

Overview of subjective well-being in educators at SMK X Sumba

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ABSTRACT

Education is a fundamental right for all citizens, as outlined in the 1945 constitution. However, the equitable distribution of educational opportunities in Indonesia remains a significant challenge, particularly in regions such as East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Province. This study aims to elucidate the subjective psychological well-being of educators at SMK X Sumba. The study employed a descriptive quantitative approach, leveraging a nonprobability sampling method through a convenience sampling technique. The subjective well-being of educators was measured using the Scale of Positive Affect and Negative Affect (SPANE) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The results showed that educators' subjective well-being was classified as good, with 73.9% in the moderate category and 26.1% in the high category. Positive affection had a high level (95.7 %), while negative affection tended to be low (82.6 %). In terms of cognition, life satisfaction shows 87% of the respondents were in the high category, which reflects that educators at SMK X Sumba have positive feelings and high life satisfaction, although there is room for improvement. This suggests that educators should develop psychological wellbeing-based programs to support teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

Keywords: Subjective well-being; teacher; Sumba; East Nusa Tenggara.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education holds a central and urgent place in Indonesia's national agenda, as explicitly mandated by Article 31 Paragraph 1 of the 1945 Constitution, which affirms that every citizen has the right to receive education. This right is further institutionalized in Article 20 of Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, which emphasizes that education is a conscious and deliberate effort to create a learning environment and learning process that actively develops students' spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, nobility, and necessary skills. Despite these constitutional commitments, significant disparities persist in the quality and accessibility of education across various regions of Indonesia. Regional inequalities are evident in indicators such as community participation in basic education and the fulfilment of the nine-year compulsory education program, with the average years of schooling remaining relatively low in some provinces (Harahap et al., 2020). One of the regions most affected by these challenges is the East Nusa Tenggara (Nusa Tenggara Timur, NTT), which continues to report lower educational outcomes than other provinces. This underperformance presents a critical concern, as the quality of education is closely linked to young people's capacity to think critically, manage local resources, and meaningfully contribute to regional development and social welfare (Kennedy, 2022).

One case in point is SMK X, a vocational high school in Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara. This institution has made consistent efforts to improve the quality of teaching staff and student outcomes. However, based on qualitative observations made by principals and faculty members, many educators still struggle to build meaningful rapport with students. Additionally, a lack of self-awareness among teachers often creates a classroom environment that is less conducive to learning and may lead to increased conflict between educators and students (I., personal communication, January 26, 2024). Addressing these issues requires a strategic focus on the continuous professional and personal development of educators (Reni et al., 2023). According to Law No. 20 of 2003, educators are professionals, including teachers, lecturers, counsellors, and tutors, who play an essential role in the educational process. Teaching is widely recognized as a profession with high emotional and psychological demands. The associated stress can have adverse consequences on teachers' well-being and, ultimately, on students' academic experiences and outcomes (Ramberg et al., 2020).

One critical yet often underexplored aspect of teaching is psychological well-being, particularly subjective well-being (SWB). This concept refers to an individual's perception and evaluation of their own life satisfaction and emotional experiences. In educational contexts, subjective well-being significantly affects teachers' performance, classroom engagement, and long-term professional commitment. Conversely, low levels of subjective well-being can manifest as absenteeism, poor classroom discipline, decreased motivation, and even professional burnout (Hascher & Waber, 2021). However, despite increasing attention paid to teacher well-being in Indonesia, most empirical studies have focused on educators working in urban, well-resourced public schools in cities such as Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung (Larasati & Monika, 2024). These studies often overlook the unique stressors and contextual challenges faced by teachers in disadvantaged and rural areas. National surveys and policy reports highlight significant disparities in teacher distribution, school infrastructure, and access to professional development between Java and the outer islands, such as NTT (MoEC, 2020). However, few studies have attempted to empirically examine how these conditions affect teachers' subjective well-being in underdeveloped regions.

There is a noticeable gap in the literature on SWB among teachers working in vocational high schools in isolated contexts, such as Sumba. This region faces compounded educational barriers, including geographic isolation, high teacher turnover, inadequate professional networks, and socioeconomic hardships (Fitriani et al., 2021; Prasetyaningrum et al., 2022). These factors may distinctly shape educators' psychological well-being in ways that are not captured by existing research focused on urban or more accessible regions. Thus, the assumption that teacher well-being is a uniform experience across settings fails to account for the educational realities of Indonesia's rural periphery. Exploring this issue in Sumba not only fills an empirical void but also offers insights critical to designing place-based policies that promote equity and retention in underserved schools.

