- Lavy, S., & Naama-Ghanayim, E. (2020). Why care about caring? Linking teachers' caring and sense of meaning at work with students' self-esteem, well-being, and school engagement. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 91, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103046>
- Li, B., & Miao, G. (2022). On the role of Chinese English as a foreign language: Teachers' well-being and loving pedagogy in their academic engagement. *Frontiers in psychology*, 13, Article 941226. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.941226>
- Loreman, T. (2011). *Love as pedagogy*. Sense.
- Ma, Y., & Liu, Z. (2024). Emotion regulation and well-being as factors contributing to lessening burnout among Chinese EFL teachers. *Acta Psychologica*, 245, 104219. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104219>
- MacIntyre, P. D., Ross, J., Talbot, K., Mercer, S., Gregersen, T., & Banga, C. A. (2019). Stressors, personality and wellbeing among language teachers. *System*, 82, 26-38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2019.02.013>

- Mairitsch, A., Babic, S., Mercer, S., Sulis, G., & Shin, S. (2023). The role of compassion during the shift to online teaching for language teacher wellbeing. *Theory and Practice of Second Language Acquisition*, 9(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.31261/tapsla.13123>
- Maslow, A. H. (1954). The instinctoid nature of basic needs. *Journal of Personality*, 22, 326–347. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1954.tb01136.x>
- McInerney, D. M., Ganotice, F. A., King, R. B., Morin, A. J. S., & Marsh, H. W. (2015). Teachers' commitment and psychological well-being: Implications of self-beliefs for teaching in Hong Kong. *Educational Psychology*, 35(8), 926–945. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2014.895801>
- Morin, A. J. S., Meyer, J. P., McInerney, D. M., Marsh, H. W., & Ganotice, F. (2015). Profiles of dual commitment to the occupation and organization: Relations to wellbeing and turnover intentions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 32(3), 717–744. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-015-9411-6>
- Mercer, S. (2023). The wellbeing of language teachers in the private sector: An ecological perspective. *Language teaching research*, 27(5), 1054-1077. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820973510>
- Mercer, S., Oberdorfer, P., Saleem, M. (2016). Helping language teachers to thrive: Using positive psychology to promote teachers' professional well-being. In D. Gabryś-Barker, D., Gałajda, (Eds.), *Positive Psychology Perspectives on Foreign Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 213-229). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32954-3_12
- Mercer, S. (2021). An agenda for well-being in ELT: An ecological perspective. *ELT Journal*, 75(1), 14-21. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccaa062>
- Naama, E., & Lavy, S. (2022). What it takes to be caring: Resources and benefits of caring teachers in Israel. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 119, 103852.
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. University of California Press.
- Noddings, N. (1988). An ethic of caring and its implications for instructional arrangements. *American Journal of Education*, 96(2), 215–230. <https://doi.org/10.1086/443894>
- Noddings, N. (1992). Social studies and feminism. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 20(3), 230-241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.1992.10505667>.
- Azari Noughabi, M., Enferad, R., Barkati, M., Masoumi, M., & Aghdamie, M. (2025). Understanding English as a foreign language teachers' dispositions toward loving pedagogy: an activity theory perspective. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2025.2592595>
- Page, J. (2018). Characterising the principles of professional love in early childhood care and education. *International journal of early years education*, 26(2), 125-141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2018.1459508>
- Pavelescu, L. M., & Petrić, B. (2018). Love and enjoyment in context: Four case studies of adolescent EFL learners. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 8(1), 73-101. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2018.8.1.4>
- Peng, W., Liu, Y., & Peng, J.-E. (2023). Feeling and acting in classroom teaching: The relationships between teachers' emotional labor, commitment, and well-being. *System*, 116(2), Article 103093. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2023.103093>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual review of psychology*, 52(1), 141-166. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55 (1), 68–78.

- Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Press.
- Ryff, C. D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069–1081. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069>
- Rakıcıoğlu-Söylemez, A. (2024). The role of classroom silence in teacher educators' well-being: A case study in TESOL initial teacher education. *System*, 127, 103530. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103530>
- Sadeghi, K., & Pourbahram, R. (2024). Transnational English language teacher wellbeing: An ecological perspective. *Porta Linguarum Revista Interuniversitaria de Didáctica de las Lenguas Extranjeras*, (IX), 135-152. <https://doi.org/10.30827/portalin.viIX.29881>
- Seligman, M.E.P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. Atria Books.
- Sternberg, R. J. (1986). A triangular theory of love. *Psychological review*, 93(2), 119-135.
- Subhaktiyasa, P.G. (2024). PLS-SEM for multivariate analysis: A practical guide to educational research using SmartPLS. *EduLine: Journal of Education and Learning Innovation*, 4(3), 353-365.
- Turner, K., Thielking, M., & Prochazka, N. (2022). Teacher wellbeing and social support: A phenomenological study. *Educational Research*, 64(1), 77-94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2021.2013126>
- Uusiautti, S., Määttä, K., & Määttä, M. (2013). Love-based practice in education. *International Journal about Parents in Education*, 7(2). 134-144. <https://doi.org/10.54195/ijpe.18222>
- Wang, Y., Derakhshan, A., & Azari Noughabi, M. (2022). The interplay of EFL teachers' immunity, work engagement, and psychological well-being: Evidence from four Asian countries. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 45(8), 3241–3257. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2022.2092625>
- Wang, Y., Derakhshan, A., & Solhi, M. (2025). Dispositions toward loving pedagogy, emotion regulation, and self-efficacy as predictors of EFL teachers' work engagement: A multinational study. *Language Teaching Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688251353132>
- Weiland, A. (2021). Teacher well-being: Voices in the field. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 99, 103250. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103250>
- Ye, D., Sun, S., & Zhao, D. (2022). EFL students' L2 achievement: The role of teachers' organizational commitment and loving pedagogy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 937624. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.937624>
- Yin, L. C., Loreman, T., Abd Majid, R., & Alias, A. (2019). The dispositions towards loving pedagogy (DTLP) scale: Instrument development and demographic analysis. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 86, 102884. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2019.102884>
- Zhang, L. (2023). Reviewing the effect of teachers' resilience and wellbeing on their foreign language teaching enjoyment. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1187468. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1187468>
- Zhang, L., Chen, J., Li, X., & Zhan, Y. (2024). A scope review of the teacher well-being research between 1968 and 2021. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 33(1), 171-186. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-023-00717-1>
- Zhao, S., & Li, M. (2021). Reflection on loving pedagogy and students' engagement in EFL/ESL classrooms. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.757697>

- Zhi, R., & Wang, Y. (2023). English as a foreign language teachers' professional success, loving pedagogy and creativity: A structural equation modeling approach. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 49, 101370. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2023.101370>
- Zhi, R., & Derakhshan, A. (2024). Modelling the interplay between resilience, emotion regulation, and psychological well-being among Chinese English language teachers: The mediating role of self-efficacy beliefs. *European Journal of Education*, 59(3), 12643. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12643>
- Zhou, S., Slemp, G. R., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2024). Factors associated with teacher wellbeing: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 36(2), 63. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-024-09886-x>