



# The Impact of College English Teachers' Psychological Well-being on English Teaching

Jing Xiaoliang<sup>1, 2</sup>, Wei Xianggang<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Guilin Medical University;

<sup>2</sup> Philippine Christian University Center for International Education, Manila City 1004

<sup>3\*</sup> Youjiang Medical University for Nationalities

First Author Email: 2094107328@qq.com; Correspondence Email: 1435180733@qq.com

**Abstract:** This qualitative study explores the impact of psychological well-being on the teaching practices of Chinese college English teachers and aims to identify strategies for supporting their well-being. Through semi-structured interviews with five participants, including junior and senior faculty members from Guilin Medical University, key challenges to well-being are identified, such as heavy workloads, limited autonomy, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships. These challenges have significant effects on teaching practices, including reduced student engagement and creativity. The findings demonstrate that higher levels of well-being positively influence instructional practices, leading to increased engagement, motivation, and satisfaction. Autonomy in teaching, competence and effectiveness, and positive student relationships are highlighted as essential factors. The study proposes strategies including autonomy support, competence development, social support, recognition and feedback, and work-life balance to promote the well-being of college English teachers. The research contributes to the literature on teacher well-being, providing insights for educational policymakers, administrators, and teacher training programs to foster a supportive environment for professional growth and effective English language instruction.

**Keywords:** Psychological well-being, College English teachers, English teaching, Instructional practices, Support strategies

## Introduction

### Background and Significance

The psychological well-being of teachers has emerged as a critical factor influencing their teaching effectiveness and overall job satisfaction. College English teachers play a vital role in fostering language proficiency and communication skills among students. However, the significance of their psychological well-being in relation to their English teaching practices has been relatively understudied. The demanding nature of the teaching profession, coupled with various job-related stressors, can have a substantial impact on college English teachers' well-being. Factors such as heavy workloads, time pressure, student expectations, and administrative demands can contribute to stress, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction among teachers. These factors, if left unaddressed, may have detrimental consequences not only for teachers but also for the quality of English language instruction provided to college students.

Understanding the impact of college English teachers' psychological well-being on their teaching practices is crucial for several reasons. On the one hand, teachers who experience higher levels of psychological well-being are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and satisfied in their work. This, in turn, can lead to improved teaching quality, increased student engagement, and enhanced learning outcomes. On the other, college English teachers' psychological well-being can influence their instructional approaches, strategies, and classroom interactions. Teachers who feel psychologically supported and fulfilled are more likely to employ effective pedagogical practices, create a positive learning environment, and foster meaningful student-teacher relationships. Besides, exploring the link between college English teachers' psychological well-being and English teaching can inform the development of supportive interventions and policies aimed at promoting teacher well-being. By identifying the factors that contribute to teachers' psychological well-being, educational institutions can implement strategies to enhance job satisfaction, reduce burnout, and ultimately improve English teaching practices.

The findings of this study can contribute to the existing literature on teacher well-being and provide valuable insights for educational policymakers, administrators, and teacher training programs in fostering a supportive and conducive environment for college English teachers' professional growth and effective English language instruction.

### Research Questions

The study will address the following research questions:

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- 1 What are the challenges of psychological well-being among Chinese college English teachers?
- 2 How does the psychological well-being of college English teachers influence their instructional practices?
- 3 What strategies can be employed to support and promote the psychological well-being of college English teachers?

### Literature review

This literature review demonstrates the significant impact of college English teachers' psychological factors, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness, on their English teaching practices. The findings suggest that supporting teachers' autonomy, fostering a sense of competence, and promoting positive relationships can enhance the quality of English language instruction. These insights can inform educational policies and practices to promote teacher well-being and improve English teaching outcomes.

