

## Research Article

### Enhancing the Psychological Well-Being of Higher Education English Lecturers: A Qualitative Study

Zanyar Nathir Ghafar\*

Information Technology Department, Bright Technical and Vocational Institute, Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region- Iraq

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#### \*Corresponding author:

E-mail:

[zanyar.ghafar@btvi.edu.iq](mailto:zanyar.ghafar@btvi.edu.iq)

#### ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of mental health on the instructional approaches employed by higher education English lecturers in the Kurdistan region. The primary objective of this study is to find effective techniques that may be implemented to enhance the psychological well-being of these teachers. The qualitative method was used by conducting semi-structured interviews with 5 lecturers at the National Institute of Technology in Kurdistan. The selection of these individuals was crucial in order to get critical insights and perspectives. The results indicate that there is a positive relationship between more significant levels of well-being and instructional practices, resulting in enhanced levels of participation, inspiration, and pleasure. The fundamental qualities that are emphasized are autonomy in teaching, competency, and effectiveness, as well as healthy student interactions. The study findings indicate that using several tactics, such as autonomy assistance, building skills, interaction, acknowledgment and feedback, and a healthy balance between work and life, is a means to enhance the overall well-being of higher education English lecturers. This study is based on a literature review on the topic of teacher well-being, offering valuable insights that may inform pedagogical administrators, staff members, and instructional programs in their efforts to cultivate a conducive atmosphere for professional development and the delivery of successful English language teaching.

**Keywords:** *Mental health, English lecturers, English language, Education, Instructional behaviors, Assistance*

#### Introduction

The impact of teachers' psychological well-being on their teaching efficacy and overall work satisfaction has become a significant concern. Higher education English instructors play a crucial role in cultivating linguistic competency and enhancing communication abilities

among students. Nevertheless, extensive research on the importance of their mental well-being concerning their practices as English educators has been lacking. The arduous demands of the teaching occupation, in conjunction with many stresses associated with the work, may significantly influence the overall

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well-being of college English instructors. Various factors, including excessive workloads, time constraints, high expectations from learners, and administrative obligations, may significantly contribute to the fatigue, stress, and diminished levels of job satisfaction experienced by teachers. If these variables are not addressed, they may negatively affect both instructors and the standard of English language education offered to college students. The examination of the influence of college English instructors' mental well-being on their pedagogical approaches is of utmost importance due to several factors. Teachers with elevated mental health degrees are more inclined to exhibit engagement, motivation, and satisfaction within their professional endeavors. Consequently, this may result in higher instructional effectiveness, heightened student involvement, and improved educational achievements.

According to Dewaele et al. (2018) and Mercer (2023), The limited focus on the well-being of English language instructors in research may be attributed to the historical emphasis of the language education field on instructional and academic matters, hence marginalizing affective and social-emotional considerations. Nevertheless, there has been a shift in this pattern due to significant contributions made by prominent academics during the last decade.

In contrast, mental health can potentially impact higher education English educators' teaching techniques, tactics, and relationships inside the classroom. Educators who experience psychological support and a sense of fulfillment are more inclined to use successful pedagogical strategies, establish a conducive learning atmosphere, and cultivate significant student-teacher connections. In addition, investigating the correlation between the psychological well-being of college English instructors and their English teaching practices may contribute to advancing supporting interventions and policies designed to enhance teacher well-being. By identifying the many aspects contributing to teachers' psychological well-being, educational institutions may effectively adopt initiatives to enhance work satisfaction, mitigate burnout, and improve the overall quality of English teaching practices. In line with

recent research conducted by Dewaele et al. (2018), Greenier et al. (2021), and MacIntyre et al. (2020), there is a direct correlation between the well-being of English language instructors and several aspects of their professional performance, including teaching practices, classroom environment, teacher-student interactions, as well as the well-being and academic success of their students. Just as the training and expertise of instructors impact their performance, the well-being of teachers also has a similar influence.

Our well-being is influenced by external events, but it may also be shaped more by our actions and attitudes. Positive behavior and attitudes are key components of interventions that improve well-being.

