

**Understanding Well-Being in Academia: Exploring the Conceptualization and Interactions
of Well-Being Among Students and Teachers**

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Abstract

Even though well-being is the core of research in many disciplines, there is still a scientific gap in what exactly that concept entails. This study is aimed at conceptualizing well-being within the context of academia using qualitative methods. Research shows that both university students and teachers are susceptible to experiencing poor well-being. Interestingly, there is a lack of research focused on examining well-being in academia in both students and teachers concurrently. Using semi-structured interviews, we will gather data on how students and teachers perceive their well-being at the university. Using a social constructivist approach, we also investigated how teachers and students perceive their well-being interacts. We used already established theoretical perspectives to guide our research such as positive psychology, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and resilience. With this study, we are attempting to qualitatively validate and extend Kiltz et al.'s (2020) model of well-being in academia. With our findings, we managed to validate their model, and our multifaceted conceptualization of well-being fell under the aspects of the SDT and included the concept of resilience. Furthermore, eudaimonia was mentioned as important for the well-being of both groups. We found a strong link between students' and teachers' well-being that was described as both single-directional and reciprocal. The participants highlighted the desire for a humanized university environment based on community and support.

Key words: academia, qualitative research, reciprocal link, students, teachers, university, well-being

Understanding Well-Being in Academia: Exploring the Conceptualization and Interactions of Well-Being Among Students and Teachers

Well-being – a debatable concept, the controversy of which is rooted in being such a fundamental notion that is remarkably complex to define (Synard & Gazzola, 2016). Optimal human experience and what “good life” entails are at the core of research and interventions in many social disciplines, such as psychology, governance, and education (Ryan & Deci, 2001). The goal to make one’s life better is a cardinal aim of scientific research and an essential part of human life – but what are we striving for? What does living in a state of well-being mean?

The rise of awareness of this issue resulted from the shift in the view of psychological well-being by not merely the absence of psychopathology but by the presence of positive experiences in one’s life (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Since World War II the focus on psychological research and interventions has predominantly been to study and treat mental disorders; thus, as Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) defined it, psychology had become a “science of healing”. Much attention had been paid to prevention factors and what environments and psychological traits are more strongly associated with psychological suffering (Sheldon & King, 2001), but what about what makes people flourish? How does one become happy and what character traits keep individuals resilient in difficult circumstances? Such topics of research became the foundation of the discipline of positive psychology where discussions revolve around positive aspects of human life such as creativity and curiosity (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001). In fact, even the World Health Organization (WHO) currently describes health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization, 2023, p. 1), thus in line with the positive psychological approach.

The interest in current scientific research exploring what characterizes well-being is vast and the corresponding literature looks at the concept from a multitude of perspectives (Marsh et al., 2020; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Nevertheless, there is no one broadly accepted definition of well-being in the scientific community (Kiltz et al., 2020, Jerome & Nicolás Schöngut-Grollmus, 2023; Gasper, 2010). This limitation poses challenges to both psychological research and practice. Without a good base operationalization of well-being makes the interpretations of research results are more complex, since every research uses a different theoretical framework of well-being. Furthermore, it makes the development of interventions for facilitating well-being difficult, since the end goal of those practices is imprecise because of the lack of definitions (Kiltz et al., 2020).

This problem appears to be especially evident in the context of well-being in academia (Fraillon, 2004). Academia can be very uplifting and broadening for both students and academic staff– but it is also found to be very demanding and ruthless (Kiltz et al., 2020). Indeed, the rate of symptoms associated with depression and anxiety in university students was found to be roughly three times higher than that of the general population from the same age group (Stallman, 2010) and university students are reported to be one of the generally most vulnerable populations for developing depression (Nicholas, 2019). Bewick et al. (2010) found an increase in mental health problems during life in university and moreover, they found that psychological suffering does not at any point during their degree return to the pre-registration levels taken before starting higher education (Stallman, 2010). Not only students, but also university teachers are susceptible to stress and lower well-being, even though some of the research in this field demonstrates that academic workers seem to be at least moderately satisfied with their work (Kinman & Jones, 2008; Winefield et al., 2003). The role of the university teacher requires not

only teaching but also carrying out research and having a high amount of administrative workload (Kiltz et al., 2020). Moreover, during the past two decades, university culture has experienced a highly increasing number of enrollments, more challenges to obtaining research grants, and generally more commercially oriented academic systems, which put an additional amount of pressure on the work of academics (Kinman & Johnson, 2019). Lackritz (2004) found that a significant percentage of the university staff they studied reported symptoms of burnout, and 20% of the staff experienced the highest degree of burnout, with younger staff members being particularly vulnerable to high-stress levels.

On account of this, both university students and teachers are susceptible to experiencing poor well-being. Interestingly, there is a lack of research focused on examining well-being in academia in both students and teachers concurrently (Kiltz et al., 2020), even though there is evidence supporting the corresponding relationship between the well-being of those two groups, like the link between the teacher's mental health and the student's well-being and them experiencing psychological strains (Harding et al., 2019), and the reciprocal link between the enjoyment of the teacher and the students in a classroom setting (Frenzel et al., 2018). Most studies examining the relationship between students and teachers are conducted in school settings, while there is a need for research in that area in higher education and there seems to be particularly little evidence on how positive student-teacher relationships impact university teachers (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014).

This study will focus on the well-being of students and teachers in university, and how those two interact. Given the general lack of conceptualization of well-being in scientific literature and the particular significance of this issue in academia (Fraillon, 2004). The current research is aimed at generating a theoretical model of well-being using qualitative methods in

order to gain insight into how students and teachers conceptualize what well-being means for them in the context of academia. Moreover, to confront the research gap, we will investigate how the well-being of students and teachers is interdependent on each other. To achieve this, we will conduct semi-structured interviews with individuals from both groups.

Our study will investigate the concept of well-being from a positive psychology perspective. Most of the research on well-being in academia has focused on the negative aspects of well-being, such as stress (Kiltz et al., 2020). In this study, we will focus also on what makes the students and teachers feel well and thrive in the academic community. Studying how to identify and prevent stressors in the academic context is vital, however, acknowledging the significance of the positive factors optimizing one's experience in university is also of crucial importance for promoting a positive culture within and outside of the classroom and should thus be paid special attention in scientific research within educational psychology.

Besides positive psychology, we will use other already established theoretical frameworks on the topic of well-being to guide our research. Well-being as a construct has a multifaceted nature, meaning it comprises different features all forming one's psychological aspects of well-being (Gasper, 2010). A significant distinction in those features frequently made in literature is the differentiation between well-being that is hedonic and eudemonic (Huta & Waterman, 2013). Hedonic well-being is concerned with the subjective happiness of the individual (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Eudaimonia, on the other hand, goes beyond subjective happiness and deals with how people create meaningful lives through concepts like growth, authenticity, and motivation (Huta & Waterman, 2013). Eudaimonic well-being encompasses aiming to reach one's potential and thus fosters intrinsic motivation (Disabato et al., 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2001), while intrinsic motivation in the context of academia has been found to cultivate

higher excellence of the learning process (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). A theory connected to eudemonic well-being is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which looks into the psychological needs behind a person's drive for growth and motivation, which according to this framework are: (a) autonomy; (b) competence and (c) relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Autonomy is related to the feeling of agency when performing, and to the experience of free will in the process; competence is about feeling proficient in one's area of interest and being able to accomplish one's learning goals; relatedness is concerned with the desire to connect and interact with others in the process. Those basic psychological needs were identified to be important for individuals' positive experiences in academia (Kiltz et al., 2020). Stanton et al (2016), similarly to this research, explored university students' experiences of well-being in academics using qualitative analysis and found that the most common themes in the data collected were the concepts of flexibility, connection, and purposeful learning, in line with the factors suggested by the framework of the SDT. The individual proposed psychological needs have also received attention in the literature on educational sciences, for instance, the need for relatedness that was supported by Hagenauer and Volet (2014) who explored the positive effects of strong student-teacher relationships. Given the role that the theoretical concepts included in the SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) appear to play for well-being in the education context, we would like to investigate how those would be expressed in our findings.

