

Teachers' Work Engagement and its Relationship With Their Individual and Social Well-Being: An Exploratory Study

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ABSTRACT

In this article, our primary aim is to explore the relationship between teachers' engagement in teaching and their well-being in a contextualized manner given that teacher engagement does not exist in isolation from the social milieu in which teachers work. To this end, we build on the concept of work engagement developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) and Seligman's (2011) model of well-being. Our small-scale exploratory quantitative study ($N = 58$) involved both language teachers and teachers of other subjects working in public education in Hungary. Data were analyzed with the help of difference tests and correlational analyses. Although our results showed that the level of well-being experienced by teachers in Hungary was similar to that of an international, large-scale teacher sample (Sulis, Mairitsch, et al., 2022), work engagement was found to have few relationships with individual well-being factors and none with school-related social ones. Since our findings are largely in contrast with the results of previous empirical research on teacher well-being, we attempt to provide potential contextual, methodological, and theoretical reasons for them.

Keywords: well-being, work engagement, PERMA model, school climate, resilience

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on the analysis of a small-scale Hungarian dataset that describes teachers' work engagement in relation to their well-being measured by individual and social variables. This is an important study in the current Hungarian educational context in which teachers struggle with a number of issues that manifest themselves not only in an apparent dissatisfaction with their jobs but also in the increasing number of teachers leaving the profession and a decreasing number of students starting teacher education (Pósfai, 2020; Smid, 2022).

In order to fulfill our aim, we present the group-related statistics and correlational results of several scales measuring teachers' work engagement and individual and social well-being to answer our exploratory research questions (RQs), which are:

- RQ1: What characterizes the work engagement and well-being of language teachers and teachers of other subjects in the Hungarian context?
- RQ2: What characterizes the relationship between work engagement and individual well-being?
- RQ3: What characterizes the relationship between work engagement and social well-being?

We would like to argue that, given the understanding that a person's well-being is rooted in their social context (Mercer, 2021), it is, therefore, important to understand how various measures on the individual and social levels correlate with one another. Contextually relevant results can fine-tune our theoretical understanding of well-being as well as imply points of interventions for local policies in education.

Our paper starts by discussing work engagement; then, we summarize concepts related to individual and social well-being as possible associated variables. This is followed by the Methods and Results sections; this latter is combined with our discussion in which we try to understand some of the unexpected results. Finally, we outline both theoretical and empirical implications for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work Engagement

Work engagement can be defined as “a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor,

dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2006, p. 702). Schaufeli et al. (2006) view this construct as the opposite of burnout and argue that individuals engaged in their work can be characterized by high energy levels and a strong willingness to exert effort and persist despite challenges. Dedication to their work is accompanied by feelings of significance; they are enthusiastic, inspired, and proud. They are completely focused and absorbed in work, making it difficult for them to disengage from their work-related tasks (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Since this questionnaire is not specific to the educational context but may refer to any kind of work, it needed to be adjusted for the school context. Clearly, work engagement in the case of teachers means dedication to and deep involvement with their teaching-related activities; this is the construct we attempted to tap into with the help of a questionnaire scale in our study.

The Concept of Individual Well-Being

Although well-being might also be interpreted objectively as access to sufficient resources, in the psychological literature, it is the construct of subjective well-being that has received much more attention (Butler & Kern, 2016). Subjective well-being is traditionally further divided into hedonistic and eudemonic types, where hedonistic well-being is mainly interpreted as an attempt at maximizing pleasure and enjoyment (Butler & Kern, 2016). Although this aspect is also present in eudemonic well-being to some extent in the form of positive emotions, the focus there is on living a meaningful rather than just a pleasurable life (Sulis, Babic, et al., 2022). An early conceptualization of what eudemonic happiness might constitute was put forward by Seligman (2002), who created the term authentic happiness to describe this construct. According to him, authentic happiness comprises whatever people choose to be involved with for its own sake, and he listed three items that meet this criterion: positive emotions, engagement, and meaning. He later added two more components to his model: relationships and accomplishment, thereby, creating the positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA) model (Seligman, 2011), where, instead of happiness, he attempted to identify basic components of well-being, which is a broader and more complex construct. In the current study, we have utilized elements of the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011), except

for the engagement scale to avoid an overlap between dependent and independent variables.