The gap of this research is to illuminate how psychological education might pave the way for improved mental health outcomes by promoting the growth of emotional intelligence. This is achieved by integrating theoretical frameworks, real-world observations, and empirical analysis. The positive relationship between mental health and emotional intelligence has been supported by many scientific studies. According to longitudinal research by García et al. (2021), higher emotional intelligence predicts better psychological well-being and lower levels of psychological discomfort. Similar conclusions were reached by Brackett and Katulak (2006), who discovered that those with greater emotional intelligence report better levels of life satisfaction along with lower levels of stress and sadness.

The results of this study have the potential to enhance the current body of literature on teacher well-being and offer valuable perspective programs for creating a supportive and conducive atmosphere for the professional development of college English teachers and the delivery of effective English language instruction.

### **The research questions that will guide this study are as follows:**

The present study aims to investigate the following research inquiries:

1. What obstacles are associated with psychological wellness experienced by English

instructors employed at private institutes inside the Kurdish region?

2. How does the mental health of English instructors at educational institutions affect their instructional behaviors?
3. What are the potential ways that may be used to provide assistance and enhance the psychological health of English teachers?

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

**Participants:** This research will entail interviews with five English lecturers employed at the National Institution of Technology, a private institution in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The selection of participants will be contingent upon their level of expertise in teaching English as a foreign language.

### **Data collection:**

Each participant will have individual interviews using a semi-structured method. The interviews will be transcribed for analysis after their audio recording, which will only be conducted with the explicit agreement of the participants.

### **Interview Questions:**

1. Could you describe your difficulties with your psychological well-being as an English teacher at an educational institution?
2. How do these issues affect teaching practices and relationships with students?
3. To what extent do you believe your psychological well-being impacts your teaching techniques and strategies?
4. Have you encountered any tactics or support systems that have had a good influence on your psychological well-being as an educator? If affirmative, could you provide more details about the points mentioned earlier?
5. Based on empirical evidence, what efficacious techniques may be used to support and enhance the emotional health of institute English instructors?

### **Designed procedure:**

Contact chosen individuals and explain the study's objective. Get informed permission for interviews. Schedule individual interviews at

suitable times and locations for participants. Make the interviews pleasant and private so participants may freely communicate their opinions and experiences. Take the interview questions as a framework, but let participants elaborate. Take meticulous notes during interviews to record significant thoughts and observations. Interviews should be recorded for transcription and evaluation.

## **Review of Literature**

This literature review examines the substantial influence exerted by psychological characteristics, such as independence, skill, and connection, on the English teaching practices of higher education English instructors. The results indicate that enhancing English language education may be achieved by supporting instructors' autonomy, cultivating a feeling of competence, and facilitating healthy interactions. These discoveries can shape educational policies and practices to enhance teacher well-being and improve English teaching results. Emotional intelligence (EI) has garnered significant attention due to its impact on individuals' lives, such as their mental health and well-being. The correlation between emotional intelligence and positive psychological consequences has been extensively studied.

The literature encompasses a wide range of views and understandings about well-being. Nevertheless, it is well acknowledged by several publications that there exists a correlation between well-being and the occurrence of happy feelings, a high standard of living, and an overall sense of life satisfaction (McCallum et al., 2017; Mercer & Gregersen, 2020). Various aspects contribute to the overall well-being of individuals, and scholars in psychology concur that individuals' subjective perception and emotional intelligence play a pivotal role in determining their well-being (Brackett, 2019; David, 2016). Brackett (2019) claimed that the state of well-being is influenced more by subjective perception, coping mechanisms, and "social sharing of experiences rather than the actual nature of the events themselves" (p. 63). According to David (2016), "the key to well-being and success lies in the ability to adapt to one's ideas and emotions, enabling appropriate responses to daily events" (p. 5). Therefore, the

concept of well-being does not include the denial or disregard of undesirable feelings. Instead, it entails cultivating a higher frequency of good emotions in our daily experiences (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020).

