Improving Mental Well-being among Educators in Malaysia through Identifying Psychosocial Risk Factors

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Abstract
Teaching is a challenging profession that requires educators to contend with high workloads, limited job control, and insufficient social support, exacerbating psychosocial risks among them. Thus, understanding psychosocial risk factors is crucial to avoid negative consequences for educators and students. There is a growing concern about the mental well-being of educators in Malaysia and the need to understand psychosocial risk factors among educators in Malaysia. The PERMA and Biopsychosocial models were discussed to understand mental well-being and the associated psychosocial risk factors with mental well-being. The literature discussed four psychosocial risk factors: environment and equipment, workload, work pace and work schedule, work-life balance, and social support. In conclusion, promoting mental well-being among educators requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the ten psychosocial risk factors. Hence, by addressing these factors, organizations can improve the mental well-being of their employees, reduce stress and burnout, and improve overall productivity and performance.
Keywords: Educators, Mental well-being, Psychosocial risks

Introduction
Teaching is a challenging profession that requires educators to manage various responsibilities, including lesson planning, grading, and student management. However, the demands of the job can take a toll on educators' mental health, leading to stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression (Agyapong et al., 2022). In Malaysia, educators face a unique set of challenges that can exacerbate psychosocial risks, including high workload, low job control, and inadequate social support (Ibrahim et al., 2021). As a result, there is a growing concern about the mental well-being of educators in Malaysia and the need to address psychosocial risk problems in the workplace.

The prevalence of stress and illness among educators in Malaysia has been documented in several studies (Tai et al., 2019). Despite the evidence of physical and mental health problems, there appears to be a lack of studies or concerns regarding occupational safety and health among educators in Malaysia (Tai et al., 2019). This lack of attention to the well-being of educators is concerning, considering the impact of psychosocial risks on mental health and the potential consequences for both educators and students.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes the significance of addressing psychosocial risks in the workplace, including work-related stress and workplace violence (Mukrimaa et al., 2016). WHO emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to occupational health that includes preventing and managing psychosocial risks. Accordingly, this approach involves identifying and assessing psychosocial hazards, implementing interventions to reduce risks, and promoting a positive work environment that supports mental well-being.

Notably, improving the well-being of educators requires a whole-school approach that involves both teachers and parents (Gymnasio et al., 2023). Educators need support from their colleagues, administrators, and the broader community to promote their mental health and well-being. This support can include access to resources and training on stress management, job control, and social support. Additionally, educators need to be empowered to take control of their own mental health and well-being by practicing self-care and seeking help when needed.

This article explores mental well-being among educators in Malaysia and the role of psychosocial risks in exacerbating the problem. The article will review the existing literature on the prevalence of stress and illness among educators in Malaysia and the associated risk factors. Furthermore, the article will examine the current state of occupational safety and health among educators in Malaysia and the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing psychosocial risks in the workplace. Finally, the article will discuss potential interventions and strategies for promoting mental well-being among educators in Malaysia.

Problem Statement

Educators in Malaysia are facing a significant mental health problem, which can negatively impact their well-being. According to recent studies, the prevalence of mental health issues among educators in Malaysia has increased over the last five years (Raaj et al., 2021). A systematic review of the prevalence of illness and stress among educators in Malaysia discovered that the prevalence of stress among educators in Malaysia ranged from 12.5% to 87.5%, while the prevalence of illnesses ranged from 9.5% to 90.5% (Tai et al., 2019). These statistics highlight the urgent need to address the mental well-being of educators in Malaysia. Additionally, a recent study reported that the prevalence of mental disorders among adults in Malaysia was 29% (Raaj et al., 2021).

Several risk factors contribute to the high prevalence of stress and illness among educators in Malaysia. These risk factors include high workload, low job control, inadequate social support, and poor working conditions (Raaj et al., 2021; Sahril et al., 2021; Tai et al., 2019). Consequently, these factors can lead to burnout, anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems among educators.

The impact of psychosocial risks on educators' mental well-being can have serious consequences for educators and students. That is, educators who experience high levels of stress and burnout are more likely to experience physical health problems, such as cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal disorders (Tai et al., 2019). In addition, educators who are struggling with mental health problems may be less effective in their roles, which can negatively impact student learning outcomes.

Considering the high prevalence of mental health issues among educators in Malaysia, there is an urgent need to address the mental well-being of educators. This can be achieved through a comprehensive approach that involves identifying and assessing psychosocial hazards, implementing interventions to reduce risks, and promoting a positive work environment that supports mental well-being (Kotera et al., 2021; Sahril et al., 2021; Tai et al., 2019). Moreover, educators need support from their colleagues, administrators, and the broader community to promote their mental health and well-being (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Raaj et al., 2021).

