

WELL-BEING AND STRESS OF TEACHERS IN MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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Reported teacher stress and teacher attrition are at alarming levels. These trends have led to a number of studies on the well-being and stress of teachers. Additionally, evidence suggests that teachers' well-being is more severely threatened in marginalised and low-income communities. This systematic review aims to synthesise the current research evidence examining the well-being and stress of teachers in marginalised communities. The review included a systematic search of both qualitative and quantitative peer-reviewed and unpublished empirical studies and dissertations. Of the forty-five studies included in the review, 44% highlighted considerable stress and compromised well-being among teachers. However, 15% also revealed a strong sense of purpose and a high level of involvement and commitment of teachers. Additionally, 18% of the studies emphasised the importance of positive relationships between teachers, their colleagues, and school management, as well as the role of institutional support in promoting teacher well-being. Based on the results of the review and risk of bias assessment, we recommend that future studies: 1) clearly define the target population and pay more attention to the sample selection process, 2) include the non-responding in the analysis and description, and 3) place greater emphasis on ethical considerations.

Keywords: teacher, well-being, stress, work stress, marginalised



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INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession can provide a sense of fulfilment, as it is widely perceived by teachers themselves as meaningful and impactful work (Karataş & Özdemir, 2022; Trillo et al., 2024). However, it can also be demanding due to the work's emotionally, cognitively, and administratively challenging nature. Teachers are often required to manage diverse classrooms, meet high-performance expectations, handle administrative tasks, and respond to students' social and emotional needs – all of which contribute to the overall complexity of the profession. According to the OECD (2019), teachers reporting high workplace stress are significantly more likely to want to quit within five years, reflecting how over a third of teachers experience stress-related turnover intentions. Elevated rates of teacher turnover have been consistently reported across various scholarly studies (Ingersoll, 2001; Simon, & Johnson, 2015). Well-being is crucial for all teachers, but it is particularly important for teachers in low-resource, crisis, or marginalised contexts (Falk et al., 2019), as it is threatened to a higher degree. In these settings, teacher well-being is more severely undermined due to the accumulation of specific stressors (such as Bottiani et al., 2019) that require targeted support and systemic-level interventions (Janík Blašková & Winter, 2025). Research by Rosinský et al. (2009) shows teachers in marginalised communities face unique demands including pupils' poor home preparation, behavioural issues, and challenging parent interactions. Ďurková and Kentoš (2024) identify behaviour-related stressors – aggressive conduct, low motivation, and poor parental cooperation – as key factors in emotional exhaustion, alongside insufficient state support and excessive administrative workload. These cumulative challenges can lead to frustration, burnout, and ultimately higher attrition, echoing broader international findings on teacher stress and retention (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Although there are dozens of reviews examining teacher well-being (e.g. Dreer, 2023; Na'imah et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2024), none of them focus on the well-being of teachers in marginalised communities. Marginalised groups refer to individuals or communities that are systematically pushed to the margins of society and experience unequal access to resources and services – often as a result of a combination of factors such as poverty, ethnicity, or health-related disadvantages (Causadias & Umaña-Taylor, 2018; Fluit et al., 2024). The operationalisation of the term "marginalised" in studies depends on the specific context. In the present study, the degree of marginalisation is determined by affiliation with the Roma minority, poverty index (low-income communities), and indicators of social exclusion (e.g., access to housing, healthcare, and infrastructure).

Teacher stress has a fairly unified definition which emphasises the role of individual stressors categorised under three broad areas: work stress (teaching workload, administrative workload), organisational-level stress (relationships with colleagues, school management), and student-related stress (students' behaviour, and achievements) (Collie et al., 2012). These factors are also relevant to teacher well-being (Konu et al., 2010). However, teacher well-being has varied conceptualisations across different research models, potentially affecting the relationship between teacher stress and well-being. In some models and approaches, stress-related mechanisms such as job demands, coping, or resilience are seen as part of well-being (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2016); in others, the concepts are separate (Turner & Gavis, 2023). However, all definitions and models concur that teacher stress and teacher well-being have a close, intertwined relationship. Recent studies show teacher well-being correlates negatively with stress and burnout, with longitudinal research demonstrating that increased burnout corresponds to declining well-being over time (Burić et al., 2019; Emeljanovas et al., 2023). Cross-national evidence confirms that teacher stress and burnout elevate anxiety and depression globally (Iriarte Redín & Erro-Garcés, 2020), while systematic reviews identify stress as a key factor undermining teacher well-being (Hascher & Waber, 2021).

