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## Self-efficacy and psychological well-being of teachers

### Abstract

**Introduction:** The aim of the presented research was to check whether there is a connection between teachers' self-efficacy and their psychological well-being from a holistic (hedonic and eudaimonic) perspective. **Method:** The study involved 100 teachers who were asked to fill in the following research tools with proven psychometric properties: the General Self-Efficacy Scale, the Satisfaction with Life Scale, the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, and the Psychological Well-being Scale. **Results:** The obtained data confirm that there is a connection between self-efficacy belief, and hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. The degree of professional promotion grades modifies the relationships considered. **Conclusions:** The psychological well-being of teachers is significantly associated with their evaluation of efficacy, which may have a positive impact on the effectiveness of teachers' professional functioning and the achievements of their students.

**Keywords:** self-efficacy, psychological well-being, hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, teachers

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### Introduction

Self-efficacy is an important personal resource shaping our actions in all areas of life. Researchers receive fairly consistent results that accentuate the importance of this variable for the efficacy of various professions, including teachers (Baka, 2017; Chomczyńska-Rubacha & Rubacha, 2013; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Analyses to date, conducted with the participation of the said group, focused mainly on the issues of stress and professional burnout (Hreciński, 2016; Korczyński, 2014; Ostrowska & Mazur, 2017; Pyżalski & Merez, 2010). According to the current state of knowledge, we know that eliminating negative factors does not necessarily promote efficacy or improve psychological well-being (Ryff et al., 2006). It is also important to remember that the work of teachers affects not only themselves but also their students, parents, and even society as a whole. By way of example, positive relationships have been confirmed between teachers' self-efficacy ratings and their job-related aspirations, work engagement, teaching effectiveness, maintaining classroom discipline effectively, students' achievements as well as their self-esteem and prosocial attitudes (Muijs & Reynolds, 2002; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

Teachers' belief that they can influence the school success of their students, even the weaker and less motivated ones, is not unrelated to their overall assessment of life quality (Kulawska, 2017). Therefore, the purpose of the presented research was to examine whether teachers' self-efficacy is related to their psychological well-being. The holistic approach to well-being, which is most often analyzed in terms of pleasure and fulfilment, i.e. in hedonic categories, is a novelty in the conducted analyses. In this study, the hedonic approach is complemented by the eudaimonic approach, which describes well-being as a pursuit of self-development and self-improvement by cultivating important aspects of life. The eudaimonic account of psychological well-being is extremely valuable. It assumes that not all fulfilled desires or achieved goals result in positive effects for the person, being only a source of pleasant sensations. This means that well-being cannot be considered only in terms of pleasure, but also in terms of living according to one's own value system.

## **Self-efficacy and psychological well-being – conceptualization**

The following will conceptualize the key variables in the research conducted – self-efficacy and psychological well-being. The theoretical basis for self-efficacy is Albert Bandura's social learning theory (1997), which uses a model of triple determinism. It assumes an interaction between three factors: the environment, person, and behavior. Events taking place in the environment affect a human being's cognitive and emotional functioning as well as their behavior. But more importantly, people are capable of self-reflection and self-regulation. With cognitive abilities, they can control events in the environment, which in turn affects their emotions and biological states. According to Bandura, self-efficacy is an individuals' conviction that they have the ability to organize and take actions toward a specific goal. When its level is high, individuals take on challenging tasks, spending a lot of time and effort to see them through to completion. They are accompanied by a sense of control over the situation, and they find tasks as something that motivates them (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).

Bandura (2007) defines self-efficacy through the lens of three specific characteristics, i.e. magnitude, generality, and strength. Magnitude refers to the extent of perceived efficacy – whether it includes only simple tasks or difficult and complex ones, too. Generality refers to the relatively generalized stability of beliefs regarding various aspects of life. Strength, in turn, describes the persistence of self-efficacy despite experienced setbacks. The level of motivation, affective states and behavior relate more to the belief in one's abilities and capabilities than to the competences actually possessed. As a result, people's behavior and even psychological well-being can be predicted more effectively by learning their perspectives on how they evaluate their abilities to take goal-directed actions (Bandura, 1997; Chomczyńska-Rubacha & Rubacha, 2013; Juczyński, 2000).

