

The Effect of Emotional Well-being on Polite Behavior and Teaching Effectiveness of English Teachers in Government Schools of Badulla District in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Many empirical studies agree that emotional well-being plays a critical role in influencing individual behavior, and the impact can directly affect work efficacy. However, the correlation between emotional well-being, behavior, and effectiveness has not been previously explored. Similarly, teachers' emotional well-being can also influence their behavior, leading to varying levels of teaching effectiveness. This study attempted to examine empirically how emotional well-being affects polite behavior and teaching effectiveness among English teachers in government schools of the Badulla District in Sri Lanka. Primary data collection was conducted using a quantitative method, involving a structured questionnaire administered to 297 randomly selected government English teachers. The study used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to analyze data. The results revealed that emotional well-being has a significant effect on polite behavior, which in turn has a substantial influence on teaching effectiveness. Supported by empirical evidence, this study concluded that the emotional well-being of English teachers directly influences polite behavior and teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, polite behavior plays a partial mediating role, implying that emotional well-being improves teaching effectiveness by fostering polite behavior. The findings of this study provide important insights for policymakers to enhance teachers' emotional well-being to improve the teaching effectiveness of English teachers by focusing on their polite behavior.

Keywords: English teachers, Emotional well-being, Polite behavior, Teaching effectiveness, Sri Lanka.

Introduction

Teachers, being one of the most important educational stakeholders, hold a major responsibility in providing enriching learning experiences for students through their subject expertise, pedagogical competency, and social awareness. They are expected to address students' academic needs, offer emotional and social support, and promote achievements consistent with 21st-century educational goals. (Wolomasi et al., 2019). Since teaching is linked to a wide range of obligations, teachers should demonstrate strong traits of physical, psychological, and emotional well-being to sustain in the profession. Sutton (2004) suggests that teaching is an emotional endeavor, and teachers often experience various emotions when they interact with students. Their emotional status has a strong connection to their efficacy (Hagenauer et al., 2015). Further, this research also claims that teachers' emotional well-being has an effect on students' well-being, including learning and development, and building a positive teacher-student rapport. If the teacher's emotional status is positive, it can have an impact on students' success, which is a measurement of the teacher's effectiveness. Can and Wu (2022) suggest that English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching is a 'dialogic and interactive job' that relates the emotions and behaviors of both students and teachers. Thus, their positive relationship results in favorable academic outcomes' and vice versa. The way

teachers behave towards students in different situations, including the way they instruct, lecture, respond, or interact, favors teaching effectiveness.

Despite the efforts to improve, Sri Lankan English language education is publicly perceived as a failure (Gunawardana & Karunaratna, 2017). Students, with no exception, follow the same assumptions, finding English language learning problematic. The Department of Education (DOE) (2021) reveals that 27% of the students who sat for the GCE Ordinary Level examination in 2021 failed the English language paper. This data presents the difference between the expected outcome and the reality of English language learning and teaching in Sri Lanka. If the students study English for several years yet still fail, there is a serious problem that should be addressed promptly. English teachers who are the 'most important stakeholders' of English Language Teaching (ELT) should carry much of the responsibility (Gunawardana & Karunaratna, 2017). Although the ELT paradigm has shifted from conventional lecturing methods to more activity-based, technologically enhanced ELT strategies, the ELT status in Sri Lanka is yet to improve. As ELT practitioners (teachers of English) are vital in the process, investigating the existing problems and focusing research on them is beneficial. However, scholars have not adequately studied how teachers' emotional well-being affects polite behavior and teaching effectiveness, particularly in the Sri Lankan ESL context. The mediating role of polite behavior on the relationship between emotional well-being and teaching effectiveness is yet to be investigated, as no study has explored the direct correlation among the variables of this study. This study intends to investigate the impact of teachers' emotional well-being and polite behavior on teaching effectiveness with special reference to the ESL context in Sri Lanka.

