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**Title:**


**THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF TEACHERS' WELL-BEING IN THEIR  
COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES**

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## **Abstract**

This qualitative study explores how the social dimension of teachers' well-being influences their collaborative practices within public secondary schools in Baku, Azerbaijan. It is grounded on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008), the Job Demands-Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), and available teacher well-being scholarship, examining participants' experiences with peers, leadership engagement, trust, and workload challenges. Participants were twelve teachers with a minimum of five years of teaching experience, from whom data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, and analyzed according to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis guidelines. The results highlighted following themes: recognition and belonging, the role of leadership, peer relationships, workload and resource strain, trust and communication, and social well-being and instructional motivation. Findings show that extensive collegial trust, active supportive leadership, and recognition strengthen a collaborative school culture, whereas excessive workloads coupled with scarce resources negatively impact well-being and collaboration. By examining the social aspect of well-being, this study fills the gap in local research and argues that fostering social trust and emotional care among teachers is important for sustained school development and retention of teachers. The outcomes are important to educational administrators and policymakers in Azerbaijan concerning the well-being of teachers and professional community.

**Keywords:** Social well-being, collaborative practices, peer relationships.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

Teacher well-being is a multidimensional concept encompassing emotional, social, and professional aspects that critically influence both teacher performance and the overall educational environment. Among these, social well-being, teachers' sense of connectedness, support, and belonging within their professional community, plays a key role in sustaining motivation, resilience, and instructional quality (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007).

Research by Diener and Seligman (2004) identifies emotional, psychological, and social well-being as essential to professional fulfillment and meaningful engagement. Within the school context, social well-being reflects teachers' relationships with colleagues, students, administrators, and the broader school community. Ryff and Keyes (1995) emphasize that the ability to form supportive, trusting relationships is central to psychological well-being and personal resilience, underscoring the interdependence between social relationships and professional vitality. Moreover, Deci and Ryan's (2008) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) highlights relatedness, the need to feel connected to others, as a universal psychological need necessary for overall well-being. In educational settings, fostering meaningful, supportive relationships among teachers is essential for promoting collaboration, collective efficacy, and a positive school climate.

Despite the recognized importance of social well-being, many systemic pressures, including high workloads, interpersonal conflicts, and lack of collegial support, threaten teachers' ability to maintain positive relationships and collaborative practices (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Addressing these challenges is crucial for sustaining teacher effectiveness and improving educational outcomes.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Teachers' social well-being is often undermined by stressors such as interpersonal conflicts, high job demands, and insufficient collegial support. Klassen and Chiu (2010) found that stress stemming from workload pressures and challenging interactions can lower teachers' self-efficacy,

weaken motivation, and disrupt professional relationships. These stressors not only affect individual teachers but also damage collaborative practices, ultimately harming school climate and student outcomes.

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) supports this view, suggesting that when job demands exceed available resources such as peer support, teacher burnout, emotional exhaustion, and professional dissatisfaction increase. Although studies have highlighted aspects of teacher efficacy and stress management (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007), there remains a research gap regarding how teachers perceive their social well-being and how this shapes their collaborative behaviors within schools.

In Azerbaijan, limited research has explored teachers' peer relationships and the social dimension of well-being, with most studies focusing instead on administrative relationships or broad occupational well-being (Fuenzalida, 2021). A clearer understanding of how teachers view their social well-being and how it impacts their collaboration with colleagues is therefore necessary.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their social well-being in schools and examine the ways in which these perceptions influence their collaborative practices. Specifically, the study sought to understand how teachers describe their social experiences and professional relationships within the school context, and how these experiences shape their ability and willingness to engage in collaboration. The insights gained aim to inform strategies for enhancing teacher support systems and promoting a more connected, collaborative school culture.