Evidence suggests teacher well-being faces greater threats in marginalised communities, where children from low socio-economic backgrounds experience higher rates of health problems, learning disorders, and disciplinary issues (Arrhenius et al., 2018). Additionally, stigmatisation of disadvantaged schools contributes to socio-economic segregation as affluent parents avoid them (OECD, 2012). All these factors may, in turn, impact teachers' mental and physical health, particularly when combined with other well-researched sources of strain such as work overload, stress, and lack of social support (Rajaei et al., 2022; Temam et al., 2019).

This systematic review aims to synthesise the current research evidence examining the well-being and stress of teachers in marginalised communities at the primary or secondary school level. The following research questions guided our review:

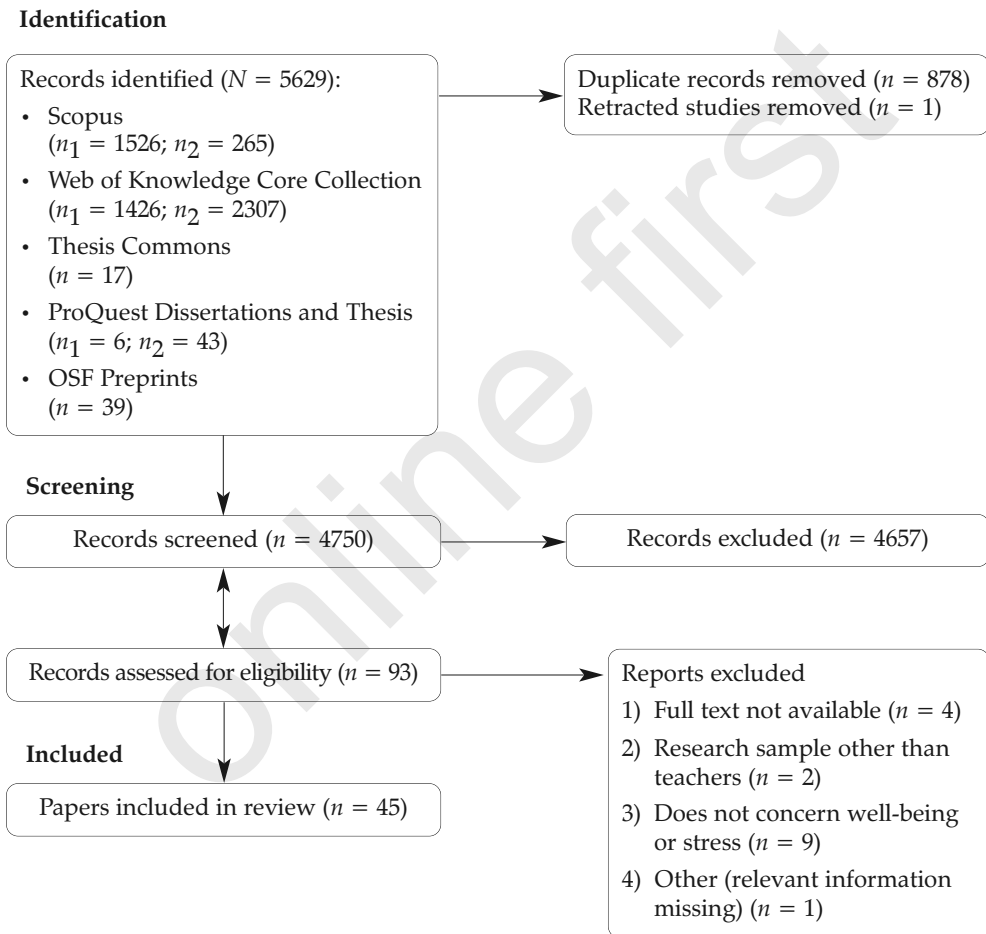
1. What is the state of well-being and stress of teachers in marginalised communities? Which aspects of their work do teachers perceive as particularly rewarding, and which as especially challenging, when teaching in marginalised communities?
2. Are there differences between findings in studies using a qualitative approach compared to those using a quantitative approach?

METHOD

Literature search

We have screened Scopus and Web of Knowledge databases for published empirical work and Thesis Commons, ProQuest Dissertations and Thesis, OSF Preprints, and Google Scholar (first 15 pages per 10 studies) for unpublished work. After the initial search, a broader follow-up search further expanded the focus on marginalised communities. The full search string for each database is available at <https://osf.io/qgbm9>.

FIGURE 1
PRISMA Flowchart



Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Identified articles were further screened and included in our review if they met the following inclusion criteria: were either peer-reviewed (including conference papers) or unpublished (including working papers, preprints, and dissertations), empirical in nature, quantitative or qualitative, and available in

the English language. Included papers should represent empirical studies and discuss either well-being or stress perceived by teachers working with marginalised groups. Non-empirical papers (reviews, letters, newspapers, commentaries, etc.), studies for which full texts were unavailable, and studies that did not specifically examine teacher well-being/stress in the context of marginalised environments were excluded.

