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## Complex Matrices Between Teacher Well-being and Learner Performance in Rural Education Ecosystems

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**Abstract.** Even though explanations for student underachievement in academic work are well documented, the influence of teacher well-being on learner performance remains under-explored. This study aims to explore the complex matrices between teacher well-being and learner performance in rural settings. Teacher well-being and learner performance in rural education ecosystems have been a cause of concern globally. Using Zimbabwe as a case, this qualitative desktop study uses primary and secondary documents in the public domain to delve deeper into the complex matrices of teacher well-being and other interweaving factors that impinge learner performance in rural education landscapes. The article responds to two questions: what teacher-related factors militate against learner performance in rural schools, and how can these be addressed? The study finds that teacher well-being is a critical but often overlooked factor in rural student achievement beyond known socio-economic influences. Tapping into the broaden-and-build theory as the illuminating lens, we argue that, without fully exploring how teacher well-being (or lack thereof) influences learner performance in rural schools, there is a missing cog in unravelling the probable causes for poor examination results in historically marginalised educational ecosystems. Considering this, the study recommends that developing countries in similar contexts, through their Departments of Education, start intervention strategies to improve teachers' well-being in rural ecologies if learner performance must be improved. The paper shares insights into what contributes to poor academic performance in rural settings and then suggests mitigation strategies.

**Keywords:** Examinations; learner performance; motivation; rural education; teacher well-being

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## 1. Introduction and Background

Despite known explanations for student underachievement in academic work, the influence of teacher well-being on learner performance remains under-explored, yet understanding teacher well-being is a vital concern for society and schools. As Granziera et al. (2023), in concurrence with Acton and Glasgow (2015), confirm, teacher attrition is a persistent problem in rural education settings. Therefore, of late, evidence continues to mount which shows that teacher well-being affects the delivery of quality education in diverse teaching-learning ecological landscapes (Dreer, 2023; Granziera et al., 2023). For instance, the study by Harrison et al. (2022) explored the association between teacher job satisfaction and instructional quality. This study reported that teachers' job satisfaction and the quality of classroom-level relationships may be important indicators of positive instructional outcomes or lack thereof.

A recent study by Granziera et al. (2023) showed that the role of school context in influencing teachers' well-being is critical. Collie and Mansfield (2022) share similar sentiments. While research on the impact of teacher well-being on learner performance is emerging, there appears to be a dearth of comprehensive research focusing specifically on the interplay between teacher well-being and learner performance in rural schools. Thus, the explicit effects of teachers' well-being in rural educational ecosystems remain a conspicuous gap in our understanding of the matrices between teacher well-being and learner performance. Considering this gap, our study aims to investigate the interplay between teachers' well-being and learner performance using Zimbabwe as a case in point. This paper seeks to advance knowledge regarding rurality and teacher well-being as an arbitrating factor of educational disadvantage. By conducting this study, we hope to disentangle the disparate effects of learner performance, teacher well-being, and rurality. The objectives of this study, therefore, are to:

1. Explore teacher-related factors that militate against learner performance
2. Establish how these factors can be addressed.

The study hopes to open new avenues in building positive teacher well-being, which is needed to better students' academic performance in the rural education ecosystem by understanding the complex matrices between teacher well-being and learner performance. We first review the background literature to place our more extensive critique in context. The uniqueness of this study resides in linking the disparate bodies of work that make up the scholarship in the two fields, namely rural schools and teacher well-being, which we now turn to contextualise the study.

## 2. Literature Review

A plethora of explanations have been advanced, especially when learners perform below expectations in schools. These explanations range from socio-economic backgrounds, learners' psychological dispositions and resource un/availability (Dean et al., 2023; Rogers et al., 2023; Tang et al., 2023). Closely related to this concern, several studies have yielded convincing evidence that learner performance in rural contexts is problematic for both schools and the nation.

Various studies (du Plessis & Menstry, 2019; Marongedza et al., 2023; Rogers et al., 2023; Shikalepo, 2020) have been conducted to examine the causes of poor learner performance in rural areas. For instance, Dean et al. (2023) noted that research from Australia and other countries shows pupils in rural areas perform worse academically than their counterparts in metropolitan areas. They concluded that the urban-rural disparities in achievement cannot be entirely explained by socio-economic variation.