### **Research Questions**

Building on the study purpose, the following research questions guided the research:

1. How do teachers explain their social well-being in schools?

2. In what ways does teachers' social well-being shape their collaborative practices?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant for educational leaders, policymakers, and school administrators seeking to improve school culture, teacher retention, and student achievement. As Fullan (2007) argues, educational change is most successful when collaboration, support, and shared purpose are embedded within the school environment. Strengthening teachers' social well-being through professional development opportunities, supportive leadership, and collaborative structures such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) fosters a positive school climate and enhances instructional effectiveness (Vescio et al., 2008). Moreover, programs focused on developing social and emotional competence (Jennings & Greenberg, 2011) can help teachers manage interpersonal demands, reduce burnout, and promote emotional resilience. Building emotionally intelligent, collaborative school cultures ultimately benefits not just teachers, but students and the broader educational community.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Social Well-being:** A teacher's sense of belonging, trust, and connectedness within the school community, characterized by supportive relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, and parents (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryff & Singer, 2006).

**Collaborative Practices:** Purposeful interactions among teachers aimed at achieving shared instructional goals, improving teaching practices, and solving professional challenges collectively (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

**Peer Relationships:** Supportive, respectful, and trusting professional relationships between teachers that contribute to emotional resilience, job satisfaction, and collaborative effectiveness (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2008).

## Chapter II: Literature Review

### Conceptualizing Teacher Well-Being and Its Social Dimension

Teacher well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, psychological, and social elements that together contribute to teachers' resilience, motivation, and performance (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Well-being is not simply the absence of stress but involves the presence of positive experiences, purposeful activities, and fulfilling social interactions (Diener & Seligman, 2004). Among the dimensions of well-being, the **social aspect** is particularly crucial, as it influences the quality of teachers' interpersonal relationships and the collaborative culture within schools.

Social well-being refers to teachers' ability to build meaningful, trusting, and supportive connections with colleagues, students, administrators, and the wider school community (Keyes, 1998). Positive peer interactions are critical for fostering professional unity, promoting mutual respect, and establishing a cooperative school climate. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) argue that when teachers experience supportive social relationships, they are more likely to create prosocial classrooms, which benefit both students and the school environment. Furthermore, strong social ties encourage practices such as co-planning and peer mentoring, enhancing both professional growth and institutional development (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016).

### Challenges to Teachers' Social Well-Being

Despite its importance, maintaining social well-being in schools is often challenging. Klassen and Chiu (2010) highlight that heavy workloads, insufficient administrative support, and interpersonal tensions are major stressors that erode teachers' social connections. According to Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, when high demands are not balanced by adequate resources, such as collegial support, teachers' social well-being deteriorates. This decline can lead to isolation, reduced collaboration, and a fragmented school environment.

Poor social well-being among teachers can weaken school climates, reduce collective efficacy, and impair problem-solving processes (Day et al., 2016). Conversely, schools that nurture strong social

networks among teachers tend to promote open communication, resilience, and shared responsibilities, leading to better student outcomes and reduced teacher burnout (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Other researchers have also identified factors undermining teachers' social well-being. Kebby (2018) and Braddy and Wilson (2021) found that poor relationships with leadership and lack of a supportive school culture significantly lower teachers' sense of belonging and collaboration. Diganayeva (2021) further noted that in Azerbaijan, teachers frequently linked their well-being to school environment factors such as staff support, motivation, and psychological health, in addition to structural concerns like salary and workload.

### **The Role of Peer Interaction and Collaboration**

Collaboration with colleagues emerges as a central determinant of teacher well-being. Acton and Glasgow (2015) argue that positive peer interactions directly contribute to teachers' sense of professional satisfaction. Likewise, Katz (2010) emphasizes that environments where teachers engage in decision-making, share concerns, and collaborate with trust foster higher levels of well-being and professional efficacy.

Professional development opportunities that encourage collaborative learning further enhance social well-being. Dodge (2012) suggests that equitable access to resources and opportunities for collaboration are vital for sustaining positive social environments within schools. However, research indicates that despite recognition of its importance, the social dimension of well-being has been underexplored compared to emotional and psychological dimensions (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012).

Addressing this gap, the current study seeks to investigate how teachers describe their social well-being and how these perceptions influence their collaborative practices with peers.

## **Regional Perspectives: Azerbaijan and Neighboring Countries**

Research conducted in Azerbaijan reveals several factors impacting teachers' well-being, though few studies focus explicitly on the social dimension. Imanguliyeva (2020) found that factors such as organizational climate, internal pressures, and lack of burnout prevention strategies affect instructors' sense of well-being in higher education institutions. Fuenzalida (2021) reported that positive relationships with school principals significantly enhance teachers' occupational well-being in Baku schools. However, peer relationships were less extensively examined. Diganayeva (2021) emphasized that heavy workloads, large class sizes, and gender-based pressures adversely affect teachers' well-being in Azerbaijan. With approximately 81% of the education workforce being female (State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan, 2020), additional societal and family responsibilities often compound the stress experienced by women teachers. Such systemic pressures reduce the time available for peer collaboration and professional community building.

