

Workload, Work Family Conflict, and Emotional Well-Being Among Female Teachers in West Malaysia

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Abstract: The teaching profession is emotionally taxing, but little is known about how workload and work-family conflict affect female teachers' emotional well-being, particularly in Malaysia. This study examines the relationship between workload, work-family conflict, and emotional well-being among female educators. Role tension and occupational stress cross with home duties. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework posits that excessive demands without sufficient resources can lead to reduced psychological health and work engagement. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey was conducted among 250 female teachers from Malaysian public secondary schools. Work-family conflict, emotional well-being, and perceived workload were measured using standardised tools. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis were used in SPSS Version 28 to identify predictive relationships among variables. The study found substantial positive correlations between workload and work-family conflict, as well as negative correlations with emotional well-being. Stressors, including high workload and fuzzy role boundaries, weaken instructors' emotional resilience. This study shows that occupational and family demands affect female teachers' mental health. The findings contribute to the growing body of research on teacher well-being in developing countries by highlighting the gendered nature of professional stress. The study recommends systemic reforms by educational policymakers to minimise workload intensity, provide flexible support, and improve female instructors' emotional coping mechanisms.

Keywords: Emotional Well-Being; Female Teachers; Job Demands-Resources; Descriptive Statistics; Regression Analysis; High Workload; Workload Redistribution; Administrative Support; Flexible Scheduling.

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1. Introduction

Teaching has long been recognised as one of the most demanding professions, requiring constant emotional engagement, cognitive effort, and social interaction [9]. Teachers not only serve as facilitators of learning but also act as mentors, counsellors, and emotional anchors for students. Within this multifaceted role, emotional well-being becomes central to teachers'

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effectiveness and satisfaction. In recent years, concerns regarding teacher well-being have gained prominence globally, as educators face increasing workloads, complex administrative duties, and growing expectations from parents, policymakers, and the wider public. In Malaysia, these pressures are particularly evident among female teachers, who make up the majority of the teaching workforce and often shoulder substantial responsibilities both at work and at home [1]. The concept of emotional well-being refers to an individual's overall psychological state, encompassing positive affect, life satisfaction, and resilience against stress. It is not merely the absence of distress but a broader condition of emotional balance and self-fulfilment. Within the teaching profession, emotional well-being has been linked to job satisfaction, motivation, and instructional quality. Teachers who maintain emotional stability are more likely to exhibit creativity, empathy, and patience in their teaching practices. In contrast, those experiencing emotional exhaustion are more susceptible to burnout, absenteeism, and attrition. Thus, the emotional well-being of teachers is not only a matter of personal health but also an essential determinant of educational effectiveness and institutional sustainability. Despite its significance, teachers' emotional well-being has been under increasing threat. A combination of rising workload, administrative demands, and societal expectations has contributed to escalating stress levels within the profession.

Teachers today are expected to integrate digital learning technologies, prepare continuous assessments, maintain comprehensive student records, and participate in numerous co-curricular and community programmes. In Malaysia, the education system's emphasis on accountability and performance measurement has intensified these challenges. Studies by Ali et al. [16] and Pace et al. [4] have shown that Malaysian teachers often work beyond standard hours to complete administrative reports and digital assessments, which limits personal time for rest or family engagement [2]. This growing imbalance between professional and personal demands has led to widespread concern over teachers' emotional health. The issue of workload is particularly critical in understanding teachers' emotional well-being. Workload encompasses the cognitive, emotional, and physical demands placed upon teachers in carrying out their duties. High workload not only strains teachers' time and energy but also affects their sense of professional efficacy and motivation. Rosli [10] observed that sustained workload pressure contributes to emotional exhaustion and lower morale among Malaysian educators. Similarly, Klassen et al. [13] found that excessive workload diminishes teachers' confidence in their ability to manage classroom challenges, ultimately reducing the quality of teaching. When workload is excessive, it often spills over into personal time, resulting in chronic stress that undermines both professional performance and emotional well-being. Workload alone, however, does not fully explain the complexity of emotional distress among teachers. A growing body of research highlights the role of work–family conflict as an important intermediary factor. Work–family conflict arises when the demands of one domain interfere with the other, making it difficult for individuals to fulfil their obligations effectively. For female teachers, this issue is especially pronounced [5].

