

## EXPLORING SUPPORTING FACTORS TO ENHANCE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' WELL BEING DURING PRACTICUM PROGRAM

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### ABSTRAK

Mahasiswa calon guru menghadapi tantangan emosional dan pengembangan profesional selama program praktik mengajar, sehingga kesejahteraan menjadi aspek penting dalam proses ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi faktor-faktor yang mendukung kesejahteraan mahasiswa pendidikan bahasa Inggris selama program praktik mengajar. Dengan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari sepuluh partisipan melalui kuesioner tertutup dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tiga faktor utama yang mendukung kesejahteraan mahasiswa praktikan, yaitu: motivasi, keterlibatan siswa, dan apresiasi terhadap profesi guru. Motivasi diperkuat oleh pengalaman langsung mengajar di kelas, sementara keterlibatan dan keberhasilan siswa memberikan kepuasan emosional yang signifikan. Selain itu, perasaan dihargai terutama oleh siswa meningkatkan kepercayaan diri dan identitas profesional mahasiswa praktikan. Faktor-faktor ini berperan penting dalam meningkatkan ketahanan emosional, komitmen terhadap profesi, serta pengalaman mengajar yang positif. Studi ini menekankan pentingnya menumbuhkan faktor-faktor pendukung tersebut untuk menjaga kesejahteraan dan keberhasilan jangka panjang calon guru di dunia pendidikan.

**Kata kunci:** mahasiswa praktikan, kesejahteraan, motivasi, keterlibatan siswa, praktik mengajar, apresiasi profesi

### ABSTRACT

Pre-service teachers face both professional growth and emotional challenges during their practicum, making well-being a critical component of their development. This study aims to explore the supporting factors that enhance the well-being of pre-service English teachers during their teaching practicum program. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were gathered from ten participants through close-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed three main contributing factors to well-being: motivation, student engagement, and appreciation of the teaching profession. Motivation was reinforced by hands-on teaching experiences, while positive student responses and academic progress strengthened emotional satisfaction. Additionally, feeling appreciated—especially by students—boosted pre-service teachers' confidence and professional identity. These factors played a significant role in increasing resilience, fostering commitment, and enhancing the overall teaching experience. The study emphasizes the importance of nurturing these elements to support the psychological and emotional well-being of pre-service teachers, ultimately contributing to their long-term success in the profession.

**Keywords:** pre-service teachers, well-being, motivation, student engagement, teaching practicum, professional appreciation

## INTRODUCTION

The teaching practicum is a vital stage in the journey of becoming a teacher. It serves as the bridge between theoretical coursework and the realities of classroom teaching. Through this direct experience, pre-service teachers apply pedagogical theories, develop classroom management strategies, and engage directly with students in a school environment (Richards, 2011; Genc, 2016). In Indonesia, the practicum is known as *Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan* (PLP), and it is often regarded as one of the most influential and transformative parts of teacher education (Lestari, 2020). However, this process is not without its challenges. Pre-service teachers frequently face emotional, cognitive, and relational stressors, which can significantly impact their well-being and future commitment to the profession (Ji et al., 2022; Miranda & Wahyudin, 2023).

Teacher well-being has become an increasingly important area of educational research due to its correlation with instructional quality, teacher retention, and student outcomes (Benevene et al., 2020; Duckworth et al., 2009). Acton and Glasgow (2015) define teacher well-being as a sense of professional fulfillment and emotional satisfaction constructed in collaboration with students and colleagues. For pre-service teachers who are still developing their professional identity well-being is particularly fragile. Mairitsch et al. (2021) emphasize that the early stages of teaching practice expose pre-service teachers to high levels of emotional demand, often without the coping mechanisms and professional confidence that experienced teachers may possess. These demands, if left unaddressed, can lead to emotional exhaustion, self-doubt, and in some cases, withdrawal from the profession altogether (Kyriacou et al., 1979; Agyapong et al., 2022).

Although most research on teacher well-being focuses on in-service teachers, recent studies have started to examine the well-being of pre-service teachers in the practicum setting. Zaimoğlu and Dagtas (2023) present a useful framework that categorizes the factors influencing pre-service teacher well-being into two groups: contributing factors and detracting factors. The contributing factors include internal motivation, positive

relationships with students, and appreciation for the profession. Motivation is often seen as the foundation of well-being. It can be fueled by personal passion, the desire to make a difference, or a sense of calling to the teaching profession (Li & Guo, 2024). Positive interactions with students such as engagement, curiosity, and respect provide emotional satisfaction and strengthen the teacher-student bond (Klassen et al., 2012). Furthermore, feeling appreciated by students, mentors, or peers helps pre-service teachers feel valued, reinforcing their professional identity and self-worth (Day & Gu, 2007).