In Georgia, research by Bitsadze and Japaridze (2014) highlights similar patterns, where emotional exhaustion among female teachers limits collaboration. Weddle, Lockton, and Datnow (2019) point out that emotionally charged conflicts often arise in collaborative settings, emphasizing the need for emotional intelligence training to strengthen professional interactions (Hochschild, 2006). Russian teachers, as Tsarkov and Hoblyk (2023) report, experience high workloads and low pay, resulting in professional disengagement. Nonetheless, recognition by peers offers some mitigation, again highlighting the potential of positive professional relationships for sustaining teacher well-being. In Kazakhstan, despite legislative efforts to improve teachers' status, issues such as resource shortages and unsupportive leadership continue to impair collaborative environments (Sarmurzin, 2023). Similarly, in China, rural teachers face limited professional development opportunities, contributing to isolation and attrition (Sargent & Hannum, 2009).

Across these regional contexts, consistent themes emerge: workload pressures, lack of structural support, and limited opportunities for genuine peer collaboration all negatively impact teachers' social well-being.

## **Conclusion**

The literature consistently emphasizes that teachers' social well-being significantly shapes the quality of collaboration, school culture, and professional satisfaction. Positive interpersonal relationships among teachers enhance resilience, promote collective efficacy, and support better student outcomes. Conversely, lack of collegial support, excessive demands, and emotional exhaustion contribute to isolation and weaken collaborative practices.

Regional studies, including those in Azerbaijan, highlight common issues such as high workloads, insufficient leadership support, and societal pressures, all of which limit teachers' capacity to engage meaningfully with peers. Although there is growing awareness of the importance of well-being, research remains largely focused on emotional and psychological dimensions, with social well-being underexplored.

Addressing this gap, the present study aims to investigate how teachers perceive their social well-being and how it affects their collaborative practices within schools. By focusing on this neglected dimension, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights into creating supportive, cohesive educational environments that enhance both teacher and student success.

## **Gaps in the Literature**

Despite growing interest in teacher well-being, the social aspect remains insufficiently examined. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2007) observed that most prior research focused on classroom management and student engagement, with little attention to the interpersonal dynamics among teachers themselves. Furthermore, the interaction between strain factors, such as conflicts with parents or colleagues, and teacher self-efficacy and collective efficacy has been largely overlooked.

This gap underscores the need for research into how teachers' perceptions of their social well-being influence their collaboration and professional relationships. Unresolved interpersonal tensions and systemic pressures may undermine collective efficacy, collaboration, and overall school climate (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). By addressing this critical gap, the present study aims to enrich understanding of the social foundations necessary for thriving school communities.

## **Chapter III: Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore teachers' perceptions of their social well-being and to investigate how these perceptions influenced their collaborative practices within the school setting. Given the personal, multifaceted, and subjective nature of social well-being, an empirical inquiry was necessary to capture the nuanced ways teachers interpreted and lived these experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A phenomenological approach was used to gain an understanding of teachers' lived experiences regarding social well-being and collegial collaboration (Yin, 2018). This method was appropriate because it focused on how individuals made meaning of their experiences, which aligned closely with the research questions:

1. How do teachers explain their social well-being in schools?
2. In what ways does teachers' social well-being shape their collaborative practices?

### **Research Site**

The study was conducted in public secondary schools in Baku, Azerbaijan. Schools provided a rich social context that mirrored broader societal interactions, offering a dynamic environment to examine how collegial and socio-emotional factors influenced teachers' well-being (Hargreaves, 1994). Concentrating on schools with diverse student bodies and teaching staff allowed a better understanding of how different determinants of social well-being affected professional collaboration within multicultural educational communities (Collie et al., 2015).