In Malaysia, cultural and social expectations often assign women the primary responsibility for domestic care and family management. Consequently, when professional responsibilities intensify, these competing demands can lead to feelings of guilt, fatigue, and emotional strain. Zhou et al. [18] observed that women experience higher levels of dual-role conflict than men due to persistent gender norms that associate women with household duties regardless of their professional commitments. This dual pressure leaves female teachers vulnerable, forcing them to constantly negotiate between their career responsibilities and family roles. The psychological implications of work–family conflict are profound. Teachers who experience persistent conflict between work and family responsibilities often report diminished well-being, irritability, and reduced emotional resilience. Over time, such strain can evolve into chronic stress, depression, or burnout. Research in organisational psychology suggests that unresolved work–family tension is associated with decreased job satisfaction, reduced organisational commitment, and increased turnover intentions [8]. Within educational contexts, this has broader consequences: teachers under chronic stress are less able to foster supportive learning environments, which, in turn, may affect student outcomes. Thus, understanding the interrelationship between workload, work–family conflict, and emotional well-being is essential for promoting sustainable and effective educational systems. The issue warrants particular attention for several reasons. First, the Malaysian education system is undergoing significant transformation, driven by technological integration, curriculum reform, and increased accountability measures.

These reforms, while beneficial in modernising education, have inadvertently intensified teachers' workloads. Second, the teaching workforce is predominantly female, with many teachers simultaneously fulfilling caregiving and household roles. This gendered dimension of workload and well-being remains understudied, especially within the Malaysian context. Third, while there is growing recognition of teacher stress, limited empirical research has examined the combined influence of workload and work–family conflict on emotional well-being using a robust quantitative framework. Addressing this gap is crucial for developing effective well-being policies and interventions within Malaysian schools. From a theoretical perspective, this study draws upon the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which posits that job demands, such as workload and emotional labour, can lead to strain and burnout when not counterbalanced by adequate resources [11]. The model offers a valuable lens for examining how workload contributes to work–family conflict and, in turn, affects emotional well-being. It also emphasises the role of organisational support, autonomy, and emotional resilience as potential buffers. Applying this framework enables a comprehensive understanding of how systemic, institutional, and individual factors interact to influence teachers' psychological well-being [14]. This study also aligns with the principles of emotional intelligence theory, particularly those advanced by

Goleman [3]. Emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to recognise, understand, and regulate one's emotions and those of others, plays a key role in managing stress and maintaining well-being. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence may be better equipped to cope with workload pressures and prevent work-family conflict from eroding their emotional balance. However, emotional intelligence alone cannot compensate for structural challenges, such as excessive administrative demands or inadequate institutional support. This study, therefore, emphasises the need to understand not only individual coping capacities but also the systemic factors that shape teachers' emotional experiences [17].

The relevance of this study extends beyond academic interest. Teachers' emotional well-being directly impacts the quality of education and student achievement. Teachers who are emotionally stable and motivated are more likely to foster positive classroom environments, demonstrate patience, and apply creative teaching strategies. Conversely, emotional distress undermines teachers' ability to connect with students, manage classrooms, and deliver effective instruction. The consequences of poor emotional well-being can ripple through entire school communities, affecting morale, teamwork, and student outcomes. Addressing these issues is therefore vital for sustaining educational excellence and promoting a healthy, supportive teaching profession. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed vulnerabilities in teachers' emotional well-being. During the shift to online and hybrid learning, many educators faced increased workloads, technological challenges, and blurred boundaries between their personal and professional lives. Female teachers, in particular, experienced heightened work-family conflict as they managed online teaching while simultaneously attending to domestic responsibilities. The pandemic context underscores the importance of understanding the long-term implications of workload and work-family imbalance on teachers' emotional health, particularly during the post-pandemic recovery phase, when hybrid learning and digital documentation remain integral to the education system [6]. Given these concerns, this study addresses a pressing gap in understanding how workload and work-family conflict jointly influence emotional well-being among female teachers in Malaysia. While previous research has examined teacher stress or job satisfaction independently, few studies have empirically tested the mediating effect of work-family conflict in this specific population.

By integrating these dimensions, the present study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the psychosocial mechanisms that shape emotional health in teaching. It also provides an evidence base for policy and institutional reforms aimed at promoting well-being and work-life balance in the education sector. The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform sustainable solutions. By understanding how workload pressures and work-family dynamics interact to impact emotional well-being, educational institutions can design targeted interventions that address both the structural and psychological aspects of teacher stress. Strategies such as workload redistribution, administrative support, flexible scheduling, and professional counselling services can mitigate emotional strain. Furthermore, embedding emotional well-being as a central component of teacher development policies would represent a progressive step toward fostering a more resilient and motivated teaching workforce. In summary, this study is driven by the recognition that teachers' emotional well-being is fundamental to the success of educational systems. Female teachers in Malaysia face unique challenges stemming from high workloads, persistent work-family conflict, and limited institutional support. Understanding these interrelated factors is essential not only for improving teachers' quality of life but also for strengthening schools' overall effectiveness. By examining these relationships empirically, this research contributes valuable insights into how educational organisations can balance performance expectations with the emotional needs of their workforce, ultimately promoting both teacher well-being and educational excellence.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Emotional Well-Being