English language instructors who assist groups of learners who are seen as particularly susceptible in their host community, such as refugees, students with little or disrupted formal education, or students who have experienced trauma, may find themselves doing a variety of responsibilities outside their pedagogical competence. Certain responsibilities may include the provision of intellectual, physical, material, and emotional support, both inside and outside the typical school hours (Montero, 2019; Myeong et al., 2020). Additionally, these individuals may assume the role of teacher advocates within their educational institutions and surrounding communities. English language educators feel obligated to partake in these practices to enhance their students' overall welfare. This commitment stems from the recognition that undertaking actions aimed at safeguarding and enhancing the quality of life for learners is closely intertwined with the professional identity of English language teachers (Linville, 2021). Moreover, these practices are widely acknowledged as essential and exemplary approaches for educators in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Short et al., 2018). Nevertheless, participating in these activities requires a consistent and arduous emotional effort, which might negatively affect the educators' overall well-being.

Newly appointed English language instructors may encounter stress due to many factors, similar to the sources of stress, which may include challenges related to classroom management, insufficient time for preparation, concerns over grades, and excessive workload. English language instructors may have difficulties with their language proficiency since they, too, are English language learners. This further contributes to their issues (Mousavi, (2007). Teacher training programs sometimes fail to address work-related difficulties, including those mentioned and others adequately. Pre-service educators may also benefit from acquiring knowledge on prospective career challenges, such as the limited availability of full-

time employment in higher education or the consequences of holding several teaching posts. Additionally, they need to acquire strategies for proactively promoting their well-being to prevent such challenges (Mousavi, S. 2007). Furthermore, it is worth noting that peer views and team teaching have been recognized as important methods for acquiring knowledge and can contribute to overall well-being (Kocabaş et al., 2021).

The educators who teach must consider the provision of opportunities for practicing and cultivating positive psychology and positivity as crucial components in teacher preparation, given their direct impact on teacher practice. A study conducted by Talbot and Mercer (2018) discovered via a series of interviews that instructors who adopt a positive perspective express a genuine enjoyment in engaging with and instructing their pupils. Furthermore, these teachers emphasized the satisfaction derived from establishing rapport and cultivating connections with their students. Additionally, it was expressed that seeing their pupils' academic achievements was a source of gratification. Several individuals revealed their conviction that they were effecting change and occupying a significant position as English language instructors. Moreover, the participants engaged in a cognitive process of reframing unpleasant events, whereby they adopted an alternative perspective to see things. Simultaneously, they deliberately revisited happy experiences as a means to maintain their emotional state and overall well-being. Talbot and Mercer (2018) also dedicated time to directing their attention toward and expressing gratitude for the pleasant occurrences in their surroundings.

Teachers have reported that engaging in self-care contributes to maintaining their overall well-being. In order to partake in self-care practices, educators may choose to provide themselves with incentives, such as indulging in a distinctive cup of coffee or enjoying a pleasant supper. Including uncomplicated tasks in teachers' everyday routines may contribute to an improved sense of well-being. The importance of self-care for teachers cannot be overstated, as it directly impacts their ability to support and nurture their pupils effectively (Etherington et al., 2020). However, it is

important to note that self-care should not be only attributed to teachers but rather seen as an ecological practice (Mercer, 2021). This necessitates that educational institutions and individuals in positions of authority must provide sufficient time, money, and assistance to enable instructors to participate actively in self-care activities. Engaging in a brief meditation exercise at the start of a meeting, particularly when educators are confronted with a substantial workload, contradicts the concept of teacher self-care. Educational institutions and administrators need to acknowledge their role as leaders and the corresponding need to provide an environment that enables teachers to participate in genuine self-care practices inside and outside the classroom.

In another investigation, Uitto and Estola (2009) interviewed 11 teachers to gather insights into their student experiences and recollections of their past academic teaching. All teachers who participated were female. During the interviews, participants conveyed various emotions, including adoration, dissatisfaction, support, and limitation about their professors. These emotions emerged due to certain events or developed gradually via reciprocal companionship. Significantly, the research revealed that both teachers may possess similar duties, and it was determined that gender does not serve as a reliable indicator of feelings.