This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the profile of subjective well-being among educators at SMK X in Sumba. This study seeks to uncover the key psychological, social, and institutional factors that influence teachers' well-being. The findings are expected to offer concrete recommendations for institutional strategies, such as curricular reforms, professional development programs, and personalized support systems, all geared toward enhancing educators' overall well-being. In doing so, the study contributes to both the academic literature on teacher well-being and practical efforts to improve education in the marginalized regions of Indonesia.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, descriptive, and nonexperimental research design. The primary objective of this study was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the subjective well-being of educators at SMK X in Sumba. A descriptive approach was deemed appropriate for examining the current psychological condition of teachers without manipulating any variables, thereby allowing naturalistic observation and interpretation of existing phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

2.2. Data Collection

The present study will examine the participants and sampling methods. Participants were selected using non-probability sampling, specifically, convenience sampling. A self-report questionnaire was disseminated to educators at SMK X in Sumba who were available and willing to participate. The inclusion criteria stipulated that participants must currently be employed as educators at school and must consent to voluntary participation in the study. The selection of this sampling method was based on considerations of accessibility, time efficiency, and feasibility within geographical and institutional contexts. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed of the purpose of the research and were provided with the opportunity to provide informed consent. Ethical standards for confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study.

2.3. Measurement

Subjective well-being was measured by assessing both affective and cognitive components following the conceptual framework of Diener et al. (2009). Both instruments used in this study demonstrated good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.87 for the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985) and reported reliability coefficients for the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) (Diener et al., 2009) ranging between 0.81 and 0.89 across various studies.

2.3.1. Affective Well-Being

The affective component was evaluated using the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE). SPANE consists of 12 items divided into two subscales: positive affect (SPANE-P) and negative affect (SPANE-N). Sample items include "*pleasant*" and "*happy*" for SPANE-P, and "*unpleasant*" and "*sad*" for SPANE-N. Participants rated how often they had experienced each emotion over the past four weeks using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very rarely or never*) to 5 (*very often or always*). Each subscale yielded scores ranging from six to 30. Additionally, an optional Affect Balance Score (SPANE-B) can be calculated by subtracting the SPANE-N score from the SPANE-P score, resulting in a possible range from -24 to +24. Higher SPANE-B scores indicate a more favorable emotional state.

2.3.2. Cognitive Well-Being

The cognitive component was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The SWLS consists of five items that assess global life satisfaction, such as "In most ways my life is close to my ideal." Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), yielding total scores ranging from 5 to 35. Higher scores reflect greater satisfaction with life.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Participants Overview

The participant profile was based on the demographic data collected through the initial questionnaire and served as a descriptive basis for the analysis. A total of 23 educators participated in the study, which also represented the entire teaching staff of SMK X at the time of data collection. Most of the participants were female (56.5%) and held a bachelor's degree (73.9%). Most respondents reported having between one and five years of teaching experience (87%), making early career educators the dominant group in terms of work tenure. Although the study involved the entire teacher population at SMK X, the sample still reflected a relatively small and demographically homogeneous group, which limits the broader applicability of the findings. Notably, the sample was skewed toward early career educators, potentially limiting insight into the well-being experiences of senior staff. Although a full-population approach helps reduce some forms of sampling error, the study remains vulnerable to selection and response biases, particularly because participation is voluntary. Some educators may have responded more actively because of their openness to the research topic or their current psychological state, whereas others may have participated less earnestly or withheld certain information.

Furthermore, due to the descriptive nature of the findings and the limited variability within the sample, there is a risk of overinterpreting observed patterns. The results should, therefore, be interpreted with caution and seen primarily as exploratory insights specific to the institutional and regional context. As such, the findings should not be generalized beyond SMK X or similar rural vocational school environments but instead provide an initial empirical foundation for future studies in more diverse or comparative settings (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participants Overview

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	10	43.50
	Female	13	56.50
Education Level	Highschool/Vocational School	3	13.05
	Bachelor	17	73.90
	Masters	3	13.05
Tenure	<1 year	2	8.80
	1 years	10	43.50
	2 – 5 years	10	43.50
	>5 years	1	4.30

3.2 Subjective Well-Being Overview

Subjective well-being (SWB) was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, with a hypothetical mean of three used as a baseline for interpretation. The results indicated that participants generally exhibited a favorable level of subjective well-being. The affective component of SWB was evaluated through two subdimensions: positive and negative affect. The empirical mean for positive affect was 4.49, which exceeded the hypothetical mean of three, indicating a high level of positive emotions. Similarly, the mean for negative affect was 3.46, which, while slightly above the midpoint, suggests that negative emotions were present, but not predominant (see Table 2).

