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The role of classroom management in the formation of teachers' well-being

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Teacher well-being is essential not just for teachers themselves, but for every stakeholder in schools. If teachers experience their job positively and are satisfied with it, they will perform their day-to-day tasks better, will be less likely to leave the profession, and their students will be more likely to succeed academically. Given this tremendous importance of teacher well-being, understanding how it can be promoted is crucial for every stakeholder.

While there are many factors that comprise teacher well-being, this thesis will show that how teachers deal with classroom management is of primary significance to the formation of their well-being. If teachers can utilize effective classroom management strategies, they will experience their interactions with students much more positively, their students will perform better academically, and this will create a positive cycle that leads to better outcomes for both teachers and students.

This thesis is a literature review of previous research that was deemed relevant. First, different components and conceptualizations of teacher well-being will be explored. Then, how classroom management and teacher well-being are connected will be examined. Lastly, some effective classroom management strategies will be discussed.

Keywords: teacher well-being, job satisfaction, teacher emotions, classroom management, disruptive student behavior, classroom discipline

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## Introduction

Schools exist to carry out educational tasks and accomplish learning outcomes. Several stakeholders collaborate to these ends, and they all have a unique role to play in realizing these goals. However, how teachers carry out their job on a daily basis is arguably the most significant predictor of students' learning (Ingersoll & Collins, 2017; Stronge et al., 2011). Teachers' performance has a strong impact on students' "engagement, persistence, and commitment to learning" (Lopes & Oliveira, 2020, p. 641), which are all predictors of their academic success.

While teachers' day-to-day tasks are manifold and their interactions with students are diverse, teachers' classroom management practices are of particular significance in determining their students' success. In fact, "teachers' classroom management practices have a direct impact on their students' probability of success" (Gage et al., 2018, p. 302). Many studies have highlighted the crucial role that effective classroom management strategies play in predicting student achievement (Fidler, 2002; Stronge et al., 2007, 2011).

While teachers' most apparent role is to ensure their students academic success, there also exists a very significant affective side to education. As Soini et al. (2010) observe "in addition to the intended learning outcomes, the pedagogical processes within school communities can generate either feelings of engagement and empowerment and a sense of satisfaction or feelings of stress and anxiety for the participants of the processes" (736). Such experiences, which range from empowerment to anxiety, are at the core of teachers' well-being, which has been observed to greatly affect whether or not a school's educational goals will be realized (Soini et al., 2010). Furthermore, researchers have highlighted that teachers who experience high levels of job satisfaction perform their job better (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). Similarly, teachers who "are satisfied with their jobs and have a strong sense of psychological well-being" (J. Lopes & Oliveira, 2020, p. 641) will raise students who are more likely to succeed academically than students of teachers with lower levels of job satisfaction. Additionally, teachers who are satisfied with their job have higher levels of motivation, enthusiasm, greater commitment to fulfilling the school's mission, as well as better mental health and an increased sense of self-efficacy (Lopes & Oliveira, 2020).

For these reasons, it is evident that teachers' job satisfaction and overall well-being largely determine the degree to which their students will succeed academically. Therefore, understanding what comprises teacher well-being and what leads to high levels of job satisfaction for teachers

are essential for future teachers like myself, as well as school leadership, policy makers and teacher trainers.

In order to study this immensely important concept, the first research question of this thesis is:

1. How can teacher well-being be conceptualized?

Secondly, Soini et al. (2010) further assert that the teaching-learning processes which have the most significant determining factor on teachers' experienced well-being are the interactions "with pupils in socially and pedagogically challenging situations" (Soini et al., 2010, p. 735). Success or failure to cope with such occurrences largely predicts teachers' well-being. For this reason, the second research question the present thesis will seek to answer is:

2. What kind of classroom management strategies have the potential to improve teachers' well-being?

Due to the literature review nature of the present thesis, the aforementioned research questions will be answered based solely on select previous research that was deemed relevant, without any personal empirical research.

## **Teacher well-being:**

### **2.1 Occupational well-being**

Schools are complex communities in which different stakeholders interact with each other (Soini et al., 2010). Teachers interact not only with their pupils, but also with their pupils' parents, other teachers and the school administration. These day-to-day interactions teachers have with the people around them all shape the emotions they experience in the course of their work (Hagenauer et al., 2015) and thereby contribute to the formation of their well-being. For this reason, teacher well-being is a complex, multi-faceted concept, which Soini et al. (2010) claim could be more accurately referred to as teachers' occupational well-being. Teachers' occupational well-being incorporates their pedagogical well-being, workload, the quality and amount of resources available to them, as well as their relationships with school administration, colleagues, parents, and pupils (Soini et al., 2010). It is vital to acknowledge these different aspects of teachers' occupational well-being in order to recognize that teachers may feel competent in one area, while experience significant stress in another (Soini et al., 2010). In other words, the emotions teachers experience in their work may vary from context to context (Hagenauer et al., 2015). For example, interactions with colleagues may be rewarding, leading to positive emotions, while classroom disruptions may make the teacher feel inadequate and experience negative emotions. At the same time, it is worth noting that teachers' well-being in one area of their occupational well-being can affect other areas. For instance, a high sense of pedagogical well-being stemming from rewarding student-teacher relationships can help teachers cope with conflicts with their colleagues. However, teachers' interactions with other members of the school community in difficult situations are of particular significance to their well-being, as these interactions can influence the kind of feedback teachers receive (Soini et al., 2010). This feedback will then influence teachers' self-evaluation, which in turn will affect their future practice (Soini et al., 2010). This practice-feedback-self-evaluation-practice loop can easily lead to a positive or negative cycle of experienced well-being.