The second key variable in the research presented is psychological well-being. Deci and Ryan (2008) define psychological well-being as a positive state associated with experienced emotions and a formulated evaluation of one's existence. There are two approaches that determine how this concept is conceptualized and operationalized. The hedonic perspective describes well-being in terms of the cognitive and emotional appraisal of one's life (Diener et al., 2008). This means that the essential component of hedonic psychological well-being assumed in this study includes: (1) experiencing high levels of positive emotions and low levels of negative emotions, and (2) having high levels of life satisfaction. The eudaimonic perspective, on the other hand, assumes that a person is happy when they live in accordance with their values and have the opportunity for personal development. In this view, it is not about the pleasure derived from life but about its meaningfulness, purposefulness and value. A theory applied in this study that directly relates to

eudaimonic well-being is the multidimensional model of happiness by Ryff (1989). Ryff and Singer (2006) describe well-being as the resultant of six different aspects of human self-fulfilment: (1) autonomy (acting in accordance with individual standards, values and beliefs); (2) ability to cope with the surrounding world (environmental control); (3) opportunities to enrich personal potential (self-growth); (4) positive relationships with others; (5) goal orientation (ability to find purpose in life), and (6) self-acceptance (self-awareness, positive attitude toward oneself).

In reviewing the research, it is worth remarking that building a sense of agency in students is an important task of every teacher. If an educator thinks he or she is incompetent and unable to deal with difficult students (low self-efficacy), their students will begin to believe that they can do nothing, and they have no better prospects. On the other hand, school staff who promote positive values and encourage students to achieve success make children and young people – despite educational difficulties – show interest in learning and try to broaden their knowledge. Therefore, teachers' self-efficacy influences their students' attitude toward the educational process and, consequently, contributes to the improvement of teaching quality (Achurra & Villardón, 2012).

Moreover, there are analyses in the literature on the relationship between self-efficacy and eudaimonic well-being. During the 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference *Edu World 2016*, results which describe the relationship between self-efficacy, professional burnout and eudaimonic well-being were presented. A total of 217 teachers aged 22 to 58 years were surveyed. A positive correlation was found between the teachers' self-efficacy appraisal and all six dimensions of psychological well-being as defined by Ryff et al. (Bentea, 2017). The positive relationships of self-efficacy and well-being were also confirmed by a study conducted in India with 100 students, including 50 women and 50 men (Siddiqui, 2015).

For the hedonic approach, most empirical reviews on self-efficacy focus on the cognitive dimension of well-being. Results published in *International Education Studies* showed that this belief is related to life satisfaction as measured by the *Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)*. The higher the level of self-efficacy of the respondents, the stronger they experienced life satisfaction. The study group comprised 405 young adults. It is worth mentioning that no gender differences were observed in the perceived efficacy and life satisfaction levels (Çakar, 2012). Similar results were obtained for 150 Turkish female teachers for whom a positive relationship between the variables considered was also confirmed (Alipour & Taghvaei, 2016).

The emotional dimension of hedonic psychological well-being appears in Chinese research on positive affect, self-efficacy perception, the role of personality, and life satisfaction (Zhang, 2016). It was proven that students with high belief experience more positive emotional states, which positively correlates with higher life satisfaction.

### Purpose of research

Taking into account the results mentioned above, the role of self-efficacy in the group of teachers and considering the holistic approach to psychological well-being, a decision was taken to verify whether the described personal resource was related to their psychological well-being in the hedonic and eudaimonic approach. Furthermore, following the research conducted by Kulawska (2017), who confirmed that contract teachers were characterized by higher self-efficacy than appointed and chartered teachers, a decision was made to enrich all analyses with the level of professional promotion. The following research hypotheses were formulated:

- H1. The higher the level of self-efficacy of the teachers, the stronger the level of their psychological well-being:
  - H1.1. in eudaimonic terms: in all its dimensions (autonomy, environmental control, self-growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance).
  - H1.2. in hedonic terms: H1.2.1. experiencing high levels of positive emotions and low levels of negative emotions, and H1.2.2. having high levels of life satisfaction.
- H2. A teacher's professional promotion grade modifies the relationships considered in hypothesis one.

### Method

#### Study group and procedure

The research was conducted on a group of 100 teachers in central Poland in cities with population over 100,000. This is the first part of a research project conducted with the participation of the above-mentioned professional group. The respondents were invited to participate in the study between September 2019 and January 2020. Prior consent was obtained from the facilities taking part in the study and the respondents themselves. The entire procedure was performed in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. This means that the subjects were informed about voluntary participation in the study. They were given information about the purpose and procedure of the study and were assured of anonymity as well as of the fact that the results would be used for scientific purposes only. Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires and seal them in envelopes, which were subsequently collected by the researcher.