### **Participants**

Participants were selected based on criteria aligned with the study's objectives. Specifically, ten secondary school teachers with a minimum of five years of teaching experience across different

subject areas and grade levels were recruited from four schools. Teachers' longevity in the profession ensured a richer understanding of school dynamics and social relationships. Participants signed informed consent forms, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality in accordance with ethical research standards (Creswell, 2012). The sample was intentionally diverse to capture a range of perspectives on social well-being and collaborative practices.

### **Sampling Strategy**

A convenience sampling strategy was employed to recruit participants who were accessible and willing to contribute rich, meaningful data (Creswell, 2012). While convenience sampling has limitations in generalizability, it was appropriate for phenomenological research, where depth of experience, rather than broad representativeness, was prioritized.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, offering a balance between focused inquiry and flexibility to explore emerging themes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This method was particularly suitable for capturing the complexity and personal nature of teachers' experiences with social well-being and collegial collaboration.

The interview questions aligned closely with the research questions, allowing participants to share detailed accounts of how they experienced social well-being in their schools and how it shaped their interactions with colleagues. Interviews were conducted ethically, respecting participants' time, privacy, and consent (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As interviews progressed, some follow-up questions were adapted to explore emerging topics, allowing for a richer, more authentic collection of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

## Trustworthiness

To enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, the study adhered to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, focusing on credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. **Credibility** was primarily established through **member checking**, where all interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and subsequently shared with participants for verification. Participants reviewed their transcripts, confirmed the accuracy of the accounts, and were invited to provide clarifications or additional insights as needed. This process ensured that the findings accurately represented participants' intended meanings and minimized researcher misinterpretation. **Transferability** was supported by providing thick, rich descriptions of the participants' contexts and experiences, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other settings. **Dependability** was strengthened by maintaining a detailed audit trail of all data collection and analysis procedures. **Confirmability** was promoted through peer debriefing during data analysis, which helped minimize potential researcher bias and increased the objectivity of the interpretations. All research activities, coding processes, and methodological decisions were carefully documented to support transparency and ensure the rigor and reliability of the study.

## Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using **thematic analysis** following the procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the interview transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve deep familiarization with the content. Initial codes were then generated systematically by identifying meaningful units of data related to teachers' social well-being and collaborative practices. These codes were carefully reviewed and organized into broader themes that captured the core aspects of participants' experiences. The themes were refined and adjusted to ensure they accurately reflected the data and maintained a strong alignment with the research questions. Each theme was clearly defined and labeled to represent the central ideas conveyed by the participants. Throughout the analysis, special attention was paid to

maintaining the authenticity of participants' voices by supporting findings with direct quotations. Continuous self-reflection and peer debriefing were conducted to minimize researcher bias and ensure that the interpretations remained grounded in the data. The finalized themes provided a structured framework for presenting the findings in a manner that addressed the study's purpose and research questions with clarity and depth.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations were identified:

**Subjectivity of Social Well-Being:** Given the complex and personal nature of social well-being, participants interpreted the concept differently, potentially affecting how collaboration was perceived and described.

**Time Constraints:** The limited timeframe for data collection and analysis may have restricted deeper exploration of participants' experiences or broader sampling across additional schools.

Despite these limitations, the study offered valuable insights into how teachers' social well-being shaped their collaborative practices, addressing an important gap in the existing literature.

## Chapter IV: Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from interviews conducted with secondary school teachers to explore the two guiding research questions:

1. How do teachers explain their social well-being in schools?
2. In what ways does teachers' social well-being shape their collaborative practices?

Themes and subthemes emerged through thematic analysis and are presented with illustrative participant quotes to support interpretation.

### 4.2 Overview of Emergent Themes

The following table provides a summary of the main themes, associated subthemes, and selected illustrative quotes from participants:

**Table 4.1 Summary of Themes, Subthemes, and Illustrative Quotes**

Research Questions	Themes	Subthemes	Illustrative Quotes
<b>RQ1:</b> How do teachers explain their social well-being in schools?	Experiencing Recognition and Belonging	Recognition and Belonging	<i>"When I enter the classroom and see the students' eyes, I forget everything else." "My principal recognized my efforts and recommended me for an honorary award."</i>