In the present study, teachers' interactions with pupils will be the most closely examined aspect of teachers' occupational well-being. While in reality it is difficult to isolate teacher-student interactions from other aspects of teachers' well-being, it is necessary to do so for the present study. Even though every aspect of teachers' occupational well-being plays an important role in how teachers experience their day-to-day work, several studies have shown that teacher-

student interactions are the most emotionally charged arena of teachers' daily work (Demetriou et al., 2009; O'Connor, 2008; Sutton, 2007; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). For this reason, teacher-student interactions arguably play the most formational role in teachers' occupational well-being.

Examining teacher-student interactions means that this study will focus mostly on what Soini et al. (2010) refer to as the pedagogical well-being component of teachers' occupational well-being. They define pedagogical well-being as "a sense of autonomy, relatedness, competence, and belonging" (Soini et al., 2010, p. 737). It is interesting to note that those precise feelings, with the exception of belonging, have been noted as fundamental human needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Be that as it may, when it comes to teachers, those feelings are shaped by the day-to-day tasks teachers have to carry out to perform their work, which include lesson planning, instruction, interacting with students, assessment and self-development (Soini et al., 2010). Noticeably, none of these tasks directly focuses on ensuring teachers experience high levels of well-being. Thus, teachers' pedagogical well-being tends to be "an unintended by-product of pedagogical processes and school practices" (Soini et al., 2010, p. 737). These pedagogical processes and school practices create successive cycles of positive or negative experiences for teachers, which ideally lead to a sense of empowerment and engagement (Soini et al., 2010). Unfortunately, however, sometimes the end result is a sense of frustration and even burnout for teachers (Soini et al., 2010).

Whether teachers will experience a sense of empowerment and engagement or a sense of frustration and burnout is primarily determined by their interactions with students in socially or academically difficult situations (Soini et al., 2010). The way teachers respond to these challenging situations with students can mitigate or exacerbate the negative impact of such situations to their well-being (Soini et al., 2010). For this reason, teachers' knowledge of effective classroom management strategies is crucial not only to their pedagogical well-being, and in turn to their occupational well-being, but also to the overall success of their instruction. This is one of the reasons why classroom management will be explored further in following sections of this thesis.

To summarize this section, teachers' occupational well-being has several components, one of which is pedagogical well-being. Pedagogical well-being can be understood as the degree to which teachers experience a sense of belonging, relatedness, autonomy and competence in their daily work (Soini et al., 2010).

## 2.2 The role of emotions in teacher well-being

Another way to explore teacher well-being is to study the emotions teachers experience during their work (Hagenauer et al., 2015), particularly during their interactions with students, as those situations significantly predict their overall well-being (Soini et al., 2010). This approach is grounded in the observation that teaching is itself an emotional enterprise (Hargreaves, 1998, 2000). Furthermore, teachers' emotions are closely related to their overall well-being (Hagenauer et al., 2015).

Including teacher emotions in the present discussion about teacher well-being is of particular relevance to this study, since student behavior in the classroom (which is closely related to classroom management) has been found to strongly impact teacher emotions (Hagenauer et al., 2015). More specifically, students' discipline and engagement are significant predictors of teacher joy, anxiety and anger (Chang, 2013; Hagenauer et al., 2015; Tsouloupas et al., 2010).

Teachers have various instructional goals and as they seek to accomplish them in the classroom, they observe their students' behavior, whether it is goal congruent or disruptive, and then evaluate the teaching-learning process accordingly (Hagenauer et al., 2015). If the students' behavior positively affects the learning process, teachers will experience positive emotions (such as joy and fulfillment), leading to improved overall well-being (Hagenauer et al., 2015). However, when students engage in disruptive behaviors, they threaten the realization of the teachers' goals (Chang & Davis, 2011), and thus arouse negative emotions (Hagenauer et al., 2015). For instance, several studies have discovered that teachers' experiences of anger are not self-directed, but instead are caused by their students, especially by students engaging in disruptive behaviors or showing low levels of interest in the instruction (Hagenauer et al., 2015; Liljestrom et al., 2007; Sutton, 2007).

Hagenauer et al. (2015) also explore the quality of interpersonal teacher-student relationships as it relates to teachers' emotions. High quality personal relationships are a basic component of subjective well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Hagenauer et al. (2015) found that the better the interpersonal student-teacher relationships were, the more positive emotions (joy), and the less negative emotions (anger, anxiety) teachers experienced. This finding has been confirmed by other researchers, who have observed that positive and rewarding relationships with students help teachers develop the resilience they need to deal with the challenges of their profession (Day & Gu, 2014).



When teachers experience more positive emotions, the "emotional contagion" (Fischer, 2007) effect has been observed to lead to reciprocal experiences of positive emotions for the students (Becker et al., 2014; Frenzel et al., 2009). Therefore, besides being essential for teachers' well-being, teacher emotions influence students' emotions and can thus impact their academic achievement (Hagenauer et al., 2015).

### **2.3 The role of job demands and job resources in teacher well-being**

A third way of exploring teachers' well-being is to consider their job demands and resources (Simbula et al., 2012). The strength of such an approach is that it considers both the factors which improve teachers' well-being (referred to as job resources) and the factors which diminish teachers' well-being (referred to as job demands). This is crucial because research has shown that the teaching profession has two seemingly opposite aspects. On one hand, teachers experience more stress than those in other professions (Dorman, 2003; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Some sources of stress recognized by the literature are inequity (van Horn et al., 1999), the role ambiguity of being a teacher (Simbula et al., 2012), lack of opportunities for promotion and professional development, and low salaries (Kyriacou, 2001). On the other hand, many teachers are enthusiastic about and engaged with their job and are able to contribute to their organizations positively (Hakanen et al., 2006; Roth et al., 2007). Some resources that help teachers cope with stress and experience their job so positively are professional development and participation in social support systems (Simbula et al., 2012). To study job demands and resources together and understand their interplay, Demerouti et al. (2001) designed the Job Demands-Resources Model. While this is a general model which wasn't specifically designed for the teaching profession, Simbula et al. (2012) have already shown that it can be applied to teachers. Soini et al. (2010) also include the quality and quantity of resources available to teachers as one aspect of what they define as occupational well-being.

