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 Resilience Report®

## Teacher Wellbeing Project

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Education, and teacher wellbeing in particular, is a serious contemporary Australian social issue, with ranging implications across educational policy, psychological science, and mental health for modern Australians. Between 2001 and 2016 the number of teaching staff in government and non-government sectors rose 20% (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Teaching is one of the highest occupational burnout professions with a 20% average turnover rate in three years, and almost 50% over five years, across Australia, America and the UK. This literature review seeks to discuss the pertinent factors that relate directly to teacher wellbeing, as it relates to student educational outcomes, though factors relating to wellbeing. This includes the quality and quantity of their social relationships in the workplace, including relationships to students, other teachers, and administration; their positive evaluations and attitudes; and their ability to address and manage instances of occupational stress. Research suggests there is a significant positive relationship between teacher wellbeing and SAT results, with an average of 8% increase in academic performance per dimension of teacher wellbeing increase (Briner & Dewberry, 2007). In our review of the literature, we have attempted to best link teacher wellbeing outcomes back through the lens of four of the seven Resilience model factors: skill, education, peer, and work.

We hypothesised that teacher wellbeing will be predicted by the quality and quantity of their social relationships in the workplace, including their relationships with students, other teachers and other staff members in the school environment.

This hypothesis draws strongly upon the Friends Factor of The Resilience Doughnut. The friends factor within The Resilience Doughnut has identified that an individual's ability to maintain successful and meaningful friendships are able to achieve increased resilience negative emotions stemming from experiences or trauma (Worsley, 2015).

Throughout our literature review the most prominent factor related to teacher wellbeing was the quality and quantity of their pro-social relationships in the workplace (Hargreaves, 2000).

Relationships with students was most often cited as the greatest source of enjoyment, motivation, and core reason for staying in their job amongst teachers (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hargreaves, 2000).

Spilt, Koomen and Thijs (2011) argue that teacher-student relationships can have observable impacts upon the teacher's professional and personal sense of identity, which in turn contributes to their wellbeing. This study further identified through self-report that a focus on teacher wellbeing promoted student educational outcomes, with an overwhelming 94% of teachers responding as 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'. This is in direct support of the hypothesis as it suggests that some forms

of relationships experienced by teachers may have an observable impact upon student educational outcomes.

The primary component of the friends factor of The Resilience Doughnut, is the supportive role of friends and a support network (Worsley, 2015; Hjemdal, Mossige, Stefansen & Von Soest, 2010). Social support, a key benefit stemming through developed relationships in a workplace environment, is identified as an important factor in individuals' ability to cope with situations that may disturb wellbeing in a professional context (Aelterman, Engels, Van Petegem & Pierre Verhaeghe, 2007).

The resilience model relies on a series of factors which form the basis of individual resilience to stressors. Teachers themselves are care-seekers in the sense that they gain considerable emotional security from their relationships with their students, thus demonstrating a basic psychological need for relatedness with their students, and acts as a pervasive source of motivation, that can explain the importance of personal relationships within the classroom for teachers (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This suggests that the relationship between teachers and their students could fulfil the role of the friends factor of The Resilience Doughnut.

When particular factors of resilience from the resilience model are not met; there is less basis. Frustration when basic relational needs are not met, undermines positive wellbeing, thus following this notion, teacher's relational experiences with individual students is predictive of their wellbeing (Spilt et al., 2011). Teachers internalise experiences with students in schemas of relationships that guide their emotional responses to daily interactions (Spilt et al., 2011).

Relationships between teachers and students can be developed by mutual respect and pro-social values, shared interest in subject material, 'atmosphere of learning', sharing of troubles/concerns, questions asked, recognition and reward of achievement, openness, caring, interdependence, mutual needs met, and clear and concise classroom culture (Noble et al., 2008; Roffey, 2012). Social capital is a key determinant of the development of teacher-student relationships. Social capital is defined by Pretty and Ward (2001) as the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a group that enable effectiveness. In the context of school life, the quality of social connections is the primary influence on the facilitation of social capital. More social capital leads to trust and reciprocity, creating a bidirectional feedback loop between teachers and students, leading to enhanced attainment of long and short-term goals and enhanced personal relationships (Roffey, 2012). Social capital can be developed in the circumstances of high expectations creating communal identity (expectancy effects), participation in decision making processes (especially those that affect them), meaning and purpose

in works organisational structure and the knowledge of how one's contribution affects the whole (Roffey, 2012).

Positive evaluations and attitudes of teachers are hypothesised to increase the resilience and wellbeing of teachers. Optimal teacher wellbeing is a sustainable state, characterised by predominantly positive feelings and attitudes, positive relationships, resilience, self-optimisation, and a high level of satisfaction with learning experiences (Noble et al 2008). In a UK study, teaching was ranked 2/26 on physical health, 2/26 on psychological wellbeing, 6/26 on job satisfaction on stress inducing jobs (Johnson, 2005). There are several key positive environmental factors which can be found within teaching environments.