Regarding gender, there were 76 women and 24 men, from primary and secondary schools. This gender distribution is due to the feminization of the teaching profession in Poland. The age of the examined individuals ranged from 25 to 67 years ( $M = 44.26$ ;  $SD = 9.46$ ). The average age of the women oscillated around 43 years ( $SD = 9.33$ ), while the average age of the men was 47 years ( $SD = 9.51$ ). Primary school teachers accounted for 49% of all the respondents,

while secondary school teachers accounted for 51%. The average length of service was almost 18 years (in the case of women – 17 years ( $SD = 9.8$ ) and men – 20 years ( $SD = 12.32$ )). Taking into account professional promotion grades, the largest group of the respondents were chartered teachers (56%), then appointed teachers (19%) and contract teachers (15%). Trainee teachers were the smallest group (10%).

#### Measures

Paper-and-pencil instruments with proven and satisfactory psychometric properties were used to conduct the study. They included: *General Self-Efficacy Scale*, *Satisfaction With Life Scale*, *Positive and Negative Affect Schedule*, and *Psychological Well-Being Scale*. The questionnaires were preceded by a survey the aim of which was to collect basic demographic data.

The *General Self-Efficacy Scale* (GSES), developed by Jerusalem and Schwarzer (1992), was used to measure the strength of a person's general belief in the effectiveness of coping with difficult situations and with obstacles. GSES is composed of 10 statements and respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the given statements on a four-point scale. *Cronbach's alpha* in our study was 0.86.

The *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS) by Diener et al. (1985) was used to determine hedonic psychological well-being in the cognitive dimension. SWLS comprises five statements and is used to measure overall life satisfaction. Using a scale from 1 to 7, respondents indicate to what extent they accept the content of a particular statement. The reliability of the questionnaire, tested in our study using *Cronbach's alpha*, was 0.82.

The *SUPIN* scale was used to examine hedonic psychological well-being in the emotional dimension. This is the Polish version of the *Positive and Negative Affect Schedule* (PANAS) by Watson et al. (1988), as adapted by Brzozowski (2010). It has two versions and each of them has two varieties: for measuring current emotional states (S20 and S30) and for measuring relatively stable affective traits (C20 and C30). The 30-item version (S30) was used in this study. The results obtained were calculated separately for the following two subscales: PE – positive emotions, and NE – negative emotions. *Cronbach's alpha* coefficients reached 0.91 for the PE subscale and 0.94 for the NE subscale in our own research.

The last tool was the *Psychological Well-Being Scale* (PWBS) which was applied to measure well-being from a eudaimonic perspective. This scale was developed by Ryff and Singer (2006), and its Polish adaptation was produced by Krok (2011). The respondents were asked to indicate, using a seven-point scale, the extent to which they agreed with each of 42 statements. The reliability as determined by *Cronbach's alpha* for each scale was satisfactory in our own research and totalled 0.7 for autonomy, 0.79 for environmental control, 0.75 for self-growth, 0.75 for positive relationships with others, 0.70 for purpose in life, and 0.86 for self-acceptance.

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## Results

Statistical analyses were performed in version 25 of the SPSS software package. Table 1 contains descriptive statistics (minimum, maximum, mean – *M*, and standard deviation – *SD*) relating to all the examined variables. It shows that the surveyed teachers are characterized by higher than average self-efficacy, well-being in the hedonic perspective (positive emotions and satisfaction with life, lower than average negative emotions) and above average eudaimonic well-being in all six scales.

Verifying the research hypotheses, Pearson's correlation coefficients confirmed statistically significant relationships (moderate to high) between teachers'

self-efficacy and psychological well-being. Higher levels of self-efficacy are associated with higher levels of their psychological well-being in eudaimonic terms in all its dimensions (autonomy, environmental control, self-growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance), (hypothesis H1.1. confirmed), (see Table 2). Furthermore, moderate correlations occurred between GSES and the cognitive dimension of hedonic well-being (satisfaction with life), (hypothesis H1.2.2. confirmed), as well as positive emotions (hypothesis H1.2.1. partially confirmed). The only statistically insignificant relationship was found for self-efficacy and negative emotions (see Table 3).

