Teachers' Perspective on Perceived Barriers to Psychological Well-Being: A Qualitative Study in Sarawak

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Abstract
Globally, restructuring and reformation of the education system have led to growing stress to perform among teachers. Assessing psychological well-being is vital to enhancing personal growth and mental wellness in the teaching-learning process. The current study aimed to understand the subjective perspectives on perceived barriers to psychological well-being among secondary school teachers. A consensual qualitative research method was applied in this study. Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. To understand the participants' narrative perspectives better, in-depth interviews were utilized to examine the meaning of their experiences, beliefs, and values. Through purposive sampling, seven secondary school teachers were recruited. The collected data were analyzed using an open coding process to derive themes from the participants. Seven themes emerged from the study: negative parents' and students' attitudes, managerial responsibilities, inadequate school facilities, unsupportive colleagues, poor self-management, poor reputed teaching profession, and discouraging teaching experiences. The study highlighted the practical alternative to enhance teachers' psychological well-being, mental health management, and psychotherapy practice. Future research was also discussed in this study.
Keywords: Perceived Barriers, Psychological Well-Being, Qualitative Study, Sarawak, Teacher

Introduction
Globally, educational systems are seeing numerous restructuring and transformations. As the COVID-19 pandemic hit worldwide in early 2020, educational systems again faced significant reconstitution, instigating high pressure among teachers as the role of teachers promptly expanded (Thomas et al., 2020). The teaching profession is challenging and fulfilling as it plays a vital role in building and educating the country's future leaders (Chan et al., 2021). Thus far,

this profession is considered highly stressful, with heavier workloads than other professionals (Hooftman et al., 2015). Undoubtedly, teacher stress is serious and must not be taken lightly.

Recently, the Global Education Census Report Malaysia (2018) underlined that Malaysian teachers were recorded as one of the top teachers. The latter devoted extra hours to ensure their students could excel in their assessments. Teachers in Malaysia are among the most committed worldwide to providing their students do well scholastically by attaining good grades and achieving career goals. Subsequently, teachers face various occupational stress and mental health issues to adapt and adapt to constant educational system changes, multiple roles and responsibilities, and higher professional competence (Ibrahim et al., 2021).

Teachers' psychological well-being is vital in creating a supportive teacher-student relationship, benefitting the teaching-learning process, and enhancing learning effectiveness (Chan et al., 2021). In Malaysia, the importance of the population's mental health has been greatly emphasized. Consequently, the psychological well-being concept has been established as a beneficial and positive aspect of attaining healthier well-being (Jeon, Kwon, Walsh, et al., 2019). Psychological well-being is defined as the perceived commitment of an individual to existential challenges in life (Keyes et al., 2002).

Negative psychological well-being is often linked to psychological distress symptoms of phobic anxiety, depressive and psychosomatic symptoms, cynical attitudes, alcohol ingestion, and occupational burnout (Gustem-Carnicer & Calderon, 2013; Schonfeld et al., 2017). Therefore, understanding the barriers to psychological well-being can assist teachers in attaining better emotional dan personal well-being in preserving optimal mental health and strengthening personal growth. Additionally, research showed that psychological capital is related to psychological well-being, whereby high psychological capital positively increases an individual's psychological well-being (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Psychological well-being is also mediated to improve teachers' values, job satisfaction, and compassion and reinforce gratifying classroom teaching and learning process (Bradley et al., 2018).

Past studies showed several factors that linked positively with teachers' psychological well-being, for instance, level of resilience, supportive colleagues in the workplace, promotion and personal development opportunities, and helpful work settings (Brouskeli et al., 2018; Jeon et al., 2018; Malik et al., 2017). On the contrary, factors that negatively affect psychological well-being include problems dealing with classroom management and disorderly student behavior (Split et al., 2011), workplace bullying, rigid bureaucratic approach, inadequate school facilities, colleagues' negative attitudes, the poor reputation of the teaching profession, parents' and students' behavior, and teachers' negative experiences (Çimen & Ozgan, 2018; Malik et al., 2017; Milatz et al., 2015; Virtanen et al., 2019) These barriers consecutively affect and reduce teachers' psychological well-being holistically.

