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Positive Paths to Feeling Successful and Accomplished in Teaching English: A Teacher-Focused Pilot Study in Hungary

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Abstract

Feeling successful and accomplished is an important aspect of well-being according to Seligman's (2011) PERMA model, which seems to represent an interesting intersection of objective and subjective as well as individual and social factors that are all relevant to flourishing. This paper describes a pilot study aimed at developing an instrument for measuring both individual and social aspects of teacher well-being. In addition, we also investigate the ways the well-being scales used in the study influence the extent to which teachers feel successful in their work. A long-term aim of the study is the development of an application or website where teachers can get personalized information on various aspects of their well-being. As regards the findings of the current pilot study, it lent support to the reliability of the piloted scales and showed that teachers tend to experience positive emotions and accomplishment/success when working. It appears that teachers find meaning in their profession, are often engaged and perhaps experience flow in their work environment. They tend to have good relations with their colleagues while also experiencing a certain amount of stress as a result of various expectations regarding student achievement. At the same time, collegial leadership seems to be less characteristic of the principals of Hungarian schools, and teachers report lower levels of resilience and health. Various paths of achieving accomplishment/success have also been identified in our study.

Keywords: *Individual Well-Being, Social Well-Being, Accomplishment, Success*

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¹Introduction

Success in life comes in many shapes and forms, and it might mean vastly different things for different people whether it is personal, professional, social, spiritual, or financial success. Knowing Peter, we are sure that he is experiencing these types of successes regularly, although we are unsure about financial success in academia. Looking at Peter's ideas and the way he turned them into academic achievements and publication records, there is no doubt that he made the most of his professional life. Unfortunately, the aim of this study is not to look at and analyze Peter's views and dispositions towards accomplishment but to map the ways English teachers' feelings of success in their professional lives are influenced by other well-being constructs as well as workplace culture in the Hungarian context.

Hungary, as we are sure Peter knows, is a landlocked country in Europe with a monolingual population who are required to learn foreign languages for many years during their compulsory education (Csizér, 2020; Csizér et al., 2025). It is also a context in which teacher-related studies do not abound, and there are also context-related issues that need to be addressed in Hungary. In our view, these are the most pressing problems: 1) a clear decrease in the number of people enrolling in teacher education; 2) an increase in the number of teachers leaving the profession or not even starting; 3) an increase in job dissatisfaction among teachers in the profession (Chrappán, 2011; Pósfai, 2020; Smid, 2022). The solution to these problems lies not only in analyzing teachers' welfare, but also in looking at the well-being of teachers in Hungary, taking into account both individual and social aspects, so that we can offer solutions to those involved in education research as well as those responsible for education policy in the country. We think that our study is an example of the way well-being can be investigated in a context-sensitive way by providing an example of one ecological perspective that Mercer (2021) argued so convincingly for.

In order to fulfill the aim of our study and address the above-mentioned problems, we compiled and validated a questionnaire in the Hungarian context and treated our results as a basis of a product that we propose to be used by teachers to analyze their own well-being and views regarding success in their professional life. Apart from offering an ecological perspective, we think that our study is important because 1) positive psychology in applied linguistics consistently showed that not only positive emotions but overall well-being is important for motivation and work; 2) we wanted to create a link between theory and practice by allowing teachers to reflect on themselves and propose concrete steps towards their well-being. Concerning our research niche, we identified both population and theoretical gaps. There are very few studies investigating the well-being of Hungarian teachers, and understanding this European context could also offer important theoretical conclusions by creating insights into the internal structure of teacher well-being, that is, the ways well-being scales relate to one another.

The structure of the article follows that of a research paper by including a background to the literature, a methods section, and the results and discussion of our data. The descriptive statistical data are complemented by short descriptions designed for teachers for reflecting on their own about the issues measured by our questionnaire, while the results obtained by

¹ This paper is part of a special issue (2025, 48) entitled: In Honour of Peter D. MacIntyre's Contributions to Psychology of Language and Communication and Second Language Research Methodology (edited by Mirosław Pawlak, Zhisheng (Edward) Wen, and Hassan Mohebbi).

regression analysis show some positive paths to accomplishment/success. It is our hope that in lieu of flowers, Peter will be interested in our results.