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative method, which involves collecting data with structured instruments such as surveys. The unit of analysis of this research is English teachers at government schools in Sri Lanka. A total of 1294 English teachers are currently teaching English language and English literature in six education zones of the Badulla district. Out of the total population, 297 English teachers were selected as the sample size, based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, with support from the sample size determination formula available online at Raosoft (2004). The sample represents the six educational zones. Finally, the respondents were selected using simple random sampling.

The teachers' emotional well-being was measured through five selected items: emotional state, attributes, social connectedness, sense of belonging and accomplishments, based on Seligman's PERMA Theory of emotional well-being (2012). The selected items were previously adopted by Butler & Kern (2016). Teachers' polite behavior was measured through five dimensions: positive interactions, negative interactions, indirect anticipation, threatening interactions and non-verbal interactions, as adopted by Culpeper and Haugh (2014) and Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005). Teachers' effectiveness is the dependent variable of this study. Danielson's framework for teaching (2011) was used as the theoretical base to extract dimensions and design items accordingly. The selected dimensions and items measuring this variable, including planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, professional responsibilities, and psychological influence, were adopted by Smith and Johnson (2021).

Based on the measurements, a structured questionnaire was developed to collect primary data from government school English teachers. The draft questionnaire was pre-tested and adjusted based on the opinions of participants and experts. Each question was prepared as a statement to assess the answer using a 7-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= somewhat disagree, 4= neutral, 5= somewhat agree, 6= agree, and 7= strongly agree). The assessment of variable measurements and hypothesis testing were carried out using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). The reliability and validity of variables were assessed following a hierarchical model based on the first order and second-order analyses. The validity of variables was examined by indicator reliability and internal consistency reliability. Finally, the hypothesis testing was done after testing the multicollinearity among variables, evaluating the significance of path coefficients, and considering R-squared, effect size, and predictive relevance.

Results

Data analysis was done through both descriptive and inferential analysis. Sample characteristics were analyzed descriptively to understand the sample profile. However, these variables were not the primary focus of this study; therefore, subgroup analysis was not conducted. The descriptive analysis was done using frequency, mean, and standard deviation with the help of SPSS to analyze the behavior of variables. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was utilized to evaluate the constructing reliability and validity of the outer model.

The first step of PLS-SEM analysis examines the indicator reliability of two main indicators: T-statistics, which at a 95% confidence level should be greater than 1.96 to indicate significance, and indicator reliability, which requires outer loadings to exceed 0.7. Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR), both of which should be more than 0.7, were also used to assess internal consistency reliability. Convergent validity was established using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with each latent variable having an acceptable threshold greater than 0.5. Finally, the square root of AVE was used to quantify discriminant validity, and it was found to be larger than the correlations with other components. The study employed a hierarchical model (first order and second order) to evaluate the reliability and validity of measurements.

The structural model assessment was primarily based on the step guidelines provided by Hair et al. (2014). The hypothesis testing was conducted following a series of steps: first, an assessment was performed to identify multicollinearity issues; second, the significance and the relevance of the structural modal relationships were assessed; third, the level of R² and effect sizes were examined; and finally, the statistical calculation of each path coefficient was taken to measure the significance by utilizing t-values. As all t-values exceeded the threshold of 1.96, all the hypotheses were accepted as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Hypothesis testing

Hypotheses	Path Coefficient	T statistics	P values	Decision
Direct Effect				
H1: Emotional Wellbeing -> Polite Behavior	0.896	50.386	0.000	Accepted
H2: Emotional Wellbeing -> Teaching Effectiveness	0.628	14.964	0.000	Accepted
H3: Polite Behavior -> Teaching Effectiveness	0.335	7.730	0.000	Accepted
Mediating Effect				
H4: Emotional Wellbeing -> Polite Behavior -> Teaching Effectiveness	0.300	7.572	0.000	Partial Mediation

Source: PLS-SEM Results, 2024.