A comparative analysis was undertaken by Sarı (2005) to examine a sample of 295 teachers and administrators from various schools throughout Turkey. The study's findings indicate that female teachers reported higher levels of emotional weariness and work satisfaction, while male instructors reported higher levels of depersonalization. Furthermore, it was shown that teachers with greater expertise had a higher sense of personal success but a lower level of work satisfaction than their less experienced counterparts. The research determined that the level of job satisfaction among principals was comparatively greater than that of instructors, mostly due to the heavier burden the latter group carried.

In addition, the study conducted by Nikooppour et al. (2012) aimed to examine the emotional intelligence and self-efficacy levels of 336 Iranian teachers who were actively

engaged in teaching English language programs. The research focused on investigating the potential impact of characteristics such as teaching experience, age, and gender on the emotional competence and self-esteem of the participants. The data collected from the study indicate a favorable correlation between years of teaching experience and the two concepts under investigation. However, age and gender were found to have no discernible influence on the variables being examined.

## Results and Discussion

Research on psychological well-being has often focused on a subset of the characteristics that make up well-being, even though the concept is wide (Houben et al., 2015). Three meta-analytical studies were examined to choose the psychological well-being indicators this review would examine (Ford et al., 2011; Houben et al., 2015; Schmitt et al., 2014). Positive emotionality, life satisfaction, self-esteem, extraversion, and negative emotionality, such as depressive symptoms, anxiety, neuroticism, psychological distress, exhaustion, and personality disorders, are all highlighted in these reviews as positive and negative indicators of psychological well-being. Understanding how work-related stress affects the psychological well-being of academics is crucial for two reasons, considering the importance of psychological well-being. Academics have a crucial role in generating and advancing knowledge, serving as the major resource of a university (Gmelch et al., 1984). Furthermore, scholars can profoundly impact students' lives and enhance society's overall well-being (Salimzadeh, 2017). Therefore, it can be deduced that the mental well-being of academics is essential for maintaining high educational standards. Any factors that compromise their well-being would likewise adversely affect their pupils. In addition, considering the time and resources spent assisting faculty members in dealing with various challenges, such as psychological and physical issues, the financial implications for post-secondary schools might be significant. Prior studies on subjective well-being among faculty members have mostly concentrated on specific components of psychological well-being, lacking a comprehensive examination of this important

issue. This review is the first to provide a current compilation of studies on the effects of stress and job situations on the psychological well-being of academics. Therefore, the conclusions drawn from this analysis contribute to the existing body of research about the psychological well-being of faculty members.

Based on these findings, it seems that students distinguish between their academic and overall well-being as individuals. However, they see both aspects as equally crucial for their well-being as students. However, the results deviate from the theoretical definitions of student well-being, which often emphasize the university (or applied sciences) setting and the well-being of students. Hascher (2008) defines well-being in the educational context as the equilibrium between positive and negative elements within the school environment. The definition provided includes balanced kids, as identified in our research, but with a specific focus on the educational environment.

### 1. What obstacles are associated with psychological wellness experienced by English instructors employed at private institutes inside the Kurdish region?

#### Interviewee 1 (Lecturer 1)

**Obstacles:** According to (Lecturer 1), the substantial workload, including responsibilities such as preparing lessons, assessment, and administrative duties, often results in elevated tension levels and is associated with work strain. The individual conveyed a sense of being inundated by the many demands imposed upon them by pupils, family members, and the educational establishment.

**The influence on pedagogy:** According to (Lecturer 1), these issues often lead to a decrease in the amount of time available for providing personalized attention to students and a reduction in possibilities for student participation. The individuals felt compelled to give precedence to completing duties rather than focusing on delivering high-quality instruction.

**The Effect of Mental Health (Lecturer 1)** claimed that their psychological well-being directly influences their educational techniques and tactics. When experiencing high

levels of stress or feeling overwhelmed, educators have recognized a decline in their capacity to generate innovative ideas and adjust their teaching methods accordingly.

#### Interviewee 1 (Lecturer 2)

**Difficulties: (Lecturer 2)** mentioned that one major problem is how hard it is to keep up and improve their English language competence. They conveyed worries that the demands of exhibiting great language proficiency would negatively impact their self-esteem and general well-being.