The Job Demands-Resources Model is founded on two basic assumptions. The first of these is that every job has risk factors leading to stress and these factors can be grouped into two categories: job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). According to Demerouti et al. (2001), every aspect of a job that requires workers to exert physical or mental efforts for prolonged periods of time, whether the factors be physical, social, or organizational, can cause workers to feel overwhelmed and thus are considered job demands. On the other hand, job resources are those aspects of a job which help alleviate the physiological and physical strain

associated with job demands (Bakker, 2011). This can be done either through internally motivating workers for professional development or through externally motivating workers to meet work-related goals (Bakker, 2011). In the context of this study, classroom management and disruptive student behavior can be considered job demands, whereas rewarding student-teacher relationships can be viewed as a job resource. The second fundamental assumption of the Job Demands-Resources Model is that stressful and motivating aspects of a job combine to create positive (engagement) or negative (burnout) experiences of well-being (Bakker & Derks, 2010). Plentiful job resources can help workers cope with even high job demands and experience engagement instead of feeling overwhelmed (Bakker et al., 2003). For instance, in one study of Finnish teachers, the following three job resources helped teachers sustain high levels of work engagement even in the face of substantial levels of disruptive behavior from pupils: support from the administration, teachers' ability to innovate and a positive organizational climate (Bakker et al., 2007).

To utilize the Job Demands-Resources Model, researchers first have to identify job demands and job resources they wish to investigate, and then by measuring how strongly teachers experience each of them, researchers can map teachers' overall well-being into four categories. The first of these four categories is characterized by high job demands and high job resources, which will cause teachers to experience engagement (Bakker & Derks, 2010). The study of Finnish teachers carried out by Bakker and his colleagues (2007) mentioned above exemplifies this state of affairs in teachers' work. In the second category, an interplay of high job demands and low job resources leads to the greatest likelihood of teachers experiencing burnout (Bakker & Derks, 2010; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Thirdly, a combination of low job demands and high job resources leads to teacher boredom (Bakker & Derks, 2010). Lastly, low job demands combined with low job resources causes teachers to experience apathy (Bakker & Derks, 2010).

Simbula et al. (2012) tested the Job Demands-Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) with the job demands of inequity and role ambiguity and the job resources of opportunity for professional development and colleague support. For their sample, only three clusters emerged instead of the four proposed by Bakker & Derks (2010). Similarly to Bakker & Derks (2010), the cluster with a high level of job demands and a high level of job resources (which they named Resourceful) was characterized by the most work engagement and the most positive characteristics (Simbula et al., 2012). The second cluster, which was characterized by high job demands and low job resources (which they named Stressed) experienced the highest levels of stress and

teachers in this cluster felt inadequate to deal with job demands (Simbula et al., 2012). Interestingly, for their sample of Italian teachers, the combination of low demands and high resources (which they named Wealthy) didn't result in teachers experiencing boredom, as theorized by Bakker & Derks (2010). Instead, teachers in the Wealthy cluster were similar to those in the Resourceful cluster in almost every category (Simbula et al., 2012). For this reason, the researchers concluded that for their sample, both the combination of high job demands and high job resources and the combination of low job demands and high job resources resulted in healthy states of being (Simbula et al., 2012). This finding underscores the tremendous importance of job resources as a dimension of teacher well-being.

## **2.4 Job satisfaction**

Teachers' job satisfaction has been observed to be closely connected to their well-being (Shoshani & Eldor, 2016). This is not surprising as it appears reasonable to assume that teachers who experience high levels of occupational well-being, experience positive emotions during their work and find their job engaging, simultaneously experience high levels of job satisfaction. For this reason, exploring the concept of job satisfaction, specifically as it relates to teachers, can expand the present discussion in a beneficial way.

To begin with, it is helpful to clarify what is meant by job satisfaction. According to Lopes & Oliveira (2020) "job satisfaction refers to how much a person enjoys the conditions in which they carry out their professional activity" (p. 643). Furthermore, people with high levels of job satisfaction consider their job rewarding and have a sense that it allows them to achieve their personal goals (Lopes & Oliveira, 2020). Pepe et al. (2017) highlight two perspectives on teachers' job satisfaction: one focusing more on the personal level of teaching, and the other more on the social context of teaching. The former perspective considers the teachers' culture, self-efficacy, inter-personal relationships and levels of motivation, while the latter examines the school leadership, organizational structures and the monetary aspects of teaching (Pepe et al., 2017). While these two perspectives might be helpful in categorizing and grouping the different constituents of teachers' job satisfaction, Lopes & Oliveira (2020) underscore the need for a multi-level perspective, which can account for factors from both of the aforementioned perspectives, and thus accurately and holistically measure teachers' job satisfaction. They point to Wang et al. (2020), who studied the results of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2013

with a multilevel perspective and found that in the United States "the percentage of low achievers in the classroom, classroom behaviour problems, classroom disciplinary climate, socioeconomic status (SES), school location, principal job satisfaction, school autonomy for instruction, participation among stakeholders, experience, teacher self-efficacy, teacher-student relationships, teacher cooperation, and effective professional development are all predictors of teacher job satisfaction" (Lopes & Oliveira, 2020, p. 644). Of these predictors, Wang and colleagues (2020) highlighted the disciplinary climate of the classroom, the participation of different stakeholders and teacher-student relationships as highly significant predictors of teacher job satisfaction.