Underpinning Theory
PERMA Model
The PERMA model of well-being, developed by Martin Seligman, is a framework for happiness and well-being based on positive psychology through five elements: positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (MTCT, 2023),[3],(PERMA, 2023). The PERMA model has been employed in various studies to measure and promote well-being, including among undergraduate students (Kovich et al., 2023).

The PERMA model can be applied to educators in Malaysia to promote their mental well-being. Educators who experience positive emotions, are engaged in their work, have positive relationships, find meaning in their work, and achieve their goals are more likely to experience well-being. For example, educators can engage in activities that promote positive emotions, such as practicing gratitude or mindfulness. They can also find meaning in their work by connecting with their students and seeing the impact of their teaching. Additionally, educators can set achievable goals and celebrate their accomplishments to promote a sense of accomplishment.

Engagement is another crucial element of the PERMA model that can promote mental well-being among educators. Educators who are engaged in their work are more likely to experience well-being. This can be achieved by providing educators with opportunities for professional development, autonomy in their work, and a supportive work environment. Furthermore, educators can engage in activities that bring them joy and fulfilment outside of work to promote engagement.

Positive relationships are also vital for promoting mental well-being among educators. Note that educators with positive relationships with their colleagues, students, and families are more likely to experience well-being. This can be achieved by promoting a positive work environment that values collaboration and social support. Additionally, educators can engage in activities that promote positive relationships, such as team-building exercises or social events.

Finally, the PERMA model highlights the significance of accomplishment in promoting mental well-being among educators. Educators who achieve their goals and celebrate their accomplishments are more likely to experience well-being. This can be achieved by setting achievable goals and celebrating big and small successes. Hence, educators can engage in activities that foster a sense of accomplishment, such as participating in professional development opportunities or pursuing hobbies outside of work.

In summary, the PERMA model provides a framework for promoting mental well-being among educators in Malaysia. Educators who experience positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment are more likely to experience well-being. Moreover, by promoting these elements, educators can improve their mental well-being and be more effective in their roles.

Biopsychosocial Model
The Biopsychosocial model is a comprehensive model used to understand why and how illness occurs (*What Is the Biopsychosocial Model? - Definition & Example*, 2016). It incorporates three components: biological, psychological, and social. The model emphasizes the interconnectedness of these factors and how they can impact an individual's health and well-being. The Biopsychosocial model has been utilized in various studies to understand and promote mental well-being, including among educators in Malaysia (Al-sabbah et al., 2021). The biological component of the Biopsychosocial model refers to the physical aspects of an individual's health, including genetics, brain chemistry, and physical health. Notably, biological factors can impact an individual's mental well-being, such as the impact of stress on the body. Consequently, educators who experience high levels of stress may be at risk for physical health problems, such as cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal disorders, which can negatively impact their mental well-being (Psychological, 2020).

Meanwhile, the psychological component of the Biopsychosocial model refers to an individual's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Psychological factors can impact an individual's mental well-being, such as the impact of negative self-talk on self-esteem. That is, educators who struggle with negative self-talk may be at risk for mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression, which can negatively impact their well-being (Megan, 2021).

At the same time, the social component of the Biopsychosocial model refers to an individual's social environment, including social support, relationships, and cultural norms. Social factors can impact an individual's mental well-being, such as the impact of social support on stress management. Note that educators with strong social support networks may be better able to cope with the demands of their jobs and maintain their mental well-being.

The Biopsychosocial model highlights the significance of addressing all three components to promote mental well-being among educators in Malaysia. This can be achieved through a comprehensive approach that includes identifying and assessing psychosocial hazards, implementing interventions to reduce risks, and promoting a positive work environment that supports mental well-being (Al-sabbah et al., 2021). Accordingly, educators can engage in activities that promote physical health, such as exercise and healthy eating, to promote their biological well-being. Educators can also engage in activities that promote positive thoughts and emotions, such as mindfulness and positive self-talk, to promote their psychological well-

being. Finally, educators can engage in activities that promote positive relationships, such as team-building exercises and social events, to promote their social well-being.

In summary, the Biopsychosocial model provides a comprehensive framework for promoting mental well-being among educators in Malaysia. By addressing the model's biological, psychological, and social components, educators can improve their mental well-being and be more effective in their roles.