To assess the significance of the correlations between variables, R-squared values were used. As demonstrated in Figure 2, the R² value of polite behavior is 0.803. Thus, emotional well-being explains 80.3% of the variance in polite behavior. The impact of emotional well-being on teaching effectiveness is 88.2%. Therefore, the impact of the predictive variables is significantly high.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the impact of emotional well-being on polite behavior and teaching effectiveness among government English teachers in the Badulla district of Sri Lanka. Results demonstrate that polite behaviour increases by 0.869 with a one-unit increase in emotional well-being (path coefficient is 0.896, t-value is 50.386), thereby confirming the first hypothesis (H1). Consistent with these findings, Frenzel et al. (2021) highlights the importance of emotional well-being in creating a positive classroom environment, as emotionally stable teachers tend to act more positively in the classroom. The dependent variable, teaching effectiveness, was measured based on planning and preparation, classroom environment, instruction, professional responsibilities, and psychological influence. The results show a 0.628 increase in teaching effectiveness with a one-unit increase in emotional well-being (path coefficient is 0.628, t-value is 14.964), confirming the second hypothesis (H2). Validating the results of this study, Keller and Becker (2021) state that emotionally stable teachers create a constructive learning environment, as emotional well-being enhances the quality of instructional methods, which in turn improves students' outcomes. Moreover, the results suggest that teaching effectiveness increases by 0.335 when polite behavior increases by one unit (path coefficient is 0.335, t-value is 7.730), which confirms the third hypothesis (H3). This finding indicates that polite behavior fosters a respectful classroom setting with an inclusive learning environment, promoting enhanced learning outcomes (Alief & Nashruddin, 2022). The role of polite behavior between emotional well-being and teaching effectiveness is confirmed as partial mediation, indicating a path coefficient of 0.300 (t-value is 7.572). However, limited scholarly evidence is found on this specific mediation.

Conclusion

After analyzing the collected data and relating it to empirical knowledge, this study concluded that emotional well-being directly affects polite behavior and teaching effectiveness. In addition, polite behavior has an influence on teaching effectiveness, making it a partial mediator between emotional well-being and teaching effectiveness. The identified performance roles are statistically significant and thus, the current study contributes new knowledge by exploring the interconnection among emotional well-being, polite behavior, and teaching effectiveness. Specifically, it provides insights into how emotional well-being significantly affects both polite behavior and teaching effectiveness, highlighting the direct impact it exerts. Further, the mediating role of polite behavior, a factor not extensively investigated in previous research, was identified and suggested.

Although this research is context-based, the results can be generalized in a broader sense beyond the specific context due to the universality of the variables. Based on the results, several suggestions can be offered to improve the status of the English language teaching and learning process. Mainly, as teachers' emotional well-being is proven to have a significant effect on teaching effectiveness, education administration should prioritize teachers' emotional well-being as a part of their professional development. Furthermore, teacher training programs should aim to build teachers' awareness of emotional intelligence. With strong emotional well-being, teachers can demonstrate more polite behavior, leading to more effective teaching. Equipping teachers with the necessary tools to regulate emotions and maintain stability can encourage polite behavior through reflective teaching practices. Furthermore, it strengthens the teacher-student rapport, which is beneficial in classroom management and the overall well-being of students, ultimately leading to a better quality of education. Thus, this research provides guidelines for school administration, education policymakers, and education institutes to provide a more supportive environment for the teachers, as their emotional well-being ultimately influences the overall outcomes of education.

Further research on this topic is suggested to delve deeper into the proven interplay of emotional well-being and teaching effectiveness to find out other potential mediators, such as job satisfaction, professional commitment, and professional development programs. The findings of this research include the solution for low performance of the students in the English language, as it demonstrates the correlation between the teacher and the teaching effectiveness, which affects students' learning outcomes. In conclusion, this research offers an understanding of the

interplay between emotional well-being, polite behavior, and teaching effectiveness by providing a comprehensive framework for the behavior of these variables. Furthermore, it contributes knowledge to the ESL context, providing valuable insights for teachers, education administrators, and policymakers seeking to improve English language teaching and learning. Although this research is based in the Badulla district, Sri Lanka, the results have a broader applicability to any ESL context.

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