Selection and data extraction process

After removing the duplicates, two authors (masked for review) independently screened the titles and abstracts of all studies in Rayyan (Ouzzani et al., 2016), unaware of each other's decisions. Studies were included for further full-text screening only when agreed by both authors. When a conflict in decision emerged, a third author (masked for review) was consulted. For studies for which we could not find the full text, we have emailed the authors with 1 gentle reminder to provide us with the full text. Each included study was coded by two team members, followed by a reconciliation process.

Risk of bias assessment

To assess the risk of bias in each included study, we have applied the JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist (Lockwood et al., 2015) for qualitative studies, and the Appraisal Tool for Cross-Sectional Studies AXIS for quantitative studies (Downes et al., 2016).

RESULTS

The systematic review identified a total of 45 studies examining well-being and stress. Of these, 20 studies employed quantitative methodologies, 24 utilised qualitative approaches, and 1 study implemented a mixed-methods design. Geographically, the studies spanned multiple continents, with the majority (21 studies) conducted in North America (USA and Canada), followed by Europe (8 studies), Asia (7 studies), Australia (5 studies), and Africa (4 studies). In terms of the primary variables investigated, 25 studies focused specifically on well-being, 18 studies examined stress, and 2 studies explored both well-being and stress simultaneously. More detailed information about each study is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Basic summary of all
included studies

Study		
Abel et al. (1999)**	Type of study / studied variables	quantitative / stress
	Country of origin	USA
	Sample	52 rural and 46 urban secondary school teachers
	Type of marginalisation	nondefined
	Teacher type	secondary school
	Mean age / years of experience	NA / 15.35 for rural; 15.70 for urban

Study	Continued	
Angelini et al. (2024)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	quantitative / well-being Italy 488 general and special education teachers nondefined primary school 40.32 / 7.17
Biasutti et al. (2020)*	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being Italy 29 Italian teachers migrant, refugee primary and middle school 50 / NA
Bottiani et al. (2019)**	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	quantitative / stress USA 255 teachers from urban low-income middle grade schools low income / ethnic minority middle school NA / approx. 50% (4 or more), approx. 50% (less than 4)
Brady et al. (2024)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	quantitative / well-being USA 109 teachers in majority-minoritised schools ethnic minority elementary and secondary school NA / first-year teachers
Brown & L'Estrange (2023)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being Australia 7 trauma-informed teachers in Australia trauma informed secondary school 30-39 / 11-15
Cui et al. (2022)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being China 10 rural teachers rural areas primary / elementary, middle school 46.2 / 20-30
Elliott (2021)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	quantitative / stress USA 103 teachers from general or special education working in high poverty urban schools low income primary / elementary school NA / NA
Ellison (2022)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being USA two elementary school teachers from high-poverty school low income middle school 40 / 11

Study	Continued	
Fleckman et al. (2022)	Type of study / studied variables	quantitative, qualitative / well-being, stress
	Country of origin	USA
	Sample	teachers working in marginalised communities (N ₁ =122, N ₂ =130, N ₃ =140, N ₄ =145)
	Type of marginalisation	marginalised communities / children exposed to trauma
Gaspar et al. (2022)	Teacher type	primary / elementary school, secondary / high school
	Mean age / years of experience	NA / NA
	Type of study / studied variables	quantitative / stress
	Country of origin	Portugal
Hine et al. (2022)	Sample	65 teachers working with children from economically disadvantaged families
	Type of marginalisation	low income
	Teacher type	kindergarten
	Mean age / years of experience	52 / 29
Holzner & Gaunt (2023)	Type of study / studied variables	qualitative / well-being
	Country of origin	Australia
	Sample	heterogeneous group of 49 teachers (including from rural and remote communities, Aboriginal, LGBTQIA, etc.)
	Type of marginalisation	ethnic minority
Christian-Brandt et al. (2020)**	Teacher type	primary / elementary, middle school
	Mean age / years of experience	19-68 / 1-33
	Type of study / studied variables	qualitative / well-being
	Country of origin	Australia
Johnson et al. (2020)	Sample	5 Tasmanian support teachers from rural and urban primary schools
	Type of marginalisation	rural teachers
	Teacher type	primary school
	Mean age / years of experience	49.4 / 22.8
Johnson et al. (2021)	Type of study / studied variables	quantitative / stress
	Country of origin	USA
	Sample	163 teachers in underserved elementary schools serving low income, English-language learner, Latinx students
	Type of marginalisation	low income
Johnson et al. (2021)	Teacher type	primary / elementary school
	Mean age / years of experience	40 / 13
	Type of study / studied variables	quantitative / stress
	Country of origin	USA
Johnson et al. (2021)	Sample	113 early care and education teachers
	Type of marginalisation	low income
	Teacher type	kindergarten
	Mean age / years of experience	NA / 14
Johnson et al. (2021)	Type of study / studied variables	quantitative / stress
	Country of origin	USA
	Sample	113 early care and education teachers
	Type of marginalisation	low income
Johnson et al. (2021)	Teacher type	kindergarten
	Mean age / years of experience	43 / 14
	Type of study / studied variables	quantitative / stress
	Country of origin	USA
Johnson et al. (2021)	Sample	113 early care and education teachers
	Type of marginalisation	low income
	Teacher type	kindergarten
	Mean age / years of experience	43 / 14