Background to the Study

In a relatively recent article, which appeared in the *ELT Journal*, Sarah Mercer (2021) argued very strongly for the need that well-being should become a priority in both research and practice in the English language teaching (ELT) ecology. She claimed that while research efforts have already been aimed at investigating the well-being of learners and contemplating possible ways to enhance it; there was considerably less attention devoted to teachers. It was probably this niche that prompted Mercer's own investigations with her research group into teachers' well-being, which led to several publications analyzing this phenomenon primarily in the Austrian and British contexts (e.g. Babic et al., 2022, Sulis et al., 2022). Sadly, there are still a large number of contexts that have not been investigated, Hungary being one of them. A further important claim that Mercer (2021) made in her article was calling attention to the seemingly simple fact that well-being besides being an individual matter is also socially determined, so much so that it does not really make sense to discuss individual well-being without its social aspects. She argued 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" (p. 16). Although this appears self-evident, it represents a novel approach regarding the concept of well-being.

Originally, well-being tended to be conceptualized more in relation to the individual, and according to Butler and Kern (2016), it is possible to define and measure this construct either objectively or subjectively. While objective well-being can be interpreted as having access to sufficient resources, subjective well-being can be further differentiated into hedonistic and eudemonic types. Hedonistic well-being is primarily associated with pleasure and enjoyment, whereas eudemonic well-being is concerned with living a meaningful rather than merely a pleasurable life (Sulis et al., 2022). One theory that attempts to account for the necessary ingredients of eudemonic well-being is Seligman's (2011) PERMA model. PERMA is an acronym, where P stands for positive emotions, E for engagement, R for relationships, M for meaning, and A for achievement.

While the presence of positive emotions seems obvious in a model of well-being, it does not mean that negative emotions are missing entirely from the life of those who flourish. Flourishing, a synonym frequently used for well-being, has more to do with the balance of emotions tipping in favor of positive ones as argued by Frederickson (2013). *Engagement* describes a state of being immersed in an activity, the perfect representation of which had already received much attention by the time the PERMA model was born as the flow state, as conceptualized by Csikszentmihályi (1997). *Positive relationships* represent the social aspect of well-being albeit from the individual's perspective: a sense of connectedness and the feeling of being cared for by significant others. *Meaning* stands for a sense of purpose and direction in connection with the life of the individual, while accomplishment refers to fulfilling the goals people set themselves and can be considered a synonym of success, not necessarily in a social or financial sense, but regarding the aims determined by the individuals themselves, on their own terms (Seligman, 2011). It was actually the addition of positive relationships and *accomplishment* that led to the birth of the theory of flourishing since Seligman (2002) had

proposed a theory of authentic happiness earlier, a model that he later considered too simplistic in comparison with PERMA (Seligman, 2011, p. 26), as attested by this quote:

Happiness and life satisfaction are one element of well-being and are useful subjective measures, but well-being cannot exist just in your own head. Public policy aimed only at subjective well-being is vulnerable to the Brave New World caricature in which the government promotes happiness simply by drugging the population with a euphoriant called “soma.” Just as we choose how to live by plural criteria, and not just to maximize happiness, truly useful measures of well-being for public policy will need to be a dashboard of both subjective and objective measures of positive emotion, engagement, meaning, good relationships, and positive accomplishment.

Therefore, we decided to focus more closely on the accomplishment aspect of well-being in our investigations since, besides its complexity, it appears to lie at the interface of both objective and subjective as well as individual and social.

According to Seligman’s (2011) model, well-being comes about as a result of a dynamic interplay between different facets of the model, whereas Mercer (2021) draws attention to social factors contributing to individual ones. In either case, it is easy to see that the equilibrium of our well-being is constantly challenged by various life events or stressors that individuals have to cope with daily (MacIntyre et al., 2019). It is this adaptive or coping potential that is captured by the theoretical construct of resilience, which can be 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). Although the link between resilience and well-being is often implied when the two concepts are discussed together, the exact nature of their relationship frequently remains unaccounted for (see e.g. Turner & Braine, 2016; White & McCallum, 2021). Based on empirical research and theoretical considerations, a circular relationship can be hypothesized, where it is just as likely that well-being contributes to resilience since individuals who flourish might be better equipped to withstand hardships (e.g. Brouskeli, et al., 2018; Çetin, 2019; Le Cornu, 2013) as that the capacity of resilience can lead to maintaining or restoring well-being as a consequence of enhancing the individual’s coping potential (e.g. Burić, et al., 2019; Hascher, et al., 2021, Johnson & Down, 2013).

