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### Sustaining Teachers' Wellbeing Across Cultures: A Meta-Synthesis

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#### Abstract

Teacher wellbeing has become an important concern in education due to its influence on instructional effectiveness, professional sustainability, and student outcomes. This study employed a meta-synthesis to integrate findings from qualitative research exploring teachers' wellbeing across different cultural contexts. Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a systematic search of academic databases identified 1,700 records, which were screened using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. After quality appraisal using the CASP checklist, 33 studies were included in the final synthesis. Thematic synthesis approach generated eight major themes, namely, structural conditions, emotional and psychological labor, relational ecology, coping and resilience, meaning and identity,

multidimensional wellbeing, interventions and professional development, and cultural and contextual influences. The findings indicate that teachers' wellbeing emerges from the interaction of institutional environments, interpersonal relationships, and individual coping capacities across diverse educational systems. Based on these results, the study proposes a framework of teachers' wellbeing using an Input–Process–Outcome structure, illustrating how structural and cultural conditions shape teachers' experiences through relational, emotional, and psychological processes that influence overall wellbeing. The synthesis contributes an integrated understanding of teachers' wellbeing and offers insights for faculty enhancement initiatives and supportive professional environments.

**Keywords:** Cross-Cultural Perspectives, Faculty Enhancement, Teacher Wellbeing, Meta-Synthesis

#### Introduction

Teacher wellbeing has become an increasingly important concern in contemporary education systems because of its influence on instructional quality, student engagement, and teacher retention. Research shows that teachers' psychological, emotional, and professional wellbeing contributes significantly to effective classroom environments and positive learning outcomes (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Nwoko *et al.*, 2023 <sup>[40]</sup>). When teachers maintain positive wellbeing, they are better able to support students academically and socially. Conversely, prolonged stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion can negatively affect teaching effectiveness and professional commitment (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017) <sup>[47]</sup>. International evidence further underscores the urgency of this issue. OECD data from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) show that, on average, one in six teachers in primary and secondary schools reports experiencing "a lot" of stress at work, and teachers who are highly stressed are more likely to consider leaving the profession. The same OECD evidence also indicates that collaborative school cultures, supportive leadership, and opportunities to participate in school decisions can strengthen teacher wellbeing and reduce attrition risks. Likewise, UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 emphasize that teacher shortages, declining retention, and weakened teaching quality are closely linked to working conditions, professional support, and the broader status of the profession. Their global report argues that improving working conditions and teacher agency is essential to sustaining the teaching workforce and achieving quality education worldwide.

Across many educational systems, teachers report increasing workloads, expanding responsibilities, and heightened accountability demands. These pressures are often associated with work intensification and emotional labor, which can contribute to stress and reduced job satisfaction (Creagh *et al.*, 2023; Bardach *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[12, 6]</sup>. International comparative evidence also shows that workload is not simply a local issue. In a study spanning five predominantly English-speaking education systems, Jerrim and Sims found that longer working hours were associated with greater workload stress and lower

workplace wellbeing, with quality of life declining particularly when teachers worked beyond 55 hours per week. In addition, Dreer's systematic review found that teacher wellbeing is closely related to teacher retention, teacher-student relationships, and student outcomes, reinforcing the view that teacher wellbeing is central not only to individual functioning but also to broader educational effectiveness. Such findings highlight the importance of understanding teacher wellbeing not merely as the absence of stress, but as a sustainable professional condition supported by institutional resources and supportive professional relationships.

Teacher wellbeing is also shaped by cultural and systemic contexts. Ecological perspectives suggest that individual wellbeing is influenced by interactions between personal experiences and broader institutional environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) [8]. Cross-cultural research further indicates that teachers' interpretations of stress, resilience, and professional identity vary according to societal expectations and educational systems (Day & Gu, 2014) [15]. As a result, understanding teacher wellbeing requires attention to contextual and cultural influences that shape teachers' experiences across different educational settings. Although a growing body of research has explored teacher wellbeing, much of this literature remains fragmented across different national contexts and research traditions. Many studies focus on specific institutional environments, limiting opportunities to compare experiences across cultural settings. Furthermore, existing reviews frequently rely on quantitative approaches, which may overlook the lived experiences and meaning-making processes of teachers. Consequently, there remains a need for integrative research that synthesizes qualitative evidence to develop a broader understanding of how teachers experience and sustain wellbeing across diverse contexts.

### Research Objective

This meta-synthesis aimed to synthesize qualitative studies on teachers' wellbeing across diverse cultural contexts in order to identify shared patterns and contextual variations in teachers' lived experiences. Through this synthesis, the study proposed a framework that explains how teacher wellbeing is experienced and sustained and how these insights can inform faculty enhancement initiatives and professional support systems for teachers.