Another significant concept that seems to play a role in the facilitation of well-being in the university context is the concept of resilience, thus the ability of an individual to rebound from experiencing stressful events (Reich et al., 2010). Building resilience has been found to be positively correlated with positive aspects of well-being in general (Hu et al., 2015; Tomyne & Weinberg, 2016) and specifically related to well-being in the academic context (Soykan et al.,

2019). Mansfield et al. (2016) explored specific resilience strategies teachers engage in, such as help-seeking and humor, and the outcomes of performing those strategies, like enhanced job satisfaction and enthusiasm (Mansfield et al., 2016). In the context of university students, resilience was found to be correlated to academic achievement (Allan et al., 2013) and life satisfaction (Abolghasemi & Varaniyab, 2010). Resilience is consequently an important concept to explore when investigating well-being, given it being a vital theoretical construct in the field of positive psychology (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

Lastly, to investigate well-being in academia, we will be using a systematic approach based on social constructivism. According to social constructivist theory, one's perception of reality and the knowledge constructs created are fundamentally dependent on one's environment, thus our psychological states are always in an interplay with those systems (Kiltz et al., 2020, Burr, 1995). In the context of education, one's experience of learning cannot be isolated from their academic social environment (Adams, 2006). For our research, this means that the groups involved in the educational process should not be studied as separate structures, but rather as one system that is an interplay of many factors and influences. Because of this, in our study, we will not only focus on the conceptualization of students and teachers separately, but we will also explore the processes of how those two groups interact in facilitating well-being in university.

Research questions

Our study's aim is to address the need for a definition of well-being by validating and extending Kiltz et al.'s (2020) theoretical model of students' and teachers' conceptualization of well-being from a positive psychology perspective using qualitative methods. To achieve that, firstly, we will investigate how each of the groups thinks of well-being in their life in general,

and secondly, we will investigate how they perceive their well-being is constructed within the university context, thus first research question will be:

RQ1: How do students and teachers conceptualize well-being in the context of academia?

The second research goal of our study is derived from our choice of a social constructivist approach. We will investigate the relationship between the student's and the teacher's well-being, thus how the behaviors and traits of those two groups interplay and influence each other. We are interested in how the processes behind this interplay are conceptualized by teachers and students and how they relate this to their well-being within academia. In that regard, our second research question is:

RQ2: How do the students and academic staff describe the processes underlying the interaction of their well-being?

Method

Participants

A sample of twelve participants was gathered for this study, comprising six students and six teachers. The student and teacher sample exhibited variability across numerous demographic variables, including age, gender, nationality, study program, faculty affiliation, as well as their level of experience in teaching. Half of our sample were male, and the other half were female. Six of the participants were students between the ages of 20 and 24 years and the other six were teachers between the ages of 25 and 56 years. To gain a broad perspective on the topic of well-being, we interviewed participants from different faculties, including the Behavioral and Social Sciences Faculty, the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, the Faculty of Economics and Business and the Faculty of Science and Engineering. All participants study or work at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands but hold different nationalities, including three from

the Netherlands, one from Chile, one from Indonesia, one from Norway, one from Romania, and one from Venezuela. In addition, students differed by the year of their degree and teachers differed by the number of years of teaching experience. Most students ($n = 5$) were in their third year of their bachelor's degree, and one was in their first year. Teachers also differed in the length of their teaching experience, which ranged from 3 years to 30 years.

Procedure

To gather the data, the researchers' team conducted two semi-structured interviews with each participant, utilizing a mixed-methods approach that combined both deductive and inductive reasoning. This approach allowed for the testing of pre-defined formal hypotheses and theoretical models, as well as the exploration of new ideas derived from qualitative data. It is noteworthy that the study was authorized by an Ethics Committee of the Psychology Program and all participants consented to their involvement after being informed. Additionally, consent and a demographics form were distributed to participants prior to the interview (see Appendix A, Appendix B and Appendix C).

The interview, which lasted a duration of 30 to 60 minutes, consisted of two segments, namely the conceptualization of well-being and the dynamics of student-teacher interaction. Each researcher then interviewed one student and one teacher. Some of the questions asked during the interview were based on the script of Kiltz et al.'s (2020) study, while others were added or revised to fit our research goals better and to provide more in-depth results. Each researcher used a distinct set of questions tailored to the specific roles of the interviewees, i.e., teacher or student. Afterward, the interview was transcribed and provided to the respective interviewee for review, allowing them the opportunity to withdraw or modify segments of the interview as desired (see Appendix A).

Data Analysis

Our analysis followed the thematic analysis approach as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), this means our focus mainly lay on identifying patterns of meaning within the data paying less attention to the frequency of code occurrence. Additionally, the values, attitudes, and belief systems that the interviewed participants expressed were labeled according to the value coding approach (Miles et al., 2014).

The coding procedure was executed using the digital software aimed for the analysis of qualitative data “ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH”. As our study partly aimed to replicate previous work by Kiltz et al. (2020), the analysis was explicitly deductive as predefined categories served to guide the coding process. Nevertheless, much attention was given to ensure that the data were allowed to stand on their own, partly for exploratory purposes but also to avoid blinding by our predefined framework. For this reason, our approach was explicitly deductive and inductive.

Initially, each team member transcribed their two verbal interviews into written form and proceeded to independently code one half of a shared transcript using the open coding approach. Multi-stage coding allows researchers to identify first distinct concepts and themes for categorization before assigning interpretive labels (Williams and Moser, 2019). The purpose of this initial step was to enhance their understanding of the topic and gain initial insights of what is interesting in the data. In the subsequent stage, all six researchers engaged in a collaborative coding process, involving the preliminary coding of a student and teacher transcript, respectively. This was done in order to establish a shared perspective concerning the meaning of the data and to further establish an initial set of codes that the members could apply later during independent analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step was followed by the group splitting into

three pairs where each pair coded two transcripts (one teacher and one student transcript respectively). During this stage, each member performed independent coding of their assigned documents, followed by a collaborative session with their partner to finalize the codes. Afterward, all members came together to review and revise the codebook (see Appendix D). This procedure was then repeated to the coding of the last six transcripts. To ensure the inter-coder reliability of our themes and produce the final codebook, each member reanalyzed two documents and then discussed final adjustments in a joint session.

Results

The results will be presented through the exploration of the main themes and clusters that appeared for each of the research questions. I will start with the conceptualization of well-being in the academic context and next, I will proceed with the interaction between students' and teachers' well-being and the processes underlying that relationship.

RQ1a: How do Students and Teachers Conceptualize Well-Being in the Context of Academia?

Our results, correspondingly to Kiltz et al.'s (2020) theoretical model, demonstrate a conceptualization of well-being comprising different clusters that appeared to form one multifaceted definition, which incorporates physical health, building resilience through mental coping strategies, having a stable social system and working on one's personal development. Moreover, well-being in academia was related to motivation and appeared to fall into the three basic psychological needs as described in the Self-Determination Theory: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The perception of one's work as meaningful was highlighted further as enhancing motivation.