Positive emotion, the P in PERMA, is a basic component of well-being according to both hedonistic and eudemonic approaches (Seligman, 2011). The presence of pleasure and enjoyment, however, does not mean the complete lack of negative emotions. Flourishing, which is also a frequently used synonym for this state, rather means that the ratio of positive and negative emotions leans towards the positive (Fredrickson, 2013). This is important since according to Fredrickson (2003), positive emotions enable the individual to be open to new experiences and build a range of resources that can be useful later.

Positive relationships are signified by the letter R in the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011). This is one of the two components of the model that go beyond individual happiness and refer to social aspects since, although relationships and relatedness are still viewed from the individual's perspective, relationships obviously require more than one person. Still, what matters here is not the quality of the relationship, but the individual's feeling of being cared for and their sense of connectedness towards significant others.

The letter M stands for meaning (Seligman, 2011), which signifies a sense of purpose and direction in connection with the life of the individual. According to Seligman (2011), seeking meaning and purpose in life is a basic characteristic of human beings. A meaningful life involves being part of and contributing to something that the person perceives as greater than their self. In order to aid an individual's quest for meaning, society created positive institutions, such as family and religions, but even political parties can assist people in assigning meaning and purpose to their lives.

Finally, A stands for accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). Accomplishment pertains to achieving the goals that individuals set for themselves and, in this sense, it can be seen as synonymous with success. However, this success is not necessarily defined by social or financial standards, but rather by the personal objectives that individuals determine for themselves, according to their own criteria. This interpretation of accomplishment is highly subjective and personal and might easily deviate from socially defined, expected, and acknowledged interpretations of success. The concept itself still presupposes a context against which

success can be measured; thus, along with positive relationships, accomplishment represents a move towards more social aspects of well-being (Seligman, 2011).

Although components of the PERMA model are mainly concerned with mental health issues (Seligman, 2011), associations between well-being and physical health have also been documented (Diener & Chan, 2011; Veenhoven, 2008). Both Veenhoven (2008) as well as Diener and Chan (2011) found that well-being is generally associated with better health and longevity although it remains unclear whether high levels of well-being might be beneficial when already fighting a disease or not. Thus, Mercer et al. (2018), citing the initiative of Zhivotovskaya at the Flourishing Center where the PERMA-V model was created (with V standing for vitality), argue for incorporating the construct of health into the model of well-being. In line with this, items measuring subjective health can also be found in Butler and Kern's (2016) PERMA Profiler survey tool.

When investigating the relationships of the various facets of well-being with one another within the PERMA Profiler, Butler and Kern (2016) found strong positive correlations between positive emotions, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, while moderate positive correlations were found between these scales and health, and moderate negative correlations were detected between these scales and negative emotions. Correlation strengths were interpreted based on Cohen (1988), who claimed that a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient from 0.10 to 0.29 should be considered weak, from 0.30 to 0.49 moderate, while from 0.50 to 1.0 strong. Similar results to those of Butler and Kern were found in validation studies of the PERMA Profiler (e.g., de Carvalho et al., 2023; Wammerl et al., 2019); moreover, strong positive correlations were revealed between the PERMA scales in a study involving language teachers (MacIntyre et al., 2019), as well as in a recent meta-analysis (Jimenez et al., 2024). As regards the relationship of work engagement and different facets of individual well-being, several studies have provided evidence for a positive relationship with positive emotions (Azari Noughabi et al., 2024; Burić & Macuka, 2018), while Greenier et al. (2021) reported links between psychological well-being and work engagement.

