

Unequal Well-Being? A Quantitative Study of Gender and Teaching Experience Effects Among Chinese University Teachers

Qi HuiFang¹ Lee Phaik Gaik²

¹Graduate Student Affairs Office, Party Committee, Guilin University of Technology, Guilin, China

²Faculty of Education, Languages, Psychology and Music, SEGi University, Malaysia

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Corresponding Author

Qi HuiFang

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Abstract

The well-being of university teachers in China has become a growing concern amid intensifying job demands and institutional pressures. While previous studies have explored individual and organizational predictors of teacher well-being, limited attention has been paid to potential structural disparities, particularly those related to gender and teaching experience. This quantitative study investigates whether significant differences exist in the well-being levels of Chinese university teachers based on gender and years of teaching experience. A total of 400 university teachers from the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region participated in a cross-sectional survey using a validated well-being scale. Independent sample t-tests and one-way ANOVA were employed to assess group differences. The results revealed statistically significant differences in well-being between male and female teachers, as well as across different teaching experience groups. These findings suggest that structural factors, such as gender roles and career stage, may contribute to unequal well-being outcomes among university teachers. The study highlights the need for more targeted support strategies that account for such disparities, and calls for a more equity-oriented approach in educational policy and faculty development programs.

1. Introduction

University teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the quality and sustainability of higher education. Yet, their well-being has been increasingly challenged by rising job demands, performance pressures, and shifting institutional expectations. In China, these challenges are particularly acute. The expansion of higher education, intensified competition for research output, and heightened societal expectations have significantly impacted the work-life balance and psychological resilience of academic staff. Recent data suggest a worrying decline in teacher well-being, which has been linked to growing attrition rates, diminished job satisfaction, and deteriorating mental health, ultimately compromising educational quality and student learning outcomes (An, 2022; Wu, 2020). While individual-level factors such as psychological capital and job satisfaction have been extensively

studied in relation to well-being, less is known about demographic disparities, especially those rooted in gender and teaching experience. These factors may subtly yet powerfully shape how teachers experience institutional pressures and access coping resources.

In the Chinese academic context, female university teachers often face a dual burden: academic expectations on par with male colleagues and disproportionate domestic responsibilities, leading to potential inequalities in stress levels, emotional well-being, and career advancement opportunities (Wu, 2023). Similarly, teaching experience may correspond with different stages of occupational adjustment and role expectations. Early-career teachers, for example, are more likely to report uncertainty and burnout, while mid- and late-career teachers may face pressures to maintain research productivity under evolving institutional benchmarks (Mertkan et al., 2022).

Despite these potential dynamics, empirical research on whether well-being significantly varies across gender and teaching experience in Chinese universities remains limited. Much of the existing literature either focuses on psychological predictors or examines well-being in generalized terms, without considering how systemic factors may contribute to disparities within the academic workforce. This lack of attention to internal variation leaves a critical gap in both theory and practice, particularly in a national context undergoing rapid educational transformation. Teaching is widely regarded as one of the most stressful professions globally (Zhao & Liu, 2020). Even in developed countries such as the United States and parts of Europe, teachers face high levels of job pressure despite more established welfare and support systems (Isac et al., 2022; Räsänen et al., 2020). For university educators, the dual demands of research and teaching—combined with administrative duties and performance evaluation systems—have contributed to growing occupational stress and emotional fatigue. In developing contexts, such as China, these challenges are compounded by limited institutional flexibility and evolving academic expectations. Although national efforts have been made to strengthen teacher training and development, rising expectations in publishing, student engagement, and policy reforms have further intensified the workload and psychological demands on faculty (Xu, 2023). Such cross-contextual comparisons reveal that university teachers' well-being is not only a personal or psychological issue, but also one shaped by systemic, cultural, and policy-level dynamics.

Addressing this gap is essential not only for academic understanding but also for informing faculty development policies and support systems. If well-being differs systematically by gender or teaching experience, then a one-size-fits-all approach to intervention will likely be ineffective. Instead, more differentiated strategies—tailored to specific demographic subgroups—are needed to promote a more equitable and sustainable academic environment.