Multifaceted Conceptualization of Well-being

Well-being was described as not necessarily the absence of stress but feeling good despite it. While participants appeared to struggle to define what exactly being in a state of well-being, what was repeatedly mentioned was the individual's personal strategies for well-being regulation and enhancement. Working on one's physical well-being through exercise and nutrition was considered as making one feel "*emotionally well*" (*university student*). Mental coping strategies, such as engaging in self-reflection and maintaining a work/life balance were recognized as enhancing one's resilience. Moreover, aspects related to personal development, such as having meaningful experiences and self-actualization were reported as part of well-being. Lastly, having a stable social support system that you can share with and rely on was a crucial coping strategy that participants disclosed, and a factor that is significant for their well-being.

Motivation

Being motivated was a factor that appeared to be important when conceptualizing well-being in academia:

I think for me motivation plays a bigger role because I know that I can do it because I've done versions of being like organized and productive and whatever in the past. But it's just that if I don't have the drive to make myself do it, no one's going to do it, you know? (university teacher)

Clusters and themes that came up in our analysis appeared to fall into the three basic psychological needs as described in the Self-Determination Theory, autonomy competence and relatedness. Interestingly, the need for autonomy was discussed mostly by the university teachers group, while students' needs corresponded mostly to the factors of competence and relatedness. Furthermore, experiencing eudaimonia was mentioned as motivating; perceiving one's work as meaningful appears to positively impact one's well-being in academia. This finding was mostly

applicable to university teachers, while for students, experiencing meaning did not appear as a driving factor.

Basic Psychological Needs

Autonomy. Receiving the autonomy to pursue one's passions and having the perception *[...] that you're free to be flexible and to adapt to whatever fits you" (university teacher)*, is referred to as an important factor for feeling well. In terms of students, autonomy was discussed as having more freedom to pursue what you are interested in as a student and having more flexibility with it:

I think students should have more choice in what they learn and when they learn it. [...]. And, not living this kind of school system, where until the very last year, everything that you have to do is predetermined [...] And I think it would be much better if students were more able to choose what they want to do, when they want to do it, and how they want to do it. (university teacher)

The freedom and flexibility from this quote were also discussed in the context of teachers. That would imply not having a strictly predetermined curriculum but being free to adapt it in their own personal way.

The most frequently reported constraint to teacher autonomy appeared to be feeling the pressure to teach in order to have the opportunity to produce research in university. The lack of freedom in that domain and the workload it brings about when having to do both research and teaching seems to lead to more stress, as expressed by this teacher: *"I feel less well normally when I feel like there is a lot of stuff I have to do and I don't really have a choice in doing it"*. Pressure to teach leads to less motivation to teach, which in turn impacts the overall teaching

experience in a negative way. This research/teaching conflict appeared very salient as one teacher disclosed:

[...] Some people are some working for the teaching unit exclusively as teachers. And other people, like me, teaching is part of the job. The job, I would like to be a researcher, I like doing teaching, but my priority is research and teaching is kind of a thing that gets in the way.

Competence. For students, competence was largely perceived in their academic performance. In fact, student participants identified their performance in university as central to their well-being, as “*related to the successes you make*” (university student). This was also related to the expectations individuals put on themselves for their performance in academia and how realistic they are. Comparing yourself to your peers in terms of performance was discussed as a cause of stress while distancing yourself from that and feeling competent in your abilities was brought up as a way of coping; as a teacher described it when talking about student well-being: “*having this idea of ‘yeah, I trust myself that I can do this’*”. The significance of a university degree and grades in relation to future professional development were also mentioned, thus performing well in university as a means to achieve security and success:

[...] Because it is also my last semester so the stakes are very high, the better I finished the better the chances I have into getting a good masters and getting a good job [...] I think that it makes a huge difference to finished as well as I can, because it affects my future, it my future [...] hm, well I mean business, business is a very competitive working-environment, ehm and it is one that in the future is also gonna be threatened by automatization, ehm, so I am trying my best to position myself in a way that will make me competitive, in my future career. (university student)

In terms of teachers, the concepts of self-esteem and self-assurance came up in the context of feeling confident while communicating in front of the class. Competence was also discussed as the need to achieve outcomes in your work as a teacher to be in a state of well-being, and that was connected to how you determine for yourself how realistically you can create an impact. Moreover, being competent as a teacher was also considered as adapting the material to students' needs and making it relevant for them.

Relatedness. Having social support and relating to others was found to make life in academia much more enjoyable and less stressful. *“Universities in general are very lonely”* said one student, and this view was to some extent shared by other participants as well, who described university as a lonely experience, especially in the beginning. Building a solid support system seemed to improve the well-being of students and teachers, and this social system included different social groups that could be a source of interaction. Friends were perceived as a big factor, and friendships were built not only from students' courses but also from external environments, such as student associations. Social contact within universities was connected to having space to discuss academic difficulties with others who are going through the same thing. Having friends who take their work seriously and are ambitiously appeared important for student's motivation:

*Not really. I find that, surrounding yourself with people who are also, like, ambitious, passionate, hardworking is also just a good incubating environment, I guess, for you and motivation and to do things.
(university student)*

In the context of teachers, interactions with colleagues were mentioned as a factor that contributes to their well-being. Similar processes as the relatedness between students play out;

being able to relate to others in a similar position in the context of academia contributes to well-being, as you can ‘blow off steam’ with those individuals and feel less alone.

One’s social support system also extends to relationships outside of academia. Again, friends outside of one’s studies, romantic relationships, and family were described as important determinants for students' and teachers' well-being.

Eudaimonia

A significant component of well-being that appeared in our interviews was the perception of one’s university experience as meaningful. This aspect was especially prevalent among the group of university teachers and their experience of teaching as purposeful. However, it did not seem to be generally relevant for our university student group. Having goals in terms of one’s career was mentioned as a driving factor, but that was more strongly related to the pressure to perform to succeed later on in the job market.

For teachers, feeling that they are having an impact on their teaching through actively contributing to their student’s development was a process that was described as a vital factor for being in a state of well-being while working in academia. Creating impact was related to the aspect of emotional involvement through your work. Emotional involvement, although it was described also as a potential factor that makes you more vulnerable to stress, was reported as significant in cultivating intrinsic motivation and creating meaning:

[...] So I think this emotional involvement is also an important one. If you're not emotionally involved, I don't know if you get the sense of fulfillment out of it, because then it's more like a task that you do to earn money, the money we need to do some meaningful things maybe outside of work. So maybe emotional involvement is also a factor. (university teacher)

For one university teacher, actively adapting the knowledge in a form that meets the needs of the students and makes it relevant to them, rather than simply presenting dry information, was described as meaningful. The satisfaction from student's understanding and successes is then in turn a process that brings satisfaction to the teacher:

[...] When they get this moment of: "oh, I understand it now". Or they can translate it to something in their real life, or they're telling me about their experiences on, for example, their first coaching trajectory. So when I really feel something's happening and they are doing something with the knowledge that they get. That's what gives me like a lot of gratification, I don't if that's the right word. Satisfaction, that's the word I'm looking for. (university teacher)

RQ3: How do the Well-being of Teachers and Students Interact?

In our research, we are interested in addressing the gap in scientific research on well-being in academia that is concerned with the connection between the well-being of teachers and students. Our results demonstrated that the well-being of those two groups is *indeed "very strongly related"* (university student). The well-being of the two groups appeared to interact in a one-sided direction that can be positive or negative and was also described as reciprocal. Both students and teachers emphasized the need for a more humanizing context in university, hence more connectedness between students and teachers that I based on empathy and humane interactions.