The Concept of Social Well-Being

While the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011) also incorporates some social aspects of well-being, like positive relationships, it primarily adopts an individual-centered perspective. In contrast, Mercer (2021) compellingly argues that subjective well-being must always be understood in relation to the social context, regardless of how narrowly or broadly that context is defined. She claims that, “from this perspective, well-being is defined as the dynamic sense of meaning and life satisfaction emerging from a person’s subjective personal relationships with the affordances within their social ecologies” (Mercer, 2021, p. 16). While this may seem self-evident, it actually introduces a new perspective in connection with the concept of well-being. For teachers, the most immediate and relevant social context is their educational institution, a factor also emphasized by Gregersen and MacIntyre (2024). These institutions are typically schools, where teachers interact with colleagues and the headteacher. In order to assess the organizational climate of schools, Hoy et al. (2002) developed a questionnaire with four key facets determining school climate: institutional vulnerability, collegial leadership, professional teacher behavior, and achievement press.

Out of the four constructs measured by Hoy et al.’s (2002) questionnaire, the interpretation of two scales is relatively straightforward based on their labelling. *Collegial leadership* means that the school’s headteacher is not authoritarian but democratic, while *professional teacher behavior* reflects trust and respect among colleagues. The less immediately clear constructs are *achievement press*, which refers to the pressure teachers feel from students and parents to achieve tangible results, and *institutional vulnerability*, which represents the pressure from parents concerning school management. While achievement press can be hypothesized to be present in the Hungarian school context, institutional vulnerability is much less likely to be relevant. In Hungary, most schools are public schools, which are state-owned and managed, with no parental involvement in financial or management decisions. With the help of their questionnaire, Hoy et al. found significant relationships between certain aspects of school climate and trust: Collegial leadership was a positive predictor of trust in the headteacher, professional teacher behavior predicted trust among colleagues, and achievement press was positively associated with trust in parents and students.

The significance of the school context in influencing teachers’ well-being can be supported by further empirical findings. For example, in a recent study by Gregersen and MacIntyre (2024), teachers responded to an open-ended question regarding what advice they would give to their colleagues in challenging times. The qualitative data analysis resulted in four emerging themes, one of which concerned positive leadership. Teachers in the sample felt that school leaders have an important role in creating a healthy work–life balance by setting boundaries on the time devoted to working. Positive leadership was also instrumental in supporting communication and attending to teachers’ emotional needs besides encouraging positive relationships with school administration. Moreover, in a systematic review of the literature that surveyed publications from 2000 to 2019, Hascher and Waber (2021) found consistent positive relationships between teacher well-being and positive collegial relations, collegial support, and collaboration in 21 studies, support by principals and leadership in 10 studies, and supportive work environment in 12 studies. These findings offer compelling evidence for the existence of a positive link between teacher well-being and the school context. As far as the social aspects of well-being and work engagement are concerned, the quality of relationships seemed to be a decisive factor in this matter based on previous research conducted with teachers (Purwaningtyas et al., 2023), meaning that good peer relationships among teachers predicted higher work engagement.

The Context of the Study and the Importance of Teacher Resilience

Although the importance of the immediate social context provided by schools and their staff cannot be denied, considering the broader social context in which public schools and the teachers employed in them are embedded is also crucial (Csizér, 2020; Csizér et al., 2025). When describing the social context of education, it is advisable to rely on statistical data for an objective description since attitudes toward the educational system as a whole are often shaped by various factors, including political views. Luckily, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports provide objective and reliable statistical data in this regard, making comparisons

both across countries and across professions within a given country possible.

As OECD (2023a) reports internationally comparable education indicators, we know that OECD countries, on average, allocated 5.1% of their gross domestic product (GDP) to educational institutions in 2020. Unfortunately, Hungary's expenditure was significantly lower, at just 3.7% of its GDP. Furthermore, while educational spending increased slightly by 0.4% during the COVID-19 pandemic (2019–20) across OECD countries, it declined by 7.2% in Hungary. This lower level of funding is also reflected in the salaries of Hungarian teachers, who earn 62% of what tertiary-educated workers make in Hungary. When calculated based on weighted averages relative to similarly educated workers in the country, this figure drops to 53%, the lowest among the countries surveyed (OECD, 2023b). The same report notes that teacher salaries represent the largest cost in formal education globally, and they directly impact the attractiveness of the teaching profession. Their influence is exerted by (1) decisions related to enrolling in teacher education programs, (2) entering the profession after graduation, and (3) staying in teaching (OECD, 2023b). The significance bestowed on teachers' salaries is also supported by another OECD (2005) report, which suggests that higher teacher salaries generally correlate with lower attrition rates in the profession. In conclusion, the statistical data presented here paints a rather bleak picture of the broader societal context surrounding education and the teaching profession in Hungary, but acknowledging and understanding this context is crucial for interpreting our findings.