Study	Continued	
Leckey et al. (2016)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being Ireland 6 teachers from disadvantaged areas pupils from disadvant. areas / behavioural problems primary / elementary school 30 / 9
Lemke et al. (2021)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative case study / stress USA 16 school administrators and 9 teachers refugee and hurricane displaced students high school NA / 12-28
Martin & Amin (2020)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being South Africa four Black African teachers working in location characterised by extreme inequality and deprivation low income NA NA / NA
Masedi et al. (2023)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being South Africa 8 teachers in a semi-urban area in the North West province of South Africa teachers of adolescents with behavioural difficulties secondary school NA / 2+
Mehta et al. (2013)*	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	quantitative / stress USA 74 teachers from high-poverty urban schools low income / ethnic minority primary / elementary school NA / 13
Menden-Hall et al. (2021)*	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being Kenya teachers in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya $N_1=27$; $N_3=33$ refugee students primary school $M_1= 26.29$; $M_3= 29.36$ / NA
Morrison (2013)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being, stress Australia one teacher from disadvantaged rural school low income primary / elementary school NA / < 1
Mosley et al. (2023)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	quantitative / stress USA 7540 teachers working in US elementary schools ethnic minority elementary school 41.47 / 13.6

Study	Continued	
Nehmeh & Kelly (2018)*	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / stress USA 2 physics teachers in New York City professional isolation high school NA / 4
Neuen-schwander et al. (2017)*	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	quantitative / stress USA 33 teachers working in high-poverty schools low income kindergarten 45 / 16
Norozi & Ness (2023)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being Norway Norwegian reception teacher in elementary school newly arrived immigrant pupils elementary school NA / 5
Olsen (2013)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being South Africa 10 teachers from schools in poor socio-economic areas low income HIV/AIDS group NA NA / NA
Ouellette et al. (2018)**	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	quantitative / stress USA 54 teachers from schools in urban high poverty communities low income primary / elementary school 40.4 / 13
O'Donnell et al. (2008)*	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	quantitative / stress USA 521 teachers from schools characterised by a wide range of geographic, socio-economic, and cultural diversity low income / ethnic minority primary / elementary school NA / 12
O'Toole & Simovska (2022)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being Ireland 15 education professionals working in disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged schools low income primary / elementary school, secondary / high school NA / NA
Parrello et al. (2019)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being Italy 39 teachers from suburbs disadvantaged areas middle, secondary / high school NA / NA

Study	Continued
Paudel et al. (2024)	<p>Type of study / studied variables quantitative / stress</p> <p>Country of origin Nepal</p> <p>Sample 218 community secondary school teachers in Kathmandu district, Nepal</p> <p>Type of marginalisation NA</p> <p>Teacher type secondary school</p> <p>Mean age / years of experience < 40 y = 133, ≥ 40 y = 85 / < 5 y = 27, 5–20 y = 145, ≥ 21 y = 46</p>
Perry et al. (2015)*	<p>Type of study / studied variables qualitative / well-being</p> <p>Country of origin Canada</p> <p>Sample one teacher from large urban school engaged in Alternative Education Programme working with marginalised adolescents</p> <p>Type of marginalisation "marginalis. youth" – students residing in foster care or group homes, had histories of drugabuse, drop outs</p> <p>Teacher type secondary / high school</p> <p>Mean age / years of experience NA / 6</p>
Rajaei et al. (2022)	<p>Type of study / studied variables quantitative / stress</p> <p>Country of origin USA</p> <p>Sample 59 kindergartens through K-12 grade teachers from low- and high-income areas</p> <p>Type of marginalisation low income</p> <p>Teacher type primary / elementary school, middle, secondary / high school</p> <p>Mean age / years of experience 44.3 / 12</p>
Santoro (2007)**	<p>Type of study / studied variables qualitative / well-being</p> <p>Country of origin Australia</p> <p>Sample three teachers working in low socio-economic areas with high migrant and refugee populations</p> <p>Type of marginalisation low income</p> <p>Teacher type secondary / high school</p> <p>Mean age / years of experience NA / 20</p>
Shernoff et al. (2011)	<p>Type of study / studied variables qualitative / stress</p> <p>Country of origin USA</p> <p>Sample 14 teachers from high-poverty urban neighbourhoods</p> <p>Type of marginalisation low income/ ethnic minority</p> <p>Teacher type primary / elementary school</p> <p>Mean age / years of experience 33 / 5</p>
Tang (2018)	<p>Type of study / studied variables quantitative / well-being</p> <p>Country of origin China</p> <p>Sample 3344 rural teachers</p> <p>Type of marginalisation rural areas</p> <p>Teacher type primary / elementary school, secondary / high school</p> <p>Mean age / years of experience 37.5 / NA</p>
Tang et al. (2018)	<p>Type of study / studied variables quantitative / well-being</p> <p>Country of origin China</p> <p>Sample 3155 rural teachers</p> <p>Type of marginalisation rural areas</p> <p>Teacher type NA</p> <p>Mean age / years of experience 37.7 / NA</p>