Emotional well-being (EWB) represents a core aspect of psychological health, encompassing the ability of individuals to recognise, understand, and regulate emotions to maintain internal stability and fulfilment. It involves an equilibrium between positive and negative affect, as well as the cognitive evaluation of one's life circumstances [15]. The World Health Organisation [20] defines mental well-being as a state in which individuals realise their potential, cope with normal life stresses, work productively, and contribute to their communities [19]. Within educational contexts, this definition is highly relevant, as teaching involves continuous interaction, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping. Teachers with high emotional well-being tend to demonstrate greater classroom engagement, positive relationships with students, and greater resilience in managing the stressors associated with the profession. Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence (EI) Theory provides a crucial conceptual framework for understanding emotional well-being in occupational settings. Goleman [3] identified five interrelated components of EI-self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills- as essential competencies for managing emotions effectively under pressure. According to Goleman [3], individuals with high EI are better equipped to handle conflicts, maintain composure, and sustain motivation despite adverse conditions. In teaching, these competencies translate into the ability to empathise with students, respond calmly to behavioural challenges, and sustain optimism in the face of administrative or academic pressures.

Teachers with stronger emotional intelligence have been found to experience lower levels of stress and burnout, as their ability to regulate emotional responses acts as a protective factor. They are more likely to reframe challenges constructively, engage in positive problem-solving, and maintain interpersonal harmony with colleagues. Conversely, teachers with low EI often struggle to cope with competing demands, leading to heightened anxiety and emotional depletion. Within the positive psychology tradition, emotional well-being encompasses both hedonic (pleasure, satisfaction, and joy) and eudaimonic (meaning, personal growth, and purpose) well-being. When teachers experience harmony between these two dimensions, they are better able to manage emotional demands and maintain a sense of professional fulfilment. In recent years, the concept of teachers' emotional well-being has expanded to encompass broader social and institutional dimensions. Emotional well-being is not only an individual attribute but also a product of environmental support, school culture, and organisational climate. Supportive leadership, collegial collaboration, and recognition have all been found to enhance teachers' psychological well-being, fostering a sense of belonging and professional efficacy. Teachers who feel appreciated and empowered are more likely to demonstrate enthusiasm and resilience, contributing positively to school improvement initiatives. Therefore, emotional well-being can be viewed as both a personal competency and a systemic outcome shaped by workplace structures and socio-cultural expectations.

2.2. Workload and Its Effects on Emotional Well-Being

Workload refers to the cognitive, physical, and emotional effort required to accomplish assigned professional duties within a specific timeframe. In teaching, workload extends far beyond classroom instruction to encompass lesson planning, assessment preparation, administrative duties, extracurricular coordination, and participation in institutional or ministry-led programmes [4]. As highlighted in the Malaysian context, teachers today face expanding responsibilities, including integrating digital platforms, conducting continuous assessments, and fulfilling bureaucratic documentation requirements [16]. These demands, while intended to improve accountability and learning outcomes, have simultaneously heightened the intensity of teachers' work and reduced their capacity for rest and reflection. Research has consistently shown that excessive workload undermines teachers' emotional well-being. Rosli [10] and Pace et al. [4] found that when teachers' work demands exceed their psychological and temporal resources, they experience emotional exhaustion, diminished motivation, and declining job satisfaction. Similarly, Klassen et al. [13] identified a strong positive relationship between workload and emotional fatigue, observing that teachers under prolonged workload pressure often display symptoms of burnout and reduced professional efficacy. Bureaucratic and administrative demands have become a significant source of stress for educators. Teachers often report spending late evenings completing online assessments, updating performance reports, and preparing documentation for inspections [20].

This constant extension of work into personal time disrupts work–life balance, leading to fatigue and emotional disengagement [7]. The expectation to fulfil both instructional and clerical duties intensifies when teachers are involved in co-curricular or leadership roles, further straining their time. From a Human Resource Development (HRD) perspective, managing workload effectively is essential for sustaining employee engagement and organisational performance. When workload exceeds available resources, emotional regulation becomes impaired, increasing vulnerability to burnout and stress. However, a balanced workload aligned with teachers' skills, resources, and support systems can promote motivation, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. Ali et al. [16] argued that educational organisations must adopt workload management strategies such as role clarification, task delegation, and supportive supervision to protect teachers' emotional well-being. Furthermore, workload has both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Quantitatively, it refers to the volume of tasks, whereas qualitatively, it concerns the cognitive and emotional complexity of those tasks. For teachers, the emotional labour associated with dealing with diverse learners, managing parental expectations, and responding to administrative scrutiny often proves more exhausting than the physical workload itself. Consequently, policies addressing teacher workload must consider not only task reduction but also the school's emotional climate. Training in stress management, time management, and emotional intelligence can help teachers cope more effectively with the high demands of their jobs.