### Review of Related Literature

#### *Conceptualizing Teachers' Wellbeing as a Multidimensional Construct*

Teacher wellbeing is widely conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, psychological, social, and professional functioning (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Roffey, 2012) [27, 44]. Rather than being defined solely as the absence of stress, wellbeing is understood as the presence of positive professional engagement, resilience, and supportive workplace relationships (Hascher *et al.*, 2021; Nwoko *et al.*, 2023) [24, 40]. This perspective positions teacher wellbeing as an outcome of interactions between individual capacities and workplace conditions, highlighting its dynamic and context-dependent nature. Qualitative studies further emphasize that wellbeing is shaped by teachers' lived experiences, including how they interpret challenges, maintain motivation, and sustain professional commitment

(Kelchtermans, 2005; Schutz *et al.*, 2006) [29, 46].

#### *Institutional and Emotional Dimensions of Teachers' Wellbeing*

A substantial body of research highlights the role of institutional conditions and emotional demands in shaping teachers' professional experiences. Studies consistently show that heavy workload, accountability pressures, and work intensification contribute to stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Creagh *et al.*, 2023) [47, 12]. At the same time, teaching requires continuous emotional engagement and regulation, as teachers manage classroom dynamics, student needs, and professional expectations (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Schutz *et al.*, 2006) [38, 46]. Emotional labor has been identified as a significant factor influencing teachers' psychological wellbeing, with prolonged exposure leading to burnout and fatigue (Salavera & Urbón, 2024) [45]. These findings indicate that institutional demands and emotional processes are closely interconnected in shaping teachers' wellbeing.

#### *Relational and Identity-Based Influences on Teachers' Wellbeing*

Research also emphasizes the importance of relational and identity-related factors in sustaining teacher wellbeing. Positive relationships with students, colleagues, and school leaders contribute to emotional support, professional satisfaction, and a sense of belonging (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Dittmann & Forstmeier, 2022) [27, 17]. Collaborative professional environments further strengthen teachers' capacity to manage work-related stress. In addition, teachers' sense of meaning and professional identity plays a crucial role in shaping motivation and long-term engagement. Teaching is often perceived as a meaningful profession that contributes to personal fulfillment and social impact (Kelchtermans, 2005) [29]. Studies suggest that when teachers align their professional roles with personal values, they are better able to interpret challenges as part of professional growth rather than as purely negative experiences (Lotfi-Gaskaree *et al.*, 2025) [35].

#### *Coping, Interventions, and Support Mechanisms*

Teachers employ various coping strategies and rely on institutional support mechanisms to sustain their wellbeing. Research highlights the importance of adaptive strategies such as emotional regulation, problem-solving, and seeking social support in managing professional stress (Salavera & Urbón, 2024) [45]. In addition, structured interventions and professional development initiatives have been shown to enhance teachers' resilience and reduce burnout. Programs focusing on emotional competence, mental health literacy, and stress management contribute to improved psychological wellbeing and professional functioning (Cavioni *et al.*, 2024; Yeh & Barrington, 2023) [9, 55]. These studies indicate that both individual coping mechanisms and institutional support systems play a role in maintaining teacher wellbeing.

#### *Cultural and Contextual Influences on Teachers' Wellbeing*

Wellbeing is also shaped by broader cultural and contextual factors. Educational systems, societal expectations, and

professional norms influence how teachers interpret stress, resilience, and professional responsibilities (Day & Gu, 2014) <sup>[15]</sup>. Cross-cultural studies demonstrate that teachers' experiences vary depending on local working conditions, community expectations, and social status (Cui *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[14]</sup>. These findings suggest that teacher wellbeing cannot be fully understood without considering the cultural and institutional contexts in which teaching occurs.

### ***Cultural and Contextual Influences on Teachers' Wellbeing***

Teachers' experiences of wellbeing vary significantly across cultural and institutional contexts, as they are shaped by the norms, expectations, and structures embedded within different educational systems. Research indicates that societal values and professional standards influence how teachers interpret stress, resilience, and their roles within the profession (Day & Gu, 2014) <sup>[15]</sup>. In particular, studies conducted in rural or underserved settings demonstrate how local working conditions, community expectations, and perceived social status affect teachers' perceptions of their wellbeing and professional identity (Cui *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[14]</sup>. These findings suggest that teacher wellbeing cannot be fully understood through individual factors alone, but must be examined within broader cultural, social, and systemic environments that shape everyday teaching experiences.

### ***Interventions and Faculty Enhancement for Teachers' Wellbeing***

Recent research has increasingly emphasized the role of institutional interventions and professional development initiatives in supporting teachers' wellbeing. Programs that focus on enhancing emotional competence, stress management, and positive psychology practices have been found to improve resilience and reduce burnout among educators (Cavioni *et al.*, 2024; Yeh & Barrington, 2023) <sup>[9, 55]</sup>. In addition, institutional efforts such as mentoring systems, mental health training, and wellbeing-oriented professional development contribute to creating more supportive and sustainable teaching environments. These approaches highlight the growing recognition that promoting teacher wellbeing requires not only individual coping strategies but also systemic integration of wellbeing support within faculty enhancement and organizational practices.