In addition, university teachers often navigate dual roles as both researchers and educators, which compounds existing stressors. The pressure to publish in high-impact journals, secure competitive research funding, and simultaneously maintain high-quality teaching standards contributes to a unique form of occupational strain. Moreover, performance evaluations are frequently tied to quantifiable outputs such as student satisfaction scores or citation indices, creating a culture of competition that may undermine collaboration and intrinsic motivation. These structural conditions not only erode individual well-being but also weaken institutional cohesion and innovation.

To this end, the present study investigates whether significant differences exist in the well-being of university teachers in China based on gender and teaching experience. By analyzing large-scale survey data from university teachers across Guangxi, the study seeks to identify underlying disparities and contribute actionable insights to the broader discourse on teacher development and

higher education reform.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teachers' Well-Being

Well-being is a multidimensional construct that extends beyond the pursuit of pleasure to encompass personal meaning, psychological growth, and sustained engagement in life's roles. In the field of positive psychology, Seligman (2002) introduced the PERMA model as a foundational framework for conceptualizing well-being. This model includes five interrelated elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. It integrates both hedonic and eudemonic perspectives, suggesting that well-being is not merely the absence of negative emotion or stress but the presence of fulfilling experiences that support individual flourishing. Donaldson (2022) further elaborated on this view by proposing that well-being involves a balance across emotional, psychological, and social dimensions, all of which interact to determine how people perceive and evaluate their quality of life.

In educational contexts, teacher well-being has emerged as a critical factor influencing not only personal health but also pedagogical effectiveness, student outcomes, and institutional culture. Teacher well-being encompasses emotional resilience, motivation, job satisfaction, and a sense of professional identity. Pancheva et al. (2020) emphasized that both hedonic (pleasure-based) and eudemonic (meaning-based) components are essential to understanding the lived experiences of teachers. Positive emotion contributes to short-term satisfaction and energy, while eudemonic elements such as meaning and accomplishment support long-term career fulfillment. In this regard, the PERMA model provides a valuable lens through which teacher well-being can be understood as a dynamic and context-sensitive process.

In particular, university teachers often work in demanding academic environments that are shaped by competitive performance evaluations, rigid publication requirements, and unbalanced workloads. Studies have shown that excessive work-related pressure, institutional instability, and unclear promotion criteria contribute to elevated stress levels, especially among early-career faculty (Pan, 2023). Mercer (2021) emphasized that teacher well-being is not merely a reflection of internal traits, but rather a product of complex social, cultural, and organizational interactions. Thus, institutional climate, collegial support, leadership style, and recognition play vital roles in shaping well-being outcomes.

To capture the multifaceted nature of teacher well-being, scholars have proposed multidimensional models that classify it into three core domains: subjective, psychological, and occupational well-being (Kun, 2019; Khan et al., 2021). Subjective well-being refers to individuals' evaluative and emotional responses to their life circumstances, often operationalized through indicators such as life satisfaction, happiness, and emotional balance (Anglim et al., 2020; VanderWeele et al., 2020). Psychological well-being focuses on functional capacities like autonomy, purpose, personal growth, and self-acceptance (Luo & Hancock, 2020), reflecting deeper cognitive and developmental aspects of mental health. Occupational well-being, meanwhile, is grounded in the professional domain and includes work engagement, perceived meaning in work, collegial support, and a sense of professional accomplishment (Cann et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2022).

These three dimensions are not mutually exclusive; rather, they interact and reinforce one another. For instance, a university teacher with a high level of occupational engagement may experience

increased self-efficacy (a facet of psychological well-being) and report greater life satisfaction (subjective well-being). Conversely, a deficit in one area, such as poor institutional recognition or heavy administrative workload, may cascade into reduced motivation, emotional exhaustion, and eventually burnout.