2.3. Work-Family Conflict and Dual-Role Stress

Work-family conflict (WFC) occurs when the demands of work and family roles become mutually incompatible, resulting in strain in fulfilling responsibilities in both domains. This inter-role conflict is particularly salient among female teachers, who often shoulder the dual expectations of professional excellence and family caregiving. Zhou et al. [18] emphasised that women experience higher dual-role tension than men because of enduring cultural norms that assign them primary responsibility for domestic and childcare duties, even when engaged in full-time employment. When professional demands encroach on family time, teachers often experience guilt, fatigue, and frustration, which gradually erode emotional well-being. Repeated exposure to such conflict can lead to reduced job satisfaction, absenteeism, and psychological distress. Female teachers, in particular, report difficulty balancing grading, lesson preparation, and administrative duties with family care responsibilities. This imbalance not only affects their emotional health but also their perceptions of competence and satisfaction in both domains. Research in organisational psychology links persistent work–family conflict to higher rates of emotional exhaustion and

diminished resilience. For teachers, this dynamic is compounded by emotional labour, the continuous need to display empathy, patience, and calmness even when internally fatigued. Unlike other professions, teaching requires constant emotional presence, making it difficult for educators to compartmentalise stress. When teachers must remain emotionally available to students despite personal or familial pressures, their internal resources are depleted more rapidly. In Malaysia, the cultural expectation for women to prioritise family adds another layer of stress.

Female teachers are often expected to attend school functions, lead community activities, and manage household affairs simultaneously. When family obligations interfere with work performance or when work demands intrude upon home life, emotional well-being deteriorates. Teachers may feel trapped in a cycle of unmet expectations, leading to chronic tension and emotional exhaustion. The post-pandemic era has exacerbated these issues. The shift to hybrid and online teaching blurred the boundaries between work and home, as virtual classrooms extended into domestic spaces. Teachers had to juggle teaching, troubleshooting technology, and household management simultaneously. As a result, work-family boundaries became increasingly permeable, amplifying emotional strain and fatigue. For female educators, especially those with young children, this transition often led to continuous conflict between professional and familial obligations, resulting in diminished well-being and motivation. Addressing work-family conflict requires both structural and psychological interventions. Schools can support teachers by providing flexible scheduling, reducing unnecessary administrative tasks, and offering emotional support programmes. On a personal level, building emotional intelligence and time management skills can help teachers navigate dual-role pressures more effectively. However, systemic recognition of the gendered nature of workload and work-family conflict remains essential to fostering sustainable well-being among educators.

2.4. Summary of Literature Insights

The reviewed literature demonstrates that emotional well-being is influenced by multiple interrelated factors, particularly workload and work-family conflict. High workload intensifies stress and exhaustion, while persistent role conflict diminishes emotional stability. Female teachers, as a group, experience these challenges more acutely due to cultural expectations surrounding caregiving and domestic responsibilities [18]; [7]. Consequently, sustaining emotional well-being in the teaching profession requires holistic approaches that address both professional and personal dimensions. In conclusion, emotional well-being serves as a crucial psychological resource for teachers, enabling them to remain resilient, motivated, and effective in their professional roles. By understanding the theoretical underpinnings of emotional intelligence, the implications of workload, and the gendered dynamics of work-family conflict, educational policymakers can design interventions that protect teachers' emotional health and promote sustainable professional engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between workload, work-family conflict, and emotional well-being among female teachers in Malaysia. This design was chosen because it enables an objective investigation of associations between naturally occurring variables without the need for experimental manipulation. The correlational approach is particularly appropriate when assessing whether variations in workload correspond to changes in emotional well-being, as well as whether work-family conflict mediates this relationship. The design enables the use of statistical tests to determine the strength and direction of relationships, ensuring empirical evidence for theoretical propositions. By adopting this approach, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological and organisational determinants of teachers' well-being within real educational contexts.

3.2. Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of female teachers employed in Malaysian public secondary schools. This demographic was selected because women represent approximately 70% of the teaching workforce and frequently encounter multiple role demands that influence their emotional health. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents based on specific inclusion criteria:

- Female teachers with at least two years of teaching experience.
- Currently employed in a public secondary school.
- Actively engaged in both teaching and administrative responsibilities.