As to psychological well-being, Ryff (1989) underlined six notions of distinctive sub-dimensions: (1) purpose in life, (2) personal growth, (3) autonomy, (4) self-acceptance, (5) environmental mastery, and (6) positive relationships with others. In other words, Ryff (1989) described each sub-dimension as an individual's belief that his life has a purpose and is meaningful, allows self-growth and development when facing daily situations, adept at making decisions autonomously, and can accept both strengths and weaknesses about himself as well as past, able to manage himself and the world around him, and capable of having quality relationships with other. Therefore, these dimensions impact an individual's personal growth (i.e., psychological capital) and are associated with work life (i.e., job satisfaction) and relationships with others and the world.

Given the limited number of studies on teachers' psychological well-being from East Malaysia, the current study focused on a sample of teachers in Sarawak, particularly secondary school teachers. Hence, the central research question was: What are the perceived barriers to psychological well-being among teachers in Sarawak? The objective of this study was:

- To explore teachers' perspectives on perceived barriers to psychological well-being.

This research aimed to understand the perceived barriers to educators' psychological well-being from their unique perspectives.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a consensual qualitative research method to explore the uniqueness of each participant's experience and an in-depth understanding of subjective perspectives about teachers' perceived barriers to psychological well-being. For instance, a consensual qualitative study (CQR) design was used to learn about the phenomenon experienced by participants and to assist participants in exploring their personal experiences more deeply (Hill & Knox, 2021). An in-depth semi-structured interview was utilized in data collection across participants (Anderson et al., 2014; Hill, 2012). All the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Essentially, the CQR method is frequently utilized in the field of social sciences, education, and psychotherapy, for instance, counseling psychology research, as it is an idyllic method to study in-depth the experiences, perceptions, and beliefs of participants, which provides a more affluent and detailed understanding of a phenomenon (Hill & Knox, 2021). The core idea of this method is emphasized by several researchers getting unanimity as a team to identify the depiction of study data across participants (Creswell, 2012).

Sample and Data Collection

Upon recruitment of participants, written permission was obtained from the Educational Research Planning and Policy Division, Ministry of Education, and State Education Department. The framework of developing a semi-structured interview by Schuman (1982) was utilized to construct the interview protocol (Creswell, 2012). This current study used semi-structured interviews to enable unique experiences of a phenomenon to emerge across the formulated central questions: (1) What are your experiences working as a teacher? (2) What are the challenges faced during the teaching-learning process? (3) What are the perceived barriers to your psychological well-being? Follow-up or probing questions can be done during interview sessions based on the participant's responses to attain in-depth data (Hill & Knox, 2021).

Before the interview session, informed consent forms were explained thoroughly, and participants were allowed to inquire about the study before signing the forms. Data was gathered through seven interview sessions whereby each semi-structured interview was conducted colloquially with one participant. The interviews were conducted in English or Malay, depending on the participants' preferences. Each interview took approximately about 40 to 60 minutes. For confidentiality purposes, coding [Participant (P)] was used to protect the anonymity of the participants. This study achieved data saturation after interviewing seven (7) participants.

A total of seven (7) Malaysian secondary school teachers were recruited in the current study through purposive sampling from local school settings. The study participants were

secondary school teachers with at least three years of working experience (see Table 1). Several inclusion criteria were used in the selection of participants: (a) Malaysian teachers, (b) had been teaching for at least three years, and (c) were willing to share their experiences on barriers to psychological well-being.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Participant [P]	Gender	Age	Race	Year(s) of Service
P1	Female	27	Chinese	3
P2	Female	32	Chinese	8
P3	Male	35	Malay	10
P4	Male	47	Indigenous	18
P5	Female	37	Malay	11
P6	Male	28	Indigenous	3
P7	Female	42	Indian	14

Analyzing of Data

The findings of the study data were analyzed using a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which consisted of six phases: data familiarizing, initial code generating, theme searching, themes reviewing, themes definition and naming, and reporting. Researchers applied a coding process involving three progressive techniques: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the present study, researchers used an open-coding technique to identify themes that emerged across raw data from participants. It is crucial to strengthen the qualitative research results coded by the researchers to decrease bias and assure transparency of the findings (Guion, 2002). Thus, triangulation, prolonged engagement, peer examination, and member checking were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the current study.

