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Subjective Well-Being in New Zealand Teachers: An Examination of the Role of Psychological
Capital

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Andrea Soykan

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between psychological capital and well-being in a sample of 1,502 teachers. Teaching has been consistently identified as one of the most stressful occupations, a situation that inherently raises questions about teacher wellbeing. This study explores the extent to which psychological capital can act as a protective factor against stress and also examines the role of appraisal and coping in the stress-strain relationship. Teachers across New Zealand and from a range of teaching levels completed surveys measuring psychological capital, challenge and threat appraisal, task-focussed and emotion-focussed coping, affect, perceived stress, and life satisfaction. Data analysis identified direct and indirect effects of psychological capital on outcome measures of well-being and stress. Teachers with higher levels of psychological capital reported higher levels of well-being and lower levels of stress. Psychological capital was positively related to life satisfaction ($r = .47, p < .01$) and positive affect ($r = .63, p < .01$), and negatively related to perceived stress ($r = -.66, p < .01$) and negative affect ($r = -.61, p < .01$). In addition, psychological capital was a significant predictor of outcome measures. Psychological capital was also positively related to challenge appraisal and task-focussed coping, and negatively related to threat appraisal and emotion-focussed coping. Task-focussed coping was found to mediate the relationship between challenge appraisal and measures of well-being. Teachers high in psychological capital were more likely to appraise a situation as a challenge than a threat, and as a partial mediator, task-focussed coping explained some of the relationship between challenge appraisal and well-being.

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Approval for this research has been obtained from the Massey University Ethics Committee (Northern), reference 15/011

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