	Importance of Leadership	Supportive vs. Unsupportive Leadership	<p><i>"The administration never announced that I received an award from the ministry."</i></p> <p><i>"Our principal praises teachers during meetings... Even a simple compliment makes a difference."</i></p>
	Positive Relationships with Colleagues	Trust, Openness, Collegial Support	<p><i>"If the personal relationship is good, the collaboration you establish is also more successful."</i></p> <p><i>"We meet outside of work to get to know each other better."</i></p>
<b>RQ2:</b> In what ways does teachers' social well-being shape their collaborative practices?	Workload and Resource Strain on Social Well-being	Heavy Workload, Poor Facilities	<p><i>"Sometimes I stay late helping students, then tutor in the evening. No energy left for anything."</i></p> <p><i>"The lack of a technical infrastructure has a negative impact."</i></p>
	Trust and Communication as Foundations for Collaboration	Trust as Basis for Collaboration	<p><i>"We only share with those we trust and those who trust us."</i></p> <p><i>"Trust is essential... trust in oneself and trust in others."</i></p>
	The Influence of Social Well-being on Teaching and Motivation	Teaching Quality Linked to Well-being	<p><i>"If I'm mentally tired or unmotivated, it reflects in the classroom."</i></p> <p><i>"When I have a sincere relationship with my colleagues and school administration, it positively influences my teaching."</i></p>

### 4.3 Presentation of Themes

#### 4.3.1 Findings for Research Question 1: How do teachers explain their social well-being in schools?

##### **Theme 1: Experiencing Recognition and Belonging**

Teachers described their social well-being as closely tied to feeling respected, comfortable, and valued within the school community. Recognition from students, colleagues, and leadership boosted their emotional resilience and professional commitment.

##### **Teacher 1 (School No. 135, Baku) stated:**

*"When I enter the classroom and see the students' eyes, I forget everything else. That moment gives me strength."*

##### **Teacher 2 (School No. 135, Baku) stated:**

*"My principal recognized my efforts and recommended me for an honorary award. That recognition meant the world to me."*

##### **Theme 2: Importance of Leadership**

Leadership practices had a profound impact on teachers' social well-being. Supportive leadership enhanced teachers' emotional security and motivation, while lack of acknowledgment led to dissatisfaction and demotivation.

##### **Teacher 1 (Mehdi Mehdizadeh School No. 4, Ganja) stated:**

*"The administration never announced that I received an award from the ministry... This inevitably has a negative impact."*

**Teacher 2 (School No. 135, Baku) stated:**

*"Our principal praises teachers during meetings... Even a simple compliment makes a difference."*

### **Theme 3: Positive Relationships with Colleagues**

Collegial relationships based on trust, openness, and mutual support were fundamental to maintaining social well-being. Teachers stressed the importance of personal bonds beyond formal professional interactions.

**Teacher 1 (Ganja City Mehdi Mehdizadeh School No. 4) stated:**

*"If the personal relationship is good, the collaboration you establish is also more successful."*

**Teacher 1 (School No. 86, Baku) stated:**

*"We meet outside of work to get to know each other better."*

However, teachers in larger schools noted that collaboration sometimes weakened due to the size and structure of departments.

**Teacher 2 (Ganja City Mehdi Mehdizadeh School No. 4) stated:**

*"There are about 40 foreign language teachers in our school... I see very little cooperation and support."*

#### **4.3.2 Findings for Research Question 2: In what ways does teachers' social well-being shape their collaborative practices?**

### **Theme 4: Workload and Resource Strain on Social Well-being**

Workload pressures and lack of resources were major obstacles to maintaining social well-being and sustaining collaboration. Many teachers described physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from long working hours and insufficient facilities.

**Teacher 3 (Ganja City Mehdi Mehdizadeh School No. 4) stated:**

*"Sometimes I stay late helping students, then tutor in the evening. By the time I get home, there's no energy left for anything."*

**Teacher 2 (School No. 192, Baku) stated:**

*"The lack of a technical infrastructure, such as inadequate facilities in Informatics classrooms, has a negative impact."*

#### **Theme 5: Trust and Communication as Foundations for Collaboration**

Trust was a recurring theme underlying effective collaboration. Teachers reported that they preferred to collaborate and share ideas only with colleagues they trusted, highlighting trust as essential for meaningful teamwork.