Results

The present study yielded rich information. Every participant in this study experienced specific perceived barriers to psychological well-being throughout their teaching profession. All the participants apprehended those barriers to psychological well-being as an avoidable and ongoing subjective experience for teachers.

Seven major themes emerged from the current study (see Figure 1) to address the participants' perceived barriers to teachers' psychological well-being: (1) negative parents' and students' attitudes; (2) managerial responsibilities; (3) inadequate school facilities; (4) unsupportive colleagues; (5) poor self-management; (6) poor reputed teaching profession; and (7) discouraging teaching experiences. Substantially, each theme was interconnected, relating perceived barriers to psychological well-being among teachers (see Figure 2). The participants' perceived barriers to psychological well-being experiences were dynamic, involving external and internal factors.
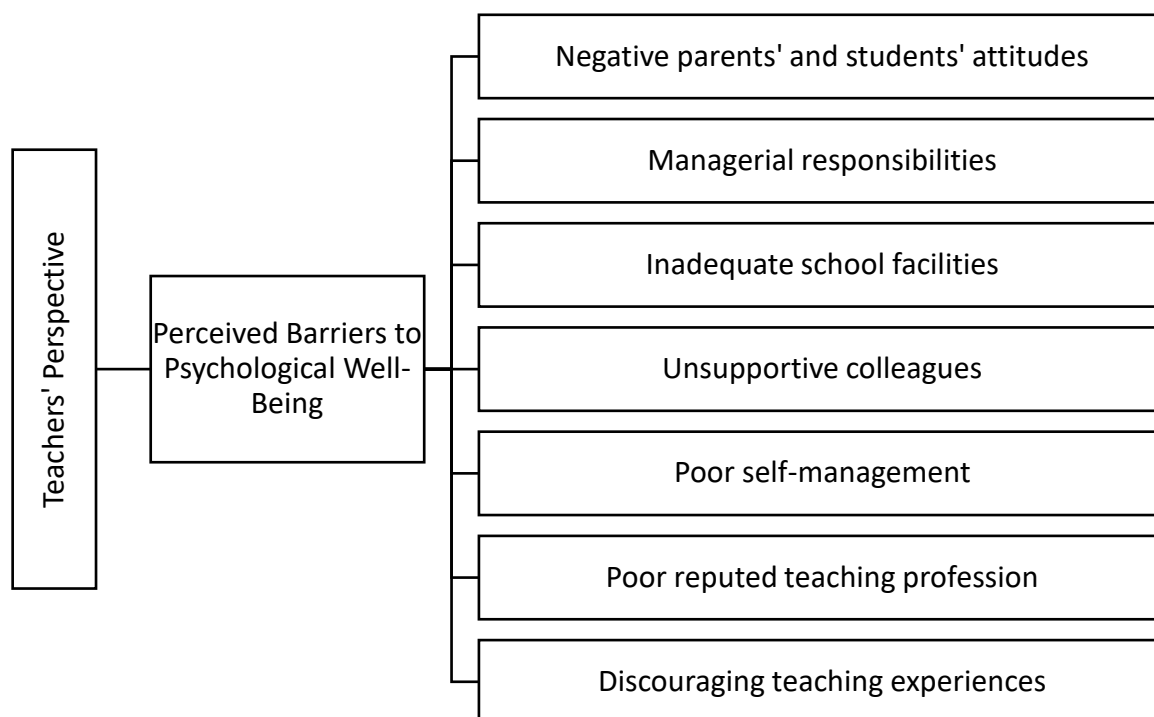
Figure. 1. Summary of emerging themes of perceived barriers to psychological well-being

Theme 1: Negative parents' and students' attitudes
One of the most described barriers to psychological well-being shared by the participants was negative parents' and students' attitudes. The participants reported that students' attitudes, such as low motivation to learn, low drive to excel academically, disruptive behaviors, for instance, lack of discipline, and unpleasant sentiments toward teachers, have been challenging for the past few years. Additionally, parents' negative perceptions and responses to teachers' pedagogy make it difficult for teachers to maintain a good interrelation with some parents.