Overview of Mental Well-Being
Mental well-being refers to an individual's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how individuals think, feel, and act, and it helps determine how they handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices (Health, 2023). Mental well-being is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. Mental and physical health are equally important components of overall health and are interconnected (Health, 2023).

Various perspectives have been adopted in the literature to conceptualize mental health and well-being. One perspective is the PERMA model, developed by Martin Seligman. It consists of five core elements of psychological well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Hernández-torrano et al., 2020; Kern et al., 2015). Another perspective is the Biopsychosocial model, proposing that mental well-being is influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors (Crinson, 2017). The Biopsychosocial model emphasizes the interconnectedness of these factors and how they can impact an individual's health and well-being.

There are several strategies that individuals can adopt to promote their mental well-being. These strategies include regular exercise, practicing mindfulness, building positive relationships, finding meaning and purpose in life, and setting achievable goals (Smith et al., 2023). Additionally, individuals can engage in self-care activities, such as getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet, and engaging in hobbies or activities that bring joy and fulfilment.

In essence, mental well-being is particularly essential for university students, who face various challenges that can negatively impact their mental health (Hernández-torrano et al., 2020). The literature highlights the significance of addressing psychosocial risks in the workplace, including work-related stress and workplace (Hernández-torrano et al., 2020; Kern et al., 2015). Psychosocial risks are factors in the workplace that can negatively impact an individual's mental health and well-being. These risks can include high workload, low job control, inadequate social support, and poor working conditions (Health, 2023; Hernández-torrano et al., 2020; Kern et al., 2015).

In summary, mental well-being is a complex construct influenced by various factors, including biological, psychological, and social factors. Accordingly, there are several strategies that individuals can adopt to promote their mental well-being, including engaging in regular exercise, practicing mindfulness, building positive relationships, finding meaning and purpose in life, and setting achievable goals. Thus, addressing psychosocial risks in the workplace is also important for promoting mental well-being among workers.

Psychosocial Risk Factors

The International Labor Organization (ILO) has identified several work-related psychosocial risk factors that can negatively impact an individual's mental health and well-being. These risk factors include job content, workload and work pace, job control, environment and equipment, organizational culture, role in the organization and career development.

These psychosocial risk factors can lead to stress, burnout, anxiety, depression, and other mental health problems among workers. The ILO emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to occupational health that includes preventing and managing psychosocial risks. This approach involves identifying and assessing psychosocial hazards, implementing interventions to reduce risks, and promoting a positive work environment that supports mental well-being.

The literature also highlights the significance of a positive work environment in promoting mental well-being among workers. In particular, a positive work environment can include factors such as job control, social support, and a supportive organizational culture. Workers who work in a positive work environment are more likely to experience well-being and be effective in their roles.

In summary, the ILO has identified several work-related psychosocial risk factors that can negatively impact an individual's mental health and well-being. Addressing these risk factors is vital for promoting mental well-being among workers. Furthermore, a positive work environment that supports mental well-being is also crucial for promoting well-being among workers.

Relationship between work Environment and Mental Well-Being

The relationship between the environment and the mental well-being of educators or employees is a fundamental topic studied in various fields. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the relationship between environment and mental well-being based on the search results.

A positive work environment can improve employee performance and commitment levels (Zhenjing et al., 2022). Employees who are satisfied with their work environment are more likely to have positive work output. In addition, a positive work environment also significantly improves employee commitment level and achievement-striving ability. Similarly, a positive work environment promotes the achievement-striving ability of the employees. Therefore, organizations should focus on improving the achievement-striving ability of the employees through a positive workplace environment.

Furthermore, a positive work environment can boost employees' physical and psychological health (Allen et al., 2022). Positive and supportive workplace practices can boost employee physical and psychological health, company morale, and the bottom line. On the one hand, fostering a positive work environment and making mental health resources available can also help attract top talent to the organization. On the other hand, equity, diversity, and inclusion training are also connected to supporting employee mental health. Accordingly, a welcoming and safe work climate builds trust among leadership and employees.

Decent work is good for mental health (WHO, 2022). All workers have the right to a safe and healthy environment at work. Decent work supports good mental health by providing a livelihood, a sense of confidence, purpose and achievement, an opportunity for positive relationships and inclusion in a community, and a platform for structured routines, among many other benefits. For people with mental health conditions, decent work can contribute to recovery and inclusion and improve confidence and social functioning. On top of that, safe and healthy working environments are not only a fundamental right but are also more likely to minimize workplace tension and conflicts and improve staff retention, work performance, and productivity.