### ***Qualitative Studies on Teachers' Lived Experiences***

Qualitative research provides rich insights into how teachers experience and interpret wellbeing in real-world contexts. Through interviews, narratives, and phenomenological approaches, these studies explore teachers' experiences of stress, resilience, and professional meaning (Kelchtermans, 2005; Schutz *et al.*, 2006) <sup>[29, 46]</sup>. Such research highlights the subjective and contextual nature of teacher wellbeing and provides deeper understanding of how teachers sustain professional engagement despite challenges.

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Several theoretical perspectives explain how teachers' professional experiences influence their wellbeing.

#### ***Ecological Systems Theory***

Ecological Systems Theory posits that individual wellbeing is shaped through dynamic interactions between individuals and the multiple environmental systems in which they are

embedded, ranging from immediate interpersonal contexts to broader institutional and societal structures (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) <sup>[8]</sup>. Within educational settings, this perspective underscores that teachers' professional experiences are not formed in isolation but are continuously influenced by school policies, organizational culture, leadership practices, and relationships with students, colleagues, and the wider community. As such, teachers' wellbeing emerges from the complex interplay between personal factors and contextual conditions, highlighting the importance of examining both structural and relational dimensions in understanding their lived experiences.

#### ***Job Demands–Resources Model***

The Job Demands–Resources Model explains that occupational wellbeing is determined by the balance between job demands and the resources available to meet those demands. Job demands, including heavy workload, emotional strain, and time pressure, can deplete teachers' physical and psychological energy, increasing the risk of stress and burnout. Conversely, job resources such as administrative support, professional autonomy, opportunities for development, and positive workplace relationships function as protective factors that enhance motivation, engagement, and resilience (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Nwoko *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[5, 40]</sup>. Widely applied in educational research, this model provides a robust framework for understanding how varying workplace conditions either constrain or sustain teachers' wellbeing across different contexts.

#### ***Emotional Labor in Teaching***

Teaching is widely recognized as an emotionally demanding profession, requiring educators to continuously regulate their emotions in accordance with professional expectations and the diverse needs of their students. Grounded in Emotional Labor Theory, this process involves managing both expressed and felt emotions to sustain effective classroom interactions and instructional practices. Recent studies highlight that such emotional regulation significantly influences teachers' wellbeing and professional satisfaction, as prolonged emotional demands are closely linked to stress, burnout, and variations in job engagement (Taxer & Frenzel, 2015 <sup>[48]</sup>; Yin *et al.*, 2019; Burić *et al.*, 2020).

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative meta-synthesis approach to systematically integrate findings from existing qualitative research on teachers' wellbeing. Meta-synthesis allows researchers to interpret and combine insights from multiple qualitative studies in order to generate new conceptual understandings and identify patterns across different contexts (Thomas & Harden, 2008) <sup>[49]</sup>. The approach focuses on synthesizing teachers' lived experiences and meaning-making processes rather than aggregating statistical results.

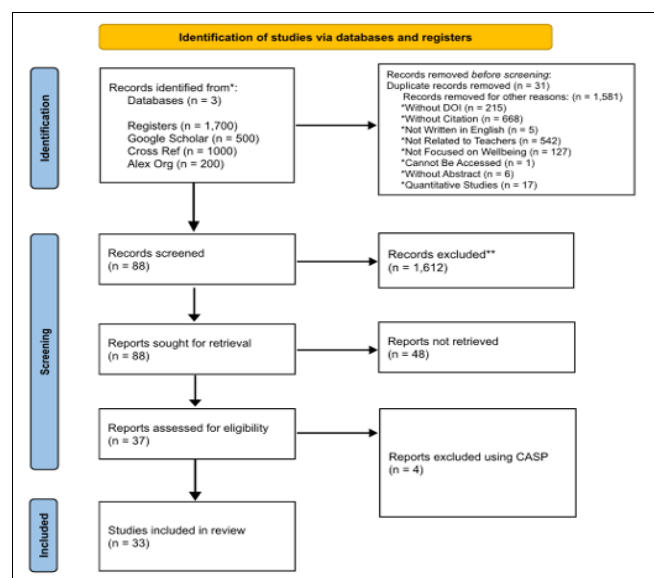
#### **Search Strategy**

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using Harzing's Publish or Perish (version 8.19) in combination with selected academic databases, including Google Scholar, CrossRef, and Alex.org. The choice of these databases was guided by their broad interdisciplinary

coverage and strong indexing of education, social science, and multidisciplinary research, which are central to studies on teachers' wellbeing. In contrast, other databases (those primarily focused on biomedical or clinical research) were not prioritized, as they tend to emphasize medical and health-related studies that are less aligned with the educational and psychosocial focus of this meta-synthesis. Search terms combined teacher-related descriptors such as *teacher* and *educator* with wellbeing-related concepts such as *wellbeing*, *mental health*, *stress*, and *burnout*. These terms were systematically applied to titles and abstracts to identify relevant studies.