> 'It is not easy to handle students nowadays. Students' negative attitudes discouraged me from passionately committing to teaching and learning activities. Some of them even against my instructions.' (P1)
> 'Students' attitude. Although I always remind myself to be patient and see everything positively, sometimes I feel the effect of students' low motivation to learn and complete their homework. It makes me feel disheartened. ' (P3)
> 'I think nowadays parents do not see our profession as noble as before this. Sometimes I get negative comments and reactions from some parents about how I teach. I find it challenging to deal with them like this. ' (P4)
> 'More and more students and parents not respecting teachers nowadays. Some parents were not willing to participate in students' activities. I find it very tiring when parents are not helpful in students' educational needs, and some even expect us to take care of everything about their children. Like baby-sitter.' (P7)

Theme 2: Managerial responsibilities
Managerial responsibilities played one of the barriers to the participants' psychological well-being. The participants revealed that more loads in administrative and management tasks

burdened them. They described that with the increased administrative roles and responsibilities, their nonteaching working hours also increased on top of teaching hours

> 'More and more administrative work nowadays. I do not have enough time to prepare my teaching materials. I feel tired almost every day.' (P2)
> 'Overloading clerical work, which is not teaching tasks. Sometimes, I do not have a choice to do what I need to.' (P4)
> 'Changes in the education system and policy created a lot of new tasks. It also caused high authority demand for teachers to ensure everything was under control. It caused much stress, and sometimes I will query whether I can do it. (P5)

Theme 3: Inadequate school facilities
Participants believed that inadequate school facilities affected their well-being. Some participants described that insufficient resources, such as computer and other essentials needed for teaching, has created much frustration and disrupted the teaching and learning process. Additionally, the condition of the school's building also demotivated the participants at the workplace.

> 'Not every computer in the classroom is functional, so we must fight with other colleagues if we want to use it. Sometimes the projector is not functioning. We have to become technicians on the spot. It was stressful.' (P2)
> 'I think school facilities have to improve. Some classroom fans always malfunction; we must teach in a hot classroom. Students are also unable to focus in that condition.' (P3)
> 'School facilities not enough to support the increasing number of students.' (P5)

Theme 4: Unsupportive colleagues
The participants shared that unsupportive colleagues as one of the barriers to their psychological well-being. The participants perceive social support from others as a crucial aspect of maintaining good relationships at work and completing tasks given to a team.

> 'Some of my colleagues were not supportive when I was tasked to organize a program. I find it very difficult to complete that task, and I feel stressed, sad, and angry. That is why I think support from co-workers is very important.' (P1)
> 'I once experienced an unsupportive boss at my previous school. It was a harrowing moment in my early teaching journey.' (P4)
> 'I think colleagues who always comment negatively on how we do things and their unsupportive actions will make it difficult to maintain my optimism and well-being.' (P6)

Theme 5: Poor self-management
The participants shared the impact of poor self-management, which hindered their well-being. Participants revealed that their inability to manage their time and poor coping skills created much stress at school. They also described that the inability to be aware of pressure led to an emotional and mental breakdown.

'I think what challenged me before this was my poor self-management. I like to learn new things, so receiving new tasks will motivate me. Nevertheless, unfortunately, I do not set a limit for what I can do, leading to burnout.' (P2)

'I believe we must learn a good coping strategy to manage many tasks at school and handle tasks at home. Honestly, I am still not very good at coping skills, so I am still unable to manage myself well in both my job and family. ' (P3)

'I wish I have a better way of personal management. Now when I work, I will worry about things at home, and when at home, I will think of work. It seems like I still have to learn more about self-management.' (P5)

Theme 6: Poor reputed teaching profession
The participants described the poor reputation of the teaching profession that hurdled their psychological well-being. Participants found maintaining their optimism and optimal well-being challenging without acknowledgment, recognition, and positive perception of the teaching profession.

'I feel disturbed and disheartened by the way society views teachers nowadays. Getting lesser and lesser acknowledgment and respect from society for our contribution nowadays. Not like our parents and grandparents' time.' (P2)

'I try to be positive, but I feel discouraged whenever I read news about teachers or this profession. On social media, media and people spread only negative news about this profession or maybe certain teachers who did wrong. It affected the good teachers as well.' (P3)

'Overworked and underpaid. These come to my mind when I think of barriers to psychological well-being.' (P5)

Theme 7: Discouraging teaching experiences
The participants revealed that their discouraging teaching experiences appeared to be one of the barriers to their psychological well-being. Participants expressed that a few events that made them feel dismayed affected their ability to achieve their goals within themselves and the external environment. They perceived job dissatisfaction, inability to engage at work, conflicts with co-workers, lack of recognition, and low self-efficacy were generally discouraging teaching experiences.