In terms of autonomy, Chen (2017) emphasized that providing autonomy-supportive teaching practices enhanced college English teachers' sense of ownership and motivation. This, in turn, resulted in increased creativity and adaptability in lesson delivery and curriculum design, contributing to effective English teaching practices<sup>[1]</sup>. Johnson (2020) reported that college English teachers who had the freedom to adapt teaching methods based on students' individual needs and interests exhibited higher levels of student satisfaction and improved learning outcomes<sup>[2]</sup>. Autonomy in teaching methods positively impacted the effectiveness of English language instruction. Smith (2018) found that college English teachers who reported higher levels of perceived autonomy in their teaching practices demonstrated greater creativity and innovation in lesson planning. This autonomy facilitated increased student engagement and motivation, enhancing the quality of English language instruction<sup>[3]</sup>.

In terms of competence, Lee (2019) highlighted that college English teachers with a strong sense of competence in their instructional abilities showed higher levels of self-efficacy. These teachers were more effective in facilitating English language learning among their students, demonstrating the importance of competence in teaching practices. Kim (2019) found that college English teachers who perceived themselves as competent in their subject knowledge and teaching skills exhibited higher levels of confidence. This confidence translated into more effective English language instruction and improved student outcomes<sup>[4]</sup>. Park (2016) reported that college English teachers who perceived themselves as competent in their instructional practices reported higher job satisfaction, enthusiasm, and commitment. This positive impact on teachers' psychological well-being resulted in more effective English language teaching<sup>[5]</sup>.

In terms of relatedness, Wang (2020) found that college English teachers who reported positive relationships with their colleagues and students experienced higher levels of job satisfaction and psychological well-being. These positive relationships positively influenced their classroom interactions and student-teacher rapport, contributing to effective English teaching practices<sup>[6]</sup>. Liu (2018) emphasized that positive relationships between college English teachers and their students fostered a supportive learning environment<sup>[7]</sup>. This environment enhanced students' motivation, engagement, and language acquisition, ultimately impacting the effectiveness of English language instruction.

### Research Design

Participants:

The study will involve conducting interviews with five college English teachers from Guilin Medical University in China. Participants will be selected based on their experience, representing a mix of junior and senior faculty members.

Data Collection:

- Semi-structured interviews will be conducted individually with each participant. The interviews will be audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed for analysis.
- Interview Questions:
  - Can you describe the challenges you face in terms of your psychological well-being as a college English teacher?
  - How do these challenges impact your teaching practices and your interactions with students?
  - In what ways do you think your psychological well-being influences your instructional approaches and strategies?
  - Have you experienced any strategies or support mechanisms that have positively impacted your psychological well-being as a teacher? If yes, could you elaborate on them?
  - Based on your experiences, what do you think are effective strategies that can be employed to support and promote the psychological well-being of college English teachers?

Procedure designed:

Contact the selected participants and explain the purpose of the study. Obtain their informed consent to participate in the interviews.

Schedule individual interview sessions at a convenient time and location for the participants.

Conduct the interviews, ensuring a comfortable and confidential environment for participants to freely express their views and experiences.

Use the interview questions as a guide, but allow for flexibility to explore participants' responses in depth.

Take detailed notes during the interviews to capture key insights and observations.

Audio-record the interviews for later transcription and analysis.

Thank the participants for their time and willingness to share their experiences.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a theory of human motivation and personality that focuses on the inherent psychological needs that drive human behavior. According to SDT, individuals have three basic psychological needs: autonomy (feeling in control and having choices), competence (feeling capable and effective), and relatedness (feeling connected and supported by others)<sup>[8]</sup>. When these needs are satisfied, individuals are more likely to be intrinsically motivated, engaged, and experience psychological well-being.

In this study, SDT can be applied in the following ways:

**Autonomy:** SDT suggests that when college English teachers' psychological well-being is supported, they are more likely to experience a sense of autonomy in their teaching practices. They may have the freedom to make instructional decisions, adapt teaching methods to suit their students' needs, and have a sense of ownership in their work. Examining the role of autonomy support and teachers' perceived autonomy in English teaching can provide insights into how psychological well-being influences instructional practices.

**Competence:** SDT emphasizes the importance of feeling competent and effective in one's work. College English teachers with higher psychological well-being may have a greater sense of competence in their ability to facilitate English language learning, create engaging lesson plans, and assess student progress effectively. Investigating the relationship between teachers' competence and psychological well-being can contribute to understanding how well-being impacts teaching quality.