Instead, among the many interrelated factors that lead to lower average performance, rurality modulates other effects on student accomplishment; this agrees with Fraidan (2025), who argues that contextual factors shape educational experiences, given that they recommended considering the unique features of rurality in education, particularly the contribution of rural perspectives and knowledge to education and student accomplishment. In another study on institutional constraints in rural schools, Marongedza et al. (2023) argue that due to their remoteness and lack of development, rural areas have inferior schools that lack basic infrastructures for learning and teaching, putting learners at a disadvantage. In a similar study, Dlamini et al. (2023) concur that schools in rural areas are poor and disadvantaged, are distant from urban towns, lack basic infrastructure like water, roads, electricity, transport, ICT, and lack lifelong learning opportunities, all of which are disadvantages for both teachers and learners.

A study by Shikalepo (2020) shows that rural school locations and socio-economic conditions are significant barriers to attracting, retaining and supporting talented teachers. It was concluded that learner performance is affected negatively. Vurayai (2020) examined the nexus between rurality and social exclusion in Ordinary level mathematics education in Zimbabwe and claimed that rural students have historically faced marginalisation and exclusion from school for a variety of reasons, including poverty, language barriers, cultural differences, and the technological divide. To complement the issue of rurality, Rogers et al. (2023) explain that rural schools experience teacher shortages that lead to underachievement by learners. These studies have contributed to understanding the drivers of student failures in rural areas.

The term rural area is relative and has diverse meanings depending on the geography and location where it is used. For example, while in Africa, the term rural means a remote area where approximately 70% of the African population resides (Shikalepo, 2020), in Austria, it includes the inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote designations as defined by the Austria Statistical Geography Standard (Dean et al., 2023). According to Dlamini et al. (2023), a rural area is a zone characterised as a sizable area with a small population that relies on agriculture and natural resources and is distinguished by a dearth of social amenities, restricted access to ICT, and inadequate transportation infrastructure; this aligns with the definition of rural area advanced by Marongedza et al. (2023) who view it as an area that is remote, poorly developed and lacks basic infrastructure like roads, electricity and information communication technologies.

Recent studies reveal that rural students underperform compared to urban students. For example, in Australia, students in rural locations have lower academic achievement, on average, than metropolitan students (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2021; Dean et al., 2023). Similarly, Texas rural schools face challenges related to teacher recruitment and retention, geographic and professional isolation, and financial problems which militate against learner performance (Tang et al., 2023). Zimbabwe's rural areas are often remote areas with no service centres nearby. The areas have poor roads and no electricity (Moreeng & Chimbunde, 2024). Thus, when juxtaposed with the concerns of the current study, most rural areas have poor socio-economic backgrounds, which invariably hinder the provision of quality education (Chimbunde, 2022).

The present study was spurred by a newspaper article published on February 2, 2024, stating that an official analysis of Ordinary Level (Form 4) results revealed that thirty rural schools in Zimbabwe's Manicaland province had a zero per cent pass rate in exams held in November and December 2023 (Ignite News, 2024). The media report that disseminated this analysis attributed the dismal performance to socio-economic disparities between urban and rural schools, inadequate teaching-learning resources, poor funding, large class sizes, lack of individualised tuition, bullying, and inadequate support systems for learners with special needs. Surprisingly, nothing was said about teacher (de)motivation and/or teacher well-being.

Several authors concur that the definition of well-being is shrouded in controversy as diverse scholars have advanced different versions of the concepts, though certain traits run through (Collie & Mansfield, 2022; Dean et al., 2023; Dreer, 2023; Granziera et al., 2023). While Granziera et al. (2023) view well-being as a teachers' evaluation of and functioning in their work environment, Acton and Glasgow (2015) define it as feelings of happiness, satisfaction, competence and enacted purpose. By extension, Viac and Fraser (2020) define well-being as the 'teachers' responses to the cognitive, emotional, health and social conditions about their work and their profession' (p. 18).