Study	Continued		
Temam et al. (2019)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	quantitative / well-being France 1549 teachers from low-SES schools socially disadvantaged schools primary / elementary school NA / NA	
Trickett et al. (2012)*	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being USA 16 high school teachers of English language learners from urban areas English language learners middle school NA / 13	
Veronese et al. (2018a)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	quantitative / well-being Israel 153 Palestinian teachers from Occupied Palestinian Territory ethnic minority / high conflict zones NA 27.6 / NA	
Veronese et al. (2018b)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being Israel 104 Palestinian teachers working in environments characterised by high levels of human insecurity, social exclusion, and marginalisation ethnic minority / high conflict zones NA 39.5 / NA	
Wang & Chen (2022)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / well-being China 46 teachers from various poverty-stricken mountainous counties low income primary / elementary school NA / 0.5-35	
Wiltshire (2022)	Type of study / studied variables Country of origin Sample Type of marginalisation Teacher type Mean age / years of experience	qualitative / stress USA 6 Head start teachers (pre-kindergarten) of "at risk" of school failure children "at risk" of school failure children (poverty, homelessness, lack of care) kindergarten NA / 14.5	
Summary	Type of study (N) Qualitative (24) Quantitative (20) Mixed (1)	Variable (N) Well-being (25) Stress (18) Well-being and stress (2)	Country of origin (N) North America (21) Europe (8) Asia (7) Australia (5) Africa (4)

Research on teachers' stress

Six studies conducted in North America and South Africa focused on educators' occupational stress, utilising qualitative methodology. Five out of these studies (Masedi et al., 2023; Mendenhall et al., 2020; Olsen, 2013; Shernoff et al., 2011; Wiltshire, 2022) consistently reported that teachers of marginalised groups experienced increased levels of stress and fatigue. However, sources of stress were not only seen in work with marginalised communities (e.g., managing behaviour problems), but also in working conditions, especially lack of resources, lack of support in the workplace, especially from colleagues; excessive workload, and school-level disorganisation (Nehmeh & Kelly, 2018; Shernoff et al., 2011). Teachers reported that occupational stress significantly impacted their personal relationships and physical health, and identified human and material resources as most important to reducing work-related stress. The fourth qualitative study by Perry et al. (2015) described a resilient and optimistic teacher with a high sense of autonomy, belonging, and competence and an effective way to cope with stress, in a case study.

Studies utilising quantitative methodology are consistent with the above findings. The challenges associated with working with marginalised student populations – often reflected in the need to manage disruptive behaviour and address lower academic performance – have been identified as significant contributors to elevated levels of stress among teachers, encompassing both personal and economic dimensions (Bottiani et al., 2019; Elliott, 2021; Rajaei et al., 2022). A significant number of teachers are suffering from depression (Angelini et al., 2024; Johnson et al., 2020). However, the work of Abel and Sewell (1999) have shown no differences in burnout rates between teachers of marginalised communities and general education teachers. New teachers experience particularly high levels of stress during their first years of teaching. This stems from frustration over limited opportunities to develop both general pedagogical skills and specific knowledge and competencies needed for working with students from marginalised (culturally diverse) communities (Brown & L'Estrange, 2023; Mendenhall et al., 2020; Nehmeh & Kelly, 2018; Norozi & Ness, 2023).

An important role in reducing stress was played by the amount and nature of resources available to schools, but also higher self-efficacy (Bottiani et al., 2019), classes with fewer pupils (Abel & Sewell, 1999), and the quality of relations between colleagues and with school management (Elliott, 2021; Mehta et al., 2013). The need to reduce teachers' stress is particularly important in the context of the findings by Neuenschwander et al. (2017), that teacher stress can affect the development of students' executive functions.