Meanwhile, in a sample of Portuguese lower secondary education teachers, Lopes & Oliveira (2020) found that "teacher-level variables are better predictors of teacher job satisfaction than school-level variables" (p. 641). Furthermore, they discovered that teachers' interpersonal relationships were the strongest predictors of teachers' job satisfaction. Thus, the findings of Lopes & Oliveira (2020) and Wang et al. (2020) are somewhat different, although there is some overlap. The participation of different stakeholders, the disciplinary climate, and teacher-student relationships in particular highlighted by Wang et al. (2020) could be thought of as teachers' interpersonal relationships. Nonetheless, the discrepancies in different samples are to be expected, as even Lopes & Oliveira (2020) emphasize the difficulty of comparing the factors impacting teachers' job satisfaction from country to country. Additionally, Zieger et al. (2019) emphasize that even when an international test such as TALIS is conducted, it remains extremely difficult and statistically problematic to compare the results of teacher job satisfaction findings between different countries. Thus, the findings of this this might not apply to every context and would have to be verified by empirical research in different contexts.

A lot of studies about teacher job satisfaction were motivated by concerning trends in teacher turnover and attrition, which are major concerns in many OECD member states (Lopes & Oliveira, 2020). One of the primary causes of teacher attrition is the difficulty of maintaining classroom discipline (Beaman & Wheldall, 2000). This corresponds to the other studies that highlight classroom management and teacher-student relationships as significant predictors of teachers' job satisfaction (J. Lopes & Oliveira, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). Thus, improving teachers' classroom management skills, which will contribute to better teacher-student relationships, is of particular importance to increasing teachers' job satisfaction and thereby decreasing teacher turnover and attrition.

## **2.5 Well-being as a learning process**

Since the teaching-learning processes greatly vary and constantly change, teacher well-being is always in a state of flux. For this reason, Soini et al. (2010) describe the formation of well-being as a "learning process" (p. 736). They state that this learning process is collaborative and all of the members of the school community play an active role in it, not just teachers. Ideally, this learning process will foster teachers' sense of relatedness, competence, autonomy, ultimately resulting in a sense of empowerment and engagement (Soini et al., 2010). Interactions which promote teachers' "satisfaction, engagement, and empowerment" (Soini et al., 2010, p. 738) are characterized by agency, in which teachers feel like they are active learners and have a "sense of coherence, meaningfulness, and belonging" (p. 738). On the other hand, "lack of professional efficacy, feelings of alienation, and inequality are all typical of the interactions that undermine the construction of pedagogical well-being" (p. 738). In other words, teachers' "experienced professional relationships (including relationships with pupils), belonging to the professional community, professional self-efficacy and perceived control and agency over one's professional action" (Soini et al., 2010, p. 737) will enhance teachers' sense of empowerment and engagement. But, perhaps most importantly to the present study, Soini et al. (2010) claim that teachers' interactions "with pupils in socially and pedagogically challenging situations" (Soini et al., 2010, p. 735) have the most significant determining factor on teachers' experienced well-being. Success or failure to cope with such occurrences largely predicts teachers' well-being. Subsequently, how teachers deal with classroom discipline will greatly impact their overall pedagogical, as well as occupational well-being.

## **2.6 The importance of promoting teachers' well-being**

Teachers experiences the highest levels of job stress compared to other professionals (Stoeber & Rennert, 2008). Some of the causes of such high levels of stress are the heavy workload, pupils' academic challenges and disruptive behavior, friction with fellow teachers, inadequate resources, not getting paid well and conflicts with parents (Santavirta et al., 2007).

Promoting teachers' well-being is essential for schools to accomplish their educational goals (Soini et al., 2010). If teachers are to succeed pedagogically and have the ability to improve their future practice, they must have a sense of engagement and empowerment (Soini et al., 2010). Teachers who have a high sense of well-being are more likely to meet educational ex-

pectations placed on them by administration, policy makers, parents, and society at large. Similarly, job satisfaction, which is intertwined with teachers' well-being (Shoshani & Eldor, 2016), has been highlighted as "an essential factor for teachers' and school effectiveness and students' academic and educational achievement" (Lopes & Oliveira, 2020, p. 641).

As already noted earlier, teacher's emotions play a significant role in their well-being (Hagenauer et al., 2015) and they impact how they carry out their tasks as teachers, for example, how they grade students (Brackett et al., 2013). Furthermore, teachers who experience more positive emotions and subsequently have higher levels of well-being are more capable of improving their teaching practice and implementing techniques and strategies that serve the best interest of their pupils (Soini et al., 2010). For example, teachers who experience more positive emotions have been shown to have a greater propensity to designing student-centered learning activities, which result in increased student engagement (Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011; Trigwell, 2012).

On the contrary, "if teaching is experienced negatively in many situations, teachers run the risk of being alienated from students, which may decrease teaching quality, deteriorate the teacher-student relationship further and enhance the likelihood of developing burnout symptoms" (Hagenauer et al., 2015, pp. 395-396). One of the primary causes of teachers' negative experiences is disruptive student behavior, which has been found to impact teacher stress, well-being and confidence (Lewis et al., 2005). Stress is "a state of anxiety produced when events and responsibilities exceed one's coping abilities" (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008, p. 694). Unsurprisingly, teacher stress has been observed to negatively impact the teacher's mental and physical well-being (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). Student misbehavior is one of the factors causing stress for teachers (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). In fact, one study of 780 primary and secondary school teachers in Britain found that disruptive student behavior was among the two most significant sources of stress, along with work pressure (Griffith et al., 1999). Additionally, in a survey of 100 British primary and secondary school teachers, disrespectful student behavior was found to cause emotional exhaustion in teachers and more severe misbehavior lead to teacher burnout (Hastings & Bham, 2003).