Although social aspects of well-being seem to be present in the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011), the perspective taken there is definitely that of the individual. However, Mercer (2021) argues convincingly that subjective well-being should always be conceptualized in relation to the social context, no matter how narrowly or broadly defined. In the case of teachers, the most immediate context that is relevant for them is the educational institution where they work, whose importance has also been highlighted by Gregersen and MacIntyre (2024). These institutions in most cases are schools, where teachers interact with their colleagues and the principal. Hoy et al. (2002) designed a questionnaire to tap into the organizational climate of schools, in connection with which they identified and measured four facets: institutional vulnerability, collegial leadership, professional teacher behavior, and achievement press. Based on these labels, understanding what collegial leadership and professional teacher behavior are, is quite straightforward: a principal exercising collegial leadership is less

authoritarian and more democratic, while professional teacher behavior entails trust and respect towards fellow colleagues. Of the two less clearly identifiable constructs achievement press is interpreted as pressure sensed by teachers originating from students and their parents for tangible success, whereas institutional vulnerability represents pressure from parents regarding the management of schools. The latter is something that is alien to the Hungarian school context, where public schools are owned and managed by the state without parents having any say in matters of finance and management. Hoy et al. (2002) identified links between different facets of the school climate and trust: collegial leadership was a positive predictor for trust in the principal, professional teacher relationship for trust in colleagues, while achievement press positively predicted trust in parents and students.

Besides the immediate social context represented by the schools and their staff, the broader social context cannot be disregarded either. Since attitudes towards the broader context of education often seem to be influenced by a range of factors including political views, it might be best to rely on statistical data when describing it. According to a recent OECD (2023a) publication whose aim is to provide an overview of internationally comparable indicators of education in the countries examined, OECD countries on average spent 5.1% of their gross domestic product (GDP) on educational institutions in 2020, while in Hungary this spending was considerably less, 3.7% of GDP only (p. 4). Also, while spending on educational institutions rose slightly (by 0.4%) over the 2019-20 COVID period across OECD countries, in Hungary it decreased by 7.2% (p. 5). The lower level of financing is also apparent in Hungarian teachers' salaries, which stand at 62% relative to tertiary educated workers, whereas when calculated based on weighted averages relative to similarly educated workers' earnings, it reaches 53% only, which appears to be the lowest figure in the table (OECD, 2023b, p. 378). According to the same report, teachers' salaries constitute the biggest cost in formal education all over the world, and they can directly affect the attractiveness of the teaching profession by influencing decisions regarding enrollment in teacher education, actually starting the profession after graduation, and remaining in teaching. Based on another OECD (2005) report, higher teacher salaries in general mean that fewer people leave the profession. In conclusion, the statistical figures cited here seem to paint a rather gloomy picture of the larger societal context of education and the teaching profession in Hungary, but this is the backdrop against which our findings should be interpreted.

As this study is a pilot investigation into our topic, we have one technical (RQ₁) and two content-related research questions (RQ₂ and RQ₃), as follows:

RQ₁: What is the internal reliability of the scales measuring self-perceived individual and social determinants of teacher well-being and resilience?

RQ₂: What are teachers' self-perceived individual and social determinants of well-being and their resilience?

RQ₃: What is the impact of teachers' self-perceived individual and social determinants of well-being and resilience on teachers' self-perceived accomplishment?

In order to answer these research questions, a quantitative questionnaire was compiled in multiple steps, and data was collected with the help of teachers working in secondary schools in Hungary.

Methods

Participants

Our population included secondary school teachers teaching various subjects in Hungarian public (i.e. not private) education. The sampling technique was a combination of convenience sampling coupled with snowball sampling. Colleagues in our network were asked to participate in the study and forward the questionnaire to other teachers as well. Based on Dörnyei (2007), we aimed to have a sample with over 50 participants, hence, the final dataset contains the answers of 58 teachers (46 females and 12 males), whose age ranged between 24 to 64 ($M = 48$ years; $Std. = 11$ years). 30 participants were language teachers, while others taught various subjects. They had varied experiences concerning the years they had been teaching at the time of data collection from 1 year to 41 years ($M = 21$ years; $Std. = 12$ years). The majority of the teachers worked full time in their schools ($n = 40$), the others had part time jobs, which resulted in the fact that teaching hours ranged from 4 to 29 ($M = 18$ hours; $Std. = 7$ hours) with the median being 22 hours and the mode 23.