Student's Impact on Teachers

As one teacher noted, students appear to impact the well-being of teachers *"more than they think"*. Having a positive experience as a teacher in university was discussed as intertwined with the interaction that they get with students. A high degree of student engagement, thus being

actively engaged with what the teacher is presenting and demonstrating enthusiasm about it, was highlighted as a factor that feels highly rewarding and results in making teachers feel valued, like they “*matter*” (*university student*). Realizing that “*there is something happening*” (*university teacher*) through students’ questions, curiosity, and engagement with other students was perceived as gratifying. On the other hand, having students not demonstrate interest affected teachers by making them demotivated. Not only being engaged but also being respectful towards one’s teachers was reported as impacting teacher’s well-being positively, thus going into class as a student and knowing the person in front of you “*is a person*” (*university student*) and you need to respect them accordingly.

It was mentioned by teachers that the current university system potentially fosters a learning process that is heavily one-sided, rather than collaborative, thus teachers simply provide knowledge to students. The dynamic this process produces was characterized by teachers solely providing resources to the students, and thereby teachers take on the role of mere service providers. Humanizing teachers and respecting the work that they do was highlighted as a necessity for creating a safe and pleasurable environment for them in academia, but it was expressed as something that is not currently happening:

And I think that one of the problems is students don't see the effort of teachers and I think they don't take into consideration teachers' well-being. So I think teachers often take into consideration students' well-being, but teachers are not always seen as people. (university teacher)

The need for understanding the teacher's situation was expressed by both students and teachers among our participants. Treating teachers not simply as “*an extension of the system*” (*university teacher*) but as authentic individuals whose well-being is interdependent on their

interactions with others was considered a vital part of cultivating well-being for teachers within the academic context.

Teacher's Impact on Students

Students were also defining their state of well-being in university in the context of their interaction with their educators. They disclosed the importance of a passionate and engaged teacher for their own motivation; if the teacher appeared demotivated and simply “*reading from the slides*” (*university student*), then that negatively impacts the student’s desire to learn. On the other hand, educators who come off as deeply involved with their work have a positive impact on students:

They go in depth in the things that people are interested in and they understand what people are interested in and they understand what's boring, but attempt to make it more significant. They have so much interest in their course that you can feel it because they obviously has gone to lengths beyond just making a presentation (university student)

Similarly to teachers, being recognized on an individual level was referred to as a crucial factor for their well-being:

[...] I think students who feel that they are heard, that their concerns are taken seriously, and that they matter, they're not just an obligation to fill but they're a person, they matter, I think that's something that increases well-being, being seen, feeling a sense of belonging. (university teacher)

Both students and teachers highlighted that the role of the teachers goes beyond simply educating; it also encompasses creating a safe learning community and environment. Feeling that “*the teachers see you*” (*university student*) and having direct interpersonal relations with them

made students feel appreciated, which in turn positively affects their state of well-being. Fostering safety through checking in personally with students, noticing their individual situations, and demonstrating care appeared to make students feel connected. Moreover, empathizing with students' struggles and providing more flexibility to fit personal circumstances is perceived as positively impacting a student's well-being.

Reciprocal Relationship

In addition to single-directional influences, a reciprocal relationship appeared between the well-being of the students and the teachers, thus their emotional states are always in an active interplay with each other. For example, if a teacher is feeling unwell and they would be “*lashing out at students*” (*university teacher*) that would impact the well-being of the students negatively, which affects the whole dynamic of the class. The same process applies in a positive direction:

I think there's this upward spiral and there's this downward spiral. If you realize the whole group has like a low energy, then in the beginning you start working really hard as a teacher, but at some point you also feel drained. [...] Whereas if a group starts to engage with each other and it's like really going off strongly, then you are more motivated. [...] So if you realize there's like a good energy in the group, they're feeling well, then there's more opportunities to learn. (university teacher)

This cyclical relationship is also salient in terms of engagement. Both groups shared the significance of engagement of the others - either engagement from the side of the teacher or students. However, having a personally involved educator who actively adapts the material to fit the needs of the student positively impacts students' motivation, which in turn makes students more engaged and at the same time positively impacts the teacher:

I think that a happy teacher makes a good lecture, and I think that a happy and engaged student makes the teacher a lot more likely to be willing to give an engaging lecture. (university teacher).

The desire for the university to be a more humane environment based on connectedness and support, on both a social and emotional level, was an overlapping cluster between students and teachers. A student described their university experience as highly “*individualistic*” and that he perceived that “*people are left to their own devices*” and “*you either pass or you drop out*”. Teachers commented on the possibilities of fostering more personal connections through more practically oriented classes with more student-teacher interaction. However, the practical challenges of the implication of this were mentioned, such as the high number of students.

Our results demonstrated the desire for more empathy and understanding for the other’s personal situation. There is a need for the university to be more of a communal environment, where educators actively check in with students when they appear to be struggling. Students shared that they would frequently wish that teachers put themselves “*in their shoes*” (*university student*) more, while teachers also disclosed that they would like students to understand the demands of their role more and that despite everything they are still human.

Discussion

The goal of this research was to frame a conceptualization of well-being within the context of the university from a positive psychology perspective using qualitative methods. We investigated what well-being in academia means for students and teachers respectively and how the well-being of these two groups interacts. To guide our research, we used already studied theoretical frameworks surrounding well-being in academia, such as the SDT. The usage of qualitative data in the execution of our research gives rise to the strengths of gathering in-depth data from our participant’s personal stories that result in a comprehensive and authentic

conceptualization of well-being. Moreover, our choice of methodology allowed us to deduct not only concepts and definitions but also context-specific processes and dynamics that contribute to a circumstantial theoretical model.

Conceptualization of Well-Being within Academia

The findings derived from our interviews are in line with the theoretical perspectives we used to guide our research and correspond to Kiltz et al.'s (2020) theoretical model of well-being within academia. Participants' insights into their own well-being indicated a multifaceted conceptualization, which, coinciding with our theoretical assumptions, was in line with positive psychology's perspective. The significance of well-being regulation and building resilience was highlighted as a component and so was the necessity for fostering motivation through the basic psychological needs as outlined in the SDT. Lastly, the significance of eudaimonia through working on personal development and perceiving one's work as meaningful was presented as part of the well-being of our participants. In this section, I will focus on the main insights concerning the previously mentioned clusters of findings.

Firstly, we expected the participants to share a conceptualization of well-being that is multifaceted, and indeed, students and teachers confirmed this multidimensional suggestion, as they defined a state of feeling as well as a combination of physical, mental and social health, hence in line with the definition of well-being proposed by the WHO, which was mentioned in the introduction (World Health Organization, 2023). Conceptualizing well-being as more than merely the absence of stress, but also, for instance, experiencing positive emotions, corresponds to the positive psychology perspective of well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Participants did not exclude stress from their experience in university, in fact, they shared that it could be a lot, but they build their framework of well-being around regulating their stress and enhancing their well-

being despite it. The participants referred to that as building “a stable system” that you can rely on to deal with life’s challenges. Those findings are in accordance with the concept of resilience, which has already been studied as significant for well-being in academia (Soykan et al., 2019; Mansfield et al., 2016). While resilience is identified as a personal competency that is refined over time (Konaszewski et al., 2021), coping strategies are the resources individuals partake in to build a resilient state of being (Rice & Liu, 2016). Our findings demonstrated that our participants develop resilience through social, physical, and mental coping strategies.