**Relatedness:** SDT highlights the significance of social connections and support for well-being. College English teachers' psychological well-being can be influenced by their relationships with colleagues, students, and administrators. Exploring the impact of social support and connectedness on teachers' well-being can provide insights into how interpersonal relationships influence English teaching practices<sup>[9]</sup>.

### **Discussion:**

#### ***1 What are the challenges of psychological well-being among Chinese college English teachers?***

Interviewee 1 (Teacher A):

**Challenges:** Teacher A mentioned that the heavy workload, including lesson preparation, grading, and administrative tasks, often leads to high levels of stress and work-related strain. They expressed feeling overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them by students, parents, and the institution.

**Impact on Teaching:** Teacher A stated that these challenges often result in limited time for personalized attention to students and reduced opportunities for student engagement. They described feeling pressured to prioritize completing tasks over providing quality instruction.

**Influence of Psychological Well-being:** Teacher A believed that their psychological well-being impacts their instructional approaches and strategies. When feeling stressed or overwhelmed, they acknowledged a decrease in creativity and adaptability in their teaching practices.

Interviewee 2 (Teacher B):

**Challenges:** Teacher B highlighted the pressure to maintain and enhance their English language proficiency as a significant challenge. They expressed concerns about their confidence and well-being being affected by the expectations of demonstrating high language skills.

**Impact on Teaching:** Teacher B shared that the pressure to meet language proficiency requirements sometimes overshadowed their focus on effective teaching methods. They believed this affected their ability to connect with students and create an engaging learning environment.

**Influence of Psychological Well-being:** Teacher B emphasized the importance of psychological well-being in enhancing their instructional approaches. They noted that when feeling confident and fulfilled, they were more likely to employ effective teaching strategies that fostered student learning.

Interviewee 3 (Teacher C): **Challenges:** Teacher C identified large class sizes as a significant challenge. They expressed difficulties in providing individualized attention and engaging all students actively, leading to increased stress and limited interaction.

**Impact on Teaching:** Teacher C noted that large class sizes made it challenging to create a supportive learning environment. They mentioned feeling frustrated by the inability to address each student's specific needs and interests.

**Influence of Psychological Well-being:** Teacher C believed that their psychological well-being influenced their instructional practices by affecting their motivation and enthusiasm. They acknowledged that when feeling stressed or overwhelmed, their teaching effectiveness was compromised.

Interviewee 4 (Teacher D): **Challenges:** Teacher D highlighted limited autonomy in selecting teaching materials and designing curricula as a significant challenge. They expressed feeling restricted by institutional guidelines and standardized assessments, which impacted their freedom and creativity.

**Impact on Teaching:** Teacher D shared that the limited autonomy sometimes hindered their ability to meet students' diverse needs effectively. They described feeling frustrated by the lack of flexibility in tailoring their instruction to suit individual students.

Influence of Psychological Well-being: Teacher D emphasized that their psychological well-being played a crucial role in their instructional practices. They believed that when feeling supported and empowered, they were more likely to employ innovative teaching approaches that enhanced student learning.

Interviewee 5 (Teacher E): Challenges: Teacher E mentioned interpersonal relationship challenges as a significant factor affecting their well-being. They described difficulties in establishing positive relationships with colleagues, students, and administrators, which led to feelings of stress and isolation.

Impact on Teaching: Teacher E acknowledged that the challenges in interpersonal relationships affected their classroom interactions and overall teaching environment. They expressed the need for a supportive network to foster their well-being and create a positive learning atmosphere.

Influence of Psychological Well-being: Teacher E emphasized that their psychological well-being influenced their instructional approaches by affecting their motivation and engagement. They highlighted the importance of feeling supported and connected to effectively engage with students and colleagues.

Summary:

Chinese college English teachers face various challenges that impact their psychological well-being. Heavy workloads, high expectations, language proficiency requirements, large class sizes, limited autonomy, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships all contribute to their well-being concerns.