Table 2. Affective Well-being Overview

Dimension	Min.	Max.	Mean.	Std. Dev.
Positive Affect	3.0	5.00	4.49	2.98
Negative Affect	2.2	5.00	3.46	2.65

For the cognitive dimension of subjective well-being, participants' scores were measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The results indicated that the minimum score was 17, while the maximum score was 33, with an empirical mean of 4.68 and a standard deviation of 4.61. The mean score, which exceeded the hypothetical average of 3, indicated that participants generally reported a high level of life satisfaction, suggesting a positive cognitive evaluation of their overall well-being.

3.3 Categorical Analysis of Subjective Well-Being

The determination of subjective well-being categories in the affective dimension in this study referred to the scoring guidelines of the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) measurement tool. SPANE comprises two primary components: SPANE-P, which quantifies the frequency of positive feelings; and SPANE-N, which quantifies the frequency of negative feelings. Each component consisted of six items, resulting in a total score of 6–30 for each dimension. To facilitate interpretation of the measurement results, the scores were categorized into three levels: low, moderate, and high. Categorization based on total scores is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Overview of Cognitive Data Subjective Well-being

Variable/Dimension	Dimension	Total Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Subjective Well-Being	Low Subjective Well-Being	6 – 13	0	0
	Moderate Subjective Well-Being	14 – 21	3	13
	High Subjective Well-Being	22 – 30	20	87
Positive Affect	Low Positive Affect	6 – 13	0	0
	Moderate Positive Affect	14 – 21	1	4.3
	High Positive Affect	22 – 30	22	95.7
Low Negative Affect	Low Negative Affect	6 – 13	19	82.6
	Moderate Negative Affect	14 – 21	4	17.4
	High Negative Affect	22 – 30	0	0

3.4 Subjective Well-Being Based on Demographic Characteristics

The findings of the data analysis demonstrate that the overall subjective well-being of educators at SMK X Sumba was fairly good. Subsequent analysis, predicated on demographic characteristics, engendered a more nuanced comprehension of subjective well-being across diverse groups. When analyzed by gender, both male and female educators at SMK X Sumba predominantly fell within the moderate subjective well-being category. According to educational attainment, most educators with high school diplomas and bachelor's degrees exhibit a moderate level of well-being. Concurrently, all respondents who held a master's degree were grouped within the same category. In the context of evaluating the duration of service, educators who have been in the profession for less than one year or one year are predominantly classified as moderate contributors. For the group with two to five years of service, the distribution of subjective well-being was balanced between the moderate and high categories. Furthermore, educators with a minimum of five years of experience were predominantly classified as moderate. For a more thorough examination of these variables, refer to Table 4.

Table 4. Subjective Well-Being Based on Demographic Characteristics

Demography	Category	Category	Total Score	Frequency
Gender	Male	Low SWB	6 – 13	0
		Moderate SWB	14 – 21	9
		High SWB	22 – 30	1
	Female	Low SWB	6 – 13	0
		Moderate SWB	14 – 21	8
		High SWB	22 – 30	5
Educational Background	High School	Low SWB	6 – 13	0
		Moderate SWB	14 – 21	3
		High SWB	22 – 30	0
	Bachelor	Low SWB	6 – 13	0
		Moderate SWB	14 – 21	11
		High SWB	22 – 30	6
	Master	Low SWB	6 – 13	0
		Moderate SWB	14 – 21	3
		High SWB	22 – 30	0
Tenure	<1 year	Low SWB	6 – 13	0
		Moderate SWB	14 – 21	2
		High SWB	22 – 30	0
	1 Year	Low SWB	6 – 13	0
		Moderate SWB	14 – 21	9
		High SWB	22 – 30	1
	2 – 5 years	Low SWB	6 – 13	0
		Moderate SWB	14 – 21	5
		High SWB	22 – 30	5
	>5 years	Low SWB	6 – 13	0
		Moderate SWB	14 – 21	1
		High SWB	22 – 30	0

3.5 Difference Test of Subjective Well-Being

Further analysis was conducted to explore differences in subjective well-being based on demographic variables, namely, gender, educational background, and length of employment. To assess differences based on gender, an independent sample t-test was employed, while to examine disparities based on educational background and length of employment, a one-way ANOVA test was utilized. The results of the Independent Samples T-Test indicated that there was no significant difference in subjective well-being (SWB) between the female and male gender groups, as evidenced by the calculated t-value of 0.209 and p-value of 0.836. The mean SWB value for the female group was 4.723 (SD = 1.100) and that for the male group was 4.640 (SD = 0.679). A significance value of 0.836 (> 0.05) indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in subjective well-being levels between the two gender groups (see Table 5).