The Instrument

The compilation of the instrument was based on international questionnaires used in various contexts. It was important to us that we only include scales that are relevant to the Hungarian context; therefore, a critical selection was made. We intended to tap into the PERMA constructs complemented with a measure of perceived health (Butler & Kern, 2016), but decided to align the scales more closely with the school context where possible. For this reason, instead of the original relationship scale we utilized three scales from Hoy et al.'s (2002) Workplace culture questionnaire tapping into relationships with the principal, fellow teachers and students and parents, and we also exchanged the original Engagement scale for Schaufeli et al.'s (2002, 2006) work engagement scale. Moreover, because of its hypothesized links with well-being, we included the Resilience scale from Luthans et al.'s (2007) psychological capital questionnaire. The adaptation process involved creating statements about the measured constructs in relation to the teaching profession in Hungarian, which could be evaluated by the respondents on five-point Likert scales ranging from total disagreement (1) to total agreement (5). The final instrument consisted of 43 Likert-scale items organized into 9 scales and 12 biographical questions at the end of the instrument. In what follows, we list the scales with a definition and a sample item for each.

Scales focusing on the individual:

1. *Positive emotions* (Butler & Kern, 2016) measure the extent teachers experienced positive work-related emotions (5 items). Sample item: I really enjoy my work.
2. *Meaning* (Butler & Kern, 2016) taps into the disposition that one's teaching work is valuable and worthwhile (5 items). Sample item: I feel that I am doing valuable work.
3. *Accomplishment/success* (Butler & Kern, 2016) explores the extent to which the teacher feels successful in their work according to their own standards (5 items). Sample item: I feel I can achieve my work-related goals.
4. *Health* (Butler & Kern, 2016) assesses teachers' self-reported physical and mental health (4 items). Sample item: I feel I am in good health compared to my peers.
5. *Work engagement* (Schaufeli et al., 2002, 2006) includes items measuring commitment, enthusiasm and involvement in teaching (5 items). Sample item: Time flies when I am teaching.

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

Scales focusing on social aspects:

1. *Collegial leadership* (Hoy et al., 2002) measures the extent to which teachers view their principal as approachable, just and non-autocratic (4 items). 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). 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' expectations aiming at high performance (6 items). Sample item: My students expect me to perform high-quality work.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Several steps were completed to create the pre-pilot version of the questionnaire. First, possibly useful questionnaires were selected, and constructs adapted to the Hungarian context. We made sure that overlaps were eliminated and relatively few items added to each scale to make sure that the instrument is not too long. During the process the two authors discussed the potential issues and expert judgment was sought whenever it was felt necessary. Once the pre-pilot questionnaire was finalized, two think aloud protocols were carried out with language teachers.

Data was collected during April and May in 2022. It was important to keep the data collection period as short as possible to avoid the possible effect of the end of the school year when teachers could be more tired and thus their well-being compromised. To comply with financial and time constraints, we decided to use an online form for our data collection. No personal data were collected, and participation was voluntary and anonymous.

We used SPSS for Windows 26.0 in the present study. In order to answer our research questions, internal reliability analyses were carried out on our scales (RQ1). We ran descriptive statistics to answer RQ2 including paired-samples *t* tests comparing the mean values of the scales, while several regression analyses were completed to find an answer to RQ3 in order to see what impacted the first round of individual scales.

Results

In this section of our paper, we provide results for each research question separately. This will be followed by the discussion of our results in a separate section.

RQ1: What is the internal reliability of the scales measuring self-perceived individual and social determinants of teacher well-being and resilience?

First, we calculated the reliability of the scales employing both Cronbach's alphas and Omegas (see Table 1). Table 1 shows that most of the scales had acceptable reliability (Dörnyei, 2007), although both achievement press and resilience should be refined for further studies in Hungary.

Table 1*The Internal Reliability of the Scales*

Scales	Cronbach alpha	Omega
Individual		
Positive emotions	0.80	0.81
Meaning	0.79	0.80
Accomplishment/success	0.80	0.81
Health	0.88	0.89
Resilience	0.66	0.64
Work engagement	0.76	0.77
Social		
Collegial leadership	0.90	0.90
Professional teacher behavior	0.75	0.77
Achievement press	0.65	0.64

RQ₂: What are teachers' self-perceived individual and social determinants of well-being and their resilience?

Table 2 contains the descriptive statistics of our scales. It seems reassuring that the mean values of many of the scales are around 4, which indicates positive dispositions. When it comes to the scales measuring individual well-being, positive emotions scored highest and showed significant differences from all the other scales, except from the one measuring accomplishment/success (see paired-samples *t* tests in Appendix A). It is less encouraging that the scale with the lowest mean value is the one measuring self-perceived health; this value is significantly lower than all the other values, except for resilience (see Appendix B). The work engagement level of teachers signals that they could have flow experiences in their work from time to time and find their work meaningful based on the mean value of the meaning scale, but their coping potential indicated by their resilience scores appears to be mediocre.