**The influence on pedagogy:** The impact on teaching was discussed by (Lecturer 2), who expressed that the emphasis on meeting language competency criteria sometimes eclipsed their attention to implementing effective teaching approaches. The individuals believed this factor impacted their capacity to connect with pupils and provide a stimulating educational environment.

**The Impact of Mental Health (Lecturer 2)** emphasized the significance of psychological well-being in augmenting their educational methodologies. The researchers observed that individuals with a sense of confidence and fulfillment were more inclined to use teaching tactics that effectively promoted student learning.

#### Interviewee 3 (Lecturer 3)

**During the interview, (Lecturer 3) discussed the challenges they have in their profession. (Lecturer 3)** has observed that huge class sizes pose a considerable issue. The participants conveyed challenges in delivering modified attention and fostering active engagement among all pupils, resulting in heightened levels of stress and constrained opportunities for contact.

**The influence on pedagogy (Lecturer 3)** observed that large class numbers were a notable obstacle in creating an atmosphere that is favorable to learning and provides support. This had a discernible influence on the teaching process. The person conveyed a feeling of dissatisfaction arising from the difficulty of fulfilling the distinct needs and preferences of each student.

**The Impact of Mental Health (Lecturer 3)** said that their psychological fulfillment influenced their teaching practices, significantly affecting their motivation and enthusiasm. The people acknowledged that their ability to teach effectively was compromised when they experienced emotions of stress or being overwhelmed.

#### **Interviewee 4 (Lecturer 4)**

**Challenges:** One of the challenges that **(Lecturer 4)** highlighted is the restricted autonomy in choosing instructional materials and establishing curriculum. The individuals conveyed a sense of being constrained by the regulations and standardized evaluations imposed by institutions, limiting their autonomy and imaginative capabilities.

**Impact on Teaching:** According to **(Lecturer 4)**, the restricted amount of autonomy sometimes inhibited their ability to handle the various requirements of their students appropriately. This is something that has an impact on teaching. The participants voiced their exasperation with the limited flexibility of their educational techniques to tailor those approaches to the specific requirements of each student, which they felt was frustrating.

**The Impact of Mental Health (Lecturer 4)** emphasized the significant impact of their psychological well-being on their teaching practices. The individuals believed that while experiencing a sense of support and empowerment, they were inclined to use creative pedagogical methods that resulted in improved student learning outcomes.

#### **Interviewee 5 (Lecturer 5)**

**Challenges:** According to **(Lecturer 5)**, issues pertaining to relationships between learners significantly contribute to the deterioration of individuals' well-being. The individuals expressed their challenges in establishing harmonious relationships with colleagues, children, and supervisors, resulting in feelings of anxiety and loneliness.

**Impact on Teaching: (Lecturer 5)** admitted that the difficulties encountered in interpersonal connections significantly impacted their interactions inside the classroom and the overall atmosphere of teaching. The individuals

articulated the need for a supporting network in order to cultivate their overall well-being and provide a conducive learning environment.

**Positive mental health influences:** According to **(Lecturer 5)**, students' emotional health directly impacts their level of interest and involvement in class. They stressed the need for a sense of support and belonging in order to interact well with peers and superiors.

**To summarise the first interviewee among 5 Lecturers, we conclude that English Lecturers at the National Institute of Technology face several challenges that might significantly impact their mental well-being.** Several contributing variables, such as substantial workloads, elevated performance standards, language proficiency prerequisites, large class sizes, limited independence, and difficulties in interpersonal communication, intensify the concerns for their welfare.

## **2. How does the mental health of English instructors at educational institutions affect their instructional behaviors?**

**(Lecturer 1)** Confirmed the significance of teachers' emotional well-being, asserting its direct impact on their ability to effectively manage the classroom and, thus, provide optimal learning outcomes for their pupils. Promoting teaching autonomy fosters the development of critical thinking skills, the use of adaptable tactics, and the cultivation of a pleasant classroom atmosphere.