In sum, teacher well-being should be understood as a holistic and integrated construct shaped by individual dispositions, social interactions, and structural conditions. The present study adopts this comprehensive framework to examine how university teachers' well-being varies by gender and teaching experience. By drawing on established psychological theory and empirical findings, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the specific factors that influence well-being in higher education, and to inform the development of targeted institutional strategies to promote healthier, more sustainable academic environments.

2.2 Gender and Well-Being

Gender has long been recognized as a key factor influencing individual well-being, which encompasses psychological, emotional, and social dimensions (Lindsey, 2020). The experience and perception of well-being are shaped by a complex interplay of biological, psychological, and sociocultural forces, and gender differences often emerge within this multifactorial context.

Several studies have explored gender differences in well-being, but findings remain mixed. Some researchers suggest that women experience more frequent and intense positive emotions than men, which may contribute to higher levels of subjective well-being (Heintzelman et al., 2020). However, other studies note that women are also more susceptible to experiencing negative emotions, potentially neutralizing their emotional advantage (Yorgason et al., 2020). In the field of education, Alqarni (2021) found that female English teachers reported higher well-being than their male counterparts, attributing this to superior coping strategies and detailed emotional regulation skills, a conclusion supported by Talbot and Mercer (2018), who emphasized gender-specific cognitive strengths in emotional resilience.

Nevertheless, in academic contexts, the relationship between gender and well-being becomes particularly complex. Female university teachers often face gender-specific challenges such as institutional bias, a disproportionate share of domestic responsibilities, and pressure to meet both professional and societal expectations (Akanji et al., 2020). These demands can exacerbate stress and negatively influence professional satisfaction. Jebb et al. (2020) and Alves (2021) further indicated that as service years increase, some female teachers report declining well-being due to role overload and reduced flexibility in adapting to institutional changes—particularly during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, research underscores the variability of gender effects across different aspects of well-being. For example, some studies found higher burnout rates among female teachers (Lu et al., 2020), while others found the opposite trend among male educators (Artz et al., 2022), or reported no statistically significant gender differences at all (Arvidsson et al., 2016). These inconsistencies suggest that gender alone does not determine well-being but rather interacts with other moderating variables such as workload, institutional support, coping style, and stage of career.

Given these findings, institutions have increasingly implemented gender-sensitive well-being initiatives, including flexible scheduling, counseling services, and equitable workload policies. These efforts aim to foster a more inclusive and supportive academic environment for both male and female educators. In summary, gender remains a salient but nuanced variable in understanding university teachers' well-being. While certain emotional and psychological strengths may be gendered, the

institutional context—marked by structural challenges and support systems—plays a decisive role in shaping well-being outcomes. Therefore, research and interventions should adopt a contextualized approach, recognizing that gender interacts dynamically with organizational culture, career stage, and individual coping capacities to influence well-being.

2.3 Teaching Experience and Well-Being

Teaching experience has consistently been identified as a key demographic factor shaping university teachers' well-being. Existing research suggests that teachers with longer experience often exhibit lower stress levels and stronger emotional resilience due to the development of more mature coping strategies (Wong, 2020; Dreer, 2021). Alqarni (2021) found that teachers with over 12 years of experience reported relatively lower pressure, a finding echoed by studies that emphasize the accumulation of psychological resources over time.

However, this relationship is not entirely linear. Alves (2021) highlighted that teachers tend to report higher levels of well-being during the early and later stages of their careers, while mid-career professionals often face a decline in well-being. This mid-career dip is frequently attributed to increased responsibilities, shifting institutional demands, and the pressure to meet research and administrative expectations. Similarly, Reyna (2024) observed that early-career teachers (within the first five years) have higher rates of stress and attrition intentions, indicating difficulties in adapting to professional demands and institutional culture.

Dreer's (2021) findings reinforce the role of experience in emotional regulation, noting that teachers with more than 15 years of experience demonstrate stronger capacity for managing burnout and building professional support networks. These educators tend to establish more stable working patterns and display lower emotional exhaustion. Additionally, experienced teachers are often more likely to access and utilize institutional resources, such as peer mentorship or professional communities, which can buffer the negative effects of stress.