Research on teachers' well-being

Ten qualitative studies discussed the well-being of teachers in marginalised communities and shared several common findings:

1) Teachers working in marginalised communities frequently construe their work as a mission, a perception that appears to enhance their well-being: they derive meaning from fostering students' growth, providing pastoral care and helping to transform life trajectories – a stance further reinforced by affirmative feedback from students (Cui et al., 2022; Fleckman et al., 2022; Martin & Amin, 2020; O'Toole & Simovska, 2022; Trickett et al., 2012). For many, this vocational orientation is rooted in personal biographies that mirror the socio-economic or ethnic backgrounds of their pupils, positioning them as salient positive role models (Santoro, 2007).

2) Even though working with marginalised communities fulfils a sense of purpose in one's work and mission, becoming too involved and worrying about one's students can lead to exhaustion. Simultaneously, the nature of working with marginalised communities (student difficulties, problem behaviours, cultural and linguistic diversity, etc.) places high emotional demands on teachers. Many teachers reported feeling emotionally drained, ineffective, powerless, physically exhausted, and undervalued (Fleckman et al., 2022; Hine et al., 2022; Holzner & Gaunt, 2023; Parrello et al., 2019). Not all teachers utilised various self-care strategies, such as exercise and vacations, which helped them cope with these difficulties (Hine et al., 2022). Others resorted to inappropriate coping mechanisms, such as overeating and increased drinking (Fleckman et al., 2022). Good collegial relationships, the presence of teacher assistants, family support, and the role of leaders were often mentioned as other important factors contributing to well-being and satisfaction. An autocratic style was seen as a threat to this positive function (Ellison, 2022; Fleckman et al., 2022; Hine et al., 2022; Morrison, 2013).

3) The lack of training to work specifically with marginalised communities, or the merely theoretical nature of this training, has been criticised (Hine et al., 2022; Mendenhall et al., 2020; Morrison, 2013; Parrello et al., 2019). These factors were perceived as threats to the creation of the aforementioned sense of meaning in one's work, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction.

4) Many teachers expressed a heavy workload, which interferes with their personal lives. Frustrations from work are often transferred to homes and result in strained relationships with family members (Masedi et al., 2023). Teachers with more years of experience reported an increase in workload in recent years (Cui et al., 2022; Hine et al., 2022). Often, teachers men-

tioned work or out-of-class activities overlapping with the normal duties and tasks placed on them. Examples include advocacy and teacher-initiated programmes for their students, visiting family homes, delivering educational resources by post, or even substituting for parents or friends (Martin & Amin, 2020; O'Toole & Simovska, 2022; Trickett et al., 2012).

TABLE 2
Risk of bias assessment for quantitative studies based on Appraisal Tool for Cross-Sectional Studies AXIS

	Introduction	Clear objectives	Methods	Appropriate design	Justified sample size	Defined target population	Sample taken from appropriate population	Appropriate selection process	Non-responding addressed	Appropriate measurement	Valid measurement	Determination of statistical significance	Clear description of methods	Results	Clear description of data	Non-response bias	Description of non-responders	Consistency of results	Presentation of all results	Discussion	Justification of discussion	Discussion of limitations	Other	Funding and COI	Ethical approval
Abel et al. (1999)**		+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+		-	-	-	+	+		+	+	-	?	
Angelini et al. (2024)		+	+	-	+	+	?	-	+	+	+	+	+		+	?	-	+	+		+	+	-	+	
Bottiani et al. (2019)**		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	-	+	+		+	+	?	?	
Brady et al. (2024)		+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+		+	-	-	+	+		+	+	-	+	
Elliott (2021)		+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	-	+		+	+	?	+	
Fleckman et al. (2022)		-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	+		-	-	-	-	+		+	+	-	+	
Gaspar et al. (2022)		+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	-		+	-	-	+	-		+	+	+	+	
Christian-Brandt et al. (2020)**		+	+	-	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	+		+	-	-	+	+		+	+	?	+	
Johnson et al. (2020)		+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	-	+	+		+	+	+	+	
Johnson et al. (2021)		+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	-	+	+	+		+	+	-	+	
Mehta et al. (2013)*		+	+	-	?	?	?	?	+	+	+	+	?		+	+	-	+	+		+	+	+	?	
Mosley et al. (2023)		+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	?		+	?	-	+	+		+	+	-	-	
Neuenschwander et al. (2017)*		+	+	+	+	+	?	?	+	+	+	+	+		+	?	?	+	+		+	+	?	?	
Ouellette et al. (2017)**		+	+	+	-	+	+	?	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	-	+	+		+	+	?	?	
O'Donnell et al. (2008)*		+	+	-	+	?	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		-	?	-	+	+		+	+	+	?	
Paudel et al. (2024)		+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+		+	-	-	+	+		+	+	-	+	
Rajaei et al. (2022)		+	+	-	+	-	-	?	+	-	+	+	+		+	-	-	+	+		+	+	-	+	
Tang (2018)		+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	-	+	+		+	+	+	-	
Tang et al. (2018)		+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	-	+	+		+	+	+	-	
Temam et al. (2019)		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	
Veronese et al. (2018a)		+	+	-	-	?	?	-	+	+	+	+	+		+	?	-	?	+		+	+	+	+	