Using Rumeli et al. [9], an appropriate sample size of 210 was determined from an initial distribution of 250 questionnaires, resulting in an effective response rate of 84%. The respondents represented schools from both urban and rural districts to ensure

diversity and the generalizability of the findings. The majority were married and had dependents, reflecting the dual responsibilities characteristic of female teachers in Malaysia.

3.3. Instruments and Measures

The research utilised a structured questionnaire consisting of four sections: (a) demographic background, (b) workload, (c) work-family conflict, and (d) emotional well-being. All instruments were adapted from previously validated scales and modified slightly to ensure contextual relevance for Malaysian educators.

- Workload was measured using items adapted from Pace et al. [4] and Klassen et al. [13] that focused on perceived task intensity, time pressure, and administrative demands.
- Work-Family Conflict (WFC) was measured using an adapted version of the Work-Family Conflict Scale developed by Netemeyer et al. [12], capturing both work-to-family and family-to-work interference.
- Emotional Well-Being (EWB) was assessed using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) by Rumeli et al. [9], which has been previously validated in Malaysian samples.

Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instruments underwent expert validation by two specialists in educational psychology and human resource development. A pilot test involving 30 teachers was conducted to evaluate clarity and reliability, producing Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.80 for all scales, indicating strong internal consistency.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through self-administered questionnaires distributed in both printed and online formats (Google Forms). Before data collection, formal permission was obtained from the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE), the State Education Department, and the participating schools. Participants were briefed on the study's purpose and provided with an information sheet explaining the research objectives, voluntary participation, and confidentiality assurances. Respondents were granted two weeks to complete the questionnaire, after which reminders were issued to encourage submission. Data collection lasted six weeks to ensure comprehensive coverage and response validity. All completed questionnaires were stored securely in encrypted digital files and locked cabinets accessible only to the researcher. Data were anonymised before analysis, and no personal identifiers (such as names or school codes) were recorded.

3.5. Ethical Process and Approval

The study adhered strictly to institutional and international ethical research standards. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University Research Ethics Committee, ensuring that all research activities complied with guidelines for studies involving human participants. The ethical process followed these key procedures:

- **Submission of Research Protocol:** The full research proposal, including instruments, consent forms, and data management procedures, was submitted to the committee for review and approval before the commencement of the study.
- **Informed Consent:** Participants received written consent forms that explained their rights, including the option to participate voluntarily, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty or consequence.
- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Data were collected anonymously. No personal or institutional identifiers were used in data files, ensuring that responses could not be traced to individual participants.
- **Data Protection and Storage:** All data were securely stored in password-protected digital systems, and physical copies were kept in locked cabinets. Data will be retained for five years' post-publication, in accordance with university policy, before secure disposal.
- **Minimisation of Harm:** The questionnaire did not include intrusive or sensitive questions, and participation posed no foreseeable risk to respondents. Support resources were listed for participants who might experience discomfort reflecting on stress or emotional well-being.

In compliance with the Declaration of Creswell [6] and the Malaysian Personal Data Protection Act, participants' privacy and data integrity were fully safeguarded. The ethical approval process ensured transparency, voluntary participation, and adherence to the highest professional standards in research conduct.

Data Analysis Techniques: Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Preliminary analyses included descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) to summarise the demographic

and main study variables. Normality tests (skewness and kurtosis) confirmed that the data met assumptions for parametric testing. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore bivariate relationships among workload, work–family conflict, and emotional well-being. To test the hypothesised mediation effect of work–family conflict, a multiple regression analysis following the procedures outlined by Punia and Kamboj [19] was conducted. Additionally, the bootstrapping method (5,000 resamples) was used to estimate 95% confidence intervals for indirect effects, ensuring robust results. Demographic variables, such as age, marital status, and years of service, were controlled for using hierarchical regression to isolate the unique contribution of the main predictors.