Importantly, Ortan (2021) argued that access to continuous professional development plays a mediating role across career stages. Teachers who actively engage in ongoing learning and skill development—regardless of teaching years—tend to experience higher satisfaction and reduced stress. This suggests that well-being is not merely a function of experience itself, but also of how experience interacts with institutional support and growth opportunities.

In summary, teaching experience appears to be a significant but dynamic determinant of well-being. While more experienced teachers generally report greater emotional stability and lower burnout, this benefit is contingent upon institutional structures that support professional development and work-life balance. Mid-career teachers may be particularly vulnerable due to the cumulative pressures of academic life, highlighting the need for targeted support during this stage. Overall, continuous opportunities for learning and career exploration are essential in maintaining and enhancing well-being throughout the teaching lifecycle.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is conceptually anchored in Seligman's (2002) Well-Being Theory, widely known through the PERMA model, which defines well-being as consisting of five measurable and interrelated elements: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. Together, these components reflect both hedonic and eudemonic aspects of well-being and provide a comprehensive lens through which individuals' psychological functioning in life and work may be understood.

The PERMA model is particularly relevant to higher education settings, where university teachers

face not only emotional and interpersonal challenges but also complex professional demands related to teaching, research, and service. In this context, positive emotions may reflect job satisfaction; engagement may signal flow in teaching or research tasks; relationships may involve collegiality and student interaction; meaning may relate to one's sense of purpose in the academic profession; and accomplishment may reflect perceived success in teaching, research, and career advancement.

In this article, the PERMA model not only underpins the construction of the well-being questionnaire used in the study but also serves as a theoretical guide for interpreting differences in well-being across demographic subgroups. By applying this framework, the study explores how different teaching experiences and gender roles may affect the presence and strength of PERMA components. For example, earlier-career teachers may report lower levels of accomplishment or engagement due to transitional stress, while gender-based differences in perceived meaning or relational support may contribute to variance in overall well-being.

Therefore, Seligman's theory provides both the structural foundation for the study's instrument and the conceptual framework for explaining the findings, allowing for a deeper interpretation of how university teachers' well-being manifests across distinct demographic groups in the Chinese higher education system.

2.5 Research Gap

Despite a growing body of literature on teacher well-being, there remains a distinct lack of empirical research that disaggregates well-being outcomes based on specific demographic dimensions within the Chinese university context. Much of the extant research tends to aggregate teacher experiences, which obscures the role of gender and professional seniority as potential sources of disparity. For instance, although gender-based work-life conflicts are frequently reported anecdotally, few studies have quantitatively examined their impact on well-being using standardized frameworks such as the PERMA model. Similarly, while professional experience is often assumed to confer resilience, the dynamic nature of academic expectations over time suggests that the trajectory of well-being may not be linear. This study seeks to fill this critical gap by providing a systematic analysis of how gender and teaching experience shape university teachers' well-being, thus responding directly to the Article Template's call for research that integrates theory, data, and problem-solving insight.

3. Methodology and Procedures

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design, which is appropriate for examining relationships between variables at a single point in time. The objective was to investigate whether significant differences exist in university teachers' well-being based on gender and teaching experience. A cross-sectional approach was selected due to its efficiency in gathering large amounts of data within a limited time frame and its suitability for exploring demographic influences on psychological constructs like well-being.

3.2 Research Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in three public universities located in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of China. These universities were strategically selected to represent geographic and institutional diversity within the region. Guangxi is characterized by a mix of urban and semi-urban areas with varying levels of educational development, making it an ideal context for studying regional variations in faculty well-being.

A total of 400 university teachers participated in the study. The sampling process utilized stratified random sampling to ensure that each selected university contributed proportionally to the sample based on faculty size. Within each stratum, proportionate random sampling was used to determine the number of participants, ensuring that the sample accurately reflected the distribution of university teachers in the region.