As for the scales measuring workplace culture, the paired-samples *t* test shows a significant difference between collegial leadership and professional teacher behavior ($t = -3.8$; $t < 0.05$). The average values here indicate that teachers are less likely to perceive their principals as approachable and non-autocratic, but they are more likely to have good relationships with their colleagues, and they also perceive outside pressures aiming for high achievement of their students as relatively high.

In order to fulfill our aim of providing teachers with immediate and personalized feedback, we proposed that these scales could be utilized in an application or a dedicated website, where teachers might self-assess the individual and social factors influencing their well-being. To aid the interpretation of the average scores calculated by the application or website for teachers, we created some sample feedback for them that can be found in Appendix C. This feedback could help teachers to raise their awareness about the multifaceted nature of their well-being as well as their strengths and weaknesses.

Table 2*The Descriptive Statistics of the Scales*

Scales	Mean value	St. dev.
Individual		
Positive emotions	4.10	0.69
Accomplishment/Success	4.01	0.64
Work engagement	3.90	0.73
Meaning	3.81	0.73
Resilience	3.56	0.68
Health	3.47	1.10
Social		
Collegial leadership	3.65	1.14
Professional teacher behavior	4.07	0.70
Achievement press	4.01	0.64

RQ3: What is the impact of teachers' self-perceived individual and social determinants of well-being and resilience on teachers' self-perceived accomplishment?

As explained in the literature review, we selected accomplishment as a dependent scale to be predicted, and then we have run additional regression analyses taking the scales having a direct effect on accomplishment as individual dependent scales. The results of this path analysis, i.e., the series of regression analyses, are presented in Table 3. As can be seen, two relationships were positive and one negative, with accomplishment being positively affected by positive emotions and resilience and negatively by collegial leadership. In the next round of analysis, the results showed that positive emotions were shaped positively by meaning, while positive emotions and health had direct positive impacts on resilience. Finally, professional teacher behavior had a positive while achievement press had a negative direct effect on collegial leadership.

Table 3*Results of the Regression Analyses*

	β	t	F	R^2
Accomplishment/success as a dependent scale				
Overall model			12.864*	0.41
Positive emotions	0.429	3.641*		
Resilience	0.342	2.851*		
Collegial leadership	-0.293	-2.704*		
Positive emotions as a dependent scale				
Overall model			129.939*	0.70
Meaning	.836	11.399*		
Resilience as a dependent scale				
Overall model			25.749*	0.48
Positive emotions	.520	5.340*		
Health	.415	4.258*		
Collegial leadership as dependent scale				
Overall model			30.596*	0.53
Professional teacher behavior	.691	7.427*		
Achievement press	-.280	-3.008*		

Note. * indicates that the accompanying p is < 0.05

Discussion

The first two research questions in this study dealt with the internal reliability and the descriptive statistics of our data. It seems that the scales measuring teachers' individual and social well-being had acceptable levels of internal reliability, although for any subsequent studies the scales of achievement press and resilience should be further refined. Concerning descriptive results, out of the scales measuring individual well-being, accomplishment/success and positive emotions are the strongest components in the complex concept of well-being in our sample. These results are comparable to Sulis et al.'s (2022) study analyzing teachers' well-being using an international sample. Similar results include the relative low values of teacher resilience and health in both samples, while Hungarian teachers obtained somewhat higher mean values of positive emotions and accomplishment, which might be somewhat surprising in view of their financial rewards, that is, their salaries (OECD, 2023b). This finding seems to support the view that perceptions of success are complex and certainly cannot be equated with one's paycheck, especially in the case of teachers. A possible explanation for the pattern of results could also be related to the timing of the data collection of the Hungarian study, which happened towards the end of the school year. It can be hypothesized that teachers might have been more tired (hence the lower scores for resilience and health), but they could already see the results students were obtaining at this time of the school year, which would explain the higher mean values of positive emotions and accomplishment. These findings draw attention to two very important issues: 1) accomplishment is certainly not synonymous with financial success, and 2) teachers' well-being should be measured in a longitudinal way by taking into account possible impacts of the proceeding school year.

