



# Strengthening the Character of 21st-Century Educators: A Philosophical Analysis of the Ministry of Education and Culture's Teacher Psychological Welfare Program

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## ABSTRACT

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Twenty-first-century education requires teachers to function not only as knowledge transmitters but also as moral agents who cultivate values, character, and meaningful learning experiences. Yet increasing administrative demands, policy changes, professional dilemmas, and emotional exhaustion often weaken teachers' psychological well-being and their ability to serve as authentic role models. This study examines how the Teacher Psychological Well-Being Program, comprising the Technical Guidance Program and the Teacher Psychological Well-Being Survey developed by Indonesia's Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, strengthens educators' values and character from a philosophical perspective. Using a qualitative descriptive-analytical case study, the research analyzes official program documents and relevant scholarly literature. Data were examined thematically by mapping program components to Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, ontological security, Ryff's psychological well-being framework, and character education through habituation. Findings indicate that the program provides a holistic intervention integrating reflective practices, resilience-building strategies, value habituation, and multidimensional well-being assessment. Through the "My Tree" framework, teachers develop self-acceptance, autonomy, purpose in life, positive relationships, environmental mastery, and personal growth. The program shifts attention from deficit-based stress management toward human flourishing by operationalizing *eudaimonia* through meaningful professional development and supportive social engagement. Reflective activities and

autonomy-enhancing practices also strengthen ontological security by fostering coherent professional identities amid systemic challenges. Positive micro-practices, including gratitude journaling, appreciation circles, grounding techniques, and affirmations, reinforce authentic character formation. The study concludes that philosophically grounded well-being interventions should be integrated into educational policy to support sustainable, human-centered, and high-quality education.

### **Keywords**

Character Education  
Educational Policy Reform  
Educator Character  
Development  
Ontological Security  
Teacher Psychological  
Well-Being

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## **Introduction**

Amidst the demands of 21st-century education, which emphasizes the development of creativity, critical thinking, and adaptability, the role of educators has become increasingly central and complex [1],[2]. Educators no longer function merely as conveyors of information, but as facilitators, inspirators, and role models [3]. However, to fulfill this noble role, educators themselves must be mentally and emotionally well-off. Teacher psychological well-being is no longer merely a personal issue, but rather a fundamental foundation for creating a healthy and transformative educational ecosystem [4].

Unfortunately, the reality on the ground shows that modern teachers face a series of challenges that can impact their well-being. Excessive administrative burdens, the demands of a dynamic curriculum, and the emotional burden of managing diverse classrooms often lead to high levels of burnout or job burnout [5],[6]. Furthermore, educators can experience professional dilemmas due to systemic dynamics, a profound dissonance between professional ideals and systemic realities that limit autonomy and professional decision-making [7].

In this article, the term "professional dilemma due to systemic dynamics" is used to refer to the dissonance between professional values and systemic constraints, not as a normative assessment of teachers as individuals. As documented in various international post-pandemic contexts, this dissonance can undermine the intrinsic motivation and professional resilience that are essential to the teaching profession [8],[9].

Recognizing this urgency, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is designing strategic initiatives in the form of a Technical Guidance Program (Bimtek) for Teacher Psychological Well-Being and a Teacher Psychological Well-Being Survey Program

[10],[11]. These initiatives have already been piloted and mark a significant shift in education policy, recognizing teacher well-being as a prerequisite, rather than a by product, of a quality education system. We present these programs as case studies that offer philosophical and practical responses to the systemic challenges facing the teaching profession[12].

Therefore, this article poses a central research question: "How can the Ministry of Education and Culture's Teacher Psychological Well-Being Program, viewed from a philosophical perspective, serve as a vehicle for strengthening the values and character of 21st-century educators?" To answer this question, we will analyze the program as a prototype for addressing the professional dilemmas posed by systemic dynamics and work burnout. We argue that the program is not simply a well-designed intervention, but rather a model that can be adopted for systemic policy reform. To establish an analytical lens for this inquiry, the following section will establish a theoretical framework that integrates the goals of flourishing education, the psychological imperative of ontological safety, and the pedagogical mechanisms of character cultivation.