For these reasons, one of the essential ways of promoting teachers' well-being is through equipping them to deal with disruptive student behavior effectively. Job resources have already been shown to significantly contribute to teachers' well being, and as noted earlier, professional development is a critical resource. Professional development in the area of classroom management

might be an exceptionally valuable job resource, given the substantial amount of stress resulting from teachers' inadequate skills to deal with misbehaving students (Simbula et al., 2012). As the rest of this thesis will show, there are classroom management strategies which have been well attested to by the literature and thus their use should be advocated.

## **Teacher well-being and classroom management**

This section of the thesis will seek to provide some answers to the second research question, namely *'What kind of classroom management strategies have the potential to improve teachers' well-being?'*

Answering this question is vitally important, because teachers report that the behaviors which cause them the most frustration and which are the most challenging to deal with are disruptions, noncompliance, and disengagement (Alter et al., 2013).

Furthermore, there is a strong link between interpersonal teacher-student relationships and teacher emotions (Hagenauer et al., 2015). More specifically, rewarding and successful interactions with students have a strong connection to positive emotions for teachers (Hargreaves, 2000). For instance, discipline in the classroom has been shown to lead to teacher enjoyment (Frenzel et al., 2011). On the contrary, when there is a lack of discipline in the classroom, teachers tend to experience more negative emotions, such as anger, frustration and anxiety (Hagenauer et al., 2015; Sutton, 2007), increased stress (McCarthy et al., 2015) and less enthusiasm (Kunter et al., 2011), which result in a higher risk of burnout over time (Tsouloupas et al., 2010). Thus, classroom management strategies which support the formation of positive teacher-student relationships are tantamount to teachers' emotional well-being (Hagenauer et al., 2015).

### **3.1 Classroom management**

As this thesis begins to delve deeper into classroom management, it is helpful to clarify what is meant by this term. One way of conceptualizing classroom management is in terms of classroom disciplinary climate, which "refers to the teacher's perceived ability to control classroom order and/or classroom disruption" (Lopes & Oliveira, 2020, p. 647). In turn, classroom order has been shown to have four components (J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). These are (1) the compatibility of the physical features of the classroom and the activities undertaken, (2) clearly defined rules and expectations for students' behavior in the classroom (3) establishing routines that allow students to perform activities in a self-regulated manner, without the teacher having to reiterate expectations and rules (4) ensuring the success of classroom processes through monitoring students, progressing at a speed appropriate for the students, organizing collaboration between students and handling transitions well (J. Lopes et al., 2017; J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021; Simonsen et al., 2008). If teachers succeed in managing order in the classroom in these



four ways, they will be able to prevent a lot of disruptive behavior and will create an environment that is conducive to learning (J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021).

### 3.1.1 Factors affecting classroom discipline

The variables which impact and predict students' behavior in the classroom are manifold and diverse (J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). These factors extend from micro-level variables such as the classroom as a learning environment, the school culture, and the neighborhood where the school is located, and extend all the way to macro-level social structures, such as the government, due to how policies shape the educational system of a region (J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021) as well as culture (Lewis et al., 2008). Another way to group these variables is to separate them into in-school variables and out-of-school variables (J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). Generally, the effects of the macro-level variables are mediated by the more immediate ones (J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). For example, the effects of culture on classroom discipline are mitigated by the school culture, the school climate and the school ethos (Glover & Coleman, 2005; Seashore Louis & Lee, 2016). Furthermore, J. A. Lopes & Oliveira (2021) found that classroom-level variables are more significant than school-level variables in predicting the classroom disciplinary climate. Nevertheless, the interplay between macro-level and micro-level variables is also noteworthy. For instance, J. A. Lopes & Oliveira (2021) observe that in Portugal, government policies are looked at as the solution to disciplinary problems in the classroom due to widely held notions in society about the loss of parental and teacher authority. While these circumstances may be unique to Portugal, it is important to note that the aforementioned factors impacting classroom discipline can interact in various ways depending on the larger, societal context.

Those factors predicting classroom discipline which can be thought of as in-school variables can be further divided into three categories, which are classroom student-related variables, classroom teacher-related variables and organizational variables (J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). Of these three, student-related variables, especially academic success, have been highlighted as the most significant predictors of classroom behavior (J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). The trend which seems to emerge from research is that underachievement and disruptive behaviors mutually reinforce each other and thus can lead to a vicious cycle of disengagement from instruction and troubling behavior (Archambault et al., 2017; Collins et al., 2016; J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). For instance, in a multilevel analysis of data from TALIS 2013, J. A. Lopes &

Oliveira (2021) found that the percentage of low achievers in the classroom had the highest impact on the disciplinary climate. Therefore, teachers' instruction is instrumental to their classroom management, because by keeping their students engaged with their teaching, they can lower the likelihood of their students engaging in disruptive behaviors (J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). This is a crucial point, because instruction emerges as more important than prevention and prediction, even though teachers tend to focus more on behavior management than on the quality of their instruction (Kayıkçı, 2011; Riley et al., 2012). The second set of variables affecting classroom discipline in-school are classroom teacher-related (J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). These variables have been found to account for 84% of the variance in classroom disciplinary climate, whereas more macro-level variables such as the school and the country only accounted for 7% and 8% respectively (OECD, 2014). Research suggests that older teachers, who have had more than 10 years of experience, and who received pre-service and/or in-service training on classroom management tend to report less incidents of disruptive behaviors and are better at both predicting and managing inappropriate student behaviors (Berger et al., 2018; Sadık & Akbulut, 2015; Scheerens & Blömeke, 2016; Wolff et al., 2015). Thirdly, organizational variables also influence discipline in the classroom (Fatou & Kubiszewski, 2018; J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021). Researchers have highlighted the following aspects of organizational variables, sometimes referred to as school climate: physical features of the school building and the classrooms, school leadership, school structures (norms, rules, expectations), relationships among stakeholders at the school, individuals' sense of belonging and discipline, and safety (both inside the school and in the general vicinity of the school) (Aldridge et al., 2018; Chirkina & Khavenson, 2018; Ruiz et al., 2018; Sulak, 2018).