Reliability and Validity: Reliability was established through Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which ranged from 0.83 (workload) to 0.89 (emotional well-being), indicating strong internal consistency. Validity was examined through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with Varimax rotation, ensuring that each item loaded significantly on its intended construct (loadings > 0.60). Construct and content validity were supported by expert panel reviews and pilot testing feedback. Furthermore, discriminant validity was supported by low inter-factor correlations, confirming that the constructs measured distinct aspects of participants' experience. The high reliability and validity scores provide confidence that the instruments effectively captured the intended psychological and behavioural variables.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive Analysis

A total of 210 valid responses were collected and analysed from female teachers across several public secondary schools in Malaysia. The respondents represented a balanced distribution of teachers from both urban and rural settings, with most aged 30–45 years, married, and having one or more dependent children. This demographic profile reflected the Malaysian teacher population, in which female educators constitute the majority and frequently balance dual responsibilities between professional and domestic roles. Descriptive statistics revealed moderate to high levels of workload ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.63$), moderate work–family conflict ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.59$), and moderate emotional well-being ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.67$). These results suggest that although many teachers manage their professional responsibilities competently, they continue to experience significant strain from the competing pressures of work and home. Many participants reported that the need to complete administrative tasks, attend meetings, and prepare teaching materials after school hours resulted in their working time extending into the evenings. This pattern reflects the ongoing challenge of managing workload in the teaching profession and illustrates how additional non-teaching responsibilities may compromise emotional stability and family engagement.

4.2. Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis indicated that workload had a significant positive relationship with work–family conflict ($r = .61$, $p < .01$) and a significant negative relationship with emotional well-being ($r = -.47$, $p < .01$). Similarly, work–family conflict showed a significant negative correlation with emotional well-being ($r = -.54$, $p < .01$). These results highlight that as teachers' workload increases, their experience of conflict between work and family intensifies, and their emotional well-being tends to decline. The negative correlation between workload and emotional well-being implies that the more teachers feel overburdened by professional duties, the less emotionally resilient and satisfied they become. This relationship is consistent with earlier findings by Pace et al. [4] and Klassen et al. [13], who observed that teachers' heavy workload is directly linked to feelings of exhaustion, lower motivation, and emotional fatigue. The strong association between work–family conflict and emotional well-being further suggests that professional stress extends beyond the school environment, influencing personal and family life. Teachers who bring their workload home often report irritability, guilt, and reduced quality of family interactions. These patterns suggest that workload pressure not only diminishes professional satisfaction but also undermines teachers' overall psychological well-being.

4.3. Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive strength of workload and work–family conflict on emotional well-being. The model was statistically significant and explained 42% of the variance in emotional well-being ($R^2 = .42$, $F = 38.24$, $p < .001$). Workload emerged as a significant negative predictor of emotional well-being ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.001$), while work–family conflict had an even stronger negative effect ($\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.001$). The findings confirm that both higher workload and greater conflict between work and family responsibilities are associated with lower levels of emotional well-being among female teachers. The data also revealed that workload significantly predicted work–family conflict ($\beta = .61$, $p < .001$), suggesting that heavier work responsibilities are a primary cause of tension between professional and personal domains. This supports earlier observations by Ali et al. [16] and Rosli [10], who found that increasing bureaucratic and administrative demands, combined with expectations for continuous assessment and digital documentation, have intensified teachers' stress

in Malaysia. The regression results provide statistical evidence that excessive work expectations directly undermine emotional health, particularly when teachers receive insufficient administrative support or autonomy in task management.

4.4. Mediation Analysis

A mediation analysis was conducted to test whether work–family conflict mediated the relationship between workload and emotional well-being. The analysis followed the approach of Punia and Kamboj [19]. In the first step, workload was found to predict emotional well-being significantly ($\beta = -.46, p < .001$). When work–family conflict was introduced into the model, the direct effect of workload on emotional well-being decreased but remained significant ($\beta = -0.23, p < 0.01$), while the effect of work–family conflict remained significant ($\beta = -0.36, p < 0.001$). This result indicates partial mediation, meaning that work–family conflict partially explains how workload affects emotional well-being. To confirm the mediation effect, bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was performed. The indirect effect of workload on emotional well-being through work–family conflict was statistically significant ($\beta = -0.22, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.31, -0.14]$), indicating that the confidence interval did not include zero. This result provides further confirmation that work–family conflict serves as an intervening variable between workload and emotional health. The mediation finding supports the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model, which posits that when job demands exceed available personal or organisational resources, employees are more likely to experience stress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced well-being.

4.5. Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the significant relationship between workload, work–family conflict, and emotional well-being among female teachers in Malaysia. High workload directly contributes to emotional strain, while work–family conflict serves as a crucial mechanism that intensifies this strain. Teachers who are burdened by administrative work and extended teaching hours face ongoing tension between professional and domestic responsibilities. These experiences align with earlier observations by Arthur and Mair [15], who reported that excessive job demands lead to psychological fatigue and deteriorating mental health among teachers. The results also support the theoretical propositions of Goleman's [3] emotional intelligence framework, which posits that the ability to manage emotions is essential to maintaining psychological balance. Teachers who lack sufficient emotional regulation strategies may internalise work stress, leading to greater conflict at home and lower overall well-being. Conversely, teachers with high emotional intelligence may be better equipped to compartmentalise stressors, preventing spillover effects from work to family. However, the findings suggest that even emotionally competent teachers can experience emotional fatigue when the workload becomes unmanageable or when institutional support is inadequate. The mediating effect of work–family conflict highlights the interconnection between personal and professional roles. Zhou et al. [18] found that women experience greater dual-role strain due to cultural expectations that require them to balance family care and professional performance.