Concerning the social aspect of teacher well-being, collegial leadership obtained the lowest mean value in our study indicating that teachers in general do not think that their schools are led in a very democratic way. This finding could be related to a specific contextual characteristic of Hungarian schools, which is that they tend to be rather rigid in their hierarchical structure (Alpár, 2018). This structural characteristic might have been exacerbated by the renationalization of schools starting in 2013, when the autonomy of schools and principals was curtailed heavily (Hermann & Semjén, 2021). Currently, there are a very limited number of decisions that principals are responsible for, since decisions regarding financial matters among other things have been transferred to state authorities. The highly centralized nature of the Hungarian educational system might trickle down to the schools themselves, affecting the relationships between principals and teachers. It is possible that we can witness the consequences of the above-described characteristics in some of the negative relationships that also emerged in the regression analyses (see below).

Based on the regression analyses, we could identify several positive paths that shape how successful teachers feel in their work (Table 3). The three identified positive paths are as follows:

1. Meaning → Positive emotions → Accomplishment/success
2. Meaning → Positive emotions → Resilience → Accomplishment/success
3. Health → Resilience → Accomplishment/success

These results indicate that there is an internal structure to one's well-being, and that all the scales showing significant roles in the above described three paths are concerned with individual aspects of well-being. The foundation of feeling accomplishment and success is that

teachers feel healthy and think that their work is meaningful. Once this foundation is strong, it influences positively both teachers' positive emotions and their resilience, which in turn increase their feeling of accomplishment and success. These results are somewhat contradictory to Sulis et al.'s (2022) findings who identified a group of teachers with high well-being but lower health, but they are in line with other findings which indicate that positive health and positive emotions are related (Chida & Steptoe, 2008). Based on our results, it is important to consider the internal structure of individual well-being, and further studies are needed to map possible relationships among the scales measuring this complex concept in various educational settings, which coincides with the conclusion MacIntyre et al. (2019) arrived at in their study.

Besides these positive pathways, a mixed and a negative path was also identified that contain social aspects of teacher well-being and are perhaps somewhat more challenging to interpret (Table 3):

1. Professional teacher behavior → + Collegial leadership → – Accomplishment/success
2. Achievement press → – Collegial leadership → – Accomplishment/success

Although it is not surprising that good relationships and trust among colleagues might lead to a less autocratic leadership style and a more approachable principal in the school, it is less obvious why this more democratic leadership style is associated with lower accomplishment/success levels as perceived by the individual. Is it possible that due to a less autonomous and more hierarchical school culture prevalent in Hungary teachers expect pressure from authoritative principals in order to feel successful? Or does this finding merely reflect the reality that school principals in Hungary are not very democratic (the level of collegial leadership is generally low), and they feel accomplished despite this fact? The negative relationship between achievement press and collegial leadership might lend support to the first interpretation, meaning that perceiving high pressure from students, parents and the school administration is more likely to be associated with low levels of collegial leadership, and this less democratic leadership style is associated with higher levels of accomplishment. Therefore, high expectations eventually lead to an increased sense of accomplishment through a more traditional, less democratic leadership style. These findings seem to signal a traditional, authoritarian institutional structure concerning schools, which appears to be more or less in line with the everyday experiences of Hungarian citizens (Alpár, 2018).

Conclusion

The most important result of our study corroborates Mercer's (2021) as well as Gregersen and MacIntyre's (2024) claims that teachers well-being cannot be investigated in social isolation; there are multiple paths to teacher success in our context. It is somewhat unfortunate though that one of the social aspects measured here, collegial leadership, was shown to influence teachers' feelings of accomplishment and success in a negative way, indicating the marked influence that school climate (Hoys et al., 2002) can play in shaping teachers' well-being or the lack thereof. However, it goes without saying that we cannot draw substantial generalization based on a single pilot study, so further large-scale and possibly longitudinal investigations are needed to map the complex and complicated nature of teacher well-being in Hungary. In addition, we need to investigate how issues beyond the school-level influence

teacher well-being and what ways well-being can be strengthened by spreading positivity. As for further limitations of our study, we need to consider teachers teaching various subjects in order to present a more detailed ecological perspective.

Finally, we think it is not a coincidence that in the seminal volume of Positive Psychology in SLA (MacIntyre et al., 2016), in the introduction it was written that “positive psychology, to Peter, is all about the little ripples of positivity that spread, often without anyone noticing. But what a thing it is when you start noticing those little ripples!” (p. 3). Peter, we are very sorry to write that you failed to create little ripples because you created huge waves in our profession and beyond. Thank you!

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Ethics Declarations

Competing Interests

No, there are no conflicting interests.