These positive factors, however, must be viewed alongside the well-documented challenges of practicum. Feelings of inadequacy, difficulty managing relationships with mentors or colleagues, and the burden of juggling multiple roles as student, teacher, and peer are among the detracting factors that can undermine well-being (Zaimoğlu & Dagtas, 2023; Sya'idah & Rohmana, 2023). While these challenges are real and pressing, this article focuses on the supporting or contributing factors that can be cultivated and strengthened to promote well-being during this transitional period. Recognizing and enhancing these positive elements not only empowers pre-service teachers to thrive during their practicum but also lays the foundation for long-term resilience and professional commitment.

Several studies support the idea that promoting well-being during practicum has lasting benefits. For instance, Hue and Lau (2015) found that mindfulness-based interventions improved pre-service teachers' mental health, reduced stress, and enhanced classroom engagement. Similarly, Gregersen et al. (2020) argue that well-being is not just about the absence of stress but the presence of "uplifts" such as support, purpose, and meaningful relationships. These findings reinforce the importance of teacher education programs taking an active role in cultivating a positive practicum environment where motivation is nurtured, student-teacher interaction is encouraged, and the profession is appreciated.

The development of pre-service teacher well-being must be understood not only as an individual psychological state but also as a dynamic interaction between personal, relational, and institutional factors (Sulis et

al., 2021). Emotional resilience, for example, is not solely innate; it can be cultivated through positive mentoring, peer support, and reflective practices (McCallum & Price, 2015). This aligns with the view that teacher well-being is shaped by both internal dispositions such as motivation and self-efficacy and external environments such as school culture and practicum structure (Bobic et al., 2022). When teacher education programs prioritize these aspects by creating a nurturing environment, offering constructive feedback, and recognizing teacher effort, they contribute meaningfully to sustaining the well-being of future educators. Such an approach not only benefits the teachers themselves but also has a ripple effect on students' learning experiences and the overall quality of education.

In this article, the focus is narrowed to explore three key supporting factors identified in the literature and confirmed through qualitative data: motivation, student engagement, and appreciation of the profession. These factors emerged as significant contributors to the emotional and psychological well-being of pre-service English teachers during their practicum. Through a qualitative case study involving ten participants from an English Education Department in Bogor, this study aims to offer practical insights for educators, mentors, and institutions to design more holistic, supportive, and emotionally sustainable practicum programs.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the factors that support pre-service teachers' well-being during their teaching practicum. A case study design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of complex, context-bound phenomena—in this case, the lived experiences of pre-service teachers during a practicum program (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2003). The participants were ten final-year students from the English Education Department at a university in Bogor, Indonesia. All participants had recently completed a four-month practicum in junior and senior high schools and were selected purposively to ensure that they had direct experience relevant to the research focus. This approach was aligned with Creswell's

(2013) recommendation that qualitative studies involving interviews should focus on a small group to allow for depth and richness of data.

Data were collected using two instruments: a close-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire, consisting of 12 items, was adapted from previous studies on teacher well-being (Zaimoğlu & Dagtas, 2023; Klassen et al., 2012; Day & Gu, 2007) and distributed via Google Forms. It used a 4-point Likert scale to capture participants' agreement levels regarding various contributing factors such as motivation, student engagement, and appreciation of the profession. To deepen the findings, follow-up interviews were conducted with six of the participants. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, allowing for flexibility while still focusing on the core themes identified in the questionnaire. All data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This multi-method approach ensured data triangulation and increased the credibility of the findings.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The findings of this study revealed that several key factors significantly enhanced the well-being of pre-service English teachers during their teaching practicum. Through questionnaire analysis and semi-structured interviews, three dominant themes emerged as the most supportive elements: motivation, student engagement, and appreciation of the profession. These elements not only helped participants navigate practicum-related stress but also strengthened their professional commitment and emotional resilience.