The well-being of teachers in Hungary whose financial remuneration, and consequently their social prestige, appear to be quite low, is under pressure. Various life events and stressors teachers must manage daily pose incessant challenges for their sense of well-being that need to be managed somehow (MacIntyre et al., 2019). *Resilience* is a theoretical construct that captures this adaptive or coping potential, and it has been defined as the “positive psychological capacity to rebound, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress, and increased responsibility” (Luthans, 2002, p. 702). Interestingly, resilience and well-being are often discussed together without making specific claims about the exact nature of their relationship, merely implying a relationship between the two (see, e.g., Turner & Braine,

2016; White & McCallum, 2021). However, both theoretical insights and empirical findings point to the possibility of a circular relationship between the two: It can be hypothesized that, on the one hand, a person's well-being contributes to their resilience since individuals who thrive may be better equipped to endure challenges (e.g., Brouskeli et al., 2018; Çetin, 2019; Le Cornu, 2013). On the other hand, resilience may also help maintain or restore well-being by enhancing an individual's coping capacity (e.g., Burić et al., 2019; Hascher et al., 2021; Johnson & Down, 2013). In line with these claims, teachers' resilience was found to display weak to moderate relationships with PERMA scales in a study examining associations between teachers' well-being and their psychological capital (Sulis, Mairitsch, et al., 2022). Therefore, investigating resilience along with well-being in the Hungarian educational context would also be worth unpacking.

METHODS

Sampling and Participants

We selected teachers working in different high schools in the Hungarian public education system, teaching various subjects, including foreign languages ($n = 30$), mainly English and German. Our sample consists of 58 teachers, who were chosen using non-probability sampling techniques, namely, convenience and snowball sampling (Dörnyei, 2007). The gender distribution attests the unequal distribution of the actual population (46 females and 12 males). The ages of our participants ranged between 24 to 64 ($M = 48$ years; $SD = 11$ years), with a corresponding teaching experience of 1 to 41 years ($M = 21$ years; $SD = 12$ years). Forty teachers worked full time in their schools, while 18 had part-time jobs. This result aligns well with anecdotal evidence, but no official data exist.

Instrument

In the current study, we used six scales measuring teachers' well-being from the individual's point of view and three scales assessing the social aspects of well-being. We present the names and sources of the scales that have been adapted below, along with their definitions, their Cronbach's alpha (α) values (Dörnyei, 2007), and a sample item for each.

Scale Focusing on Work Engagement

Work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002, 2006) includes items measuring commitment, enthusiasm, and involvement in teaching (5 items; $\alpha = 0.76$). Sample item: Time flies when I am teaching.

Scales Focusing on the Individual Aspects of Teacher Well-Being

1. *Positive emotions* (Butler & Kern, 2016) measures the extent to which teachers experienced positive work-related emotions (5 items; $\alpha = 0.80$). Sample item: I really enjoy my work.

2. *Negative emotions* (Butler & Kern, 2016) assesses teachers' experiencing negative emotions (5 items; $\alpha = 0.76$). Sample item: My work fills me with anxiety.

3. *Meaning* (Butler & Kern, 2016) taps into the disposition that one's teaching work is valuable and worthwhile (5 items; $\alpha = 0.79$). Sample item: I feel that I am doing valuable work.

4. *Accomplishment/Success* (Butler & Kern, 2016) explores the extent to which the teacher feels successful in their work according to their own standards (5 items; $\alpha = 0.80$). Sample item: I feel I can achieve my work-related goals.

5. *Health* (Butler & Kern, 2016) assesses teachers' self-reported physical and mental health (4 items; $\alpha = 0.88$). Sample item: I feel I am in good health compared to my peers.

6. *Resilience* (Luthans et al., 2007) assesses teachers' views about their ability to recover quickly from difficulties and adapt to challenging situations (5 items; $\alpha = 0.66$). Sample item: I feel I can cope with the problems that arise in my work.