**Teacher 3 (Ganja City Mehdi Mehdizadeh School No. 4) stated:**

*"We only share with those we trust and those who trust us."*

**Teacher 3 (School No. 135, Baku) stated:**

*"Trust is essential... trust in oneself and trust in others."*

## **Theme 6: The Influence of Social Well-being on Teaching and Motivation**

Teachers indicated that their level of social well-being directly influenced their classroom performance. Higher levels of social well-being fostered greater creativity, patience, and energy in teaching, while poor well-being often led to diminished classroom engagement.

**Teacher 2 (School No. 192, Baku) stated:**

*"If I'm mentally tired or unmotivated, it reflects in the classroom."*

**Teacher 3 (School No. 86, Baku) stated:**

*"When I have a sincere relationship with my colleagues and school administration, it positively influences my teaching."*

### **4.4 Cross-Theme Analysis**

A synthesis across the findings revealed three overarching patterns:

First, leadership, peer relationships, and trust consistently emerged as core pillars influencing teachers' social well-being. Teachers who experienced strong leadership support and positive peer relations reported higher emotional resilience and a greater willingness to collaborate. In contrast, those who faced neglect or lack of recognition from leaders and colleagues described feelings of isolation and reduced collaboration.

Second, workload and resource challenges acted both as direct threats to social well-being and as indirect barriers to effective collaboration. Even where trust and leadership were present, teachers often felt overwhelmed by external demands, leaving them with limited time and energy for collegial interaction.

Third, the findings revealed that social well-being directly influenced teaching practices and professional growth. Teachers consistently linked their emotional and social states to the quality of their instruction, patience with students, and creative engagement with their work.

These cross-theme patterns demonstrate that social well-being is not an isolated psychological construct; rather, it is dynamically connected to teachers' collaboration, professional effectiveness, and ultimately to student learning outcomes. Addressing leadership practices, fostering collegial trust, and managing workload demands are thus mutually reinforcing strategies necessary for cultivating both individual and institutional growth.

**Table 4.1 Summary of Cross-Theme Analysis: Patterns Emerging from Teachers' Experiences**

<b>Overarching Pattern</b>	<b>Key Insights</b>
Leadership, Peer Relationships, and Trust as Core Pillars	Strong leadership and collegial trust enhance social well-being and collaboration; lack of recognition leads to isolation.
Workload and Resource Challenges	High demands and poor resources undermine social well-being and limit collaboration, even when trust is present.
Social Well-being Influences Teaching and Professional Growth	Higher social well-being leads to more effective, creative, and engaged teaching practices, benefiting student outcomes.

#### 4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the key findings from the study, organized around the two research questions. Six major themes were identified, highlighting how teachers perceive their social well-being and how it shapes their collaborative practices. The findings point to the importance of supportive leadership, collegial trust, manageable workloads, and strong professional communities in fostering

both teacher well-being and effective collaboration. The next chapter will discuss these findings in relation to the existing literature.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

This research aimed at investigating socially oriented aspects of well-being and collaborative practice among teachers in Baku, where social well-being is described as community feeling. Secondary school teachers were chosen as participants, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with them. Data analysis resulted in the identification of the following six themes: feeling valued and part of the school community, the importance of leadership, positive relationships with colleagues, challenges from workload and resources, trust and communication, and the impact of social well-being on teaching and motivation. This study balanced gaps in literature by underscoring that teachers' social dimensions bear persistent influence and attention, recalling the diverse characteristics of teacher well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2004; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). Social well-being, in particular, emerged as a foundational component in promoting teacher motivation, trust, collaboration, and social relations which correlate with school climate and student achievement (Day, Gu & Sammons, 2016; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The most important takeaway from this research is the fact that recognition and feeling valued are not superficial motivators but rather core to well-being. Teachers ascribe emotional resilience and professional commitment to the appreciation received from peers and administrators, which corroborates Fullan's (2007) stance that teacher empowerment and a shared vision are the hallmark of a successful school culture and reform. It became obvious that the most important factor influencing a teacher's wellbeing is leadership. Supportive leadership enhances both well-being and professional trust and collaboration, supporting earlier findings which consider transformational leadership pivotal to school advancement (Day et al., 2016). On the contrary, lack of recognition or appreciation by a leader does lead to demotivation, which corresponds to literature concern pertaining to lack of emotions in the teaching profession and burnout (Bitsadze & Japaridze, 2014). The theme of good peer relationships has strong relevance to the work of Akinyemi et al. (2020), celebrating the importance of communities of practice for trusting, shared learning, and professional development. However,