## **Literature Review**

This section aims to develop a theoretical and philosophical framework that will serve as a foundation for analyzing the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's Teacher Psychological Well-Being Program. This framework draws from the intersection of educational philosophy, well-being psychology, and character education theory.

### **A. Paradigm Shift in Education: From Human Capital to Flourishing**

For decades, the dominant paradigm in global education has tended to focus on the development of "human capital." Within this framework, the primary goal of education is to prepare students to become a productive workforce to drive economic growth [13]. While important, this approach often reduces the essence of education to merely instrumental functions, neglecting holistic human development.

Now, a global movement is emerging that is pushing for a shift in educational goals toward flourishing or well-being as the primary goal [14]. Flourishing cannot be equated with fleeting happiness or hedonism, but rather refers to Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia*, namely a life lived well, filled with meaning, and realizing one's highest human potential [15]. In the context of education, this means creating an environment that not only supports academic achievement but also fosters virtue, resilience, and a sense of purpose in life [16]. If flourishing is the goal for students, then logically, the educators who guide them must also be supported to achieve a state of flourishing first [17].

### **B. Psychological Well-Being and Educator Ontological Safety**

Psychological well-being is a multidimensional concept that goes beyond the mere absence of mental health problems. The comprehensive model proposed by Ryff [18] identifies six key

dimensions: autonomy, positive relationships, purpose in life, self-acceptance, personal growth, and environmental mastery. These dimensions align closely with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which states that human well-being and intrinsic motivation depend on the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness [19].

In the teaching profession, fraught with uncertainty and demands, the concept of ontological security becomes particularly relevant. Ontological security is an individual's fundamental need to maintain a sustainable, stable, and coherent self-narrative in the face of life's turmoil. The application of this concept, originally used to understand the experiences of refugees in liminal spaces, is justified in the context of the modern teaching profession. Constant policy changes, often conflicting systemic demands, and shifting social expectations create a form of "professional liminality" that challenges teachers' identity narratives. Without ontological security, teachers can experience instability in their professional identity and a diminished sense of meaning in their profession [20].

In addition to the psychological well-being framework, contemporary pedagogical literature demonstrates that teachers' psychological well-being directly impacts the quality of their learning practices. Kamboj and Garg [11], through their concept of Transformational Teaching, assert that transformative teaching requires emotional engagement, personal meaning, and authentic relationships between teachers and students. This approach positions teachers not merely as transmitters of material but as agents of change capable of motivating, providing individual attention, and stimulating reflective thinking in students. In this context, teachers' psychological well-being is a crucial prerequisite, as emotional exhaustion and work burnout have been shown to hinder teachers' capacity to deliver transformative and meaningful teaching.

### **C. Values and Character Education Through Habituation**

Values and character education cannot be successful if taught solely cognitively or through rote learning. Educational philosophy, particularly that rooted in the Aristotelian tradition, emphasizes the importance of habituation in character formation. Values such as honesty, empathy, and resilience must be instilled through repeated practice until they become part of a person's character [21].

In the school context, this habituation can be realized through concrete practices integrated into the school culture. The "Prosperous School" model [22] is an example of a comprehensive framework that not only emphasizes positive discipline and cultivating a culture of appreciation, but also encompasses the development of school policies, teacher training, and a student problem-solving system. This Ministry of Elementary and Secondary Education program can be seen as a continuation of this holistic tradition, with a specific focus on strengthening the internal conditions of teachers as the primary driving force for creating a

"prosperous" school environment more broadly [22]. This theoretical framework that combines the goals of flourishing, fulfilling psychological well-being, strengthening ontological security, and the process of habituating values will be used as an analytical lens in examining the teacher welfare program that is the focus of this research.