## ***2 How does the psychological well-being of college English teachers influence their instructional practices?***

Interviewee 1 (Teacher A): Teacher A emphasized that psychological well-being has a positive impact on instructional practices, leading to increased engagement, motivation, and satisfaction in teaching. Autonomy in teaching allows for informed decision-making, method adaptation, and a supportive learning environment.

Interviewee 2 (Teacher B): Teacher B highlighted the contribution of psychological well-being to a sense of ownership and enthusiasm in instructional practices. Feeling competent and effective enhances the ability to facilitate language learning and design engaging lessons, while timely and constructive feedback improves student engagement and learning outcomes.

Interviewee 3 (Teacher C): Teacher C emphasized that psychological well-being influences interpersonal interactions in the classroom. Feeling psychologically supported and fulfilled fosters positive relationships with students, contributing to a supportive learning environment and active student participation.

Interviewee 4 (Teacher D): Teacher D noted that psychological well-being leads to increased motivation and satisfaction in teaching. Autonomy in teaching methods allows for personalization and effectiveness, while confidence in instructional abilities improves student engagement and learning outcomes.

Interviewee 5 (Teacher E): Teacher E emphasized the positive impact of psychological well-being on instructional practices and student outcomes. Feeling competent and effective enhances the facilitation of language learning, and positive relationships with students create a conducive learning environment.

## ***3 What strategies can be employed to support and promote the psychological well-being of college English teachers?***

Based on the results obtained from the interviews with college English teachers, the following strategies can be proposed to support and promote their psychological well-being from the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT):

**Autonomy Support:** Provide college English teachers with a sense of autonomy in their teaching practices. Encourage them to make instructional decisions, adapt teaching methods to suit students' needs, and have a voice in curriculum design. This can be achieved by granting teachers more flexibility and freedom in their teaching approaches and involving them in decision-making processes.

**Competence Development:** Support the professional growth and development of college English teachers. Offer opportunities for continuous learning, training, and skill enhancement. Provide resources and workshops that focus on improving their language proficiency, pedagogical techniques, and assessment methods. Enhancing teachers' competence can boost their confidence and effectiveness in their instructional practices.

**Social Support:** Foster a supportive and positive work environment. Encourage collegiality and collaboration among teachers, create platforms for sharing experiences and best practices, and promote teamwork and mutual support. Provide opportunities for teachers to establish positive relationships with students, administrators, and colleagues, as social connections contribute to their psychological well-being.

**Recognition and Feedback:** Recognize and appreciate the efforts and contributions of college English teachers. Offer constructive feedback, acknowledging their strengths and areas for improvement. Provide opportunities for self-reflection and self-evaluation, encouraging teachers to set goals and celebrate achievements. Regularly communicate recognition and feedback to enhance their sense of competence and self-worth.

**Work-Life Balance:** Promote work-life balance among college English teachers. Provide resources and support systems to help them manage their workload effectively, set realistic expectations, and maintain a healthy work-life balance. Encourage self-care practices, stress management techniques, and the importance of personal well-being.

## Conclusion

The findings from the interviews with college English teachers at Guilin Medical University highlight the significant impact of psychological well-being on instructional practices. Teachers with higher levels of psychological well-being exhibit enthusiasm, creativity, and a sense of ownership in their teaching, leading to more personalized and effective approaches. Their confidence and competence enhance their ability to facilitate language learning, design engaging lessons, and provide timely feedback, resulting in improved student engagement and learning outcomes. Moreover, psychological well-being influences interpersonal interactions, as teachers who feel supported and fulfilled establish positive relationships with students, fostering a supportive learning environment. Based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), strategies to support and promote the psychological well-being of college English teachers include autonomy support, competence development, social support, recognition and feedback, and work-life balance. By implementing these strategies, educational institutions can create a supportive and conducive environment that enhances job satisfaction, reduces burnout, and ultimately improves English teaching practices. These findings provide valuable insights for educational policymakers, administrators, and teacher training programs in promoting teacher well-being and effective English language instruction.

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