Drawing from these proffered definitions, this study advances that teacher well-being refers to the physical, mental, and emotional health of teachers in the workplace and is essential for fostering a supportive learning environment and making sure that teachers can assist pupils efficiently (Fraidan & Alsubaie, 2025). As Dreer (2023) suggested, teacher well-being could have a broad spectrum of potential effects. We argue that higher levels of well-being among teachers can increase their motivation and engagement at work, which can benefit students' performance. The teachers who put their well-being first are also better able to manage the pressures and stress of the work, which can eventually benefit students and the school. In brief, teacher well-being can be characterised as an individual's personal and professional fulfilment, pleasure, purposefulness, and enjoyment created via collaboration with students, colleagues and school contexts.

However, teacher well-being can also be low, extending to negative emotions such as stress and burnout, which are detrimental to learner performance (Fraidan, 2024). As Hascher and Waber (2021) explicitly write, well-being is represented by subjective life satisfaction and positive and negative effects that affect how teachers work. For example, Granziera et al. (2023) explain that emotional tiredness can harm learners and schools, such as quitting work, being less productive, losing dedication, and having poor physical and mental health. In the context of teacher well-being, Dlamini<sup>1</sup> et al. (2023) argue that because of some aspects of their profession, teachers may suffer unpleasant and negative emotions, including anger, anxiety, tension, irritation, or sadness.

This is referred to as teacher stress and is part of teacher well-being that can be developed because of poor working conditions in rural areas. The term working conditions refers to the physical workspace and any other aspects of the workplace that impact employees, including workload, working hours, amenities, legal rights, and obligations. Thus, when a teacher's work environment and circumstances prevent them from efficiently teaching, they are considered bad working conditions and affect teacher well-being.

The central question is: how is teacher well-being affected by rurality? To answer this question, we draw from a study by Shikalepo (2020) that reports that the lack of basic teaching supplies, an excessive workload of administrative and instructional responsibilities, inadequate school funding, and low teacher pay typify the challenge of teaching in sub-Saharan Africa's developing nations. These challenging circumstances make Schools unable to enhance teachers' working conditions worse (Shikalepo, 2020). Teaching thus remains difficult in rural schools, and teachers fail to teach effectively due to these unfavourable working conditions and a lack of consistent efforts to change them. The teachers deployed in rural schools complain about the quality of life, which is not as good as in urban schools (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019), reflected by the quality of classroom structure, accommodation facilities, and school resources they use. These factors impact on teacher well-being.

Acton and Glasgow (2015) explain that teacher well-being is supported or constrained by contextual factors which enable teachers to realise their purpose and goals in teaching, provide realistic and manageable work demands that allow for autonomy, and value respect and celebrate teachers' professional expertise and work practice. Several variables influence job satisfaction for teachers. These comprise leadership styles, socio-economic conditions and individual characteristics. According to Viac and Fraser (2020), job satisfaction in the teaching context refers to how much a person appreciates the circumstances in which they conduct their professional activities. Job satisfaction is crucial to teachers' well-being, yet most rural areas have poor socio-economic conditions, which invariably hinder teachers' development of positive emotions. That resonates with Fraidan (2024), who discusses empirical approaches to measuring teacher engagement.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

We couch this study on the broaden-and-build theory advanced by Fredrickson in 2001. At the core of the theory is the assumption that experiences of positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, which in turn serve to build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources (Fredrickson, 2001). The theory suggests that the ability to feel good may be a basic human strength essential to studying human well-being. Optimal well-being, or thriving, is indicated by positive emotions.

Positive emotions, like joy, interest, satisfaction, love, and related positive feelings, undoubtedly represent times when people are not troubled by negative emotions, such as anxiety, melancholy, wrath, and despair. According to Diener et al. (1991), people's assessments of their subjective well-being are predicted by the overall balance of their positive and negative emotions, which is consistent with this perception. People interact with their surroundings and participate in activities when they have positive affect, and many of these actions are adaptive for the person (Fredrickson, 2001).