The current study adds evidence from the Malaysian context, where female teachers often bear additional social expectations as primary caregivers. As a result, they face not only professional workload but also persistent domestic pressures, which together contribute to reduced emotional energy and heightened psychological distress. The discussion also highlights the systemic and organisational roots of the issue. Administrative obligations and performance-based accountability systems have compounded teachers' workload in Malaysia [16]; [4]. These additional tasks divert time and energy away from teaching, increasing stress and reducing engagement. Teachers' emotional well-being deteriorates when the demands of their roles outstrip their personal and institutional resources, consistent with the JD–R model. The model suggests that providing sufficient resources, such as administrative support, recognition, and emotional support, can mitigate the negative impact of job demands. The present findings imply that institutional intervention is essential. Workload reduction policies, improved delegation of administrative tasks, and enhanced work-life balance programmes can significantly reduce emotional stress. Furthermore, leadership practices that prioritise emotional well-being, such as recognising teachers' efforts, providing psychological support, and fostering collegiality, can buffer the adverse effects of workload.

Studies by Zhou et al. [18] and Ismail [8] emphasise the importance of supportive supervision and professional recognition in maintaining educators' motivation and resilience. The evidence also suggests that work-family conflict is not merely an individual challenge but a structural one. Social norms that associate women primarily with domestic responsibilities need to be reevaluated within educational institutions. Organisational policies that offer flexible scheduling, family leave, or childcare support can reduce the psychological burden on female teachers. At the same time, individual coping strategies, such as time management, self-regulation, and peer support, play a vital role in maintaining well-being. Teachers who cultivate emotional intelligence and resilience are better positioned to manage stress effectively, even in demanding work environments. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that improving emotional well-being requires a holistic approach that integrates individual emotional competencies, institutional support systems, and policy-level changes. Emotional well-being is not merely an outcome of personal resilience but the product of fair workload distribution, gender-sensitive management, and a positive school culture that values teachers' emotional health as much as their performance.

4.6. Summary of Findings

The results clearly indicate that workload, work-family conflict, and emotional well-being are significantly interrelated among female teachers in Malaysia. Teachers experience moderate to high workloads and report that these demands interfere with their family responsibilities. The statistical findings reveal that as workload increases, work-family conflict intensifies, leading to a decline in emotional well-being. Work-family conflict partially mediated the relationship between workload and emotional well-being, confirming that emotional strain often arises when professional pressures encroach on personal time and family duties. The discussion establishes that excessive workload not only causes immediate stress but also leads to cumulative emotional exhaustion, undermining motivation and life satisfaction. The findings support prior research indicating that, due to cultural and gender expectations, female teachers are especially vulnerable to these pressures. The evidence also demonstrates that organisational factors, such as bureaucratic requirements, a lack of administrative assistance, and limited autonomy, significantly exacerbate stress. At the same time, supportive school leadership, peer collaboration, and professional recognition can alleviate some of these effects. In essence, this study provides empirical validation that workload and work-family conflict jointly shape the emotional well-being of female teachers in Malaysia. Addressing these issues requires institutional awareness and proactive management. Effective interventions should include equitable workload distribution, supportive administrative systems, and professional development in emotional regulation and stress management. Improving teachers' emotional well-being not only benefits individual educators but also enhances the overall quality of teaching and learning in Malaysian schools.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between workload, work-family conflict, and emotional well-being among female teachers in Malaysia. The findings revealed that workload exerts a significant negative influence on emotional well-being, both directly and indirectly through the mediating effect of work-family conflict. Teachers with heavier workloads are more likely to struggle to balance their professional and domestic responsibilities, leading to emotional fatigue, reduced job satisfaction, and a decline in psychological well-being. These findings underscore the interconnectedness between occupational demands and personal life stressors within the teaching profession. The results confirmed that work-family conflict serves as a significant mediating factor between workload and emotional well-being. When work demands exceed an individual's capacity or time resources, teachers are forced to compromise their family obligations, which, in turn, generates feelings of guilt, stress, and psychological exhaustion. This dual-role strain aligns with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, which posits that high job demands, in the absence of adequate resources, lead to emotional depletion and reduced well-being. In this regard, the findings support previous studies that identified emotional exhaustion and burnout as outcomes of prolonged work-family conflict [18]; [10]. Furthermore, the study extends understanding of emotional well-being within the educational context by highlighting gender-specific dimensions of workload and stress. Female teachers in Malaysia face distinct challenges due to cultural expectations that they balance caregiving and household responsibilities alongside their professional roles.