Table 5. Different Test: Subjective Well-Being Based to Gender

Gender	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error	Sig.	Conclusion
Female	4.723	1.100	.305	.936	No difference
Male	4.640	.679	.215		

The findings of the one-way ANOVA test revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the subjective well-being (SWB) variable based on the participants' educational level, $F(2, 20) = 1.036, p = 0.373$. The mean SWB score for the high school education group was 4.000 (SD = 0.346), for the bachelor's degree group was 4.824 (SD = 1.012), and master's degree group was 4.600 (SD = 0.400) (see Table 6).

Table 6. Different Test: Subjective Well-Being Based to Educational Background

Educational Background	Mean	SD	Sig.	Conclusion
High School	4.000	.346	.373	No difference
Bachelor	4.824	1.012		
Master	4.600	.231		

The results of the one-way ANOVA test revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in subjective well-being (SWB) based on participants' tenure, $F(2, 20) = 1.581, p = 0.230$. The mean SWB values for participants with less than one year of work experience, one year of work experience, and 2–5 years of work experience were 4.700 (SD = 0.990), 4.320 (SD = 0.598), and 5.018 (SD = 1.093), respectively. Despite variations in the mean between the groups, these differences were not statistically significant (see Table 7).

Table 7. Different Test: Subjective Well-Being Based to Tenure

Tenure	Mean	SD	Sig.	Conclusion
<1 year	4.700	.990	.230	No difference
1 year	4.320	.598		
2 – 5 years	5.018	1.093		

3.5 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the subjective well-being (SWB) of educators at SMK X Sumba is generally favorable. Most participants (73.9%) reported moderate levels of SWB, whereas 26.1% demonstrated high SWB. According to Diener (in Eid & Larsen, 2008), individuals with high subjective well-being are those who experience frequent positive emotions, possess high life satisfaction, and rarely encounter negative emotional states. Conversely, individuals with low SWB often feel dissatisfied with their lives and frequently experience unpleasant emotions, such as sadness and frustration. Subjective well-being is influenced by two primary components: affective and cognitive well-being. The affective dimension includes both positive and negative emotions. Findings revealed that 95.7% of participants reported high positive affect, while 82.6% reported low negative affect, indicating that most educators frequently felt joy, enthusiasm, and comfort and seldom experienced emotional distress. This aligns with Diener et al. (2004), who emphasized that SWB is determined more by the frequency of emotional experiences than by their intensity. Frequent positive and negative emotions are key indicators of high SWB.

Positive affect has consistently been linked to better psychological outcomes. Individuals who often experience positive emotions tend to have stronger social relationships, higher resilience, and better stress coping mechanisms (Lyubomirsky, 2007). These emotional resources contribute to a fulfilling life and are essential for maintaining psychological well-being over time. For educators at SMK X Sumba, the predominance of positive affect may reflect a work environment that fosters emotional health and professional satisfaction. The cognitive dimension of SWB was assessed using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The results showed that 87% of the participants were in the high category, indicating a generally positive evaluation of life. Life satisfaction refers to a subjective assessment of overall quality of life (Diener & Seligman, 2004), and higher scores often correlate with increased well-being and a more optimistic view of the future (Diener et al., 2010). Educators with high life satisfaction are likely to experience a greater sense of purpose, autonomy, and alignment between their personal values and professional roles.

Demographic variables also revealed meaningful patterns. Gender-based analysis showed that women reported a higher percentage of high SWB (21.7%) than men (4.3%). This finding supports the study by Taylor et al. (2000), who found that men tend to use action-based coping strategies, whereas women rely

more on emotion-focused strategies, such as seeking social support. These emotional strategies may influence how positive or negative experiences are internalized, thereby affecting overall well-being. Educational level also appears to be a significant factor. Participants with a bachelor's degree (S1) were more likely to report high SWB (47.8%) than those with only a high school diploma or master's degree, who all fell within the moderate category. Previous research has consistently demonstrated a positive relationship between higher education levels and psychological well-being (Marmot & Wilkinson, 2003; Diener et al., 2010), possibly due to the better job alignment, cognitive resources, and social status associated with higher education.