### 3.1.2 The impact of classroom management on teacher well-being

Having gained an understanding of teacher well-being and classroom management in earlier sections of this thesis, this section will focus on the ways in which classroom management affects teachers' well-being. As already noted earlier, teaching is a very demanding profession and teachers can experience a lot of stress (Wettstein et al., 2021). Much of this stress comes from psycho-social aspects of teaching, such as classroom management and teacher-student relationships (Friedman, 2006). Furthermore, classroom disruptions are among the primary causes of strain, stress, and exhaustion for teachers (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Evers et al., 2004). Particularly high levels of stress are experienced by teachers when they feel inadequate to deal with classroom disruptions (Evers et al., 2004). While coping strategies help teachers deal with

stress (Wettstein et al., 2021), if they are ineffective (like denial and distancing oneself from the problem) teachers risk developing feelings of burnout (Kokkinos, 2007).

## **3.2 Classroom management practices**

Having examined the adverse affects classroom indiscipline can have on teachers when not handled well, exploring effective classroom management strategies will be the focus of this section of the thesis. Solid classroom management strategies have extraordinary importance in preventing the disruptions which can be so devastating to teachers' well-being (Wettstein et al., 2021). Thus, studying strategies that have been researched and found to be effective is of paramount importance.

### **3.2.1 Proactive and reactive classroom management practices**

Classroom management practices can be grouped into two broad categories: proactive strategies and reactive strategies (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). Proactive strategies refer to those preemptive practices teachers utilize to prevent or mitigate undesired student behaviors, usually by trying to change the situation before the behavior would reach a critical level (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). Some examples of proactive strategies are praising appropriate or desired behavior and establishing rules in advance (Little et al., 2002; Safran & Oswald, 2003). Such proactive strategies place a greater emphasis on providing positive responses to displays of desired behavior (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). On the other hand, reactive strategies are employed in reaction to inappropriate student behavior once it has already occurred. For instance, teachers may administer appropriate consequences for the undesired behavior (Little et al., 2002; Safran & Oswald, 2003). Such reactive strategies are more remedial in nature, and thus involve more negative and corrective responses (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). Briefly stated, proactive strategies focus on positively reinforcing desired behaviors, while reactive strategies focus on correcting undesired behaviors. Thus, employing more proactive strategies will decrease time spent reprimanding students (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008).

Proactive strategies, such as praise, can improve the atmosphere in the classroom, improve student learning and help students stay on task (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). Furthermore, these strategies have been claimed to mitigate most disruptive behaviors, enhance student engagement with curriculum content and productive activities (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). As a result,

proactive classroom management strategies can help reduce teacher stress and thereby improve teachers' overall well-being (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008).

In their study of 97 teachers, across 21 schools in Australia, Clunies-Ross et al. (2008) found that teachers' use of reactive classroom management strategies correlated with higher levels of workload stress, student misbehavior stress, time/resource difficulties stress, and poor colleague stress. Thus, employing reactive classroom management strategies predicted diminished teacher well-being. However, interestingly enough, the use of more proactive classroom management strategies didn't predict lower levels of stress in teachers (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). At the same time, the use of more reactive classroom management strategies was connected to diminished time spent on task. Meanwhile, the use of more proactive classroom management didn't have any significant connection to student behavior (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008).

Unfortunately, however, in spite of the evidence for the positive effects of proactive disciplinary strategies, some research suggests that teachers employ classroom management practices which are not as well attested to by the literature (Infantino & Little, 2005).

### 3.2.2 Three evidence-based classroom management practices

Gage et al. (2018) contend that the best way to identify classroom management practices that lead to student success is to first pinpoint student behaviors which are characteristic of success in the classroom and then find those classroom management practices which promote those positive student behaviors. In their analysis, the quintessential student behavior which marks success is engagement. Other studies have further highlighted that the higher the level, the greater the intensity, the longer the duration of student engagement, the greater the likelihood of student success (Downer et al., 2007).

On the other hand, Gage et al. (2018) indicate that there is one particular behavior which characterizes students' failure in the classroom, namely displaying disruptive behavior. They define disruptive behavior as "more than simple disengagement in that it involves behaviors that draw the focus of the teacher, and perhaps the entire classroom, away from instruction or expected tasks" Gage et al., 2018, p. 303). Not only is it challenging for teachers to respond to disruptive behaviors (Westling, 2010), students who display such behaviors tend to fall behind academically (Nelson et al., 2004; Wagner et al., 2005) and not receive as much instructional and teaching time as students who do not display disruptive behaviors (Sutherland et al., 2008).