The theory is informative in that it assists our understanding that positive teacher well-being is essential and must be cultivated if they are to perform well in their duties. However, negative teacher well-being does not support good work ethics and, as such, must be avoided. In the context of this study, we borrow from the broaden and build theory to argue that positive experiences in the classroom and at school have been shown to improve teachers' ability to form strong working connections, be receptive to innovative ideas and approaches, and respond more nimbly to uncertainty and challenges (Dreer, 2023).

On the other hand, educators who develop more negative emotions at work are less likely to form relationships; they stick to traditional approaches and find it difficult to overcome unforeseen challenges (Frenzel, 2014). This theoretical approach is a good fit for this study as it elucidates how the attributes of teacher well-being are associated with the conduct of teachers both within the classroom and at the school, which affects learner performance. With the insights from the theory, pleasant or nasty feelings for teachers at school also serve as internal cues to explain whether they proceed with their daily obligations as expected to deliver quality education.

### 4. Methodology

Tapping into the broaden-and-build theory as the illuminating lens, we deployed a case study of Zimbabwe, deep-seated in the qualitative approach, to explore the complex matrices between teacher well-being and learner performance in rural education ecosystems. The study used document analysis of institutional reports, journal publications, and policy papers unaffected by our influence (Morgan, 2022); this was an excellent aid for examining the documents' contents to determine how student performance was affected by teacher well-being and rurality. The use of documents was helpful because the study could be replicated using the same documents.

The search terms 'teacher well-being and learner performance in rural education ecosystems' were used to look up the literature in several internet databases, including ERIC, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Science Direct. We filtered the first 253 papers according to their title, abstract, and keywords (Page et al., 2021), which advise that studies may be included or excluded based on their contribution. To be incorporated into this study's analytical portion, primary research published in peer-reviewed journals between 2015 and 2024 was necessary. As such, books, book chapters and reports were excluded. Secondly, we only used studies written in English. Since the study was confined to Zimbabwe, studies from other geographical settings were excluded. Only 15 of the over 253 published journal articles were kept for thematic analysis since they addressed the paper's pith. We screened the documents by reading the abstracts and full texts. The documents were helpful as they provided us with a means of tracking the impact of teacher well-being and rurality on learner performance.

Using documents to collect data was advantageous since they are non-reactive data sources that may be read and examined multiple times without being impacted by human bias (Cohen et al., 2018). Consequently, identical papers can repeat results (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Miles and Huberman's (1994) basic coding processes were applied to evaluate the obtained data. Following the requirements of the research's emphasis, the data and themes from the investigation were examined. The key findings were revealed by cross-checking the data after it had been coded, classified, and thematised document by document (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Yin, 2018). The themes generated insight, comprehension, and empirical knowledge about the impact of rurality and teacher well-being on students' performance.

## 5. Findings

Hereunder, we present the themed findings of the study. Two themes emerged: teacher-related factors that militate learner performance in rural schools and the strategies to address the abovementioned factors.

### 5.1 Teacher-related factors that militate against learner performance in rural schools

#### Theme 1: Rurality and learner performance

It was found in this study that rurality militated against learner performance in Zimbabwe. An official analysis of Ordinary Level (Form 4) results for the 2023 academic year revealed that thirty rural schools in Zimbabwe's Manicaland province had a zero per cent pass rate (Ignite Media Zimbabwe, 2024). The media report which disseminated this analysis attributed the dismal performance to socio-economic disparities between urban and rural schools, inadequate teaching-learning resources, poor funding, large class sizes, and lack of individualised tuition, which is an old and exhausted narrative evident in several studies (Dean et al., 2023; du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Rogers et al., 2023; Shikalepo, 2020). The finding suggests that inadequate resources due to rurality play a significant role in shaping the performance of students who learn in such settings.

### **Theme 2: Teacher well-being and learner performance**

The document analysis revealed that teacher well-being affects learners' academic performance. Teachers working in rural schools lack motivation to teach as they are stressed emotionally and psychologically due to the poor working conditions evident in these settings. The finding is consistent with Fraidan (2025), who argues that teacher engagement is affected by contextual factors. The conditions of deprivation leave teachers emotionally drained, demotivated, and reporting elevated levels of fatigue. This leads to various deleterious outcomes for the learners and teachers, including job withdrawal, diminished productivity and decreased commitment (Granziera et al., 2023). Such low well-being for teachers may lead them to withdraw from the classroom and eventually higher rates of absenteeism, negatively impacting students' performance. Instead of committing to teaching, teachers are compelled to engage in other economic activities to supplement their wages, which gravely affects their overall performance (Moreeng & Chimbunde, 2024).