Scales Focusing on the Social Aspects of Teacher Well-Being

1. *Collegial leadership* (Hoy et al., 2002) measures the extent to which teachers view their headteacher as approachable, just, and non-autocratic (4 items; $\alpha = 0.90$). Sample item: The principal recognizes when a problem can be solved in more than one way.

2. *Professional teacher behavior* (Hoy et al., 2002) taps into cooperation and support among teachers teaching at the same school (4 items; $\alpha = 0.75$). Sample item: In our department, teachers support one another.

3. *Achievement press* (Hoy et al., 2002) assesses the pressure experienced by teachers as a result of parents', students', and school management's expectations aiming at high performance (6 items; $\alpha = 0.65$). Sample item: My students expect me to perform high-quality work.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Participation in the study was voluntary, and no personal data were collected. After collecting the data with the help of an online platform in the spring term of 2022, the validation process was carried out (for details, see Csizér et al., 2025). In order to answer RQ1, we ran independent samples *t* tests to find out whether there were any significant or meaningful differences between teachers teaching various subjects concerning their work engagement and the other scales. As no such variations were found, we decided to collate the sample and look at teachers of all subjects together in order to decrease our sampling error when answering RQ2 and RQ3, for which we used correlational analyses in the software, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 26.0).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What Characterizes the Work Engagement and Well-Being of Language Teachers and Teachers of Other Subjects in the Hungarian Context?

Our RQ1 involved comparative and descriptive aspects (Table 1). Concerning possible differences between language teachers and teachers of other subjects, no meaningful differences emerged between the two subsamples. Except for a single scale (negative emotions), all the other scales showed non-significant differences. These results underline the importance of the social context teachers live in, as hardly any subject-specific characteristics could be shown here. In practical terms, this means that based on the scales, the level of well-being reported by language teachers and teachers of other subjects was the same in all cases except that language teachers reported significantly higher levels of negative emotions.

This seems to lend some support to Mercer’s (2021) hypothesis that language teachers might experience lower levels of well-being due to their difficult position compared to teachers of other subjects since higher levels of negative emotions can be expected to influence well-being unfavorably. However, based on the lack of other significant differences, we decided to analyze the sample of teachers as one instead of dividing it into two sub-samples. In the future, further research on the well-being of teachers teaching different subjects would be needed to validate the results of our small-scale study and explore potential reasons for the higher levels of negative emotions among language teachers.

When inspecting the descriptive results (Table 1), we cannot see major differences among the mean values as they tend to cluster around four on the 5-point scale. As in this analysis the focus was on work engagement, we have checked paired-samples *t*-test results with Cohen’s *d*, in relation to the individual and social well-being scales. Concerning the latter, no difference is significant, which means that teachers’ dispositions towards work engagement and the social aspects of well-being did not differ. Comparing the mean value of work engagement to those of the other individual well-being scales, the picture is more

varied as we found no significant difference (with meaning and achievement), significant difference with a small effect (with positive emotions [$t = 2.024, p = 0.02, d = 0.266$]), significant differences with medium effect (with resilience [$t = -3.095, p = 0.002, d = -0.401$] and health [$t = -2.439, p = 0.009, d = -0.406$]) and with large effect (with negative emotions [$t = -12.180, p < 0.001, d = -1.599$]).

Our descriptive results are directly comparable with Sulis, Mairitsch, et al.’s (2022) as they also used 5-point Likert scales, while other studies we reviewed above obtained their data on 10-point scales. Comparing the mean values of our work engagement and Sulis, Mairitsch, et al.’s engagement scales, our results are almost identical to their study using an international sample despite the difference in the measurement tools used to assess engagement. However, some of the other scales seem to have higher mean values in this Hungarian sample, and the mean value of the negative emotions is lower in our sample compared to Sulis, Mairitsch, et al.’s results despite the use of identical scales in the case of these variables. This could lead to an optimistic claim that Hungarian teachers report higher well-being despite the contextual difficulties they face as outlined above.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Scales and Differences Between Language Teachers and Teachers of Other Subjects