3.3 Research Instrument

Well-being was assessed using the Workplace Well-Being Questionnaire (Kun, 2016), which comprises 27 items across five dimensions: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. These dimensions are grounded in Seligman's PERMA model and are designed to capture both hedonic and eudemonic aspects of well-being. Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), allowing for nuanced measurement of individual differences in well-being.

In addition to the well-being scale, a demographic questionnaire was administered to collect data on gender, teaching experience (categorized into five intervals: 0–5, 5–10, 10–15, 15–20, and 20–25 years), and other background variables. This demographic information provided the basis for comparative analysis across subgroups.

3.4 Research Instrument

The data collection process was facilitated through the WenJuanXing (WJX) online platform, a widely used digital tool for survey distribution in China. After obtaining ethical clearance and institutional permissions, the researcher contacted human resources departments at each university to coordinate the recruitment of participants. The selected teachers were invited to complete the online questionnaire using mobile devices or computers during a scheduled session facilitated by university staff. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the process. Each participant completed the survey in approximately 30–40 minutes.

To improve response quality and minimize non-response bias, the survey was preceded by a pilot test involving 30 university teachers not included in the final sample. Feedback from the pilot study helped refine the clarity of items and optimize survey length. Moreover, the online platform used—WenJuanXing (WJX)—offered real-time monitoring and response authentication, ensuring data integrity. The survey remained open for three weeks, during which two reminder emails were sent to increase participation rates. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring data anonymity, and clarifying the study's academic purpose.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0. Descriptive statistics were first computed to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants. To examine differences in well-being by gender, an independent samples t-test was conducted. For teaching experience, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed, followed by Tukey's HSD post hoc tests to identify specific group differences. Prior to conducting ANOVA, Levene's test was applied to assess the homogeneity of variances. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

This methodological framework ensured rigorous data collection and analysis, allowing the study to address its research objectives effectively and provide meaningful insights into the well-being of university teachers across different demographic groups.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Gender Differences in Well-Being

Table 1.1 presents the group statistics of gender for well-being among university teachers, categorized as a demographic variable. The participants were divided into two groups based on gender: female and male. The table shows the number of participants (N), mean well-being scores, and standard deviations for each group. Male teachers ($M = 3.432$, $SD = .721$) reported higher well-being than female teachers ($M = 3.252$, $SD = .728$). These results indicate that male university teachers reported higher well-being scores compared to their female counterparts.

Table 1.1: Descriptive Statistics for Gender and Well-Being

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female	199	3.252	.728
Male	201	3.432	.721

An independent t-test was conducted to assess whether there were significant differences in well-being between male and female university teachers. To verify the assumption of equal variances, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was performed. As shown in Table 1.2 indicating that the assumption of equal variances was met. An independent samples t-test confirmed a statistically significant difference in well-being scores between male and female teachers ($t(398) = -2.477$, $p < .05$), indicating that gender significantly impacts well-being.

Table 1.2: The Independent Samples Test of Gender for Well-being

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances								95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.371	.251	-2.477	398	.007	-.014	.0725	-.322	-.037
Equal variances not assumed			-2.477	39.78	.007	-.014	.0725	-.322	-.037

These findings align with Seligman's well-being theory, specifically the PERMA model, which emphasizes five core dimensions of well-being: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The observed gender disparity may reflect differential experiences in these domains, particularly in the areas of meaning and accomplishment. For instance, female faculty may experience fewer opportunities for recognition and advancement, affecting their sense of personal accomplishment and overall well-being. Additionally, societal expectations and family responsibilities may interfere with engagement and positive emotions at work. Wu (2023) notes that female faculty in China frequently experience dual pressures from family and professional expectations. Therefore, institutional responses should prioritize gender-sensitive policies—such as

flexible work arrangements, accessible career development, and mental health services—to enhance well-being equitably.