Worsley (2015) explores The Resilience Doughnut as being likewise composed of a strength-based approach to resilience. The recognition of the positive attributions and factors of resilience available to teachers within their environments could form their basis of resilience in order to promote their wellbeing.

Self-efficacy and workload evaluations account for more than half (54%) of the variance of teacher competency (Aelterman et al., 2007) and are found to further sustain their efforts towards pursuing children's optimal scholastic attainment (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca & Malone, 2006). These are key indicators that through the strength-based approach of The Resilience Doughnut, the work factor may form the basis of resilience for these teachers (Worsley, 2015). This is further explored through the identification that these teachers also exhibit enthusiasm for teaching and are more committed to their profession, and are likely to exert a positive influence on students' achievements and their own sense of efficacy (Caprara et al., 2006).

The eventual academic achievement of the students themselves is identified to be predicted by subsequent achievement as well as teachers' self efficacy beliefs, which in turn, contributed significantly to students' achievements and teacher job satisfaction, thus demonstrating a bidirectional relationship (Roffey, 2012). It stands to reason therefore that the work factor from the resilience model will be closely linked with student performance in the context of teacher wellbeing and resilience.

The relationships between teachers and students is a key environmental factor within the teaching environments. Mental representations at different levels of generalisation offer a window to understand how individual student-teacher relationships affect professional and personal esteem. Consistent negative evaluations of relationship theories link to habitual appraisals of problematic student behaviour, which leads to unproductive emotional labour, compassion fatigue, and

occupational burnout (Chang Davis, 2009). This could be contrasted with the identification of the long term positive attitudes towards teaching, therefore, are best accounted for by positive self efficacy upon initiation, which is sustained long term by the profession, enthusiasm for learning, and the removal of negative relationship attributions (Roffey, 2012). Thus, an adoption of a model taking on a strength-based approach to promote positive attributions would positively impact teacher self-efficacy, in turn resilience and ultimately student performance.

Furthermore, stress is a negative emotional experience being triggered by the teacher's perception that their work situation constitutes a threat to their self-esteem or wellbeing (Kyriacou, 2001). Stress minimisation is a key predictive factor to longitudinal teacher wellbeing. Knowledge of stress minimisation strategies and techniques are important for administration and teachers alike as they predict better outcomes for students and teachers alike. Kyriacou (2001) reports that the primary sources of occupational stress for teachers stems from students who lack motivation to learn; difficulties and efforts in maintaining discipline in the classroom; confronting general time pressures and workload demands; exposure to environmental and occupational change states; the implicit evaluations and attributions of others who are relevant to the teachers self esteem; difficult or challenging relationships with colleagues and administration; and general exposure to poor working conditions.

Cooper and Marshall (1976) directly implicate five main sources of stress in the work environment relevant to teacher wellbeing.

Cooper and Marshall's five sources of stress;

1. Intrinsic: poor physical conditions, classroom environment, and work overload
2. Role ambiguity and role conflict
3. Career development potential: lack of security and under/over promotion. The high burnout rate is a factor also, as teachers see others around them give up and feel discouraged.
4. Relationships: Manager, and other teachers. Bullying from both students and other employees. Moreover, teachers and education employees are the largest group of callers to the UK National Workplace Bullying Advice Line (Holmes, 2005).
5. Organisational structure and climate: Involvement in decisions that affect teachers directly, including educational policy at state and federal levels.

It is important to note that occupational stress is highly variant in the teaching profession. Moreover, intrinsic stress management strategies, personality traits, or the environment can interactively influence the degree to which stressful situations are perceived, influencing on a daily basis the teacher's emotional and cognitive wellbeing. Hattie (2009), in his meta-analysis of effective education, concluded that making mistakes needs to be welcomed as part of effective learning, and necessary and expected as part of the learning environment. Schools improved academically in environments where people were not afraid to admit they had used discretion in their use of the curriculum (Hattie 2009). Just as strength acknowledgment makes for positive evaluations, mistakes must almost be acknowledged in order to learn from them; recognition was found to be favoured over punishment as purposeful to the learning process and further training (Roffey 2012).

In conclusion, the pertinent psychological research suggests that modern teacher wellbeing is best predicted by: the quality and quantity of the social relationships in the workplace, including relationships to students, other teachers, and administration; the nature of their positive evaluations and attitudes in regards to their role in the workplace; and the minimisation and management of sources of stress, as listed above. The major implications of these findings is that if we want to improve the school performance and teacher wellbeing, we need to recognise this bidirectional influence they have on each other. How teachers feel on an everyday basis is likely to affect their performance, and so, in turn, the performance of those they teach (Briner & Dewberry, 2007). While we cannot directly implicate cause and effect relationships between the above factors and teacher wellbeing (Briner & Dewberry, 2007), the high reliability and direction of the correlational data is strongly indicative of bidirectional influence and multiple, layered, nested factors that affect teacher wellbeing.

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