Scales	Full sample (<i>N</i> = 58)		Language teachers (<i>n</i> = 30)		Teachers of other subjects (<i>n</i> = 28)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Work engagement	3.90	0.73	3.80	0.60	4.03	0.83
<i>Individual aspects of well-being</i>						
Positive emotions	4.10	0.69	4.05	0.59	4.14	0.79
Accomplishment/Success	4.01	0.64	3.95	0.62	4.07	0.65
Meaning	3.81	0.73	3.86	0.53	3.75	0.90
Resilience	3.56	0.68	3.59	0.65	3.52	0.72
Health	3.47	1.10	3.63	0.95	3.29	1.22
Negative emotions	2.13	0.77	2.34	0.82	1.91	0.66
<i>Social aspects of well-being</i>						
Collegial leadership	3.65	1.14	3.65	1.23	3.65	1.05
Professional teacher behavior	4.07	0.70	4.09	0.76	4.05	0.65
Achievement press	4.01	0.64	4.03	0.61	3.99	0.69

Note. Based on the results of independent samples *t* tests, a significant difference was only found for the scale of negative emotions ($t = 2.16, p < 0.05$).

What Characterizes the Relationship Between Work Engagement and Individual Well-Being Scales?

To answer our RQ2, we also looked at the correlations between work engagement and individual well-being scales (see Table 2). It is surprising that only positive emotions and meaning show significant relationships with work engagement, indicating that teachers experiencing more positive emotions and thinking that their work is meaningful report a higher level of work engagement, that is, these variables seem to move together. The fact that there are no correlations between the work engagement and other well-being scales is not in line with findings reported in connection with language teachers in the British and Iranian context (Greenier et al., 2021). Furthermore, strong correlations between engagement and the other PERMA

scales measuring individual well-being have been reported in research involving teachers and non-teachers (de Carvalho et al., 2023; Jimenez et al., 2024; MacIntyre et al., 2019; Wammerl et al., 2019). It seems that in the Hungarian educational context, work engagement does not relate to some of the other scales of well-being, which shows that the scales driving teachers' involvement in their work may be distinct from those that influence their overall well-being. This could suggest that while teachers might be engaged in their work, this engagement does not necessarily translate into higher levels of well-being as high engagement could also relate to burnout (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) although this needs to be confirmed. In practical terms, this result points to the need for separate strategies to address work engagement and well-being in the Hungarian educational setting.

Table 2. *Correlational Coefficients Between Work Engagement and the Individual Well-Being Scales*

Scales	Work engagement
Positive emotions	0.518*
Negative emotions	-0.102 ^{ns}
Accomplishment/Success	0.243 ^{ns}
Meaning	0.608*
Resilience	0.230 ^{ns}
Health	-0.118 ^{ns}

Note. *The result is significant at $p < 0.05$ level, ^{ns} means non-significant result.

Table 3. *Correlational Coefficients Between Work Engagement and the Social Well-Being Scales*

Scales	Work engagement
Collegial leadership	0.083 ^{ns}
Professional teacher behavior	0.062 ^{ns}
Achievement press	0.154 ^{ns}

Note. ^{ns} means non-significant result.

What Characterizes the Relationship Between Work Engagement and Social Well-Being Scales?

As shown above, teachers' engagement in their work is not driven by their individual well-being; therefore, we were interested whether social well-being scales could have been

related to their work engagement (see Table 3). This does not seem to be the case: None of the scales we measured in our study based on Hoy et al. (2002) showed significant relationships with work engagement. In our understanding, these results show that our participants could experience disenchanted feelings towards their immediate school

environment including not only the leadership of their schools, but also their colleagues, which do not contribute to an individual's level of work engagement. These findings are in stark contrast with Purwaningtyas et al.'s (2023) findings, which suggested that good peer relationships among teachers were particularly important in predicting their higher work engagement. These results also contradict the findings of Hascher and Waber's (2021) systematic review, which found consistent positive links between measures of various aspects of the school environment and teachers' well-being.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