The coefficient of determination ( $r^2 \cdot 100\%$ ) is 33.64 for autonomy, 32.49 for self-acceptance, 27.04 for en-

**Table 1**

Statistics describing self-efficacy and well-being in hedonic and eudaimonic terms

Descriptive statistics ( <i>N</i> = 100)	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Self-efficacy (GSES)	19	40	30.67	3.95
Positive emotions (PANAS)	19	70	44.75	10.74
Negative emotions (PANAS)	15	56	25.82	11.24
Satisfaction with life (SWLS)	8	34	22.94	5.26
Autonomy (PWBS)	17	45	34.72	6.19
Environmental control (PWBS)	18	48	34.63	6.45
Self-growth (PWBS)	18	49	36.95	6.06
Positive relationships with others (PWBS)	23	49	39.95	5.47
Purpose in life (PWBS)	22	48	37.11	5.65
Self-acceptance (PWBS)	17	49	35.45	7.32

Note. *M* – mean, *SD* – standard deviation, GSES – General Self-Efficacy Scale, PANAS – Positive and Negative Affect Schedule, SWLS – Satisfaction With Life Scale, PWBS – Psychological Well-Being Scale.

Source: authors' own work.

**Table 2**

Self-efficacy and psychological well-being in eudaimonic terms

	Psychological well-being in eudaimonic terms					
	Autonomy (PWBS)	Environmental control (PWBS)	Self-growth (PWBS)	Positive relationships with others (PWBS)	Purpose in life (PWBS)	Self-acceptance (PWBS)
Self-efficacy (GSES)	0.58***	0.52***	0.43***	0.30**	0.38***	0.57***

Note. \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

Source: authors' own work.

**Table 3**

Self-efficacy and psychological well-being in hedonic terms

	Psychological well-being in hedonic terms		
	Positive emotions (PANAS)	Negative emotions (PANAS)	Satisfaction with life (SWLS)
Self-efficacy (GSES)	0.21*	<i>ns</i>	0.41***

Note. \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; *ns* – statistically insignificant.

Source: authors' own work.

**Table 4***Self-efficacy and psychological well-being of teachers taking into account professional promotion grades*

Correlation coefficients <i>r</i> Pearson ( <i>N</i> = 100)	Self-efficacy (GSES) trainee teacher	Self-efficacy (GSES) contract teacher	Self-efficacy (GSES) appointed teacher	Self-efficacy (GSES) chartered teacher
Positive emotions (PANAS)	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	0.49*	<i>ns</i>
Negative emotions (PANAS)	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>
Satisfaction with life (SWLS)	<i>ns</i>	0.46 ^	<i>ns</i>	0.45**
Autonomy (PWBS)	0.78**	<i>ns</i>	0.82***	0.55***
Environmental control (PWBS)	0.77**	0.45 ^	0.49*	0.51***
Self-growth (PWBS)	0.68*	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	0.47***
Positive relationships with others (PWBS)	0.85**	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	0.24 ^
Purpose in life (PWBS)	0.65*	<i>ns</i>	<i>ns</i>	0.37**
Self-acceptance (PWBS)	0.88**	0.56*	0.48*	0.57***

Note. GSES – self-efficacy; ^  $p < 0.1$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; *ns* – statistically insignificant.

Source: authors' own work.

vironmental control, 18.49 for self-growth, 16.81 for satisfaction with life, 14.44 for purpose in life, 9.0 for positive relationships with others, and 4.41 for positive emotions. This means that self-efficacy explains most of the total variation in autonomy (almost 34%), self-acceptance (almost 33%), and environmental control (27%), i.e. the dimensions of eudaimonic well-being. For the cognitive evaluation of life (the hedonic well-being dimension), this predictability is almost 17%. The emotional rating of hedonic well-being (positive emotions) is the lowest and totals about 5%.

Regarding the second hypothesis, professional promotion grades modify the considered relationships between the key variables (hypothesis H2. confirmed), (see Table 4).

Self-efficacy in trainee teachers co-exists strongly with eudaimonic well-being, especially: (1) self-acceptance, (2) positive relationships with others, (3) autonomy, and (4) environmental control. The coefficients of determination ( $r^2$  \* 100%) are, respectively: 77.44, 72.25, 60.84, and 59.29, which means that GSES predicts between 59% and almost 78% of the variability in the said dimensions. For contract teachers, only self-acceptance has a strong relationship with GSES (the coefficient of determination takes the value of 31.36). As for appointed teachers, their self-efficacy appraisal improves the positive affect and selected dimensions of self-fulfilment such as self-acceptance, environmental control and sense of autonomy (highest coefficient of determination – 66.24). However, in the case of chartered teachers (the most numerous group), their self-efficacy translates into both a high level of satisfaction with life and living in accordance with professed values, standards and beliefs, most importantly self-acceptance. The coefficients of determination in this case range from 13.36 (purpose in life) to 32.49 (self-acceptance).