Our participants’ perceptions of well-being in academia corresponded to the basic psychological needs as outlined in the SDT – autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Those findings align with previous research supporting the significance of the SDT for well-being in academia (Larson et al., 2017; Lataster et al., 2022; Stanton et al., 2016). Interestingly, our findings suggested that the university teachers’ group discussed the need for autonomy, while students’ needs corresponded mostly to the factors of competence and relatedness. Teachers highlighted the ability to have a sense of agency in one’s choices in academia as vital for feeling well. They discussed the significance of having the freedom to follow your individual passions both as a student through having more flexibility with choosing courses, and as a teacher through making autonomous decisions of how to structure one’s teaching. It is worth noting that it was mostly the group of teachers who emphasized the importance of experiencing one’s work in academia as meaningful and purposeful. The intrinsic value of teaching seems to significantly account for teachers’ well-being and according to Richardson and Watt (2006), it is one of the primary drives for choosing teaching as a career. Autonomous motivation pertains to actions that are driven by personal incentive and deliberate choice (Jeno et al., 2021), thus given the emphasis of creating impact through their teaching, it is

no surprise that teachers regard highly having the autonomy to choose how to pursue one's personal goals in academia. Students, on the other hand, did not discuss autonomy as an aspect of their well-being and seemed to be more extrinsically motivated; according to our findings, their motivation to perform well in university was more strongly related to the importance of good grades for their future career, rather than them finding their study experience as meaningful. Students more strongly identified competence than teachers as important for their well-being, where they described good grades and performance as positively impacting their well-being, and poor performance as negatively affecting their well-being. Considering student's vulnerability to experiencing poor well-being as described in the introduction, the found focus on extrinsic motivation among this group is interesting, given that extrinsic focus of students is found to be associated with decreased well-being and elevated ill-being (Howard et al., 2021). The observed distinction in the manifestation of basic psychological needs between students and teachers, as well as the divergence in motivational types within these two groups, would be worth investigating in future research.

Finally, the need for relatedness was shared by both students and teachers and was manifested through the desire for connectedness within the university through contact with teachers, peers, and colleagues, and outside of university through relationships with friends, family, and romantic partners. This finding is also in line with previous research (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Graham et al., 2016; Stanton et al, 2016).

Interaction between Students' and Teacher's Well-Being

Next to the conceptualization of well-being in academia, we explored the interaction between the well-being of students and teachers, and in line with our expectations, we found a strong relation between the well-being of those two groups. We found that students' and

teachers' emotional states are in an active interplay with one another, hence that the positive well-being of the teacher impacts the students' well-being positively and vice versa, and the same dynamic is expressed with negative emotional states. A similar relationship was found by Harding et al. (2019) who emphasized the role of the teacher's state of well-being on the students' well-being and their experiencing psychological strains. The reciprocity of those processes indicated in our findings is a valuable insight into our study, as it proposes that teachers and students can jointly gain from each other's positive well-being, highlighting the potential for mutual support and growth.

The reciprocal positive relationships between students and teachers were found to be fostered through certain processes within their interaction, namely through engagement and through connectedness based on mutual recognition and support. The vitality of engagement between teachers and students in the learning practice was shared by both groups and it appeared to also be cultivated through a reciprocal loop, where students and teachers mutually enhance each other's engagement. The positive impact of a strong student-teacher relationship on student engagement has been supported (Zepke & Leach, 2010) and the positive influence of student engagement on teachers has also been subject of research (Hagenauer & Volet, 2013), but the reciprocal nature of this process seems to remain under-explored, making our findings notably considerable.

Our findings suggest that teacher-student connectedness on an individual level is crucial for the well-being of both students and teachers and is fostered through personal interaction, including communication, recognizing each other as individuals, and empathizing with one another. Our results correspond to the findings of Hagenauer and Volet (2013) who explored the value for teachers of creating emotional bonds with students, and Miller et al. (2018) who

discuss the significance of student-teacher interactions on the sense of belonging of students. Creating a humanizing environment in universities that values and supports students and staff as individuals, rather than just part of a collective, was perceived as essential. Our participants shared, however, that the current educational system and culture in the university do not actively reinforce such a climate. Teachers shared their concern regarding the one-sided nature of the learning process, where teachers are characterized as plan providers of service, rather than part of one collaborative dynamic where teachers and students mutually engage with one another. This was further connected to the high number of students and the limitation this poses to having personal connections between students and educators, which is a finding also demonstrated by Cotten and Wilson (2006). Hence, well-being is considered as embedded within a larger context; firstly, individual well-being appears to be dependent on one's relatedness, which is in turn characterized by one's broader environment. Kezar & Bernstein-Sierra (2016) highlight the implication of the commercial value of the university culture on the educational process and discuss the individualistic focus on productivity rather than valuable learning such a system brings about. Similar perceptions were expressed by some of our participants through the assessment of the university culture as individualistic and with the need for more community and a humanized learning context.

Limitations

Despite the strengths ingrained in utilizing qualitative research methods, it is crucial to acknowledge certain limitations that impact our research. Firstly, we used convenience sampling, thus our participants were chosen on the base on proximity to the researchers, which puts forth the risk of bias and lack of external validity. The limited generalizability of our results is further expanded by our sample size of only twelve participants. Subjectivity in administering the

research is a possibility, since the researcher's predetermined viewpoints and research aims may lead to them asking leading questions during the interviews (Agee, 2009). Even though we attempted to ensure inter-coder reliability by working collaboratively on the final codebook, there is still a potential risk of researchers' assumptions affecting the identification and interpretation of codes and themes, hence possibly limiting the objectivity of our conclusions. Finally, because of the qualitative nature of our research methods, this study fails to suggest quantitative outcomes, thus limiting the possibility of drawing statistical conclusions.

Implications and Future Research

Our study contributed to the comprehensive understanding of well-being in academia and provided insights on what factors to consider when measuring and building interventions surrounding teachers' and students' well-being. Our results demonstrated the value of investigating not only what causes stress to individuals in academia, but also what makes them thrive, such as experiencing meaning through one's time in academia. Motivations seemed to be strongly related to well-being in the university context, and our findings revealed a discrepancy between teachers' and students' motivational drives, with students appearing to be mainly extrinsically motivated. Investigating how to foster intrinsic motivation in students is an area worthy of future research, provided the value of intrinsic motivation for well-being (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Even though our research does not provide quantitative outcomes, we suggested various factors that advance a shared understanding of well-being in academia and based on individuals' personal experiences propose components that appear to play a role in students' and academic staff's well-being. While we provide ideas, further research could be focused on quantifying our

findings and statistically testing the validity of our results, and building measurement methods, theoretical frameworks, and interventions correspondingly.

Our conceptualization of well-being, in line with the social constructivist perspective (Burr, 1995), revealed that one's psychological state cannot be separated from one's environment and relation to others. The students' and teachers' well-being appeared to be essentially connected and thus should be investigated as one dynamic interplay, rather than individual units. Moreover, in accordance with Adams (2006), relationships within academia were also found to be a product of one's larger academic environment. Given this, future research on well-being could benefit from taking all these dimensions into account and building theoretical frameworks accordingly.

Conclusion

The complexity surrounding the definition of well-being (Synard & Gazzola, 2016) necessitates further research, particularly in the under-investigated area of well-being in academia (Fraillon, 2004). Our study aims to contribute to this understanding by providing valuable insights. By validating Kiltz et al.'s (2020) theoretical model, our findings demonstrate a multifaceted conceptualization of well-being. Participants in our research emphasized the importance of motivation and highlighted factors aligning with the basic psychological needs described in SDT. Additionally, the experience of eudaimonia played a significant role in enhancing well-being. Notably, we found a reciprocal interrelation between the well-being of students and teachers, with the broader academic context influencing their relationships. These findings emphasize the multidimensional nature of well-being in academia.