Notes: + = meets the criterion, - = does not meet the criterion, ? = unclear

Quantitative studies confirmed a higher workload for teachers of marginalised communities (Holzner & Gaunt, 2023;

Tang, 2018). They also found a positive effect of pay satisfaction, professional learning, community engagement, and support from family and friends on well-being (Tang, 2018; Tang et al., 2018; Veronese et al., 2018a). Regarding stress, evidence is mixed. The results of Temam et al. (2019) observed no difference between teachers of marginalised communities and other teachers. However, the research of Fleckman et al. (2022) observed higher rates of secondary trauma stress. The risk of bias assessment is summarised in Tables 2 and 3.

TABLE 3
Risk of bias assessment for qualitative studies based on JBI Critical Appraisal Checklist for Qualitative Research

	Philosophical perspective – methodology congruence	Methodology – research question congruence	Methodology – data collection methods congruence	Methodology – analysis of data congruence	Methodology – interpretation of results congruence	Researcher background	Influence of the researcher on the research	Representation of participants	Ethics of the research	Conclusions drawn from analyses
Biasutti et al. (2020)*	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Brown & L'Estrange (2023)	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Cui et al. (2022)	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Ellison (2022)	+	+	?	+	+	-	-	+	?	+
Fleckman et al. (2022)	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	+
Hine et al. (2022)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Holzner & Gaunt (2023)	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Leckey et al. (2016)	+	+	?	+	+	-	-	+	?	+
Lemke et al. (2021)	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+
Martin & Amin (2020)	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Masedi et al. (2023)	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Mendenhall et al. (2021)*	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+
Morrison (2013)	+	+	+	+	+	+	?	+	+	+
Nehmeh & Kelly (2018)*	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+
Norozi & Ness (2023)	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Olsen (2013)	?	?	?	?	?	+	+	+	+	?
O'Toole & Simovska (2022)	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Parrello et al. (2019)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Perry et al. (2015)*	+	+	?	+	+	-	-	+	?	+
Santoro (2007)**	+	+	+	?	+	+	+	+	?	+
Shernoff et al. (2011)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Trickett et al. (2012)*	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+
Veronese et al. (2018b)	-	-	+	+	+	+	NA	+	+	+
Wang & Chen (2022)	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	?	+
Wiltshire (2022)	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+

Notes: + = meets the criterion, - = does not meet the criterion, ? = unclear

DISCUSSION

A substantial research gap remains, as existing reviews on teacher well-being (e.g., Na'imah et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2024) have not examined teachers in marginalised communities. The review identified 45 quantitative and qualitative studies, with quantitative research primarily addressing teacher stress and qualitative research predominantly exploring teacher well-being. Reviewed studies consistently highlight that teachers working in marginalised communities face elevated stress, burnout, and, in many cases, compromised well-being, with recently published research confirming these findings (Conroy et al., 2024; Đurković & Kentoš, 2024). These challenges stem from systemic issues such as insufficient resources, professional isolation, institutional disorganisation, and student-related difficulties. Doan et al. (2024) also found that compared with their peers in mainstream settings, teachers in marginalised schools more frequently report restricted autonomy in decision-making. On the contrary, Temam et al. (2019) did not find differences in work-related well-being between teachers in marginalised and mainstream schools. This can be explained by the strong sense of purpose and engagement in teachers' roles (Cui et al., 2022; Martin & Amin, 2020; O'Toole & Simovska, 2022). Several studies reported that, despite facing structural disadvantages, teachers experienced a sense of well-being from supporting students and fostering community, maintaining workplace relationships and psychological resilience comparable to colleagues in more advantaged settings (Bottiani et al., 2019; Fleckman et al., 2022).

Another significant trend identified across the reviewed studies is the emphasis on the importance of positive relationships with colleagues and school leadership. This relational aspect of the school environment consistently emerges as a key protective factor against work-related stress, burnout and supportive element in the well-being of teachers working in marginalised communities (Conroy et al., 2024; Versfeld et al., 2025). In high-poverty schools, positive interpersonal dynamics are frequently cited as more influential than material resources in teachers' decisions to stay or leave (Simon & Johnson, 2015). Moreover, studies indicate that teachers who feel respected by school leaders and experience professional solidarity with peers demonstrate higher levels of resilience and job satisfaction (Tran et al., 2023; Collie, 2023).