**(Lecturer 2)** acknowledged the significance of psychological well-being in fostering ownership and excitement in instructional practices. The experience of being skilled and efficient contributes to the capacity to promote language acquisition and create captivating instructional sessions. Additionally, providing feedback in a timely and constructive manner boosts student engagement and improves the overall results of the learning process.

**(Lecturer 3)** placed significant emphasis on the notion that psychological well-being plays a crucial role in shaping interpersonal connections within the classroom setting. The experience of receiving psychological support and achieving a sense of fulfillment is crucial in

cultivating good connections with students, enhancing the overall supportive nature of the learning environment, and promoting active student engagement.

**(Lecturer 4)** observed that there is a positive correlation between psychological well-being and heightened levels of motivation and satisfaction within the teaching profession. The use of autonomous teaching approaches facilitates the customization and efficacy of instruction, while the presence of self-assurance in instructional capabilities enhances student involvement and academic achievements.

**(Lecturer 5)** focused a high priority on the beneficial influence of psychological well-being to instructional methodologies and students' academic achievements. The experience of being skilled and proficient contributes to the promotion of language acquisition while establishing strong connections with pupils fosters an optimal educational setting.

### 3. What are the potential ways that may be used to provide assistance and enhance the psychological health of English teachers?

According to the findings from interviews conducted with college English lecturers, the following techniques might be suggested to provide assistance and enhance their mental health, as seen through the lens of a psychological framework that explores motivation.

**Allow university English lecturers** to choose how they wish to instruct their courses. Please encourage them to control their classes, adapt their methods to fit the needs of their students, and participate in curriculum development. In order to do this, decision-making procedures need to include educators and provide them with more flexibility in how they approach their teaching.

**Expertise Progress:** Facilitate enhancing career advancement and growth among college English educators. Provide avenues for ongoing education, professional development, and the cultivation of expertise. Please provide tools and seminars to enhance individuals' language skills, pedagogical strategies, and assessment methodologies. Improving the competency of

teachers has the potential to enhance their confidence and efficacy in implementing instructional strategies.

**Encourage a pleasant and encouraging atmosphere at work:** Teachers should be encouraged to work together as a team and show mutual support for one another by fostering an environment of collegiality and openness. Teachers' mental health may be improved by helping them form supportive social connections with learners, managers, and other educators.

**Appreciation and Feedback:** Show institute English lecturers that their work is valued and appreciated. Provide helpful criticism, highlighting both their qualities and places for growth. Facilitate times of introspection and assessment and inspire educators to strive for and acknowledge progress towards objectives. Give them frequent affirmation and constructive criticism to boost their confidence and self-esteem.

**Motivate English instructors to balance work and personal life:** Give those tools and assistance to handle their workload efficiently, establish reasonable goals, and balance work and personal life. Promote healthy habits, stress reduction strategies, and a focus on well-being.

## Conclusion

The results obtained from the interviews conducted with English lecturers at the National Institute of Technology shed light on the notable influence of psychological well-being on teaching methodologies. Educators with elevated levels of emotional health demonstrate excitement, inventiveness, and a feeling of ownership in their pedagogical practices, facilitating the implementation of personalized and efficacious instructional approaches. The individual's self-assurance and proficiency contribute to their aptitude in promoting language acquisition, creating captivating instructional sessions, and delivering prompt evaluations, leading to enhanced student involvement and academic achievements. In addition, the psychological well-being of individuals has a significant impact on their interpersonal connections. Specifically, instructors with a sense of



support and fulfillment are more likely to create good relationships with their pupils, creating an atmosphere conducive to supportive learning. On the other hand, by a psychological framework that examines motivation, techniques that foster and enhance the emotional wellness of higher education English instructors include several aspects. These include the provision of autonomy support, the cultivation of competence growth, the provision of social support, the provision of recognition and feedback, and the establishment of a healthy work-life balance. By employing these tactics, educational institutions can provide a friendly and accommodating atmosphere that effectively boosts work satisfaction, mitigates suffering exhaustion, and eventually enhances English teaching practices. The results above provide significant insights that may be used by educational administrators, leaders, and teacher training programmers to enhance teacher well-being and facilitate the delivery of successful English language teaching.

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