While well-being is inherently personal, it is intricately connected to one's social environment. Within the university setting, where individuals seek knowledge and prepare for

future careers, the connections formed with educators have lifelong impacts. Thus, it is crucial for universities to foster an environment where both students and teachers feel comfortable, safe, and supported in pursuing their academic passions and experiencing well-being. This study shed lights on factors that contribute to such an environment. Further research is needed to statistically test our findings and build theoretical models and interventions accordingly.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent, interview study within the project “The reciprocal link between students and teachers' well-being”

March 2023

I, _____,

hereby consent to be a participant in the current research performed by

YOUR NAME , student at the University of Groningen, contact: XX @rug.nl

I have agreed to participate in the study “The reciprocal link between students and teachers' well-being.” I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary. I understand that my data will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. I can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, and I also have the right to request that my responses will not be used. The researcher is responsible for the safe storage of the data.

The following points have been explained to me:

1. The data will be used to achieve the study’s goal and describe how students and teachers conceptualize well-being in the academic context. Furthermore, participation in this study should help advance our understanding of how students effectively cope with their university studies and the role of the learning environment in this regard.
2. I shall be asked to explain how I experience well-being at the University of Groningen, what I think can enhance the same, and what the institution already does and could do beyond that to improve well-being.
3. The current interview study will last approximately 45-60 minutes. At the end of the study, the researcher will explain to me in more detail what the research was about.
4. The data will be treated confidentially, and my anonymity will be ensured. Hence, my responses cannot be identifiable and linked back to me as an individual.
5. The researcher will answer any questions I might have regarding this study, now or later in the course of the study.
6. The interview will be audio-recorded to ensure that nothing I say gets lost during the process.
7. I will be allowed to read through my interview summary and decide whether I want particular parts not to be considered within the analysis. Apart from that, the researcher has the right to publish the study’s findings.

Date:

Signature researcher:

Date:

Signature participant

Appendix B

Demographics Form for Students

Interview Study

“Well-Being in the University Context”

Participant _____ (filled out by the researcher)

Before beginning the interview, we need some short sociodemographic information about you as a participant. That will help us to put your answers into context.

1. I am male female other
 2. Age _____ years
 3. Nationality _____
 4. Concerning my studies
 - a. Faculty: _____
 - b. Department: _____
- Bachelor Master
 1st year 2nd year 3rd year

If you have any further questions concerning the interview study, do not hesitate to ask them. Again, thank you very much for participating in our study and helping us get better insights into well-being at the university.

Appendix C

Demographics Form for Teachers

Interview Study

“Well-Being in the University Context”

Participant _____ (filled out by the researcher)

Before beginning with the interview, we need some short sociodemographic information about you as a participant. That will help us to put your answers into context.

1. I am male female other
2. Age _____ years
3. Nationality _____
4. Concerning my work
 - a. Faculty: _____
 - b. Department: _____
 - c. Title: _____
 - d. Since: _____ years
 - e. Total Years of Experience: _____ years

Now, if you have any further questions concerning the interview study, do not hesitate to ask them.

Again, thank you very much for participating in our study and therefore helping us to get better insights into well-being at the university.

Appendix D

Codebook

Table 1

Conceptualization of well-being

Categories	Codes	Description	Examples
Components	Balance	Refers to a state of harmony between different dimensions in, f.e., different areas of life or in the experience of emotions, necessary for well-being	“But yeah, again, just balance and learning to do all that while not being too tired about everything.” _
	Competence	The need for experiencing a sense of mastery of abilities and skills	“ So primarily the factors that affect me are, you know, whether I'm up to the task that I'm supposed to do. For example, if I find the task quite easy, then I'll feel quite happy about it.”
	Mental	State of an individual's psychological functioning	“I guess mental health is part of well-being, but it is something that you have to keep a close eye on.”
	Physical	State of an individual's physical health and functioning	“Well, to the point of being healthy. That is really important because health, like being let's say chronically ill or something and not finding options for you to recover does a lot to you personally and your well-being.”
	Relatedness / Need to belong	Need for connection and belonging gained through social interactions and relationships	“ (...) and also feeling connected to your peers, I think. It's, yeah, it can be a very lonely experience. I think that helps for your well-being to connect.”

	Autonomy	The need for freedom to make self-determined decisions described by the participants	“Receiving autonomy so that you're free to be flexible and to adapt to whatever fits you.”
	Happiness, hedonic	State of emotion that was used by participants to describe well-being	“Well-being means to me being happy”
	Motivation	The perception that the amount of motivation an individual experiences has an impact on well-being	“I think wellbeing would then be connected maybe also to motivation, like the components of motivation.”
External Factors	Family	Participants’ perception that family played a critical role in their well-being	“So loved ones could help a lot with well-being and that could be friends, family, whatever you are comfortable with, or your partner as well.”
	Friends	Participants’ perception that spending time with friends played a critical role in their well-being	“My friends are also an important part, just to relieve stress, to have a good time, to disconnect the mind from things that may be bothering me, in all other regards not even just university related.”
	Weather	Participants’ perception that weather influences their well-being	“You see the sun is out just like for a couple of hours and I’m so much happier. I feel so much more productive, even though I might not be, but I just feel like it and I cannot wait for spring and summer to come.”
	Environment/city/nature	Participants’ perception that their environment influences their well-being	“What is also important is the sort of identity with the city, like starting to feel like this is home, starting to know the streets, know the songs, know the language a little bit, know a little the

Internal Factors	Organized home	Perception that the organization and cleanliness of an individual's home is necessary to feel well	history and kind of identify with the city.” “Yeah, like all that and also kind of trying to manage my apartment. Not looking like an absolute chaos because I feel like if all those things are well going then I feel more in place than when it's not.”
	Hobbies	Factor described by participants that is important for positive well-being and is used to counteract stress	“So how do I cope? I have hobbies, I guess. Painting, making models, music sometimes.”
	Acting according to your values	Perception that acting in accordance with one's beliefs and values has a positive impact on one's well-being	“And that's what for me wellbeing is like - be the person that you want to be and strive to act according to your values and experience balance.”
	Having meaningful relationships	The perception that the closeness, comfort, and support of intimate friendships plays a crucial role in well-being	“So loved ones could help a lot with well-being and that could be friends, family, whatever you are comfortable with, or your partner as well”
	Flourishing	Assumption that the state of flourishing, characterized by positive experiences such as joy, fulfillment, and purpose, will have a positive impact on well-being	“So being also able to focus on things that help you flourish, for instance. Because wellbeing is very much related to flourishing and, you know, positive health and positive being.”
	Religion	Perception that religion contributes to their overall well-being	“And religion does a lot with me as well, with wellbeing.”
	Identification / emotional attachment	The assumption that if certain things are perceived as part of your own identity and there is a deep	“So, I love it. I find meaning in it, and that keeps me going. And, I really like to be part of students' education and try

	emotional connection with what you do, this will have a positive impact on your well-being	to have an impact, positive impact on that.”
Mindset	The assumption that the mindset one adopts can shape one's perceptions, attitudes, and reactions to life events, and thus affects one's overall well-being	“I mean for sure the state of mind I guess. Like I said, like me personally, I'm more of an overthinker. So I probably handle a situation different to someone else who's maybe a little bit more like going with the flow.”