## **Materials and Methods**

This research uses a qualitative approach to gain a deep, rich, and substantive understanding of the phenomenon under study. This approach was chosen because the research objective was to conduct a philosophical interpretation of a program, not to measure its impact quantitatively [23].

The research design used was a descriptive-analytical case study [24]. The focus of this research is an in-depth analysis of the Teacher Psychological Well-Being Technical Guidance Program and the Teacher Psychological Well-Being Survey Program conducted by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as a single phenomenon [25]. This design allows researchers to explore the complexities of the program in its real-life context and connect it to the established theoretical framework.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of official program documents issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture, including the Good Habits Habituation [26], the Habituation Diary, activity modules such as the "Circle of Appreciation," and the conceptual metaphor "My Tree." Meanwhile, secondary data includes relevant academic literature, previous research results, and related program guides such as the Prosperous School Program Guidebook [22]. The data analysis technique used was thematic analysis. The analysis process involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) in the data [27]. Specifically, we mapped the practical elements found in the program documents (e.g., types of activities, metaphors used, reflection instructions) and then analyzed how these elements reflected or resonated with philosophical and theoretical concepts outlined in the literature review, such as eudaimonia, ontological security, dimensions of well-being, and the principle of habituation.

## **Results**

An analysis of program documents from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education revealed a structured intervention architecture rich in psychological and philosophical content. These findings are presented in two main sections: the structure of the technical guidance program and the conceptual framework of the well-being survey.

Thematic analysis was conducted systematically to identify and interpret patterns of meaning embedded within the Teacher Psychological Well-Being Program documents.

Following the six-phase framework of Ahmad et al. [27], the analysis proceeded through several stages.

First, the researchers familiarized themselves with the primary data by repeatedly reading and reviewing official program documents, including the Good Habits Habituation Guide, Habituation Diary, “Circle of Appreciation” module, and the “My Tree” conceptual framework. During this stage, preliminary notes were recorded regarding recurring concepts, activities, metaphors, and well-being strategies.

Second, initial codes were generated inductively and deductively. Inductive coding focused on identifying recurring practical elements directly emerging from the documents, such as gratitude journaling, appreciation practices, reflective exercises, boundary-setting activities, grounding techniques, and personal growth modules. Deductive coding was guided by the theoretical framework established in the literature review, including concepts of eudaimonia, ontological security, psychological well-being dimensions, and character habituation.

Third, the codes were systematically organized into broader conceptual categories. Similar codes were grouped according to their underlying meanings and functions within the program. For example, gratitude journaling, appreciation circles, and positive affirmations were categorized as reflective and relational well-being practices, whereas grounding techniques and boundary-setting exercises were categorized as resilience-building practices.

Fourth, these categories were reviewed and refined through constant comparison between the empirical data and the theoretical framework. This process ensured that each theme accurately represented the program content while maintaining conceptual coherence with established philosophical and psychological theories.

Fifth, the themes were defined and named. Three overarching themes emerged from the analysis:

- the operationalization of eudaimonic flourishing through the “My Tree” framework,
- the strengthening of ontological security through reflective and autonomy-supportive practices, and
- the cultivation of educator character through value habituation and micro-practices.

Finally, the themes were interpreted philosophically to explain how the program contributes to strengthening the values and character of 21st-century educators. The resulting thematic structure provided the analytical foundation for the findings and discussion presented in the following sections.