some respondents reported inconsistencies regarding collaboration across schools, especially in large institutions where minimal peer support was noted. This highlights the need for purposeful policies and structures aimed at developing relational capacity among staff, as Vescio et al. (2008) suggested. Working with a heavy workload and insufficient resources not only served as an impediment to collaboration, but also as a source of psychological pressure, especially among female teachers, reinforcing findings by Diganayeva (2021). These stressors heighten the experience of social isolation, decrease overall job satisfaction, and diminish the ability of teachers to develop relationships with their colleagues. The most prevalent aspect of the theme was trust because it came up during almost every interview. It was clear to see that teachers linked trust to their willingness to share and collaborate. This echoes Deci and Ryan's (2008) Self-Determination Theory that identifies relatedness as one of the essential human needs. Without trust, collaboration is ineffective. Schools must, therefore, build trust by being open, just, and exercising distributed leadership.

Lastly, the link between social well-being and classroom practice shows why this concern goes beyond the individual teacher and is significant. Socially well-off teachers were more energized, more patient, and overall more effective, which benefited students and school performance (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This research sheds light on the intricacies of social well-being amongst teachers and its impact on their professional interactions. The results indicate that respect, supportive leadership, and collegial connections enhance motivation, effectiveness, and collaboration among educators. Conversely, inadequate leadership, increased workload, and insufficient peer connections diminish the sense of well-being and disrupt collaborative efforts. The social dimension of well-being forms the basis of building a school culture that is supportive and strong. It should be regarded as primary during teacher development programs, policy formulation, and in school leadership activities. The purpose of this study is to rectify this for the Azerbaijani context because there has been insufficient study concerning social well-being and collaborative practice. Initiatives aimed at enhancing schools have to begin with human resources—acute awareness that education is more than an intellectual undertaking; it is social in nature. By addressing the social needs of teachers, we not only assist their professional development but also begin to create a more open, strong, and effective educational system.

## **Chapter 7: Final Product**

### **Voice of Teachers: Stories of Well-being and Collaboration – A Mini-Booklet**

*Our product link:*

[https://1drv.ms/b/s!AvsYbB\\_928YXgRPggs\\_BXb71D\\_jW?e=lwmIKj](https://1drv.ms/b/s!AvsYbB_928YXgRPggs_BXb71D_jW?e=lwmIKj)

We took our research out of the classroom, crafting a supplemental resource called Voice of Teachers: Stories of Well-Being and Collaboration. This mini-book contains the authentic voices of twelve teachers from secondary schools in Azerbaijan and provides their experiences for school leaders and policymakers.

This booklet represents the outcomes of the research on well-recognized issues of leadership, peer relations, workload, trust, and communication as well as the lack of adequate measures for enhancing teacher well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Fullan, 2007). This product, combining actual testimonies with researched material, serves not only as a guide but also as a mirror that educators can reflect upon in order to foster a positive change in school climate.

#### **Content and Structure:**

The booklet presents 12 sections, each containing:

1. An illustrative Teacher quote
2. A social welfare concern
3. A practical recommendation for schools
4. An empowerment statement

Interview data yielded answers related to burnout, lack of trust, emotional distance, and unfair workload and was included in every spread.

#### **Purpose and Impact**

Our aims were to:

1. Recognize the impact of social-emotional aspects of teaching on teachers
2. Empower through authentic teacher voices

3. Support the need for school improvement
4. Encourage collaboration for overcoming challenges posed by division of work among staff

## APPENDIX A

### Interview Protocol

Location \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

People Attending \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher conducting interview: Ali Taghizada/ Narmin Hajiyeva / Gamar Mutallimova/ Rubaba Taghizada

#### Opening:

Hello [Participant's Name], thank you so much for joining me/us today.

My name is [Your Name], and I'm a [Your Position/Role] at [Your Institution/Organization].

I really appreciate you taking the time to speak with me/us.

Today, I'd like to talk about your experiences as a teacher, specifically focusing on your social well-being at school/university and how it relates to your collaborative practices with colleagues. Your insights are incredibly valuable, and I believe they can help us better understand and improve the working environment for teachers.