'I fought with some colleagues due to certain misunderstandings in teaching pedagogy. It affected the way we worked together after that. Now the awkwardness makes us all less happy.' (P2)

'I think recognition and reward are very important after achieving or completing specific tasks. My previous workplace did not practice this, and I did not feel satisfied or encouraged. I think it is very important to appreciate achievement and work done.' (P3)

'Continuous poor performance by the students makes me feel low self-efficacy. Then some parents are challenging to deal with when I want to discuss their children's performance. Some parents will scold us directly in the face.' (P5)
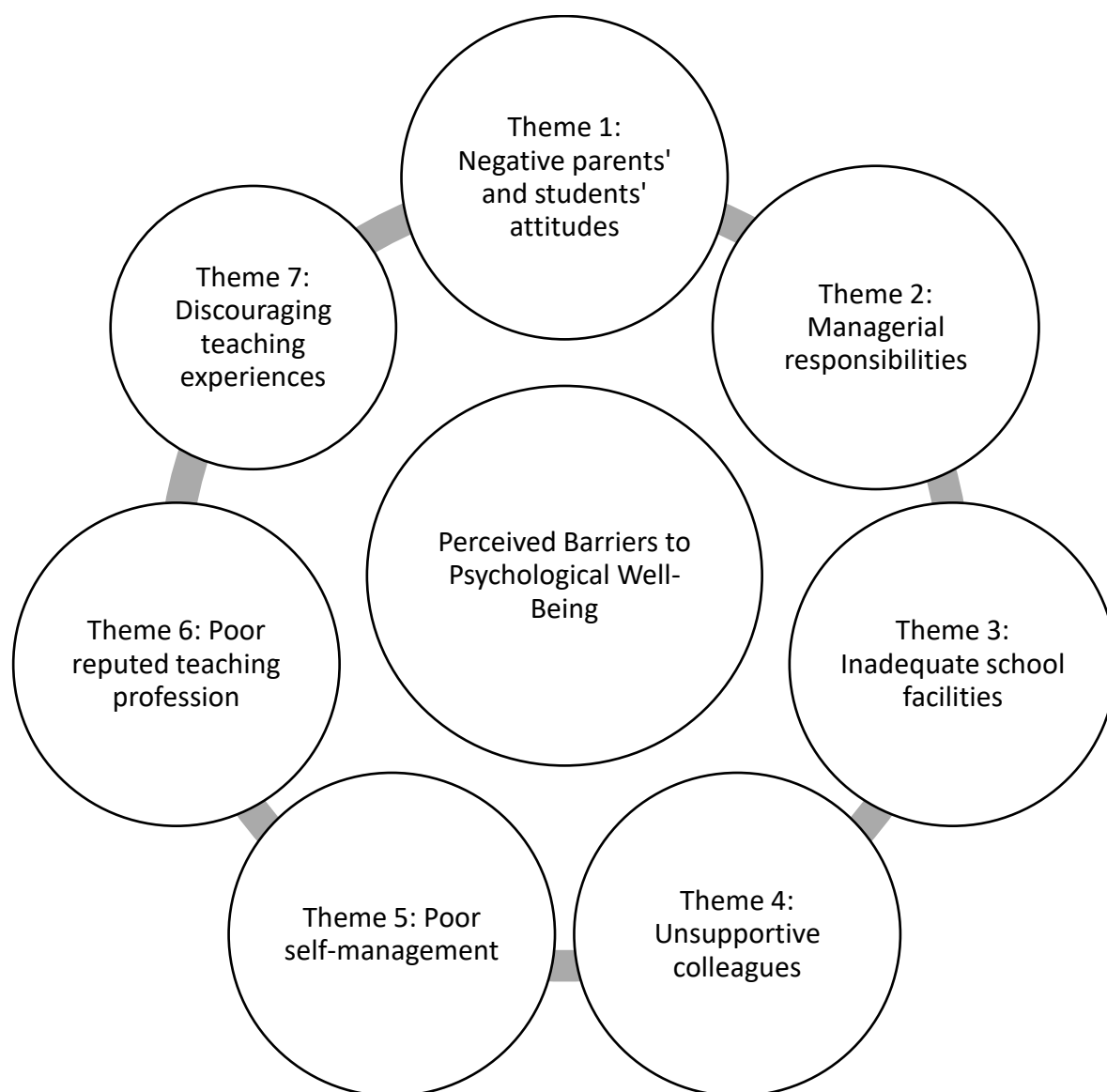
Figure 2. Interconnected major themes of perceived barriers to psychological well-being