In summary, a positive work environment is imperative for promoting mental well-being among educators or employees. A positive work environment can improve employee performance, commitment level, and physical and psychological health and attract top talent to the organization. Moreover, decent work is also good for mental health and can contribute to recovery and inclusion, improve confidence and social functioning, and minimize tension and conflicts at work.

Relationship between Workload and Mental Well-Being
Research has proven that there is a direct relationship between workload and the mental well-being of educators or employees [1] (Nieuwenhuijzan, 2019). A high workload can lead to stress, burnout, and other mental health problems among educators or employees. Educators or employees who experience high levels of stress may be at risk for physical health problems, such as cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal disorders, which can negatively impact their mental well-being (Gymnasio et al., n.d.). Therefore, it is crucial to address workload as a psychosocial risk factor in the workplace.

In addition, the relationship between workload and personal well-being among university professors has been studied (Pace et al., 2021). The study reported that high workload was negatively related to personal well-being among university professors. The authors argued that workload management is important for promoting personal well-being among university professors. This can be achieved by providing professors with opportunities for professional development, autonomy in their work, and a supportive work environment. Additionally, professors can engage in activities that bring them joy and fulfilment outside of work to promote their personal well-being.

A mentally healthy work environment promotes employee well-being, job satisfaction, and engagement (Keenan, 2023). It also leads to increased productivity, creativity, and innovation. Therefore, it is critical for organizations to address workload as a psychosocial risk factor in the workplace. This can be achieved by identifying and assessing workload hazards, implementing interventions to reduce risks, and promoting a positive work environment that supports mental well-being. Correspondingly, employees can engage in activities that promote their physical and mental health, such as regular exercise, mindfulness, and self-care activities.

In summary, workload is a notable psychosocial risk factor that can negatively impact the mental well-being of educators or employees. Thus, addressing workload as a psychosocial risk factor in the workplace is imperative for promoting mental well-being among workers.

This can be achieved by identifying and assessing workload hazards, implementing interventions to reduce risks, and promoting a positive work environment that supports mental well-being. As such, employees can engage in activities that promote their physical and mental health.

Relationship between Work-life Balance and Mental Well-Being
Maintaining a good work-life balance is paramount for promoting mental well-being among educators or employees (Foundation, 2021; Writers, 2021). Balancing the demands of work, school, and life can be challenging; however, it is critical to overall success and mental health. Consequently, a good work-life balance can benefit individuals personally, professionally, and academically. For instance, by devoting sufficient time to sleep and exercise, individuals can better focus in class or at work and absorb more information from readings and lectures. In turn, adhering to this practice can reduce the amount of time needed to spend studying or working, making it easier to balance academic and professional obligations.

Research has demonstrated that work-life balance is related to job satisfaction, well-being, and psychological health (Gragnano et al., 2020). Job satisfaction is an indicator of well-being and psychological health and is related to many positive worker behaviours. Moreover, a good work-life balance can reduce stress, burnout, and other mental health problems among educators or employees. Ultimately, it can lead to increased productivity, creativity, and innovation. Therefore, organizations must promote work-life balance as a psychosocial risk factor.

Achieving work-life balance can be challenging, especially for educators or employees who have demanding jobs or caregiving responsibilities (Barile et al., 2022). However, there are several strategies that individuals can adopt to promote their work-life balance and mental well-being. These strategies include setting clear boundaries between work and personal life, prioritizing self-care activities, such as exercise and relaxation techniques, and seeking support from colleagues, friends, or family members. Furthermore, organizations can promote work-life balance by offering flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting or flexible schedules, and promoting a positive work culture that values work-life balance.

In summary, maintaining a good work-life balance is important for promoting mental well-being among educators or employees. A good work-life balance can benefit individuals personally, professionally, and academically, reduce stress, burnout, and other mental health problems, and increase productivity, creativity, and innovation. Note that achieving work-life balance can be challenging, yet there are several strategies that individuals can adopt to promote their work-life balance and mental well-being. On top of that, organizations can promote work-life balance by offering flexible work arrangements and promoting a positive work culture that values work-life balance.

Relationship between Social Support and Mental Well-Being
Social support is critical in promoting mental well-being among educators or employees. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the relationship between social support and mental well-being based on the search results.

Furthermore, social support can impact teachers' mental health literacy (Li et al., 2022). Teachers who receive social support are more likely to have better mental health literacy, which refers to the knowledge and beliefs about mental health and mental illness. Notably, it can come from various sources, such as colleagues, supervisors, friends, and family members. Generally, teachers with social support are more likely to recognize and respond to mental health problems among their students, which can improve the mental well-being of both teachers and students.