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Appendix A

Paired Sample T Tests among Positive Emotions and Scales Measuring Individual Well-Being

Pairs	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Positive emotions and accomplishment/success	1.017	0.314
Positive emotions and meaning	5.388	< 0.001
Positive emotions and health	3.864	< 0.001
Positive emotions and resilience	5.802	< 0.001
Positive emotions and engagement	2.024	0.48

Appendix B

Paired Sample T Tests among Health and Scales Measuring Individual Well-Being

Pairs	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Health and positive emotions	-3.864	< 0.001
Health and meaning	-2.054	0.045
Health and accomplishment/success	-3.722	< 0.001
Positive emotions and resilience	-.750	0.456
Positive emotions and engagement	-2.439	0.018

Appendix C

Guidelines to Interpreting the Results of the Questionnaire

The concept of well-being is a complex one, involving an individual's experiences, personality traits and the wider social context that influences their life. In this sense, the study of teacher well-being cannot be reduced to the characteristics and experiences of the individual but must also take into account their experiences of the institution in which they work, and the systemic frameworks and constraints of their work in relation to the teaching profession. Since the determinants of teacher well-being can be understood as a dynamic system, we must recognize that neither external nor internal factors are determinants in themselves: the key to teacher well-being lies in their interrelationships. Thus, although it may not be clear at first glance why our questionnaire includes scales of school climate that teachers have minimal control over, we must admit that without being informed about these, we cannot form a true picture of teacher well-being. We also recommend to those who complete the questionnaire that, although it is at the level of individual characteristics and experiences where they can really take an active role in promoting their own well-being, they should try to take all the dimensions listed here into account when assessing their questionnaire results.

I. The social Dimension of Well-Being: The School Climate

1. Collegial Leadership

This dimension of the questionnaire measures teachers' perceptions of the leadership style of the principal in their institution. Collegial leadership style reflects a principal's attitude who focuses on meeting the needs of their teaching staff and achieving the school's goals at the same time. The principal treats teachers as partners, is open, egalitarian and friendly, but also sets clear expectations and standards of performance for teachers. An average score of more than 3 on this scale indicates that the principal of the school is likely to have a collegial leadership style. This can contribute to the teachers' sense of well-being in the institution, as the principal's management style is not autocratic, but they are able to take into account the views of the teaching staff and treat them as equals. An average score below 3, on the other

hand, indicates that collegial leadership style is not typical of the leader of the respondent's institution, which indicates a less positive and healthy working atmosphere.

2. Professional Teacher Behavior

Professional teacher behavior examines another component of the school climate: the attitudes of teachers towards each other. Professional teacher behavior is characterized by respect for colleagues' competence, commitment to learners, independent judgement and mutual cooperation and support between colleagues. If the respondent's overall score on this scale is above 3, this indicates that they believe that the teaching staff in the institution are, to a greater or lesser extent (the higher the average score, the more), professional, i.e. they help each other, cooperate and make professionally competent decisions, and support the professional competence of their colleagues. An average score below 3 may indicate a negative atmosphere in the teaching profession, where teachers may feel uncomfortable due to a lack of supportive relationships and mutual appreciation.

3. Achievement Press

The "Achievement press" scale measures the aspect of the school climate that is related to the expectations of the institution, including the school management, parents, teachers and students, regarding school performance. The statements in the scale describe a school that sets high but achievable academic standards and targets. Students are persistent, strive to achieve the targets set and are respected for their academic success by both students and teachers. Parents, teachers and the principal all strive for high academic standards and are committed to the development of the school. If the respondent scores more than 3 on this scale, the atmosphere at the school is as described above: high but achievable standards for both students and teachers. As success is important in such a school climate, it can contribute to the satisfaction of the teachers working in the institution. However, extremely high scores may also be an indication that expectations of academic success are excessive and may be overwhelming for teachers. In the case of high scores, it is therefore worth considering the scores on the "Accomplishment" scale: if high scores here are associated with high achievement scores, this should be seen as positive for teacher satisfaction, but if high scores here are associated with low achievement scores, this may indicate the overwhelming presence of performance pressures. Similarly, an average score below 3 may indicate a range of problems. It is possible that the school does not place enough emphasis on academic achievement, or that students do not feel ownership of these kinds of expectations and do not strive for success in this area. This lack of student success can have a negative impact on teacher satisfaction. At the same time, it is also possible that the school may prioritize other values rather than academic achievement, so that the teacher may feel successful despite low scores on this scale. This dilemma can also be resolved by examining achievement scores: if low "Achievement press" scores are associated with high "Accomplishment" scores then there is no cause for concern, but if low scores on both scales are found then teacher satisfaction and well-being are likely to be adversely affected.