We must be cautious in drawing wide-ranging conclusions based on a single data source, but it is thought-provoking that there is so little evidence of interrelationships between work engagement and the individual and social aspects of well-being among Hungarian teachers, regardless of whether they teach a foreign language or other subjects, despite the fact that their level of engagement is comparable to Sulis, Mairitsch, et al.'s (2022) study. It would be crucial to understand why engagement is seemingly such a stand-alone characteristic in the case of these teachers. At this point, we can only hypothesize various reasons. For example, a strong sense of duty might sustain engagement regardless of the level of individual and social well-being. Similarly, it could also be a contextual characteristic that emphasizes work engagement independently of individual and social well-being. Regardless of the specific reasons, such a scenario harbors potential dangers: The quality of teaching and the emotional support provided to students may suffer when work engagement is not supported by a comprehensive sense of well-being on the teachers' part (Purwaningtyas et al., 2023). Finally, this lack of connection may also lead to weakened social ties, loosely knit communities, and reduced efficacy within these communities.

When interpreting our results, it is also important to consider possible measurement issues, such as problems with the self-selection process in the sampling (Dörnyei, 2007), which might have resulted in teachers with higher levels of individual well-being being more likely to participate in our study. Alternatively, participating teachers may have over-reported their well-being due to perceived norms or expectations that were not adequately

captured in a questionnaire study. A solution to this problem would be to use probability sampling techniques in future studies if a sampling frame is available or schools could be selected randomly (Dörnyei, 2007), or, if this is not possible, to conduct interviews that could explore these complex interrelationships—or the lack thereof—in a more personalized manner. Another potential measurement issue could be related to the translation and adaptation of the original scales into Hungarian. Despite our efforts to validate the scales in Hungarian (Csizér et al., 2025), we might have inadvertently introduced some cultural biases that influenced the results that we are unaware of even at this point.

Beyond measurement issues, it is possible that in our context, there is no relationship between individual and social aspects of well-being, or that this relationship cannot be adequately captured in a single cross-sectional study. Being a teacher in Hungary comes with social challenges, and it could be hypothesized that teachers adapt to these challenges by maintaining their individual well-being even when social support is lacking. This could lead to resilient behaviors or compensation mechanisms, allowing individual well-being to remain high despite contextual difficulties. Thus, the high levels of individual well-being might be driven by personal achievements or satisfaction with their work, which may not necessarily require strong social connections or support systems.

Furthermore, our sample consisted of teachers from various subjects, which could have influenced our results. Additionally, the sample size did not allow us to employ multivariate statistical techniques to map both direct and indirect relationships, such as path analysis (Dörnyei, 2007), as well as the possible roles of mediating variables. Therefore, we believe that future research in Hungary should explore the interrelationships between the various aspects of teacher well-being. Future research directions should not only include qualitative data collection to complement our data with individual teacher stories but also consider other scales measuring teacher well-being quantitatively. Furthermore, to fully understand the internal structure of well-being, we need data that directly compare various contexts and countries (see, e.g., Csizér, 2020; Csizér et al., 2025).

Theoretically, studies have repeatedly considered well-being as consisting of various pillars measured by different

scales or explored through qualitative investigations to understand their relationship to work engagement (e.g., Sulis, Babic, et al., 2022; Sulis, Mairitsch, et al., 2022). Consequently, the possible hierarchical nature of individual and social well-being and their impact on overall well-being should also be considered. Such a theory could organize the complex phenomenon of well-being into different levels or layers (e.g., Ryff, 1989), making it easier to understand how various components interact. This approach could enhance our understanding of the foundational role of certain variables in well-being and work engagement, offering a holistic view of the interconnections between individual and

social well-being and their influence on work engagement. A model of well-being in education could also help prioritize interventions or resources, such as addressing basic teacher needs before focusing on professional development, thus simplifying guided implementation and problem diagnosis. Finally, it is important to theorize how well-being and work engagement may reinforce each other and create a positive feedback loop, where high well-being leads to greater engagement, and greater engagement, in turn, enhances well-being (Azari Noughabi et al., 2024; Greenier et al., 2021).

Authors' Contributions

Conceptualization: ÁA, KCs; Data collection: ÁA, KCs; Data Analysis: KCs; Original draft: ÁA, KCs; Review & editing: ÁA, KCs.

Ethics Approval & Consent to Participate

Consent was obtained from all the participants.

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