Having identified the two behaviors that best predict student success (engagement) or failure (disruptive behavior), Gage et al. (2018) highlight three classroom management strategies that enhance engagement and mitigate disruptive behavior. These are active teaching, providing opportunities for students to respond, and giving feedback to students. Gage et al. (2018) claim that these three classroom management strategies have been identified as being the most effective practices in over 50 years worth of literature. They define active teaching as "the teacher engaging in behaviors that include explaining a concept, demonstrating a principle, or modeling a skill/activity associated with an academic topic while furthering the lesson/objective of the class" (Gage et al., 2018, p. 303). Several researchers have shown that the more a teacher incorporates these activities into their lessons, the more engaged their students will be (Pianta et al., 2012; Williford et al., 2013). Similarly to active teaching, actively supervising students while they work in groups or independently has also been observed to lead to less disruptive behaviors (Haydon & Kroeger, 2016). Secondly, giving students opportunities to respond (OTR) can be more elaborately explained as "[c]urriculum-related prompts that the teacher provides to either the whole class, a group of students, or an individual student" (Gage et al., 2018, p. 303). Research has shown that when teachers utilize OTR, students are more likely to succeed in the classroom (Kern & Clemens, 2007; MacSuga-Gage & Gage, 2015; Partin et al., 2009). More specifically, three to five OTR per minute have been shown to improve student engagement (Haydon et al., 2010; Macsuga-Gage & Simonsen, 2015; Sutherland et al., 2003). Thirdly, Gage et al. (2018) understand feedback to students as "the provision of positive performance feedback to students, including both verbal and gestural feedback for student academic and social behavior" (p. 304). They assert that "[p]ositive feedback has been associated with improving student outcomes including increased academic engagement and decreased disruptive behaviors" (p. 304). In addition to positive feedback, Gage et al. (2018) remark that teachers need not shy away from negative feedback altogether. What teachers need to keep in mind when giving students negative feedback, claim Gage et al. (2018), is that reprimanding students is more likely to lead to negative behavioral outcomes and that if such feedback continues, it is more indicative of failed instruction, than of the students' behavioral issues. Instead of reprimanding students, re-teaching is a form of negative feedback which leads to positive student outcomes (Nelson & Roberts, 2000).

In the end, Gage et al. (2018) acknowledge that the three classroom management strategies discussed above are only some of the many ways of managing a classroom. For instance,

Conroy et al., (2014) have highlighted the following classroom management practices as predictors of higher levels student achievement: effective time management, clearly articulated expectations and consistent classroom practices. At the same time, Gage et al. (2018) claim that the three strategies they recommend can be easily adopted by teachers, they are viewed by many as vital aspects of instruction, and they are utilized in many intervention programs (e.g. Good Behavior Game).

The three classroom management strategies discussed above have been studied empirically as well. For example, in a study of 1,242 teacher–student pairs from 65 elementary schools across several school districts in a southeastern state of the USA, who were observed during typical classroom instruction, Gage et al. (2018) found that students were significantly less engaged in classrooms where the teacher didn't utilize the three classroom management strategies discussed above. As students' level of engagement has been shown to predict their success (Downer et al., 2007), it can be stated that successfully adopting the three classroom management strategies discussed above leads to more successful students. Unfortunately however, due to the very limited demographic information Gage et al. (2018) collected about teachers and students (only gender and minority status), they couldn't discover any common variables among teachers who had poor classroom management skills, nor could they observe any differences in these teachers' well-being or job satisfaction. Such findings would have been invaluable for the present study, without which it can only be inferred that teachers who worked in classrooms with more engaged students experienced higher levels of self-efficacy and improved overall well-being. However, such inferences are not groundless, as similar trends have been observed in other studies (e.g. J. Lopes & Oliveira, 2020; Wang et al., 2020).

## Discussion

### 4.1 The findings of this thesis

The first research question this thesis sought to shed light on was *'How can teacher well-being be conceptualized?'*. The first finding related to this question was that teachers' well-being is best captured as occupational well-being, which incorporates the various aspects of their work, in all of which they experience a sense of well-being (Soini et al., 2010). In any of these areas, teachers are characterized by engagement and empowerment when their level of well-being is high and feelings of frustration or burnout when their level of well-being is low (Soini et al., 2010). Several studies were cited (Demetriou et al., 2009; O'Connor, 2008; Sutton, 2007; Sutton & Wheatley, 2003) to show that teachers' interactions with students, particularly in situations that involve classroom management, have the most formational effect on their overall occupational well-being. Secondly, teacher emotions were observed to be essential to their well-being, as teaching is an emotional enterprise (Hargreaves, 1998, 2000). These emotions were found to be largely determined by students' behavior (Hagenauer et al., 2015; Liljestrom et al., 2007; Sutton, 2007). Thirdly, the Job Demands-Resources Model (Demerouti et al., 2001) was examined. This discussion underscored the tremendous need for plentiful resources available to teachers as a prerequisite for high levels of well-being. Fourthly, the concept of job satisfaction was explored, which is closely connected to well-being (Shoshani & Eldor, 2016) and captures the extent to which a person enjoys the conditions in which they perform their work (J. Lopes & Oliveira, 2020). While some samples were cited where teachers' interpersonal relationships and the disciplinary climate of the classroom were the most significant predictors of teachers' job satisfaction (J. Lopes & Oliveira, 2020; Wang et al., 2020) it was also argued that comparing different samples, especially across countries remains problematic (J. Lopes & Oliveira, 2020; Zieger et al., 2019). The fifth finding related to the first research question was that teachers' well-being is best understood as a collaborative learning process, in which every stakeholder present at schools has an active role to play (Soini et al., 2010). The last finding related to this research question was that promoting teacher well-being is of tremendous importance, particularly in the area of classroom management.

The second research question the present thesis sought to provide answers to was *'What kind of classroom management strategies have the potential to improve teachers' well-being?'*. In

connection to this research question, the concept of classroom management was briefly explored. It was shown that the goal of classroom management is classroom order, which has four components (J. Lopes et al., 2017; J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021; Simonsen et al., 2008). If these four components of classroom order are present in the classroom, students are much less likely to engage in disruptive behaviors. Following that, various factors affecting discipline in the classroom were explored and the trend which emerged is that more immediate factors have a stronger influence on disciplinary climate in the classroom than factors which are on a wider, societal level (Glover & Coleman, 2005; J. Lopes & Oliveira, 2020; Seashore Louis & Lee, 2016). More specifically, students' academic engagement was shown to be the most significant predictor of their discipline in the classroom (Archambault et al., 2017; Collins et al., 2016; J. A. Lopes & Oliveira, 2021) and thus it was argued that improving the quality of teachers' instruction may be the most salient tool in improving the disciplinary climate of the classroom.