The present results indicate that, although teachers frequently face high job demands and stress, their well-being is not necessarily compromised, nor do these conditions inevitably lead to burnout. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model explains this resilience through a dual-path mechanism: while

excessive demands may result in exhaustion, the availability of resources can sustain motivation and engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). Recent theoretical developments support that engagement constitutes the positive pathway of the model, with resources such as collegial support, constructive feedback, and a strong sense of purpose enabling employees to remain energetic and committed even under challenging conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2023; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). In teaching, these protective factors often buffer the negative impact of stress, allowing educators to maintain motivation and well-being despite persistent stresses (Bottiani et al., 2019).

Limitations

While this review contributes meaningful insights, its conclusions must be considered in light of several methodological limitations. The relatively broad scope of marginalised communities included in our systematic review is a limiting factor. Although the inclusion of various types of marginalisation may appear somewhat heterogeneous, this broad approach allowed us to conduct a robust analysis with a sufficient number of studies. There is not yet sufficient evidence to differentiate between types of marginalisation, such as economic disadvantage versus ethnic diversity. A summary of study characteristics revealed that a significant proportion of quantitative studies worked with relatively small, non-representative, and diverse samples, restricting the generalisability of the findings. Due to the heterogeneity of variables across the included studies, we had insufficient data to conduct a full meta-analysis. Of all 45 included studies, 24 were conducted in China or the USA, where larger research samples were likewise predominantly observed. This fact also points to the uneven global distribution of research on teachers in marginalised communities. Our review only included studies written in English, so we have likely omitted evidence published in other languages.

Implications

Within the risk of bias assessment for quantitative studies, we identified three areas that raised the biggest concerns about possible bias and should be addressed in future studies:

(1) the target population to which conclusions are to be generalised should be clearly defined along with the selection process which should ensure the similarity of the sample to the population. It is highly recommended to justify the sample size (e.g., use a-priori statistical power or precision-based analysis);

(2) non-responding (the presence of missing data) should be included in the analysis and description (e.g., what was the nature and extent of the missing data, were participants with missing data removed, or were the missing data imputed? If imputed, how?); and

(3) research involving human subjects should be evaluated and approved by an appropriate ethics committee. We also identified the same two topics within the risk of bias assessment for qualitative studies, namely lack of information about the ethical approval and whether the methods used to collect data are in line with the research question and methodology. Specifically for qualitative studies, there is a need to formulate positionality and consider how the researchers' background may affect the research in question.

The review also points to the global imbalance in research distribution, calling for increased empirical attention to under-represented regions. Finally, by considering a broad range of marginalised contexts, it allows for a more inclusive view of the difficulties and strengths found in these educational settings. This can serve as a starting point for future research comparing different types of marginalisation or school environments.

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Data availability statement

The data and PRISMA checklist are openly available at https://osf.io/vhtnk/?view_only=08fe2723104f4bb090b53416adb7cc70

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Dobrobit i stres učitelja u marginaliziranim zajednicama: sustavni pregled

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Iskazani stres učitelja i njihov odlazak iz profesije na alarmantnim su razinama. Ovi trendovi doveli su do mnogih studija o dobrobiti i stresu učitelja. Osim toga, dokazi upućuju na to da je dobrobit učitelja ozbiljnije ugrožena u marginaliziranim i zajednicama s niskim prihodima. Ovaj sustavni pregled ima za cilj sintetizirati trenutačne istraživačke dokaze koji ispituju dobrobit i stres učitelja u marginaliziranim zajednicama. Pregled je uključivao sustavno pretraživanje kvalitativnih i kvantitativnih recenziranih i neobjavljenih empirijskih studija i disertacija. Od četrdeset pet studija uključenih u pregled, 44 % istaknulo je znatan stres i ugroženu dobrobit među učiteljima. Međutim, 15 % također je otkrilo snažan osjećaj svrhe te visoku razinu uključenosti i predanosti učitelja. Nadalje, 18 % studija naglasilo je važnost pozitivnih odnosa između učitelja, njihovih kolega i uprave škole, kao i ulogu institucionalne podrške u promicanju dobrobiti učitelja. Na temelju rezultata pregleda i rizika od pristranosti u procjeni, preporučujemo da buduće studije: 1) jasno definiraju ciljnu populaciju i posvete više pažnje procesu odabira uzorka, 2) u analizu i opis uključe ispitanike koji nisu odgovorili, 3) te usmjere veću pozornost na etičke aspekte.

Ključne riječi: učitelj, dobrobit, stres, stres na poslu, marginalizirani



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