Discussion

The current study explored Malaysian teachers' perspectives on perceived barriers to psychological well-being. The findings of our present study unveiled a total of seven themes of perceived barriers to psychological well-being have been revealed: (1) negative parents' and students' attitudes; (2) managerial responsibilities; (3) inadequate school facilities; (4) unsupportive colleagues; (5) poor self-management; (6) poor reputed teaching profession; and (7) discouraging teaching experiences. Noticeably, there were unique interconnections when the participants shared their experiences and perspectives about barriers to their psychological well-being throughout their teaching journey.

Firstly, this study depicted negative parents' and students' attitudes as one barrier to psychological well-being. This is consistent with past studies that underlined negative behavior of students, such as lack of discipline and morality, low motivation in learning, and students' poor performance related to an impediment to teachers' psychological well-being (Bradley et al., 2018; Çimen & Ozgan, 2018; Molero et al., 2019). Furthermore, the finding is also in line with a report by Hargreaves et al (2007), which revealed that teachers receive lesser respect and support these days (i.e., the assumption that teachers are responsible to

cater students' attitudes and health besides educational needs, uninterested of school activities, made demeaning comments and judgments regarding teachers' performance and teaching pedagogy, questioning teachers' authority, and schools' systems). Consequently, parents' and students' negative attitudes caused tense and distant relations between teachers and some unsupportive parents, whereby psychological well-being was associated by facet which involved sustaining good and active interpersonal relations quality of relationships with others (i.e., students, parents, social community) (Gustems & Calderon, 2014; Leow et al., 2020).

Secondly, heightened managerial responsibilities in the teaching profession can be equally gratifying and demanding (Jeon et al., 2019). The present study indicated that managerial responsibilities among teachers in Malaysia have increased, adding to the existing multitude of tasks and responsibilities (i.e., students' co-curricular activities, schools' programs, dealing with student's parents, and teaching responsibilities) (Musa et al., 2018; Othman & Sivasubramanian, 2019; Tang et al., 2013). This finding is aligned with the past study by Musa et al., which indicated that teachers these days are laden with intensifying administrative tasks on top of other classroom responsibilities. The increased hours spent on teaching and nonteaching (i.e., marking assessments and grading papers) time and the high demands on additional administrative duties impact teachers' psychological well-being (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2013).

Thirdly, some participants believed that inadequate school facilities also appeared to be their perceived barriers to psychological well-being. This is consistent with past studies that insufficient school resources and a poor environment have led to occupational stress and poor psychological capital (Çimen & Ozgan, 2018; Ibrahim et al., 2021; Jeon et al., 2019; Malik et al., 2017). Additionally, a study by Sadick & Issa (2017) highlighted that enhancing buildings' indoor environmental quality (IEQ) positively impacted occupants' well-being. Furthermore, the current finding is also supported by research conducted by Schreuder et al. (2015), which observed respondents' improvement in their well-being after shifting from old office buildings to new ones.

Fourthly, the current study also depicted unsupportive colleagues as perceived barriers to psychological well-being. This is aligned with past studies which depicted perceived social support (i.e., partners, family, friends, co-workers) as regularly played as one of the essential aspects associated with an individual's psychological well-being under daily situations (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Sezer, 2022; Wilson et al., 2020). Thus far, the absence or lack of unsupportive social support may lead to poor psychological well-being as social support was found to be significantly associated with the domains of psychological well-being, whereby positive interrelationship with others is highly related to high psychological well-being (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Sezer, 2022).