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine whether teachers' self-efficacy is related to their psychological well-being in hedonic and eudaimonic terms. Previous analyses have only been conducted from one research perspective (Alipour & Taghvaei, 2016; Bentea, 2017; Çakar, 2012; Zhang, 2016). A holistic approach to well-being was chosen in this study since the knowledge gained can be helpful in formulating an emotional and cognitive evaluation of one's own life or in searching for its meaning; and the work of teachers affects not only themselves but also students, parents, and even the whole society.

To sum up, the teachers surveyed were characterized by higher than average self-efficacy and levels of psychological well-being – both in hedonic and eudaimonic terms. This means that they positively evaluated their ability to act in a goal-oriented manner. Moreover, they were accompanied by higher than average levels of positive emotions and satisfaction with life and by lower levels of negative emotions. In addition, living in accordance with their values along with the possibility of self-growth and self-improvement were another source of their well-being. Different outcomes were obtained by E. Kulawska (2017) who surveyed 44 teachers of early childhood education. The vast majority (68%) described their efficacy as average and only 16% as high. This discrepancy may be caused by the specificity of the respondents as well as by the educational reform of 2017.

Second, the research hypotheses formulated earlier were confirmed. High levels of teachers' self-efficacy were accompanied by their high ratings of psychological well-being. This remains consistent with previously cited data (Alipour & Taghvaei, 2016; Bentea, 2017; Çakar, 2012; Siddiqui, 2015; Zhang, 2016), in which

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the relationships presented above were considered from only one perspective. Based on the obtained coefficients of determination, it can be concluded that self-efficacy explains to a greater extent the total variation in various dimensions of eudaimonic well-being compared to hedonic well-being (satisfaction with life). Self-efficacy appraisal has a poor relationship with the emotional dimension of hedonic well-being (positive emotions).

Furthermore, it is important to consider well-being not only in terms of pleasant sensations or tasks accomplished and successes achieved (hedonic approach). It turns out that self-efficacy is more important for eudaimonic measures. It was Aristotle who first wrote about the authentic spirit-self of man, while contemporary precursors of eudaimonism (Maslow, Rogers, Frankl, Allport) mentioned living in accordance with the true Self (Ryff & Singer, 2006). Such a man (self-fulfilling) is internally free, does not yield to external influences, and has a coherent system of norms and rules (values that cannot be overestimated in the teaching profession).

The third conclusion that emerges from the research is the differentiating role of professional promotion in the relationship between key variables. This requires further analysis due to the size of each group. It is worth stating, however, that the self-efficacy for trainee, appointed and chartered teachers was particularly important in terms of the eudaimonic concept of well-being (both internal and external dimensions). It is about self-acceptance, autonomy (the inner aspects of self-fulfilment) and environmental control, as well as positive relationships with others (the outer dimensions of happiness). The introduction of professional promotion grades into the analyses resulted in insignificant interactions of GSES with hedonic well-being – although with two exceptions, namely: self-efficacy predicted 24% of the positive emotional evaluation of the lives of appointed teachers and 20% of the cognitive evaluation of the lives of chartered teachers.

In conclusion, self-efficacy is an important personal resource that determines the extent to which teachers are able to use their skills and abilities. It is also strongly linked with their psychological well-being. For that reason, it is very important to pay more attention to the development of these competences in the training of future teaching staff. It is an empirically verified view that self-efficacy can be taught and developed on the basis of carefully prepared training programmes, which are applicable in business, but should also be used in education at all levels.

The authors are aware that the study has some limitations. Therefore, it is recommended that further studies be performed involving larger groups of teachers, especially after taking into account professional promotion grades. This may offer further insight into how the training programmes should be best formulated. Future research should also adapt a holistic approach to psychological well-being in the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches. It is

feasible that the most direct path to happiness and well-being is not only seeking positive hedonic experiences, but also engaging in meaningful pursuits and the development of one's strengths – a request of special interest in a group of teachers. Therefore, the above research should be considered as a first step for further analysis.

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