**Study Selection Process (PRISMA 2020)**

The study selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines for systematic reviews. Records were identified through database searches and subsequently screened to remove duplicates and irrelevant publications. Titles and abstracts were reviewed for relevance, followed by full-text evaluation of potentially eligible studies. The entire process is illustrated through a PRISMA flow diagram that documents the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages of the review.



**Fig 1:** PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process

Studies were selected using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance and methodological rigor. Included studies were peer-reviewed, written in English, focused on teachers' wellbeing, and employed qualitative or mixed-method designs with clearly extractable

qualitative data involving teacher participants. Studies that were purely quantitative, unrelated to teacher wellbeing, or lacked accessible full texts were excluded. An initial search across databases identified 1,700 records. After removing duplicate records (n = 31) and excluding records for other reasons (n = 1,581), a total of 88 records remained for screening. All 88 records were sought for retrieval, of which 48 were not retrieved, leaving 37 studies assessed for eligibility.

**Quality Appraisal of Included Studies (CASP Qualitative Checklist)**

The selected studies were evaluated using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme Qualitative Checklist to assess their methodological quality. This appraisal led to the exclusion of four studies that did not meet the required standards, resulting in a final sample of 33 studies for the meta-synthesis. The assessment focused on key criteria, including clarity of research aims, appropriateness of methodology, rigor of data collection and analysis, and consideration of ethical issues. The appraisal was conducted independently by three researchers: Jayfemme Hannah Comparativo, Janice Berdin, and Jan Olenns Alaban, who are master's students and authors of the meta-synthesis. Any discrepancies in the evaluation were resolved through discussion among the appraisers until consensus was achieved.

**Data Analysis**

The qualitative findings were synthesized using thematic synthesis based on the approach proposed by Thomas and Harden (2008) [49]. The analysis involved line-by-line coding of qualitative data extracted from the selected studies, followed by grouping codes into descriptive categories and interpreting them into higher-order analytical themes. Codes were compared across the 33 studies to identify recurring patterns and relationships. This process resulted in eight major themes representing key factors influencing teachers' wellbeing across cultural contexts.

**Results and Discussion**

The 33 studies that met the inclusion criteria and were included in the meta-synthesis providing qualitative and mixed-method evidence on teachers' wellbeing across different educational contexts. For mixed-method studies, only the qualitative findings were analyzed. The studies represent diverse geographic settings, including countries from Asia, Europe, Africa, Australia, North America, and South America. This distribution allowed examination of teachers' wellbeing across varied educational systems and professional environments.

**Table 1:** Profile of the Included Studies

Study No.	Authors & Year	Title	Type of Research	Country of Origin	Codes Extracted
1	Anderson <i>et al.</i> , 2021 [3]	Generating Buoyancy in a Sea of Uncertainty: Teachers' Creativity and Well-Being During COVID-19	Mixed-method	United States (North America)	creativity, resilience, adaptation, uncertainty
2	An <i>et al.</i> , 2021 [2]	Examining K-12 Teachers' Feelings and Experiences Regarding Online Teaching During COVID-19	Mixed-method	United States (North America)	online teaching stress, work-life imbalance, technology challenges
3	Belmonte <i>et al.</i> , 2022 [7]	Social and Emotional Wellbeing of Teachers and Its Impact on Teaching Practice	Qualitative	Philippines (Asia)	SEL support, self-care training, mental health needs
4	Cavioni <i>et al.</i> , 2024 [9]	Promoting Teachers' Wellbeing Through a Serious Game Intervention	Qualitative	Italy (Europe)	emotional competence training, self-care skills