Fifthly, the participants shared that poor self-management hindered them from coping with their working stress, which preceded poor psychological well-being. Managing personal and professional issues is frequently connected to coping strategies. In this study, the participants depicted incapability to manage themselves, inhibiting them from sustaining optimism and optimal psychological functioning. This is consistent with the past research underlined coping strategies (i.e., self-management, coping mechanisms) that may facilitate teachers to reduce psychological distress throughout the teaching profession (Gustem-Carnicer, & Calderon, 2013; Rajesh et al., 2022). Consequently, poor self-management may elicit a decrement in teachers' psychological well-being.

Next, the participants described the poor reputed teaching profession as another barrier to psychological well-being. This result is consistent with past studies, which indicated that poor reputation of the teaching profession due to various factors (i.e., low salaries, unattractiveness workplace, low society perception and acknowledgment, and negative media coverage about schools and teachers) had impacted teachers' well-being (Hargreaves et al., 2006; Hargreaves et al., 2007; Heidmets & Liik, 2014). Therefore, the teaching profession's reputation and teachers' psychological well-being at school undoubtedly arise from daily situations in school (Heidmets & Liik, 2014). Additionally, media nowadays often report negative news coverage either related to individual teachers (i.e., individual misconduct, unlawful behavior, public accusations) or linked to the profession (i.e., drastic changes in the educational system, teacher shortages, morale and discipline problems, salary issues, the inadequacy of school resources, workload, teaching and nonteaching working hours), which increased the low perception and acknowledgment by the society that directed to the poor reputed teaching profession (Hargreaves et al., 2006; Hargreaves et al., 2007).

Lastly, the participants expressed that discouraging teaching experiences were one of the barriers to their psychological well-being. Teaching experiences are often connected to work engagement, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, pedagogy, and recognition (Dennis et al., 2015; Mikus & Teoh, 2022; Soini et al., 2010; Zee & Koomen, 2016). The current finding is consistent with past research, which emphasized that perceived recognition and encouraging events at work (i.e., work achievement, competent, quality co-workers' relationships) (Dennis et al., 2015), high self-efficacy (Zee & Koomen, 2016), job satisfaction and work engagement (Mikus & Teoh, 2022; Toropova et al., 2021), and teachers' pedagogical well-being (Soini et al., 2010) positively associated with teachers' psychological well-being. Hence, discouraging teaching experiences within the school community may lead to declining teachers' psychological well-being.

The findings of the current study may have few implications. One of the implications is for school counselors who work with clients with job satisfaction problems and other work-related psychological distress issues. School counselors may consider that well-being counseling that promotes and motivates personal aspects of an individual's psychological well-being can enhance teachers' psychological functioning and directly encourage strong attitudes toward their work productivity (Toropova et al., 2021). Teachers play a critical role in shaping the future of our society, and their well-being is essential for their job performance and personal life. Therefore, by understanding teachers' unique challenges and their impact on their psychological well-being, this study can motivate and contribute to developing interventions and strategies to promote psychological well-being among teachers. This, in turn, can eventually benefit both teachers and their students.

The current findings may contribute to and facilitate the development of a systematic psychological well-being program (Bell et al., 2014) to help enhance teachers' psychological well-being in Malaysia, particularly in Sarawak. Subsequently, it may alleviate the issue of inadequate highlighting in the Malaysian education system by integrating psychological well-being concepts into teacher training and professional development programs. Teachers' psychological well-being can impact their job satisfaction, absenteeism, and turnover rate, ultimately affecting the quality of education students receive. Therefore, by understanding the barriers teachers may face in maintaining their psychological well-being, more comprehensive teaching programs and training can develop to support their well-being.

Besides, this study's findings developed an in-depth understanding of psychological well-being among secondary school teachers in East Malaysia, specifically in Sarawak.

Consequently, it broadens the existing theoretical and contextual knowledge of psychological well-being from an Eastern country's perspective. Furthermore, the study's findings highlighted other issues, for instance, organizational commitment to restoring the teaching profession's reputation and the importance of a positive interpersonal relationship with students and parents linked to teachers' psychological well-being (Kun & Gadanecz, 2022).