### **Theme 3: Learning opportunities in rural schools**

Document analysis shows that passing the Ordinary Level examinations in Zimbabwe is not only attributable to rurality but also to the extent to which the students are exposed to the subject matter of the learning areas before they write the examinations, also resonating with Fraidan (2025) who argues that exam anxiety and vocabulary challenges depend on contextual factors. As such, opportunities to learn to advance the hypothesis that students' academic progress is correlated with their exposure to subject matter and coverage through having access to more advanced course material can result in learners having more opportunities to study more advanced course content.

In Zimbabwe, teachers spend time searching for services to improve their welfare amid economic challenges (Moreeng & Chimbunde, 2024). That suggests that students in rural schools may fail to complete the syllabus before they sit for examinations due to the teachers' absenteeism during teaching hours. Ultimately, students will sit for the examination fully conversant with what is expected. So, these learning opportunities apply to rural and urban secondary school students. The finding shows that the learning opportunities are restricted in rural secondary schools. As Tang et al. (2023) argued, school districts face resource-challenged contexts in most rural areas and a high absence and turnover of teachers and school leaders who could provide those opportunities.

## **5.2 Strategies to address the related factors that militate against learner performance in rural schools**

### **Theme 1: Enhancing teacher well-being**

From the analysis, it was deduced that enhancing teacher well-being in rural schools will improve learner performance. The reviewed studies reveal that teachers with high rates of well-being contribute more broadly to the success of learners and the school systems (Dean et al., 2023; du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Harrison et al., 2022), suggesting that improving teacher well-being in rural areas demands that we examine the school-related factors that impede the well-being of teachers and then work on them. Other elements are specific to schools, such as the resources and physical location of the institution, the degree of autonomy the

school has in establishing its policies, and the principal's leadership style. Several factors influence the school climate, including time restrictions, parent-child interactions, autonomy, relationships and teamwork, the structural environment, supervisory support, and physical and social-emotional safety. To improve the well-being of teachers, we propose that the school stakeholders must work on a plan that makes their teachers happy. So, the intervention strategies must favour need satisfaction and reduce need frustration.

### **Theme 2: Establishment of service centres and local recruitment of teachers**

Establishing service centres in the school's proximity emerged as one strategy to improve learner performance in rural schools (Moreeng & Chimbunde, 2024). It emerged that several structural disparities between schools in rural and urban contexts are likely to operate as mediating variables for variations in student performance, and one of them is probably the diverse learning opportunities that students have. It has been reported by du Plessis and Mestry (2019) that learners at rural schools miss learning opportunities and ultimately underperform because of teacher absenteeism that emanates from the teachers' trips to the service centre looking for medical attention, withdrawing their salaries from banks, transport challenges and other related issues. After the trips, the teacher is supposed to cover the lost time and teach learners the expected content if, and only if, the teacher so wishes and is committed.

These challenges affect the teacher's well-being because they lead to occupational stress, which results in teachers experiencing unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration, or depression (Dlamini et al., 2023). Beyond a general improvement in the welfare of teachers, teachers working in rural areas deserve better working conditions. The study also reveals that the deployment of teachers must factor in the origin of the teachers (Plessis & Mestry, 2019). This could mean many teachers would be happy to work near their homes because they can access most of their basic needs. So, once local teachers staff schools, it would lessen the burden of accommodation and reduce the teacher's movement, affecting students' learning opportunities.