5	Cronin <i>et al.</i> , 2023 [13]	Teachers' Experiences of Life Skills Development in Physical Education	Qualitative	United Kingdom (Europe)	resilience teaching, psychosocial skills, teacher role meaning
6	Cui <i>et al.</i> , 2022 [14]	Exploring Rural Chinese Teachers' Attitudes Towards Wellbeing	Qualitative	China (Asia)	rural disadvantage, social status, passion for teaching
7	Dittmann & Forstmeier, 2022 [17]	Experiences with Teachers in Childhood and Wellbeing in Adulthood	Qualitative	Germany (Europe)	relational influence, teacher-student bonding
8	Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2021	Impact of Trauma-Informed Training and Mindfulness-Based SEL on Burnout	Mixed-method	United States (North America)	burnout reduction, trauma-informed teaching
9	Li, 2021 [33]	Psychological Wellbeing, Mindfulness, and Immunity of Teachers	Qualitative	China (Asia)	emotional regulation, psychological constructs
10	Lotfi-Gaskaree <i>et al.</i> , 2025 [35]	Meaningful Work and Subjective Wellbeing Among Language Teachers	Qualitative	Iran (Asia)	purpose, fulfillment, professional meaning
11	Ma <i>et al.</i> , 2022 [36]	COVID-19 Anxiety, Stress, and Depression Among Teachers	Qualitative	China (Asia)	stress prevalence, mental health crisis
12	Nazari & Oghyanous, 2021 [39]	Role of Experience in Teachers' Stress, Turnover Intentions, Wellbeing	Mixed-method	Iran (Asia)	occupational stress, identity, retention
13	Nwoko <i>et al.</i> , 2023 [40]	Factors Influencing Teachers' Occupational Wellbeing	Qualitative	Nigeria (Africa)	workload, relationships, competence, work environment
14	Odame-Amoabeng <i>et al.</i> , 2025 [41]	Experiences and Wellbeing of Educators Using Virtual Reality	Qualitative	United Kingdom (Europe)	technology adoption, training needs, institutional support
15	Salavera & Urbón, 2024 [45]	Emotional Wellbeing in Teachers	Mixed-method	Spain (Europe)	emotional intelligence, happiness, affect balance
16	Tort-Nasarre <i>et al.</i> , 2023 [50]	Positive Body Image: Experiences of Adolescents, Teachers, Parents	Mixed-method	Spain (Europe)	self-perception, wellbeing, identity influence
17	White & McSharry, 2021 [52]	Preservice Teachers' Experiences of Pandemic-Related School Closures	Qualitative	Ireland (Europe)	liminality, disruption, identity formation
18	Xie, 2021 [54]	Chinese EFL Teachers' Work Engagement	Mixed-method	China (Asia)	emotional regulation, engagement, resilience
19	Alpuerto, 2022 [1]	Science Teachers' Experiences on ICT Integration	Qualitative	Philippines (Asia)	institutional barriers, coping strategies
20	Wilcock <i>et al.</i> , 2025 [53]	Teachers' Experiences of School-Based Mental Health Literacy Programmes	Qualitative	United Kingdom (Europe)	emotional support training, wellbeing awareness
21	Lemon & Turner, 2024 [32]	Unravelling the Wellbeing Needs of Australian Teachers	Qualitative	Australia (Oceania)	wellbeing needs, systemic support gaps
22	Fray <i>et al.</i> , 2023 [19]	Under Pressure and Overlooked: Impact of COVID-19 on Teachers	Qualitative	Australia (Oceania)	emotional strain, institutional neglect
23	Kim <i>et al.</i> , 2021 (qualitative stress study)	Teachers, Stress, and the COVID-19 Pandemic	Qualitative	South Korea (Asia)	psychological distress, coping strain
24	Hidalgo-Andrade <i>et al.</i> , 2021 [25]	Teachers' Mental Health and Coping Strategies During COVID-19	Mixed-method	Ecuador (South America)	coping, stress management, support seeking
25	Aperribai <i>et al.</i> , 2020 [4]	Teacher Physical Activity and Mental Health During Lockdown	Qualitative	Spain (Europe)	health behaviour, stress buffering
26	González <i>et al.</i> , 2023 [21]	Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Online During COVID-19	Qualitative	Spain (Europe)	adaptation, professional learning needs
27	Hascher <i>et al.</i> , 2021 [24]	Teacher Wellbeing and Resilience: Toward an Integrative Model	Qualitative	Austria (Europe)	multidimensional wellbeing framework
28	Yeh & Barrington, 2023 [55]	Sustainable Positive Psychology Interventions for Teachers	Qualitative	United Kingdom (Europe)	wellbeing enhancement program
29	Collier, 2023 [11]	Surviving COVID Isolation: Rural Teachers' Lived Experiences	Qualitative	United States (North America)	isolation, emotional struggle, resilience
30	Bardach <i>et al.</i> , 2022 [6]	Teachers' Psychological Characteristics and Wellbeing	Qualitative	Germany (Europe)	psychological traits, retention, effectiveness
31	Ljalikova <i>et al.</i> , 2021 [34]	Narrative Analysis of CLIL Teachers' Meaningful Experiences	Qualitative	Estonia (Europe)	professional meaning, identity construction
32	Besser <i>et al.</i> , 2020	University Students' and Teachers' Wellbeing During COVID-19	Mixed-method	Israel (Asia)	shared stress, educational disruption
33	Creagh <i>et al.</i> , 2023 [12]	Workload, Work Intensification and Time Poverty for Teachers	Qualitative	Australia (Oceania)	excessive workload, time pressure

The thematic synthesis of the qualitative findings revealed eight recurring themes (T) that explain key influences on teachers' wellbeing across cultural contexts. These themes are structural conditions (T1), emotional and psychological labor (T2), relational ecology (T3), coping and resilience (T4), meaning, identity, and purpose (T5), multidimensional wellbeing (T6), interventions and professional development (T7), and cultural and contextual influences (T8). Using the thematic synthesis procedures of Thomas and Harden (2008) [49], extracted codes were first grouped into descriptive categories and then interpreted into broader analytical themes. The table presents the distribution of the 33 included studies by country of origin, indicating that the studies were drawn from diverse geographical contexts across continents. Specifically, studies from the United States belong to North America; the Philippines, China, Iran, South Korea, and Israel are part of Asia; Nigeria represents Africa; Ecuador represents South America; Australia belongs to Oceania; and countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Spain, Ireland, Austria, and Estonia are located in Europe. This geographical spread demonstrates that the synthesized evidence reflects a wide range of cultural and institutional contexts. Collectively, these themes highlight the interconnectedness of institutional, relational, psychological, and cultural factors shaping teachers' wellbeing across different global settings.