II. Individual Aspects of Well-Being

1. Resilience

"Resilience", in other words, the ability to resist or cope, expresses the ability of an individual to deal with negative events that occur to them in such a way that they can move on from the event without long-term negative consequences. It is important to note that resilience is not only about overcoming a given stressful situation, but also about emerging from that situation empowered in one's competence. Although it is not clear whether resilience should be seen as

a permanent personality trait or rather as a response to a specific situation, it increasingly appears to be a skill that can be consciously developed. Our scale measures the extent to which the respondent perceives themselves to be a resilient person: their problem-solving ability, their ability to adapt easily to changes in their work, and their ability to cope with stress. If the average score on the scale is above 3, the person considers themselves to be more resilient, while averages below 3 indicate a lack of resilience. Since resilience is considered an important coping potential, it is assumed to have a crucial influence on the well-being of the individual. Thus, in a particularly stressful profession such as teaching, the development of this skill could be an important part of enhancing well-being.

2. Accomplishment/Success

The “Accomplishment” scale captures a teacher's beliefs about their ability to do their job effectively, which leads to their success. This concept is broader than self-efficacy and is not related to one specific activity only, but it is interpreted holistically in terms of the teaching profession. It examines respondents' beliefs complemented by an evaluative dimension, presumably also associated with emotions. The scale encompasses the realization of ideas, the achievement of goals set, accompanied by feelings of personal competence and a sense of achievement. Scale averages above 3 points predict a sense of accomplishment, which is presumably also related to the positive emotion scale of the questionnaire, where one would expect relatively high scores. Conversely, if the mean is below 3, we would expect lower positive emotion scores.

3. Meaning

Feeling that our life is valuable and worthwhile, that there is meaning in what we do, and that our life matters, is an important element of personal well-being. For teachers, “Meaning” signals that they feel that their profession is important and that they are doing meaningful and socially useful work that inspires them and challenges them in exciting ways. Attitudes towards this concept are measured by this scale. An average score of more than 3 on the scale indicates that the respondent considers teaching to be a meaningful and inspiring activity, while a score below 3 indicates that the respondent does not have such a positive view of their chosen profession. High scores on this scale suggest that the respondent might also show a higher level of engagement.

4. Work Engagement

The notion of engagement refers to an individual's total dedication to an activity and their maximum effort. It is similar to the flow experience: the person ceases to be distracted by the outside world and focuses only on the activity they are doing. Engaging activities tend to be performed for the sheer pleasure of doing the activity, thus such activities are self-motivating. The type of “Engagement” covered by our scale is experienced when teachers are totally absorbed in their work and forget everything else around them, when time flies so fast during teaching that they are surprised when the ringing bell signals the end of the lesson. Respondents with an average score above 3 are more inclined to experience this kind of engagement, while those with an average score below 3 are less inclined to experience it. With high scores on this scale, we would expect respondents to also score higher on the “Meaning” scale.

5. Positive Emotions

The notion of well-being is obviously linked to the emotions experienced by the individual, so this scale of our questionnaire aims to explore the “Positive emotions” experienced by teachers in their work. Although teaching provides the opportunity to experience a wide range of positive emotions, our questionnaire focused on the enjoyment and joy of teaching, the pride

and hope that it engenders, and the curiosity that it entails, as the importance of these emotions in the learning/teaching process has been confirmed by a number of studies conducted on students. A scale average of higher than 3 suggests that teachers experience a range of positive emotions in teaching, while a mean value of less than 3 indicates a less pronounced presence of positive emotions. It should be noted that research shows that a lack of positive emotions is not necessarily associated with more negative emotions. In our opinion, lower levels of positive emotions may also indicate that the teacher aims to avoid emotional involvement or, for some reason, does not wish to report their emotions about teaching.

6. Health

As attitudes towards health have been identified in many studies as an important determinant of well-being; the “Health” scale aims to explore respondents’ perceptions of their own health. In addition to subjective perceptions of the individual’s own health and then perceptions of their health relative to their peers, the scale’s items also inquire about how motivated the respondent is to maintain their own health. Respondents with a scale average above 3 tend to feel healthier, while those with an average below 3 tend to have a more negative perception of their own health. These tendencies are expected to be in direct proportion to the resilience of the individual, indicating their coping potential. We might expect that respondents who feel healthy will be more resilient, while those who self-report poor health will feel less resilient.