Influential factors for well-being in the academic context

Categories	Codes	Description	Examples
Humanizing Context	Flexibility	This refers to the need for adjusting to people's personal circumstances.	“I have different relationships with all of my students, and ehm its again just about good communication, its about, what do you need, what can I give you, what can I not give you, what do I expect of you, just making these things quite clear and then constantly adjusting the process”
	Teacher authenticity	This refers to need of emotional involvement of teachers through communicating personal characteristics and value, which in turn humanize the teachers in the perspective of the students.	“I think people feel a sense of belonging when the teacher doesn't only give an hour lecture on a topic, but also takes a moment to show themselves kinda, who they are, what they value, and communicate very clearly that education matters to them, that the students matter to them”
	Empathy	This refers to the attempt to feel with others and recognize	“...Just displaying empathy and that you actually care”

		their individual situation.	
	Understanding	This refers to the need for understanding of the other group's perspective and circumstances.	"I think if the teachers could understand what the students are afraid of when it comes to the assessment and then just spell it out what is hard and what isn't, to understand all of that from a student perspective"
Student-teacher Interaction	Student engagement	This referred to active participation and communication by students in the classroom.	"When you see the students being very engaged with each other... Those are moments where I think something's happening and I feel like they are learning something."
	Student opinions impact teacher	This referred to an opinion made by students that could affect teachers' well-being, both positively and negatively.	"But then if there's some, I don't know, frustration from students that is not always justified according to my subjective opinion, then it can have a pretty negative effect (on well-being)."
	Reciprocal relationship between student-teacher well-being	This referred to the link between students and teachers well-being, and how it affects each other. If the others' well-being is not at its optimal, the other party would also be affected.	"Student, teacher well-being? I think that a happy teacher makes a good lecture, and I think that a happy and engaged student makes the teacher a lot more likely to be willing to give an engaging lecture [...] but if it's the other way around and you have a teacher that's super enthusiastic about the topic and really tries to

Mutual respect	This referred to how both students and teachers need to establish respect in order to have a positive teaching environment.	engage people, then students are more likely to engage, its very much connected” “I think they both have a responsibility to establish mutual respect. I think students should always go into the class knowing that this is a person and we need to respect them and then the other way around, the professors should always know that these are people and there should always be a degree of respect.”
Clear communication	This referred to establishing good communication between students and teachers to enhance the positive experience in the classroom.	“I think for me the bottom line of all of this is, it really boils down to communication, between students and teachers and between teachers and the board, ehm, because the board or the university provides the resources for teachers.”
Being seen / Recognition	This referred to participants feeling included in the university community, whether it is in the classroom or workspace.	“If I would go to class and the professor would just like to read from a script and not really interact whatsoever, I think that would affect my well-being.”
Teacher-student connectedness	This referred to the perception of both	“I think professors have a hard time connecting with

		teachers and students on how connected they are to each other, and how this connectedness affects their well-being.	individuals because in lectures there's often hundreds of people and you can't really address anyone, you have to address the crowd. But in my experience, addressing the professors after class has mostly been a positive experience. So I feel like I've heard and seen that sometimes they remember my name, which is cool.”
Pedagogical Skills	Good teaching as adapting to students	This refers to the necessity of teaching to adapt the material to students' needs in order to make them engaged	“I think its ignorant to think that ehm if you present people dry material that they would just absorb it like a sponge, you have to make it juicy and then they will absorb it like a sponge.”
	Responsibility to make student engaged	This refers to perception of students and teachers that teachers are ultimately responsible for fostering engagement in the classroom	“Wellbeing has a different side where you think about engagement. So that would also be, I think, my responsibility to make them engaged and make sure they get engaged in the classes.”
	Teachers performance dependent on their well-being	This refers to the positive relationship between the teacher's state of individual well-being and their teachings skills and academic performance	“The teacher with a passion makes so much of a difference, and if a teacher with a passion is overworked to s**t year after year, its very easy to lose that passion or just not have the time to develop it.”
Teacher Responsibility	Clear communication	Students shared the positive impact teachers clearly communicating has on their well-being	“Clarity. I think because sometimes university can be confusing, which can cause frustration or insecurity. So I think clarity is actually an important one.”

	Making support resources available	This refers to the responsibility of the teacher to inform student about support resources provided by the university that they can benefit from	“And also communicating with them what is the support system, where could they go, where could they get more support.”
	Teachers responsibility goes beyond education	This refers to the emphasis on the role of a teachers as going beyond simply conveying content; it is also fostering a healthy, supportive learning environment	“So it's not only, gathering knowledge, but it's also feeling good, finding purpose in what, what they're doing, being motivated, showing students also how to be resilient in terms of struggles.”
	Creating a safe learning environment	This refers to the teacher’s responsibility to foster safety in the classroom through individual connection and empathy.	“Creating a good atmosphere in class and always like ask, giving some space for checking up with them, especially first year students and doing activities where they can get to know each other, interact a bit, make friends.”
	Teachers well-being as foundation for student well-being	This refers to the perception that the teacher’s well-being is critical for the well-being of the students in class	“But I would have a negative experience or a positive experience depending on the teacher's wellbeing, I would say.”
Institutional Level	High pressure environment	Referring to participants experiencing university as stressful with high workloads	“And sometimes students have a hard time balancing these two things and like sometimes it feels like it's either studies or yourself.”
	Monotonous work tasks	This referred to the straining effects of repetitive work tasks as experienced by teachers	“And I find there's a lot of tasks in my life as a teacher that are not very fulfilling but are necessary like, for example, with grading or for example I’m giving the class history of psychology and

Too many Students	This referred to primarily staff's perception that the university was accepting too many students and the consequences of this	there are 300 students and they have to write essay questions. So I have to read 600 essay questions and they're all the same." "Think students often don't realize that while they only take three courses, and I'm one of the three teachers, I see 300 students"
Understaffed	Staff's perception that work exceeded their capacities	"We overworked and have too many hours of work to do for too few people, then if I want more time the only way the manager can solve this problem is by giving my time to someone else"
Work/salary discrepancy	Staff's perception that the salary did not represent amount of work required	"Indeed in terms of salary, if you don't get paid there, there's sometimes the about are you in the right scale? Do you get paid for the things that you do? I think if that's not the case, then that also affects your wellbeing because it affects your motivation to work."
Accessibility/Poor communication of support resources	Participants perception that support resources were hard to access and not well communicated	"And also communicating with them what is the support system, where could they go, where could they get more support.."
Extra-educational resources/support	Participants perception that university was responsible for students well-being outside strictly educational matters	"Providing maybe more support in housing at the beginning of their studies."
Clear communication	Participants perception that communication channels in the	"So maybe making a scholarship more available, those

University creating space for connectedness	<p>university should be clear</p> <p>Participants perception that the university played an important role in facilitating socialization processes</p>	<p>information on how to get this little bit easier.”</p> <p>“The thing is, I don't know actually what the university at the moment provides also to first year students with regard to how to navigate life through in the new city”</p>
Having high freedom/autonomy but low connectedness	<p>Participants perceiving that online work/education increased autonomy but reduced connectedness</p>	<p>“Yeah. We don't have to go, we don't have to show up If we wanted to, we can just do self-study. Just go by the book, read all the material that they gave us. Not even go to any lectures, you know, read the lecture slides, but what good are electrolytes as well, if they're not even like proper?”</p>
Too much focus on extrinsic motivation/outcomes	<p>Participants perception that education is extrinsically motivated</p>	<p>“Feel unwell when I go there because I have to and they go there because they have to. And no one gets something out of it, then it feels like a waste of time for everyone”</p>
Leadership	<p>Participants emphasizing good leadership as important in their well-being process</p>	<p>“I think leadership is an important one, the way that leadership is, done at your workplace or at the university.”</p>
Poorly structured curriculum	<p>Perceptions that the curriculum was confusing or had negative impacts on well-being</p>	<p>“I mean, so what I think should happen is that we should stop doing this crazy amount of examinations, every, wait how long is each block, like eight weeks? Like I think that's bad, I think, I think that's very bad for all of us. It's bad for us as teachers. It's bad for Students.”</p>