## **6. Discussions**

The study explored teacher-related factors that militate against learner performance in rural education environments in Zimbabwe and established how these factors could be addressed. The study has demonstrated that teacher well-being in rural education is at its lowest level due to rurality and lack of teacher opportunities. These factors contribute to students' poor academic performance in these settings. Several studies confirm that rural schools perform poorly, and a well-established correlation exists between generational wealth, socio-economic status, and school achievement (Dean et al., 2023; du Plessis & Mestry, 2019; Moreeng & Chimbunde, 2024). It can be deduced from these submissions that rurality is a factor that militates against learner performance. As confirmed by Rogers et al. (2023), there is a scarcity of teachers in remote schools, poor broadband access, transportation issues, insufficient funds, and racial and socio-economic segregation undermine learner achievement. That observation is also

shared by Dean et al. (2023), who claim that student achievement may be influenced by the characteristics of the school's students attend.

However, we do not entirely agree with the media coverage that disseminated the Ordinary Level results in Zimbabwe, which showed that rurality is the only cause of the failure because we have witnessed students passing in rural secondary schools. Personal testimony is that one of the researchers of this study learnt at a rural school and passed his Ordinary Level in 1989, years after the country attained political independence. By then, the country's rural infrastructure (roads, electricity, schools and water resources) had not developed the way it is currently, and rural secondary schools were riddled with challenges like the acute shortages of both human and capital resources. However, under such desperate circumstances, many students who learnt at rural secondary schools passed. So, in this paper, we argue that attaining a zero per cent pass rate as disseminated by the newspaper is not only because of rurality but other factors that need further investigation.

Rather than simply attributing the zero per cent pass rate to the disparities in socio-economic status between rural and urban schools, we found that teacher well-being was and is a critical factor in accounting for learners' dismal performance in rural secondary schools. As Mo'e and Katz (2022) argue, teachers' basic psychological needs, satisfaction or frustration are related to their propensity to accept a motivating or demotivating teaching style. While we agree that the two main issues limiting the quality of instruction in many African rural schools are a lack of competent teachers and substandard teaching environments (Shikalepo, 2020) because of less access to support services (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019), we also contend that teachers lack motivation to teach because of poor working conditions and poor remuneration which create low teacher well-being.

Poor working conditions and low salaries of teachers are reported in several studies as critical factors that affect the quality of teaching. Rogers et al. (2023) support this argument by asserting that rural and low-income urban areas are often more severely affected than others due to lower salaries and poorer working conditions. This is because teaching as a profession is generally undervalued in many African countries, and teachers are not paid particularly well (du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). Instead of committing themselves to teaching, teachers are compelled to engage in other economic activities to supplement their wages, which gravely affects their overall performance. Low salaries and poor working conditions make teachers despair, contributing to negative emotions and destroying teacher well-being (Fraidan, 2025; Moreeng & Chimbunde, 2024). Other factors that destroy positive emotions in rural areas are the quality of classroom facilities, accommodation, and school resources (Tang et al., 2023).

Drawing from the theory of broaden-and-build, the negative emotions that emanate from low salaries and poor working conditions demotivate teachers to engage with their teaching environments and, thus, do not exhibit the adaptive bias to approach and explore novel pedagogical approaches (Fredrickson, 2011). Negative attitudes about the workplace cause employees to become unsatisfied,

which lowers productivity. This may partly explain the poor performance in rural schools. The broaden and build theory argues that experiences of positive affect by teachers have the potential to prompt them to engage with their environments and partake in effective teaching activities, many of which are adaptive for the learner to perform well. The theory also confirms that when a teacher's well-being is high or low, interest will be linked with attending duties and contentment with inactivity. Our argument aligns with the theory that teachers who have positive emotions and are satisfied tend to exert more significant effort in teaching and display greater levels of care and concern for their students. Engaged teachers positively impact students' outcomes because they dedicate time to research and innovation in their profession, making them more effective teachers and classroom managers (Dreer, 2023; Frenzel, 2014). Positive teacher well-being predicts higher job engagement and satisfaction. In contrast, negative teacher well-being can lower their motivation, and teachers may decide to leave the profession or underperform in their duties.