Motivation emerged as a foundational contributor to well-being. Despite the challenges encountered during practicum, many participants expressed a renewed sense of purpose and enthusiasm for teaching. The questionnaire responses showed high agreement on statements related to increased commitment after direct classroom experience. Interview data further supported this, with several participants sharing that teaching real students and managing a classroom gave them a sense of

achievement and confidence. As stated by one participant, "Teaching directly made me realize how rewarding it is to help students understand something. It made me want to become a real teacher even more." This aligns with Li and Guo's (2024) assertion that intrinsic motivation, when activated through authentic experiences, plays a critical role in teacher perseverance and satisfaction. In addition, motivation is a powerful internal driver that significantly enhances pre-service teachers' well-being. Experiencing real teaching scenarios allowed participants to connect their academic learning with classroom realities, reinforcing their commitment to becoming educators. When pre-service teachers felt that they were growing, making progress, and contributing meaningfully to students' learning, their confidence and motivation increased. Therefore, teacher education programs should continue to provide meaningful, hands-on teaching experiences that ignite and sustain motivation throughout the practicum period.

Another significant contributor was student engagement, which had the most uplifting emotional impact. The questionnaire results indicated that most participants felt emotionally supported and encouraged by their students' enthusiasm and progress. Participants who experienced responsive classrooms described feelings of joy, connection, and renewed commitment to teaching. One participant said, "When I saw my students excited to learn and improving, I felt like all my hard work paid off." These findings are consistent with Klassen et al. (2012), who found that student motivation and interaction are central to fostering teachers' positive emotions and classroom efficacy. The presence of positive student-teacher relationships served not only as a motivator but also as a buffer against stress during the practicum period. Student engagement emerged as one of the most emotionally rewarding factors during the teaching practicum. The positive responses, curiosity, and academic improvement of students served as a source of encouragement and fulfillment for pre-service teachers. This interaction created a sense of connection and purpose, reinforcing their belief in their ability to make an impact. Promoting student-centered teaching strategies and encouraging

student-teacher interaction can thus enhance emotional satisfaction and support the overall well-being of future educators.

The third key factor was appreciation of the teaching profession. Participants reported feeling valued when they received verbal gratitude from students or constructive feedback from mentor teachers. Questionnaire data revealed a particularly high mean score on the statement, "I feel appreciated by my students when teaching English," indicating that even small gestures from students made a big emotional impact. This sense of being appreciated reinforced participants' identity as future educators and gave them a deeper respect for the teaching profession. As Day and Gu (2007) noted, when teachers feel that their work is meaningful and recognized, it contributes to a stronger professional identity and long-term well-being. Feeling appreciated especially by students played a vital role in affirming the professional identity of pre-service teachers. Acts of appreciation, whether verbal or behavioral, boosted their emotional resilience and validated their role in the classroom. This appreciation not only motivated them to perform better but also helped shape a positive view of the teaching profession as a respected and meaningful career. Practicum programs should emphasize constructive feedback and foster an environment where pre-service teachers feel seen, respected, and valued for their contributions.

In summary, the results clearly show that these three contributing factors—motivation, student engagement, and appreciation—played an essential role in enhancing pre-service teachers' well-being. Rather than being overwhelmed by practicum stressors, many participants emerged from the experience feeling more committed, emotionally uplifted, and professionally affirmed. These findings highlight the importance of designing practicum programs that nurture intrinsic motivation, promote positive student interaction, and recognize the efforts of pre-service teachers. By doing so, teacher education institutions can help cultivate emotionally resilient, passionate, and well-prepared future educators.

## CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted that three main factors motivation, student engagement, and appreciation of the profession play a crucial role in enhancing the well-being of pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum. These factors provided emotional strength, affirmed professional identity, and contributed to a more positive practicum experience overall. Motivation, fueled by real classroom engagement, helped participants feel more committed and purposeful in their teaching journey. Meanwhile, student engagement offered emotional rewards, as the enthusiasm and progress of learners gave pre-service teachers a sense of satisfaction and encouragement. Additionally, the feeling of being appreciated—especially by students—gave them confidence and validation, reinforcing their choice of profession.

Futhermore, these three factors worked not only as buffers against practicum-related stress but also as enhancers of emotional resilience and professional growth. These findings underline the need for teacher education programs to design practicum environments that do more than fulfill academic requirements. Programs should actively nurture intrinsic motivation, encourage meaningful student interaction, and foster a culture of appreciation through feedback and mentoring. By doing so, institutions can ensure that pre-service teachers are not only pedagogically prepared but also emotionally supported—leading to stronger professional identity, well-being, and long-term success in the teaching field.

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