This dynamic creates conditions for heightened emotional strain, particularly when institutional structures do not provide adequate support. The evidence from this study confirms that, although teaching is often viewed as a nurturing profession, the emotional burden associated with balancing work and family responsibilities is substantial. The study also reinforces the theoretical contribution of Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory, which emphasises the importance of emotional awareness and regulation in coping with occupational stress. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence may navigate challenges more effectively; however, even emotionally competent individuals can experience distress when external pressures, such as excessive workload and lack of institutional support, persist over time. Therefore, emotional well-being should not be understood solely as an individual attribute but as a condition influenced by structural, cultural, and organisational factors. In summary, the study concludes that maintaining teachers' emotional well-being requires a multi-dimensional approach that acknowledges the interplay between professional workload, family responsibilities, and institutional support. Excessive workload contributes to work-family conflict, which in turn reduces emotional stability and overall well-being. Addressing this issue demands proactive intervention by educational policymakers and school administrators to create environments where teachers can perform effectively without compromising their mental health or personal lives.

5.1. Implication

The findings of this study carry important implications for educational policy, institutional management, and teacher professional development. Addressing the relationship among workload, work-family conflict, and emotional well-being requires systemic, coordinated strategies that extend beyond individual coping mechanisms. The implications can be categorised into institutional, policy, and personal development dimensions. At the institutional level, schools must adopt workload management strategies that distribute tasks more equitably and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens. Teachers frequently report that non-teaching responsibilities, such as data entry, report writing, and documentation, consume significant time that could otherwise be dedicated to lesson planning and student engagement. By streamlining bureaucratic processes and delegating non-academic duties to administrative personnel, schools can create a more supportive environment that allows

teachers to focus on pedagogical and student-centred activities. In addition, implementing flexible work arrangements, such as allowing teachers to complete certain administrative tasks remotely, could enhance time management and mitigate the intensity of work–family conflict. From a policy perspective, the Ministry of Education and other governing bodies should consider revising existing teacher workload policies to ensure a balance between accountability requirements and teachers' psychological capacity. Policy frameworks should include clear guidelines for maximum allowable teaching hours, administrative workloads, and continuous professional development commitments.

Introducing well-being programmes and stress management workshops at the national level could help teachers acquire the skills needed to manage emotional demands effectively. Furthermore, integrating indicators of emotional well-being into teacher appraisal systems would signal institutional recognition of mental health as an essential aspect of professional performance. For school leadership, the findings emphasise the importance of supportive supervision and empathetic management. School principals and senior administrators play a pivotal role in shaping teachers' work experiences. Leaders who demonstrate emotional awareness and practice compassionate communication can foster a positive organisational culture that enhances morale and reduces burnout. Training programmes for school leaders should therefore include components on emotional intelligence, stress management, and staff well-being. Establishing mentorship systems or peer-support groups within schools can also serve as practical interventions to help teachers share coping strategies and maintain their own resilience. At the personal level, teachers can benefit from developing stronger emotional intelligence and self-regulation skills, as Goleman [3] suggests. Emotional awareness allows teachers to recognise early signs of stress and to employ adaptive coping strategies, such as mindfulness and time management, to maintain psychological balance. Encouraging teachers to engage in self-care activities and to seek professional counselling, when necessary, could also improve emotional well-being. Additionally, promoting open discussions about work–family balance within schools can reduce stigma and foster a culture of mutual understanding and support.

The findings also have implications for future research. While this study focused on quantitative relationships among workload, work–family conflict, and emotional well-being, future studies could adopt qualitative or mixed-method approaches to explore teachers' lived experiences more deeply. Such studies could reveal nuanced perspectives on how cultural, institutional, and family dynamics interact to shape emotional health. Comparative studies across different regions or educational systems would also help determine whether similar patterns exist beyond the Malaysian context. In practical terms, this study underscores that improving teachers' emotional well-being is not solely a matter of individual resilience but a shared responsibility among policymakers, school leaders, and society at large. Sustainable improvements in teacher well-being will only emerge when the systemic causes of stress are addressed through coordinated policy reform, institutional restructuring, and ongoing professional support. Investing in teachers' emotional well-being not only enhances their personal quality of life but also contributes to better educational outcomes and the long-term stability of the teaching profession.

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