**Table 1.** Summarizes the thematic analysis process.

| Initial Codes                                                                                  | Categories                                    | Emergent Themes                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Life purpose, personal growth, positive relationships, self-acceptance                         | Flourishing-oriented development              | Operationalization of Eudaimonic Flourishing |
| Gratitude journal, future-self reflection, autonomy exercises, boundary setting                | Reflective identity and agency development    | Strengthening Ontological Security           |
| Appreciation circles, grounding techniques, positive affirmations, daily habituation practices | Value internalization and character formation | Character Development through Habituation    |

#### **A. Structure of the Technical Guidance Program for Teacher Psychological Well-Being**

The Technical Guidance program was systematically designed using interconnected metaphors, habituation practices, and resilience techniques. The "My Tree" Metaphor as a Holistic Framework: The conceptual foundation of the entire Technical Guidance program is the metaphor of "a Tree that Grows Strong and Shady." This metaphor serves as an intuitive roadmap for teachers to understand the process of developing self-well-being. Based on the guidance document, the program has seven sequential components that represent the dimensions of psychological well-being:

1. Introduction to Psychological Well-Being: An opening session that introduces the "Tree that Grows Strong and Shady" metaphor as the main framework.
2. "Recognizing the Seed": A module focused on Self-Acceptance, inviting participants to understand their strengths and areas for self-development.
3. "Strengthening the Roots": A session discussing Self-Autonomy, training teachers to build a strong and independent internal foundation.
4. "Finding the Sun": The focus is on finding a meaningful Life Purpose as a source of energy and direction.
5. "Caring for the Ecosystem": A module emphasizing the importance of building positive relationships with colleagues, students, and the community.
6. "Maintaining the Quality of the Planting Medium": A session aimed at increasing capacity in effectively managing the work and personal environment.
7. "Growing New Branches": A closing module focused on sustainable Personal Growth.

Well-Being Habituation Practices: This program emphasizes the formation of new habits through concrete activities. The Habituation Diary provides a series of daily exercises, including:

1. "5-Minute Gratitude Journal": A short, evening-time reflection exercise to record gratitude.
2. Internal Boundary-Setting Exercise: A structured guide for teachers to establish healthy personal boundaries related to work.
3. "Appreciation Circle": A group activity where participants share written appreciation to build a culture of recognition and positive relationships

Self-Resilience Techniques: This program equips teachers with practical techniques for stress management. Key examples include:

1. The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique: A sensory awareness exercise to calm yourself when feeling anxious or overwhelmed.
2. Positive Affirmations: Using self-affirming phrases to counteract negative thoughts and build self-confidence.

## **B. Conceptual Framework of the Teacher Psychological Well-Being Survey**

The Teacher Psychological Well-Being Survey program is designed to complement the Technical Guidance by providing comprehensive diagnostic data. This survey framework maps teachers' psychological well-being multidimensionally, based on van Dierendonck and Lam's [18] Psychological Well-Being (PWB) model. The six main dimensions measured in the PWB framework include: Self-acceptance, Positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and Personal growth.

These six dimensions are considered relevant to the program's orientation, which emphasizes the search for meaning, strengthening relationships, and developing teachers' reflective capacity. Thus, the survey not only assesses the absence of stress but also assesses teachers' capacity for full professional development

## **Discussion**

This section will synthesize the research findings from the analysis of program documents with the philosophical framework established in the literature review. This synthesis aims to answer the primary research question regarding how the Ministry of Education and Culture's Teacher Psychological Well-Being Program can serve as a vehicle for strengthening the values and character of 21st-century educators.

### **A. The Teacher Well-Being Program as a 21st-Century Eudaimonia Practice**

The analysis of the Ministry of Education and Culture's program demonstrates a paradigm shift from reactive interventions (stress management) to a generative-salutogenic approach (achieving eudaimonia). While stress management aims to return individuals to a state of neutrality, the eudaimonia approach aims to move individuals beyond this point to a state of flourishing.

This is clearly evident in the structure of the "My Tree" module. Modules such as "Finding the Sun" (A Meaningful Life Purpose) and "Growing New Branches" (Personal Growth) directly reflect the search for an authentic and meaningful life, a core tenet of Aristotle's eudaimonia [28]. The program asks more than just "How can I reduce my stress?" but also deeper questions: "What makes this profession meaningful to you?" and "How can you continue to grow as an educator and a human being?" Activities such as "Circles of Appreciation" are practical

manifestations of the "Positive Relationships" dimension of the Ryff model. These activities not only provide a momentary sense of well-being but also build the foundation of a supportive social ecosystem where flourishing can occur collectively, not just as an individual achievement.