Before we begin, I want to explain a bit about how our conversation will go. This interview will last approximately [X minutes/hours]. I have a list of questions to guide our discussion, but please feel free to share any thoughts or experiences that you think are relevant. There's no need to worry about giving the 'perfect' answer—I'm really just interested in your genuine experiences and opinions.

I'd also like to mention that everything we discuss today will be kept confidential. If you're comfortable, I'd like to record our conversation to ensure that I accurately capture your thoughts. However, if you prefer not to be recorded, please let me know, and I will take notes instead.

Do you have any questions before we start? If not, we can begin with some warm-up questions to get to know you a little better.

**Warm-up questions:**

1. Could you share a little about your background and what inspired you to become a teacher?
2. What do you enjoy most about working in your school?
3. What kinds of interactions with colleagues or students do you value the most?
4. Is there a particular instance of collaboration or support among your peers that stands out to you?

**Question 1:**

1. How do you explain social well-being within the school environment?
2. Can you describe what social well-being means to you as a teacher? Please share some specific instances.
3. How would you describe your current social well-being at work?
4. What factors contribute most significantly to your sense of social well-being in your school?  
Please provide some specific examples.
5. Who or what are your primary sources of support within the school?
6. How do relationships with colleagues influence your social well-being?
7. What are the main challenges you face that impact your social well-being at school?
8. Can you share an experience where your social well-being was significantly affected, positively or negatively?
9. How does your work-life balance affect your social well-being?

10. What strategies do you use to maintain or improve your social well-being?

*In case we cannot provide the definition of social well-being, then we should think of the ways in which we will be able to provide the definition. Here is one example:*

**Use of Visual or Concept Mapping Tools:**

To help us better understand how you see social well-being in your school environment, I'd like to try a visual exercise. Sometimes, drawing or mapping out ideas can make it easier to express thoughts that might be hard to put into words.

Could you please take a few minutes to create a simple diagram or concept map that represents what social well-being means to you in the context of your school? You might include elements like relationships, support, communication, trust, or anything else that you feel is important.

There's no right or wrong way to do this—the goal is simply to capture the key components or feelings that come to mind when you think about a supportive social environment at work. Once you've finished, feel free to explain what you've drawn and why you included those elements.

If you'd like, you can use paper and pen or any drawing tool that you're comfortable with. Take your time, and when you're ready, we can discuss your diagram together.

**Follow-Up Questions After the Visual Task:**

1. Clarification:
  - a. Could you walk me through your diagram and explain the different elements you included?
2. Connections:
  - a. How do these elements relate to one another in your view? For example, are there specific relationships or interactions that you find particularly important?
3. Reflection:
  - a. Did creating this diagram help you think about social well-being in a new way? If so, how?

4. Application:

- a. How might this understanding of social well-being influence your daily interactions and collaboration with colleagues at school?

**Question 2:**

1. In what ways does your social well-being shape your ability to collaborate with other teachers?

Please provide some specific examples.

2. Can you provide examples of how your interactions with colleagues have enhanced or hindered your collaborative efforts?

3. How do the social dynamics within your teaching team affect your collaborative practices?

4. What role does trust play in your collaborative relationships, and how is it connected to your social well-being?

5. How does your comfort level in social interactions impact your participation in team meetings or collaborative projects?

6. Can you describe how effective communication among staff contributes to your social well-being and teamwork?

7. How do support systems within the school (e.g., mentoring, professional development) affect both your social well-being and your collaborative work?

8. In what ways do collaborative practices within the school support or challenge your social well-being?

9. How does your social well-being influence your teaching methods and interactions with students?

10. Do you find that your level of social well-being affects your motivation and engagement in collaborative initiatives? Please elaborate.
11. What changes or initiatives do you believe could improve teachers' social well-being in your school?
12. How could the school better support collaborative practices to enhance teachers' social well-being?
13. What personal strategies do you employ to maintain your social well-being and foster positive collaborations?
14. How do you balance individual well-being with the demands of collaborative work?
15. Looking ahead, how do you see the relationship between social well-being and collaboration evolving in your school?
16. What support or resources would you like to see implemented to strengthen both social well-being and collaborative practices among teachers?

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