At the same time, social support can also mediate the relationship between well-being and teaching effectiveness [2]. Teachers who receive social support are more likely to have better well-being, which refers to the overall quality of life and happiness. In addition, teachers with better well-being are more likely to be effective in their teaching. Therefore, it can mediate the relationship between well-being and teaching effectiveness, highlighting the significance of social support in promoting mental well-being among educators.

Similarly, social support is valuable for promoting mental health and well-being among students (*Supporting Child and Student Social , Emotional , Behavioral , and Mental Health Needs*, 2021),(Sutherland, 2018). Teachers and school staff can provide social support to students by creating a positive and supportive school environment, promoting positive relationships among students, and providing resources and support for students who are struggling with mental health problems. Hence, social support can improve students' mental health and well-being, which can, in turn, improve their academic achievement and success.

In summary, social support is vital in promoting mental well-being among educators and employees. It can impact teachers' mental health literacy, mediate the relationship between well-being and teaching effectiveness, and promote mental health and well-being among students. Accordingly, teachers and school staff can provide social support to students by creating a positive and supportive school environment, promoting positive relationships among students, and providing resources and support for students who are struggling with mental health problems.

Conclusion
In conclusion, mental well-being is a fundamental aspect of overall health that affects individuals at every stage of life. The PERMA and Biopsychosocial models provide frameworks for understanding mental well-being and the factors that influence it. In particular, psychosocial risks, such as workload, environment, and work-life balance, can negatively impact the mental well-being of educators or employees. Notably, addressing these risks is vital for promoting mental well-being in the workplace.

Furthermore, social support is crucial in promoting mental well-being among educators or employees. It can impact teachers' mental health literacy, mediate the relationship between well-being and teaching effectiveness, and promote mental health and well-being among students. Thus, teachers and school staff can provide social support to students by creating a positive and supportive school environment, promoting positive relationships among students, and providing resources and support for students who are struggling with mental health problems.

In addition, a positive work environment is important for promoting mental well-being among educators or employees. It can improve employee performance, commitment level, and physical and psychological health and attract top talent. On top of that, decent work is also good for mental health and can contribute to recovery and inclusion, improve confidence and social functioning, and minimize tension and conflicts at work.

Moreover, maintaining a good work-life balance promotes mental well-being among educators and employees. A good work-life balance can benefit individuals personally, professionally, and academically, reduce stress, burnout, and other mental health problems, and increase productivity, creativity, and innovation. Although achieving work-life balance can be challenging, there are several strategies that individuals can adopt to promote their work-life balance and mental well-being.

In conclusion, promoting mental well-being among educators or employees requires a comprehensive approach that addresses psychosocial risks, promotes a positive work environment, provides social support, and promotes work-life balance. Therefore, by addressing these factors, organizations can improve the mental well-being of their employees, reduce stress and burnout, and improve overall productivity and performance. A proposed framework, as illustrated in Figure 1, can be explored further.
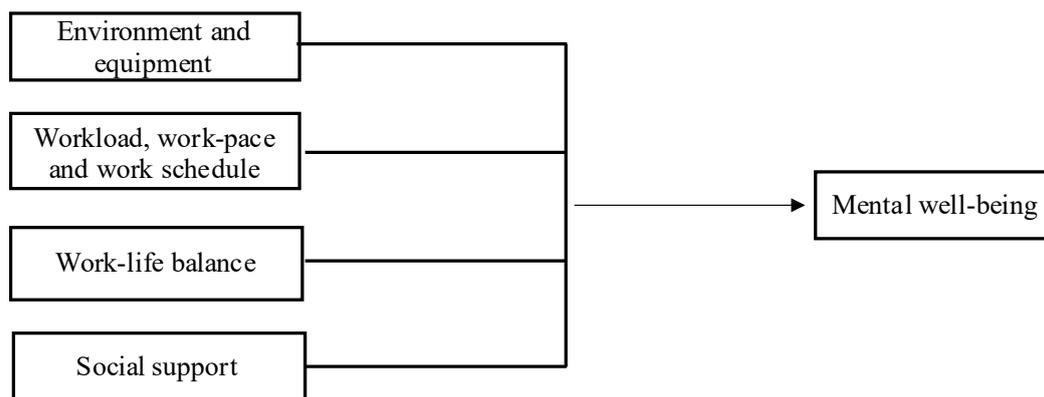

Figure 1: Proposed Mental Well-being Framework

Acknowledgment

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