Upon examining specific classroom management strategies, proactive strategies were shown to be more effective in dealing with undesired student behaviors, as well as in improving teachers' well-being (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). Some of the proactive strategies which were cited are praise and establishing rules in advance (Clunies-Ross et al., 2008). Furthermore, three evidence-based classroom management strategies and their effects were examined. These three are "(a) active instruction and supervision of students (i.e., teaching), (b) opportunities for students to respond, and (c) feedback to students" (Gage et al., 2018, p. 302). These three strategies have been well-researched and shown to greatly contribute to students' success in the classroom (Gage et al., 2018; Haydon et al., 2010; Haydon & Kroeger, 2016; Kern & Clemens, 2007; MacSuga-Gage & Gage, 2015; Macsuga-Gage & Simonsen, 2015; Partin et al., 2009; Sutherland et al., 2003; Williford et al., 2013). Additionally, Gage et al. (2018) claim that teachers can easily adopt these three strategies, many view them as essential components of instruction, and they are already included in many large-scale intervention programs. However, if these three practices are supported by 50 years of literature and research as Gage et al. (2018) claim, one would imagine that just about every teacher takes advantage of them. Unfortunately, in a sample of nearly 1300 teacher-student pairs in the USA, only about 20% of the teachers utilized these techniques (Gage et al., 2018). Such low figures raise serious questions about teacher training and how the findings of educational researchers can be transferred into teachers' day-to-day practice. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the classroom management strategies explored in this thesis are only some recognized and recommended by researchers.



The overarching, concise conclusion of this section is that teacher-student relationships, and especially disruptive behaviors by students are arguable one of the most significant, if not the most significant, factors in the formation of teachers' well-being. Fortunately, there are classroom management strategies and theoretical frameworks that essentially every teacher can utilize to make their relationships with students more fruitful and empower themselves to deal with lack of discipline in the classroom effectively and with a high level of self-efficacy. Thus, while teachers will not experience high levels of occupational well-being automatically, such a positive experience is not as elusive as many may fear.

However, given the fact that classroom management is essentially what determines whether teachers will experience high levels of job satisfaction or will be frustrated, experience burnout, and potentially leave the profession, I believe classroom management should be given much greater significance in teacher training. Lopes et al. (2017), for instance, found that 60% of their 2905 teacher participants received no training in classroom discipline strategies or classroom management. Meanwhile, 90% of the participants asserted that disciplinary problems worsened in the previous five years. Similarly, Hagenauer et al. (2015) observe that "instructional strategies that aim at fostering the interpersonal TSR [*teacher-student relationship, added by the author of this thesis*] have been largely overlooked in teacher education curricula" (p. 398).

Furthermore, they add that teachers' ability establish good connections with students should be included in teacher training (Hagenauer et al., 2015). Based on what I have learnt through writing this thesis and based on my personal experience as a pre-service teacher, I very much agree with them.

## **4.2 Evaluation of the thesis and the writing process**

I chose teacher well-being and classroom management as the main foci of my thesis because I saw a strong connection between the two in my personal experiences as a student and as a teacher. However, I was not aware of how well the connection between the two has already been researched and how much disruptive behaviors in the classroom are the dealbreaker for teacher well-being. I approached the writing process with an eager desire to learn about effective classroom management strategies, but I considered the topic of teacher well-being is not nearly as intriguing or complex. I almost saw having to write about teacher well-being as a necessary evil, if you will, in exploring effective classroom management strategies. I did not

think that teacher well-being was such a multi-faceted, complex phenomena as I have discovered it to be during the writing process. Yet, I believe I only began to scratch the surface of what has already been conceptualized and researched about teacher well-being. Similarly, when I began researching classroom management strategies, I was just hoping I may find some that have already been researched. I was very positively surprised at the wealth of information available on concrete, pragmatic classroom management strategies that have been well-researched and shown to "work". In the end, my views on teacher well-being changed in the sense that I now realize how complex of a concept it is, while my understanding of classroom management was more enriched than change. This is primarily due to my complete lack of knowledge on the subject prior to the writing of this thesis. I have also significantly improved my reading comprehension of scientific articles, which I believe will come very handy during my master's studies.

### **4.3 Future research**

The possibilities for future research based on the topics and findings of the present thesis are virtually endless. For example, researchers could examine the use of specific classroom management strategies and pair them with teachers' well-being. In other words, researchers could on one hand observe how frequently teachers utilize a specific classroom management strategy (for example, opportunities to respond). On the other hand, they could measure the well-being of teachers who participate in the study. Then, they could look for correlations between certain classroom management strategies and teachers' well-being. It would be very interesting to see if there are any strategies that predict a higher level of well-being for teachers. While it seems more apparent to conduct a study like this quantitatively, I would also be very interested to add the benefits of a qualitative study to it. Based on the findings of this thesis, it appears to me that well-being is a very personal, and subjective concept, thus I suppose it might be better captured through qualitative research. Another idea for future research is related to the Job Demands-Resources Model. Disruptive student behaviors would be the job demand under investigation, while several resources could be tested, including professional development and participation in support systems, which have already been studied by Simbula et al. (2012). It would be interesting to see how many clusters emerge as different levels of these job resource and job demands are combined, and also what the different clusters are like, whether they will be like those theorized by Demerouti et al. (2001) or like those described by Simbula et al. (2012).

Having made some suggestions for future research, the closing remark I would like to make is that I would definitely like to continue on to my master's thesis with the topics of this thesis.

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