Poor feedback system	Perceptions that processes did not work	“So none of my feedback has ever been used for anything, and that kind of sucks”
Individualistic context	The perceptions that the university context was very individualistic	“Universities in general are very lonely.”
Class size and engagement	Perceptions that big classrooms led to reduced engagement among staff and students	“Okay. I think professors have a hard time connecting with individuals because in lectures there's often hundreds of people and you can't really address anyone, you have to address the crowd.”
Value asymmetry between teaching/research	Perceptions that efforts in teaching were not valued in terms of promotions compared to research	“Oh I mean, as a professor, or like a associate assist, or professor and so on, ehm and as a assistant professor you strive to be a full professor at some point, ehm and for that you need publications, and publications you only get from doing research, from publishing, and teaching doesn't help you with that”
Professorship as security	Perceptions that professorship offered job security	“Hmhf, you are just sitting very comfortably when you are professor, you have to, you can finally stop with the elbows right and left, and because before that, academia is super competitive right”
University as product	The perception that education is a product to be bought	“And so for me, a big impact on my own well-being is if I feel affirmed and valued. And sometimes students don't

University as industry	Perceptions that university is a business which aims to produce profit	<p>see me as a person but as a service provider.”</p> <p>“Ultimately money determines the flow of all these things, there might be proxies for that, that we don’t call them money, essentially, in the end it’s all about money”</p>	
Online Education	Increased flexibility	The perceptions that online education offer more freedom in terms of learning	<p>“You could then watch it from home in your bed, I mean I don’t know if i’d still be a student I might also just be sitting at home with a hot chocolate, and watching it from my bed and not having to go to Zernike campus, twenty minutes with the bike in the cold”</p>
	High autonomy/low connectedness	The perception that with more freedom, student will be less likely to interact with peers and teachers	<p>“People just show up less to the lectures if they are recorded, [...] you take away less from a lecture if you are not there, and from the social aspect of course you want to be with your fellow students, you should be with your fellow students, cause if you are connected to your fellow students you are also way more likely to pass the course and to, feel engaged”</p>

	Attention span troubles because of covid	The issue that arise from online education which interrupt the ability of student to pay attention in class due to distractions	“First of all the pandemic right, people had a lot of online education for a long time, so, they are just used to slow watching lectures, lecture recordings, and if lectures are recorded there is, I mean anectodically, I don’t know if statistically that is the case, but people just show up less to the lectures if they are recorded”
	Desire for online education	This refers to individuals preferred interest of online education compared with physical classes	“Although it was weird at first, I found that there were benefits and there were costs. Of course, like it was nice to have everything recorded, but I only realized that now, you know, like after I have recordings, I'm like, damn, I miss those days when I have recordings.”
Meaningful Work	Finding purpose	This refers to finding their interest and passion in their working environment	“I keep active means, you know, also being curious, always finding new themes to research or to investigate. During my researcher career, I researched many, many different things. [...] So, if you take a look at everything that I published, you know, well, there are certain themes, of course, you know, major themes that I stick to, but always, you know, from different perspectives, different things”

Having an impact	This refers to teacher's sense of work contribution and how it impacted the others around them	“It is very rewarding to have students be engaged, to show that they care, to show that they're learning, to show interest in what you are saying, cause it takes work to prepare it, ehm so its quite rewarding to, you know to actually see the faces of people you're teaching, and see them learning and see them ehm actually care about learning”
Intrinsic/extrinsic motivation	This refers to the two types of motivation experience by both teacher and student in the university system; intrinsic include motivation from the self and extrinsic include motivation from outside the self	Then I think they get buy easier and they are more resilient, as compared to when they just do it for the money.
Goals	This refers to the way individuals aiming for a desired outcome	Okay. He seems happy enough. He's got a, you know, very promising career ahead, you know, has a good relationship and a plan for the future. And you know's, going to go do a PhD in Germany soon. All that stuff. He, he seems to have everything planned out
Responsibility for Well-being	Individual	The perception that individuals are responsible for their own well-being, believing that their choices and actions influence their well-being (within academia)
		“I feel like everyone has the responsibility to take care of themselves and their well-being. But you also have to kind of go out of your way. You have to do things for yourself. You know, not everything's gonna be handed to you on a plate, right?”

Work-life Balance	Students	The perception that students are responsible for well-being within academia	“Students, I mean there is always a relationship of respect of course, so you are responsible as a student for the teachers well-being just as you are responsible for the well-being of anyone that you run into your life”
	Teachers	The perception that teachers are responsible for well-being within academia	“I think tutorial teachers are probably the most directly responsible, because if you have a class of some students and you see some are struggling and some are not”
	Institutional	The perception that the university is responsible for well-being in academia	“Also, certainly the university as a organization is responsible”
	Time management	The proper distribution of time between professional/academic responsibilities and leisure activities	"What does well-being mean to me? Well, I guess, to be able to organize your time in the best way you think fits, you know”
	Setting emotional boundaries	Setting up boundaries to manage and separate emotions between work and personal life, aiming for work-related emotions to not interfere with personal well-being and relationships	“Then at some point as a teacher, you learn to distance yourself more from it. I remember my first year of teaching and then I had in total, I think, 30 - 40 students and then 38 evaluations were positive and two evaluations were negative, and I was beating myself up for these two evaluations that were negative”
	Prioritizing personal well-being over work	By prioritizing personal well-being over work-related responsibilities, individuals recognize the importance of	“Well-being is to be able to get my job like, you know, to do my job and do them on time. You know, basically keep the

		taking care of themselves in order to maintain a healthy work-life balance	bosses happy. And yeah, and, and also, you know, to do that in a, in a way that doesn't harm my physical health and mental health”
Student	Comparing yourself to others	This relates to students comparing themselves with other peers in terms of their abilities, achievements, or academic progress	“Because there's this constant direct comparison to a lot of other people, because you're all doing the same things and you're all on the same track”
	Grades/performance as part of self-image	Students perceive their academic achievements as a crucial part of how they define themselves and their worth	“There have been moments before my study delay, where I realized that I'm gonna have to take six months extra to finish my degree. There was a big stress component. It was really emotional because I felt like I was failing myself and everyone. I felt a lot of shame”
	Academic achievements as central for wellbeing	Students' acknowledgement that their academic performance has a substantial impact on their well-being	“Because showing well-being often relates to feeling the successes you make. It's not like you failed a test and then feel okay or amazing afterwards. You often feel really dragged and tired and stuff like that, and I think that does so much more”
Resilience	Setting emotional boundaries	Strategy used to maintain a healthy work-life balance, by preserving individuals' emotional resources.	“At some point, as a teacher, you learn to distance yourself from negative evaluations”
	Coping	Strategies that individuals use to alleviate stress	“For me, the most important part is having a place where you can go to calm down”

Time management	Skill that helped individuals stay organized and create structured routines	“I think it has to do with not overburdening myself, trying to not feel burnt out while still managing all your classes”
Functional stress	A form of stress that can be beneficial to individuals performance and learning	“I always manage two or three days under very strong stress”
Motivation	The need or reason to study or teach	“When I’m teaching, I’m just so excited and it can really pump me up and give me a high for the whole day just because it was so much fun.”
Self-reflection	Allowed individuals to evaluate their study/teaching ways, motivation and purpose	“The most important thing is to be curious”
Finding purpose	Making a positive impact on individuals lives	
Mindfulness	A mental state that encourages one to focus on the present, while accepting one's thoughts and bodily sensations	“I’m putting some peanut butter and honey on my banana bread and I just stand in the sun for a bit before getting on my bike, just eating, making a little bit of space for myself.” “It was important for me to investigate new things, learn new things and communicate this.”
Professional learning	Engaging in learning with other educators during workshops, conferences and training sessions	