### Structural Conditions

Institutional and organizational conditions play a major role in shaping teachers' professional experiences, particularly in relation to workload, policy expectations, and access to resources. Evidence from the included studies shows that increasing responsibilities, time pressure, and accountability demands contribute to stress and reduced job satisfaction (An *et al.*, 2021; Creagh *et al.*, 2023) [2, 12]. These findings are consistent with broader research indicating that excessive workload and administrative demands are among the strongest predictors of teacher burnout (Bardach *et al.*, 2022) [6]. Additionally, variations in institutional expectations across contexts further intensify these pressures, as teachers navigate competing demands between instructional responsibilities and administrative tasks.

Across the studies, structural conditions consistently emerge as external constraints that shape how teachers experience their roles. Limited access to resources, unclear policy directives, and technological challenges, particularly in online teaching environments, were identified as factors that increase professional strain. At the same time, supportive leadership and institutional structures were shown to moderate these challenges by providing clearer guidance and access to necessary resources (Collie *et al.*, 2018). These patterns suggest that structural conditions function as foundational elements that either constrain or enable teachers' capacity to manage professional demands.

### Emotional and Psychological Labor

While institutional factors establish the working environment, teachers' daily experiences are also shaped by the emotional demands embedded in their roles. Teaching involves continuous emotional regulation and psychological effort, making it inherently demanding. The included studies highlight frequent experiences of stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, particularly during periods of disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Fray *et al.*,

2023; Collier, 2023) [19, 11]. These emotional demands are often intensified by the need to manage classroom dynamics, respond to diverse student needs, and maintain professional composure.

At the same time, emotional labor is not solely associated with negative outcomes. The findings indicate that emotional engagement can also contribute to professional fulfillment when teachers perceive their work as meaningful and supported. However, the balance between emotional strain and emotional reward is highly dependent on contextual conditions, such as institutional support and relational dynamics. This dual nature of emotional labor highlights its complexity as both a source of stress and a contributor to professional satisfaction.

### Relational Ecology

Beyond individual emotional experiences, interactions within the school environment further influence how teachers navigate these demands. Relationships within school environments serve as critical sources of support and professional meaning. Positive interactions with students, colleagues, and school leaders enhance job satisfaction and foster a sense of belonging (Dittmann & Forstmeier, 2022) [17]. These relationships also provide informal support systems that help teachers manage stress and sustain engagement in their work.

Across the included studies, relational dynamics are shown to operate as interconnected systems rather than isolated interactions. Collaborative school cultures and supportive leadership structures contribute to stronger professional communities, which in turn enhance teachers' resilience and wellbeing (Collie *et al.*, 2018). Conversely, strained relationships or lack of collegial support can amplify stress and reduce professional satisfaction. These findings highlight that teacher wellbeing is deeply embedded in social and relational contexts within educational environments.

### Coping and Resilience

In response to both relational and emotional demands, teachers actively develop strategies to manage challenges and sustain their engagement. Teachers employ various coping strategies to manage professional demands, including emotional regulation, problem-solving, and seeking social support. The included studies emphasize resilience, adaptability, and creativity as key responses to challenging conditions (Anderson *et al.*, 2021; Xie, 2021) [3, 54]. These strategies enable teachers to navigate complex and often unpredictable work environments.

The findings further indicate that coping and resilience are not static traits but dynamic processes that evolve over time. Teachers adjust their strategies depending on the nature of the challenges they encounter, such as shifts to online teaching or increased workload demands. This adaptability reflects a continuous process of adjustment and learning, highlighting the role of personal agency in sustaining professional functioning. Overall, coping and resilience function as mechanisms that mediate the impact of external and emotional pressures.

### Meaning, Identity, and Purpose

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### **Multidimensional Wellbeing**

Alongside these adaptive strategies, deeper motivational factors also shape how teachers remain committed to their profession. A strong sense of purpose and professional identity contributes significantly to teachers' motivation and commitment. The included studies show that teachers derive meaning from their roles as educators and mentors (Cronin *et al.*, 2023; Lotfi-Gaskaree *et al.*, 2025) [13, 35]. This sense of meaning provides a foundation for sustained engagement, particularly in challenging conditions.

Furthermore, professional identity influences how teachers interpret their experiences and respond to difficulties. When teachers perceive alignment between their personal values and professional roles, they are more likely to frame challenges as opportunities for growth rather than as sources of stress. This interpretive process strengthens commitment and supports long-term engagement in teaching. These findings highlight that meaning and identity serve as internal resources that shape teachers' professional experiences.