Additionally, this study's findings can contribute to developing interventions and strategies by school administrators that can promote the importance of psychological well-being programs to enhance teachers' personal growth and self-management (i.e., coping strategies) (Bell et al., 2014). The supportive environment and co-workers may nurture healthy and encouraging experiences among beginning teachers associated with psychological wellness enrichment, diminishing the possibility of psychological distress in the future. Additionally, managerial and organizational levels may promote dimensions of psychological well-being by providing more positive feedback, moral recognition, and appreciation as a form of social reinforcement (Brun & Dugas, 2008). It is a crucial key element of workplace engagement. Fundamentally, developing more encouraging experiences and positive emotions certainly increases psychological capital and empowerment, which are beneficial for generating psychological well-being (Kun & Gadanecz, 2022). Furthermore, relevant frameworks must form for analyzing the media roles concerning public definitions and public understanding of the teaching profession.

Alongside this, the findings of this study contribute to the theoretical knowledge of psychological well-being, particularly among Malaysian teachers. The results also suggest that government and policymakers prompt restructuring of educational policy, syllabus, school practices, and training programs that emphasize the constructs of psychological well-being. This can be implemented early in the curriculum to prepare teacher education students stronger in terms of psychological capital when facing future day-to-day circumstances in teaching and to maintain a sense of accomplishment in sustaining teachers' well-being (Shirley et al., 2020). For instance, by identifying teachers' unique barriers, policymakers and educators can create a supportive environment for teachers. This can include promoting work-life balance, reducing workload, providing mental health resources, and offering professional development opportunities.

In sum, the findings emphasized the importance of understanding subjectively perceived barriers to psychological well-being. Cultivating teachers' psychological well-being is vital not just to improve job satisfaction but also to facilitate them to identify and build psychological strengths in combating stressors.

Conclusion
In conclusion, all seven themes that emerged from teachers' perspectives of perceived barriers to psychological well-being have assisted the participants in being mindful of their possible obstacles to improving workplace contentment and well-being management. As the teaching profession and educational system are rapidly undergoing transformation and restructuring, the current finding has led to timely constant discussion to recognize the significance of positive education and well-being counseling. Perceived barriers to psychological well-being may be set as the foundations to guide teachers or educators who work in school settings. Besides, it is vital to understand each perceived barrier's facets in building strategies to develop more robust psychological capital and well-being to create an optimal occupational environment for this noble profession.

Teachers play a vital role in shaping the future of our society. Their job requires them to deal with various challenges, including managing student behavior, meeting academic standards, and addressing the diverse needs of their students. These demands can affect teachers' psychological well-being, eventually affecting their job performance and personal life. Therefore, it is crucial to understand teachers' barriers to maintaining their psychological well-being. By examining teachers' perspectives on perceived barriers to psychological well-being, this research can broaden the existing theoretical and contextual knowledge of psychological well-being from an Eastern country's perspective.

The pre-and post-COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the education sector. Teachers have had to adapt to new teaching methods, deal with increased workloads, and support their students' emotional needs in a virtual environment. These challenges have only added to teachers' barriers to maintaining their psychological well-being. Therefore, examining teachers' perspectives in the context of perceived barriers to psychological well-being can provide valuable insights into teachers' unique challenges. It can help identify the factors that are contributing to the increased stress levels among teachers and provide insights into how teachers can be supported during these challenging times. Essentially, they are better equipped to support their student's academic and emotional needs.

Recommendations

For future research, it is recommended to reach out to rural schoolteachers who may experience different work environments and occupational stress. It is also suggested to conduct a qualitative research design with rural secondary and primary school teachers to gain an in-depth understanding of their psychological well-being. Furthermore, it is recommended to construct and introduce a systematic evidence-based psychological well-being program in Malaysia for teachers or educators to develop their psychological well-being.

Limitations

The current study has a few limitations. One of the limitations is that the study focused on Sarawak secondary school teachers' experiences; thus far, the finding may not be able to represent the teachers in Malaysia generally. Also, the participants were recruited from public schools; this study's findings may not accurately represent educators in private schools or different educational institutions. The study also aims at the general context of psychological well-being. Future research ought to examine specific sub-dimension of psychological well-being among different cultures.

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