### **B. Building Ontological Security Through Reflection and Self-Autonomy**

The teaching profession faces constant uncertainty. In these circumstances, the ability to maintain a coherent self-narrative becomes crucial for mental health. The Ministry of Elementary and Secondary Education's program intelligently integrates practices that serve as tools for building and maintaining ontological security [29].

Reflective practices such as the "5-Minute Gratitude Journal" and writing a "Letter to Your Future Self" are mechanisms for weaving everyday experiences into a meaningful self-narrative. The professional dilemmas resulting from the systemic dynamics outlined above are rooted in fragmented professional narratives. Practices like the "Gratitude Journal" directly address this by empowering teachers to write coherent and empowering narratives of their daily experiences, thereby restoring ontological security that can be disrupted by systemic dissonance. On the other hand, the "Strengthen Your Roots" (Self-Autonomy) module and the "Define Internal Boundaries" exercise directly empower teachers to assert their agency. This empowerment of autonomy is an essential foundation for building strong ontological security.

### **C. Strengthening Educators' Character Through Habituation of Core Values**

This program explicitly uses the term "habituation," indicating that its goal is not simply temporary skills training, but rather a continuous process of character development [30]. The micro-habits introduced, such as grounding techniques or reciting positive affirmations, are a form of internalizing core values in concrete actions. Grounding techniques are not simply about calming oneself; they are the practice of cultivating the character of calmness and mindfulness. The "Gratitude Journal" cultivates the character of gratitude and humility.

Thus, when a teacher regularly practices self-well-being, they are engaging in a process of strengthening their character. Teachers who are able to calmly manage their emotions, who can see the positive side of challenges, and who have appreciative relationships with their colleagues will indirectly become authentic character role models for their students. The most effective character education is not that taught through dogmatic lectures, but rather that demonstrated through living examples. This synthesis demonstrates the program's deep philosophical underpinnings, revealing a powerful model for educator empowerment whose implications for future policy and research will now be explored

## **Conclusion**

This research began with the question of how the Ministry of Education and Culture's Teacher Psychological Well-Being Program can serve as a vehicle for strengthening the values

and character of 21st-century educators. The analysis shows that the program is not only psychologically relevant but also philosophically aligned with the principles of holistic character education, effectively translating concepts such as eudaimonia and ontological security into grounded practice. The main conclusions of the discussion can be summarized in three key points:

1. This program is a practical manifestation of eudaimonia-oriented education. By focusing on life purpose, personal growth, and positive relationships, the program shifts the goal from mere survival to flourishing.
2. This program systematically strengthens teachers' ontological security. Through reflective practice, educators are empowered to construct a coherent self-narrative and assert their agency, as a direct response to professional dilemmas resulting from systemic dynamics arising from systemic dissonance.
3. This program strengthens character through habituation. By instilling core values such as calm and resilience through microhabits, this program empowers teachers to model authentic character.

The implications of these findings are significant. This program should be seen as a prototype for broader policy reform. Teacher psychological well-being should not be viewed as an add-on program, but rather integrated as a central pillar of educator professional development strategies. Investing in teacher well-being is a direct investment in the character development of future generations. Systemic policies that support autonomy, reduce administrative burdens, and create an appreciative work culture should be prioritized to ensure the sustainability of the impact of such interventions.

Future research could take several directions. First, longitudinal research is needed to measure the long-term impact of this program on teaching practices, school climate, and student achievement. Second, comparative studies with teacher well-being programs in other countries could provide valuable insights into best practices. Finally, exploring how these principles can be integrated early in the pre-service teacher education curriculum would be a highly strategic preventative measure.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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