### **Interventions and Professional Development**

To support these multiple dimensions, structured institutional efforts are necessary to sustain teachers' wellbeing over time. Structured interventions and professional development programs play an important role in supporting teachers' wellbeing. Evidence from the included studies shows that training in emotional competence, stress management, and resilience can reduce burnout and enhance coping skills (Cavioni *et al.*, 2024; Yeh & Barrington, 2023) [9, 55]. These programs provide teachers with tools to navigate professional challenges more effectively.

In addition, the findings indicate that interventions are most effective when integrated within broader institutional support systems. Mentoring programs, collaborative initiatives, and wellbeing-focused training contribute to improved professional experiences by reinforcing both individual capacities and organizational support. This suggests that interventions function not only as isolated strategies but as part of a larger system that supports teacher wellbeing.

### **Cultural and Contextual Influences**

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### **Cross-Cultural Patterns of Teachers' Wellbeing**

Across Asian contexts, the findings consistently emphasize the role of workload pressures, professional identity, and societal expectations in shaping teachers' wellbeing. Teachers in these settings often navigate high performance demands alongside strong cultural expectations regarding their professional roles. These conditions highlight how wellbeing is influenced not only by institutional structures but also by culturally embedded values related to responsibility, dedication, and professional identity. As a result, teachers' experiences in Asia reflect a close interaction between external demands and internalized expectations of teaching.

In Europe and Australia, the synthesis highlights the influence of institutional and organizational conditions, particularly workload intensification, accountability demands, and the availability of organizational support. Teachers in these contexts frequently operate within structured educational systems where policies, leadership practices, and resource availability play a central role in shaping professional experiences. The findings indicate that variations in institutional support, such as leadership quality and collaborative environments, significantly affect teachers' ability to manage demands and sustain wellbeing.

In North and South American contexts, the studies primarily focus on emotional strain and coping strategies, especially during periods of disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers in these regions frequently report heightened emotional demands, including stress, anxiety, and uncertainty, alongside the need to adapt to rapidly changing teaching conditions. These findings underscore the importance of coping mechanisms and emotional regulation as central components of teacher wellbeing, reflecting how individuals actively respond to challenging and unpredictable environments.

In the African context, the findings highlight the importance of institutional support and access to professional resources in shaping teachers' wellbeing. The study included in this region emphasizes how working conditions, availability of materials, and organizational structures influence teachers' professional experiences. These factors illustrate the critical role of systemic support in contexts where resource constraints and structural challenges may be more pronounced.

Overall, the synthesis reveals both shared and context-specific patterns in teachers' wellbeing across regions.

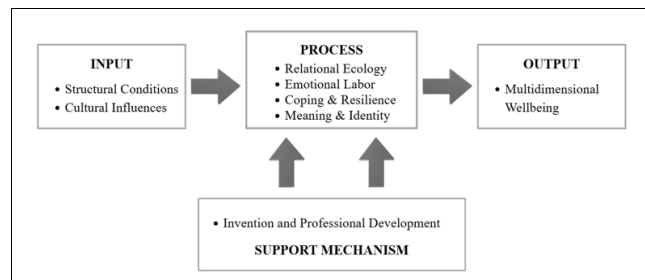
While each context presents unique challenges shaped by cultural, institutional, and socio-economic conditions, common influences are evident across all regions. Supportive professional relationships, adaptive coping strategies, and a strong sense of professional purpose consistently emerge as central factors sustaining teacher wellbeing. These findings indicate that although the expression of wellbeing varies across contexts, its underlying dimensions remain interconnected and broadly consistent across educational systems.

### Implications

The synthesis of the studies highlights several implications for educational practice and policy. Teachers' wellbeing is influenced by a combination of institutional conditions, interpersonal relationships, and personal coping capacities. Structural factors such as workload demands, organizational support, and policy expectations shape teachers' daily professional experiences, while supportive relationships with colleagues, school leaders, and students provide important emotional and professional support. The findings also emphasize the value of resilience, emotional regulation, and professional development initiatives that strengthen teachers' ability to manage stress and sustain engagement in teaching.

### Framework of Teachers' Wellbeing Across Cultural Contexts

The development of the framework from this meta-synthesis adopts an *Input–Process–Outcome (IPO) structure*, originally proposed by Hackman and Morris (1975) [22] and later applied widely in educational and organizational research to explain how contextual conditions influence outcomes through mediating processes. In the context of teacher wellbeing, this structure helps illustrate how institutional and contextual factors shape teachers' professional experiences and ultimately affect their wellbeing. According to Hascher *et al.* (2021) [24] and Nwoko *et al.* (2023) [40], teachers' wellbeing is influenced by the interaction between workplace demands, professional relationships, and individual coping resources. Within this framework, *structural conditions and cultural influences* represent the key inputs shaping teachers' professional environments. These inputs interact with processes such as *relational ecology, emotional labor, coping and resilience, and meaning and professional identity*, which influence how teachers interpret and respond to their work conditions. These processes ultimately contribute to the outcome of *multidimensional teachers' wellbeing*, while *interventions and professional development initiatives* serve as supporting mechanisms that strengthen teachers' capacity to sustain wellbeing across diverse educational contexts.