Tenure also plays a role in SWB. The highest proportion of educators with moderate SWB (39.1%) had been teaching for one year. Interestingly, high SWB was the most common among those with 2–5 years of experience. These findings support the view that satisfaction tends to grow as individuals adapt to their roles and develop their professional confidence. According to Johnson et al. (2005), educators who feel autonomous and empowered in their teaching decisions are more likely to report job satisfaction, which directly influences psychological well-being. Beyond these quantifiable factors, additional qualitative insights suggest that educators at SMK X Sumba possess high levels of joy and spiritual engagement, which may further contribute to their psychological well-being. Positive emotions such as joy have been linked to increased well-being and long-term mental health (Seligman, 2011). Furthermore, the strong spiritual values within the school community appear to provide an additional layer of emotional resilience. Spirituality has been shown to enhance psychological well-being by offering social support, meaning, and a sense of peace (Koenig, 2009; Pargament, 2011).

The findings of this study indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in subjective well-being (SWB) based on the participants' educational level or tenure. These findings imply that conventional demographic factors such as formal education or tenure may not be the primary contributors to subjective well-being, particularly in contemporary complex and evolving work environments. According to the findings of Luhmann et al. (2023), the correlation between education and subjective well-being has been shown to be either weak or inconsistent. These results suggest that this relationship is often mediated by variables such as job satisfaction, social engagement, or employment stability. This finding aligns with the results of the current study, which indicates that higher education does not necessarily lead to higher well-being. This finding underscores the importance of considering additional psychological and contextual variables.

Regarding the issue of tenure, Benevene et al. (2022) posit that extended tenure can exert a favorable influence on well-being solely in instances where it is complemented by a conducive work environment. Consequently, the absence of a substantial relationship in this study may suggest that the duration of employment alone is inadequate to influence well-being without considering factors such as organizational support, recognition, and autonomy. These findings are consistent with contemporary perspectives on well-being that prioritize psychosocial and emotional factors over static demographic variables (Schnettler et al., 2020). This study underscores the need for future research to prioritize internal and contextual factors, including meaning in work, organizational climate, and personal values. These elements may offer more robust explanations for individual variations in subjective well-being.

In conclusion, the subjective well-being of educators at SMK X Sumba can be characterized as predominantly positive and supported by high levels of positive affect and life satisfaction. These outcomes are influenced not only by demographic factors, such as education level and tenure, but also by internal and cultural elements, such as joy and spirituality. These findings highlight the importance of fostering emotional, cognitive, and spiritual well-being among educators as a foundation for sustaining professional fulfillment and personal resilience.

4. CONCLUSION

The data analysis yielded findings that indicated a predominance of moderate subjective well-being among the participants, with 17 individuals (73.9%) falling within this category. Conversely, six participants (26.1%) were classified as having high subjective well-being, suggesting that, on aggregate, the subjective

well-being of educators at SMK X Sumba was satisfactory. In the cognitive domain, most of the participants (87%) reported high levels of life satisfaction. In the affective domain, a significant proportion (95.7%) of participants exhibited elevated levels of positive affect, indicative of a generally healthy emotional state. Future research should explore other variables that may influence educators' well-being such as spiritual values and social support. Additionally, the limitations of this study should be addressed to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding. In practice, educators are encouraged to allocate more quality time to their personal lives and to adopt more interactive teaching methods to foster positive emotions during instruction. Furthermore, educational institutions are strongly encouraged to offer educators social support services and professional development training. These initiatives are designed to assist teachers in maintaining and enhancing their subjective well-being as well as cultivating a more supportive and positive work environment.

Ethical approval

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles outlined by Tarumanagara University.

Informed consent statement

The participants were fully informed about the aim of the research, and their consent was secured before any data were collected. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all responses were treated as confidential and used exclusively for academic research purposes.

Authors' contributions

Conceptualization, Z, RF, AS and ARA; methodology, Z, AS and ARA; validation, Z and RF; formal analysis, Z, AS and ARA; writing original draft preparation, Z, RF and ARA; writing review and editing, Z, RF and AS.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data availability statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author due to privacy reasons.

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