4.2 Teaching Experience and Well-Being

Descriptive results are presented in Table 1.3. A clear upward trend is observed: teachers were grouped based on their years of teaching: Group 1 (0-5 years), Group 2 (5-10 years), Group 3 (10-15 years), Group 4 (15-20 years), and Group 5 (20-25 years). From the findings, the mean well-being score for the group with 20-25 years of teaching experience is the highest ($M = 3.818$, $SD = .117$), followed by the group with 15-20 years ($M = 3.573$, $SD = .083$), the group with 10-15 years ($M = 3.471$, $SD = .686$), the group with 5-10 years ($M = 3.108$, $SD = .490$), and the group with 0-5 years ($M = 2.839$, $SD = .339$). This indicates that teachers with more teaching experience generally report higher well-being scores. This trend highlights the importance of providing additional support and development opportunities for less experienced teachers to enhance their well-being and sustain their professional growth over time.

Table 1.3: The Group Statistics of Teaching Years for Well-being ($N=400$)

Teaching Years	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval of Mean	
				Lower bound	Upper bound
0-5	89	2.839	.339	2.77	2.91
5-10	73	3.108	.490	3.00	3.20
10-15	91	3.471	.686	3.34	3.61
15-20	80	3.573	.083	3.41	3.74
20-25	67	3.818	.117	3.59	4.05

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the well-being scores among university teachers based on their teaching years. Table 1.4 provides the results, showing significant differences in well-being scores among the groups ($p < .05$), indicating that the mean scores differ based on teaching years. Table 1.4 showed a significant difference among university teachers' well-being scores based on teaching years ($F(4, 395) = 28.459$, $p < .001$). This indicates significant differences in well-being scores among different teaching year groups.

Table 1.4: The ANOVA of Teaching Year for Well-being

Well-being	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	P
Between Groups	47.467	4	11.867	28.459	<.001
Within Groups	164.708	395	.417		
Total	212.174	395			

Following a significant finding in the ANOVA regarding differences in well-being among university teachers based on their years of teaching experience, a post hoc test was conducted to determine which specific groups differed from each other. Table 1.5 presents the results of post hoc multiple comparisons of well-being among university teachers based on their teaching years, using the Tukey HSD test, using the Tukey HSD test. It includes the mean differences between groups, standard errors, significance levels, and the 95% confidence intervals for the mean differences. Post-hoc comparisons indicated that group 1 (0-5 years) exhibited significantly lower well-being compared to those in Group 3 (10-15 years), group 4 (15-20 years), and group 5 (20-25 years), with all differences being statistically significant ($p < .001$). As shown in Table 1.5, the largest well-being gap was

observed between group 1 and group 5, with a mean difference of -.9787, indicating that teachers with the least experience had notably lower well-being compared to those with the most experience. However, no significant difference in well-being was found between group 3 (10-15 years) and group 4 (15-20 years), with a *p*-value of .844. Similarly, there was no significant difference between group 1 (0-5 years) and group 2 (5-10 years), as indicated by a *p*-value of .067.

Table 1.5: Post Hoc Multiple Comparisons of Well-being on University Teachers

Multiple Comparison Dependent Variable: ' Tukey HSD					95% Interval	Confidence
Teaching Years	Teaching Years	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
0-5	5-10	-.268	.102	.067	-.548	.011
	10-15	-.63202*	.096	<.001	-.896	-.368
	15-20	-.73336*	.099	<.001	-1.006	-.461
	20-25	-.97879*	.104	<.001	-1.265	-.693
5-10	0-5	.268	.102	.067	-.011	.548
	10-15	-.36378*	.101	.003	-.642	-.086
	15-20	-.46511*	.105	<.001	-.752	-.179
	20-25	-.71054*	.109	<.001	-1.010	-.411
10-15	0-5	.63202*	.096	<.001	.368	.896
	5-10	.36378*	.101	.003	.086	.642
	15-20	-.101	.099	.844	-.373	.170
	20-25	-.34677*	.104	.008	-.632	-.062
15-20	0-5	.73336*	.099	<.001	.461	1.006
	5-10	.46511*	.105	<.001	.179	.752
	10-15	.101	.099	.844	-.170	.373
	20-25	-.245	.107	.149	-.539	.048
20-25	0-5	.97879*	.104	<.001	.693	1.265
	5-10	.71054*	.109	<.001	.411	1.010
	10-15	.34677*	.104	.008	.062	.632
	15-20	.245	.107	.149	-.048	.539

Note: * The mean difference is significant at the .05 level; WB, Well-being.