**Fig 1:** Framework of Teachers' Wellbeing Across Cultural Contexts (Hackman & Morris' (1975) [22] Input–Process–Outcome Model)

The framework organizes the eight themes into the Input–Process–Outcome (IPO) structure. Under Input, Structural Conditions (T1) and Cultural and Contextual Influences (T8) represent the external environment that shapes teachers' professional experiences. The Process consists of Relational Ecology (T3), Emotional and Psychological Labor (T2), Coping and Resilience (T4), and Meaning and Identity (T5), which reflect how teachers experience, interpret, and respond to these conditions. The Output is Multidimensional Wellbeing (T6), which captures the resulting state of teachers' emotional, psychological, social, and professional functioning. Meanwhile, Interventions and Professional Development (T7) function as a Support Mechanism, influencing the process by strengthening teachers' capacity to manage demands and sustain wellbeing.

#### Input (Structural and Cultural Conditions)

The Input component highlights how teachers' wellbeing is initially shaped by external and systemic factors. Structural conditions, such as workload, policies, and resource availability, define the immediate work environment, while cultural and contextual influences shape broader expectations, values, and professional norms. Together, these factors establish the conditions under which teachers operate, influencing the demands they face and the opportunities available to them. This suggests that teacher wellbeing does not originate at the individual level alone, but is fundamentally rooted in institutional and cultural contexts that frame professional experiences.

#### Process (Relational, Emotional, and Psychological Mechanisms)

The Process then represents how teachers actively experience and respond to the conditions established by the input. Relational ecology captures the role of social interactions in providing support and meaning, while emotional labor reflects the psychological effort required to manage professional demands. Coping and resilience

demonstrate how teachers adapt to challenges, and meaning and identity reflect how they interpret their roles and sustain motivation. These interconnected processes operate simultaneously, shaping how teachers navigate their work environments. This highlights that wellbeing is not a passive outcome, but an active and dynamic process influenced by multiple internal and relational mechanisms.

### Output (Multidimensional Wellbeing)

The Output evidently shows the resulting state of teachers' wellbeing as shaped by the interaction of the preceding components. Multidimensional wellbeing encompasses emotional, psychological, social, and professional aspects, reflecting the complexity of teachers' experiences. Rather than being determined by a single factor, wellbeing emerges as the cumulative result of how teachers process and respond to both structural and relational influences. This reinforces the idea that teacher wellbeing is holistic, integrating multiple dimensions that are continuously shaped by ongoing experiences.

### Support Mechanism (Interventions and Professional Development)

To even strengthen the framework, the Support Mechanism highlights the role of institutional interventions in strengthening the processes that lead to wellbeing. Interventions and professional development provide teachers with skills, resources, and support systems that enhance coping strategies, emotional regulation, and professional growth. Positioned beneath the process component, this element emphasizes that support does not directly create wellbeing but reinforces the processes through which teachers manage their experiences. This indicates that sustained wellbeing is supported by both individual capacities and institutional efforts.

### Directions and Interconnectedness

Most importantly, the directional arrows in the framework emphasize that teacher wellbeing develops through a flow of influence from input to process and ultimately to output. However, this flow is not strictly linear; instead, it reflects an interconnected system where each component influences and reinforces the others. The arrows indicate that structural and cultural conditions shape teachers' experiences, which are then interpreted and managed through relational, emotional, and psychological processes, leading to wellbeing outcomes. At the same time, the upward arrows from the support mechanism highlight how interventions strengthen these processes, reinforcing teachers' ability to respond effectively. This interconnected structure demonstrates that teacher wellbeing is not produced by isolated factors but emerges from the continuous interaction of environmental conditions, personal responses, and institutional support.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The meta-synthesis of 33 qualitative studies provides an integrated understanding of teachers' wellbeing across diverse cultural contexts. The findings reveal that teachers' wellbeing is shaped by the interaction of institutional conditions, emotional demands, professional relationships, and individual coping capacities. Eight themes emerged from the synthesis, structural conditions, emotional and psychological labor, relational ecology, coping and

resilience, meaning and identity, multidimensional wellbeing, interventions and professional development, and cultural and contextual influences, highlighting that wellbeing is a multidimensional and context-dependent phenomenon. Despite variations across regions, common factors such as supportive institutional environments, positive professional relationships, resilience, and a strong sense of professional purpose consistently influence teachers' wellbeing. The framework developed using the Input–Process–Outcome model illustrates how structural and cultural conditions influence teachers' experiences through relational, emotional, and psychological processes that lead to multidimensional wellbeing. Based on these findings, educational institutions and policymakers are encouraged to promote supportive workplace environments, provide professional development focused on wellbeing and resilience, and implement faculty enhancement initiatives that address both organizational and individual factors. Future research may further examine teachers' wellbeing across additional cultural contexts, explore how institutional policies and support systems sustain teacher wellbeing over time, and empirically test and validate the proposed framework in different educational settings to strengthen its applicability and generalizability.

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