While socio-economic disadvantage is commonly used as an explanation for lower average student achievement in rural locations (Dean et al., 2023), one critical factor related to teacher well-being that we advance to explain the poor learner performance in rural schools is that students have lower learning opportunities compared with their urban counterparts. That is backed by Reeves' (2012) explanation that the opportunity to learn is a concept that is also pertinent to the current debate. That point is also shared by du Plessis and Mestry (2019), who contend that teachers in rural schools may teach less than those in urban ones because long trips to see a doctor, pick up their salary, or attend in-service training might cause teachers to miss class and lose valuable instructional time. Such movement leads to burnout - a condition of extreme physical, emotional, and mental tiredness brought on by prolonged exposure to emotionally taxing work environments.

The study's findings showed that teacher well-being is critical if we want teachers who practice in rural schools to improve their performance and learner achievement. It has also shown that job satisfaction has been directly associated with both teacher well-being and student outcomes, which is also supported by several studies (Dean et al., 2023; Dreer, 2023; Dreer & Gouasé, 2022; Harrison et al., 2022), suggesting that the quality of the classroom facilities, accommodation, and school resources must be improved to keep teachers from transferring to other schools.

If there is a shortage of accommodation, the parents and the school must contribute towards establishing decent accommodation and other social services for their teachers so that the teachers are retained at their schools and not attracted to urban schools. We contend that having a healthy school atmosphere is particularly important for the well-being of teachers and students' academic progress. This is also supported by the broaden-and-build theory, which argues that teacher well-being and student outcomes are positively correlated with job satisfaction, corroborating with the report of Mo'e and Katz (2022), which argues

that supporting teachers' needs will help them to be more enthusiastic about the subjects they are teaching and teaching in general.

Another key issue here is reducing the time teachers spend accessing social services by bringing those services to their doorsteps. The government can establish service centres in remote and underdeveloped communities where schools are located. Additionally, the deployment of teachers must factor in the origin of the teachers. Many teachers would be happy to work near their homes. So, once local teachers staff schools, it would lessen the burden of accommodation and reduce the teacher's movement, affecting students' learning opportunities. However, it has some limitations in that some teachers may be absent from school to attend family functions. Another strategy is that rural teachers need rural allowances to cushion them from the adverse impact of rurality that their counterparts in urban schools do not experience. All these initiatives are meant to make them happy at work so that they get motivated to perform their best and improve student performance in rural schools, consistent with Mo'e and Katz (2022), who claim that teachers must feel that their needs are addressed to support the needs of their students. Once the needs for teachers' well-being are met, it serves as an internal source of inspiration and vigour that improves teachers' capacity to provide pedagogical support.

We contend that teachers typically exhibit more significant levels of motivation, dedication, and involvement when they are happier in their schools. Furthermore, we argue that the well-being of educators is widely regarded as a critical component of the efficiency and effectiveness of educational systems worldwide, as well as a primary force behind educational advancement. The key component of a successful educational system is having teachers who are in good health and highly motivated to support learner performance.

## 8. Conclusion

This study explored the complex matrices between teacher well-being and learner performance in rural education ecosystems. This study has demonstrated that high teacher well-being helps schools improve their operations and boost staff commitment. On the other hand, low teacher well-being is seen as a barrier to student achievement since it can increase teacher absenteeism and reduce teacher commitment in rural schools. We also note that positive and negative dimensions are linked to teacher well-being. These include positive constructs like job satisfaction, positive emotions, resilience, thriving, motivation, and commitment and negative constructs like stress and burnout. Based on those submissions, we conclude that, in addition to prioritising student results, schools must prioritise teacher job satisfaction and the relationships that exist between them and their students in the classroom.

It was also evident that high-quality instruction in rural schools is adversely affected by unfavourable working conditions that impact teacher well-being and learner performance. Providing teacher accommodation with essential amenities like water and electricity should be prioritised in rural schools to address some of these challenges. Considering this, the study suggests that governments in

developing countries should, through their Departments of Education, begin implementing intervention strategies to enhance teachers' well-being in rural ecosystems to increase learner performance. This study is unique because it looks at how the school environment affects teachers' well-being, which in turn affects student performance. The results of this study offer significant evidence that learner performance is affected by the level of stress and the well-being of their teachers. The study is limited because its findings and arguments were based on secondary data. As such, empirical studies must be conducted to explore teachers' and learners' perspectives and experiences in rural schools on the interplay between teacher well-being and learner performance.

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