This ascending pattern supports the well-being theory, which posits that well-being is developed over time through accumulated experiences and fulfillment in key life domains. More experienced faculty may have established a stronger sense of professional identity and purpose (meaning), greater mastery and recognition (accomplishment), and deeper professional relationships, thereby aligning closely with the PERMA dimensions.

However, the non-significant differences between the 15–20 and 20–25 year groups may indicate a plateau in well-being—possibly due to ceiling effects or stagnation in career progression. Without further growth opportunities, educators may experience diminished engagement or meaning, despite continued service.

Therefore, early-career educators should be supported through structured onboarding, mentoring, and

training to enhance their early experiences. For mid- and late-career faculty, universities should provide sustained professional development, leadership pathways, and well-being support to prevent stagnation and ensure continued growth.

The results underscore the relevance of institutional culture in shaping well-being. While quantitative data clearly show a gender and experience gap in well-being, qualitative interpretations suggest that deeper mechanisms may be at play. Female teachers' lower well-being may not only reflect immediate work-life conflict but also institutional microcultures that underrecognize their contributions. Similarly, early-career teachers' lower scores may be attributed to a lack of mentorship and professional affirmation. As such, the findings go beyond statistical differences to highlight systemic inequalities that require structural intervention.

This aligns with recent debates in higher education policy that call for well-being to be understood not merely as a personal or psychological attribute, but as an organizational responsibility. Universities should not merely react to teacher distress through ad hoc wellness programs but must proactively design equitable career structures and inclusive cultures that preempt such disparities.

5. Conclusion and Implication

5.1 Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the well-being of university teachers, focusing on two demographic variables: gender and teaching experience. The results revealed statistically significant differences in well-being based on both variables. Male teachers reported higher well-being than female teachers, highlighting the influence of gender-related roles and responsibilities on emotional health. Similarly, teaching experience was positively associated with well-being; teachers with more years of service reported greater well-being, with those in the 20–25 year group exhibiting the highest levels. These findings confirm the relevance of well-being theory and its five dimensions—positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment—in shaping teachers' psychological health. They also underscore the complex interplay of social roles, cultural expectations, and institutional support in shaping well-being outcomes across different teacher demographics.

5.2 Implication

The findings of this study offer several important implications. For policy and practice, university administrators must consider gender-specific challenges and provide targeted interventions such as flexible work arrangements, supportive leadership, and well-being resources to reduce stress and enhance job satisfaction, especially for female faculty. For early-career teachers, institutions should offer mentorship, professional development opportunities, and clear advancement pathways to help cultivate confidence, resilience, and engagement. Mid-career and senior faculty should be provided with meaningful leadership roles, research support, and recognition to maintain motivation and prevent stagnation. Additionally, fostering a supportive institutional culture that values well-being—through fair workload distribution, mental health resources, and formal recognition systems—can contribute to sustained satisfaction and retention. From a theoretical standpoint, the study affirms the applicability of the well-being theory (PERMA) in higher education contexts, suggesting that institutional efforts to support each dimension of well-being can yield more resilient, motivated, and satisfied educators.

These findings carry broader implications for policy and future research. First, institutions need to adopt an equity-informed lens when crafting well-being policies, recognizing that structural

differences in role expectations, domestic labor, and career pathways may yield unequal emotional burdens. Second, educational researchers should move beyond generalized models and instead investigate intersectional variables—such as how gender interacts with career stage or academic discipline to shape well-being. Third, longitudinal designs are needed to explore how well-being fluctuates across academic life cycles, thereby informing stage-specific interventions. Finally, cross-cultural comparative studies could help determine whether the patterns observed here reflect uniquely Chinese conditions or broader global trends in academic labor.

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