Journal of Pedagogical Research
Onlinefirst Article
https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202645257

Research Article

Positive mental health and teaching self-efficacy among Vietnamese pre-service primary teachers: Evidence from a cross-sectional study

Ly Hang Tran

Vinh University, Vinh City, Vietnam (ORCID: 0009-0006-2947-0040)

Teaching self-efficacy is an early indicator of professional readiness, yet little is known about how positive mental health is associated with this belief among pre-service primary teachers. This cross-sectional study examined third- and fourth-year primary education students from two teacher education institutions in Vietnam. Positive mental health was measured with the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form, and teaching self-efficacy was measured with the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale-Short Form. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and hierarchical regression. The results showed that positive mental health was positively associated with teaching self-efficacy. Among the three dimensions of positive mental health, psychological well-being emerged as the most consistent predictor of overall teaching self-efficacy and its task-specific domains. Social well-being was also related to overall teaching self-efficacy and to efficacy for student engagement and instructional strategies, whereas emotional well-being did not remain an independent predictor when the other well-being dimensions were considered. The findings suggest that teacher education should treat positive mental health not only as a student welfare concern but also as a psychological resource linked to the formation of professional confidence.

Keywords: Positive mental health; Pre-service teachers; Primary teacher education; Psychological well-being; Teaching self-efficacy

Article History: Submitted 29 April 2026; Revised 23 June 2026; Published online 13 July 2026

1. Introduction

Teaching self-efficacy begins before future teachers enter the profession. For pre-service primary teachers, it develops while they move between university coursework, school observation, micro-teaching, practicum tasks, and feedback from lecturers or school mentors. At this stage, students may know how a lesson should be planned, but still doubt whether they can hold pupils' attention, respond to unexpected behaviour, explain ideas clearly, or keep a lesson moving when classroom conditions change. Teaching self-efficacy is therefore not a vague sense of confidence. It is an early judgement of professional capability grounded in beliefs about one's capacity to organise and perform teaching-related actions (Bandura, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001).

Address of Corresponding Author

Ly Hang Tran, Vinh University, 182 Le Duan Street, Vinh City, Nghe An Province, Vietnam.

lyth@vinhuni.edu.vn

How to cite: Tran, L. H. (2026). Positive mental health and teaching self-efficacy among Vietnamese pre-service primary teachers: Evidence from a cross-sectional study. *Journal of Pedagogical Research.* Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202645257

Teacher self-efficacy is grounded in Bandura's theory of self-efficacy and refers to teachers' beliefs about their capacity to organise and perform actions required to support student learning (Bandura, 1997). In teaching, this belief is commonly linked to teachers' perceived ability to engage students, use instructional strategies, and manage classroom situations (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Research has associated teacher self-efficacy with instructional behaviour, classroom processes, student adjustment, and teacher well-being (Perera et al., 2019; Zee & Koomen, 2016). For pre-service teachers, these beliefs are still malleable. They may shape how students read early teaching experiences: as normal difficulties in learning the profession, or as signs of personal inadequacy.

Pedagogical preparation clearly matters, but it may not be enough to explain differences in teaching self-efficacy. Students with similar coursework and practicum exposure can differ sharply in how capable they feel (Elmali & Balkan Kiyici, 2025; Kyriazis et al., 2025; Sounoglou et al., 2026). One explanation lies in their psychological resources. Students who feel purposeful, able to grow, connected to others, and capable of managing their environment may be better placed to turn early professional experiences into confidence (Bjorklund et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2024). These resources do not replace teaching knowledge. They may, however, influence how students interpret and use that knowledge.

Positive mental health offers a way to examine these resources. In Keyes's (2002, 2005) mental health continuum model, mental health is not only the absence of illness or distress; it also includes positive emotional, social, and psychological functioning (Keyes, 2002, 2005). The Mental Health Continuum–Short Form captures this view through three dimensions: emotional well-being, social well-being, and psychological well-being (Keyes et al., 2008; Lamers et al., 2011). Cross-cultural research supports this multidimensional view of well-being (Iasiello et al., 2022; Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2018).

The distinction matters for teacher education. Emotional well-being may sustain interest and motivation. Social well-being may matter because teaching is relational and socially embedded. Psychological well-being may be most closely tied to teaching self-efficacy because it concerns agency, growth, purpose, relationships, and mastery (Keyes et al., 2008; Lamers et al., 2011; Yeo & Suárez, 2022). A student who sees themselves as growing, purposeful, socially connected, and able to manage demands may be more likely to believe that they can engage pupils, choose instructional strategies, and handle classroom situations. General happiness may help, but confidence in specific teaching tasks likely depends on deeper forms of functioning.

The literature gives strong reasons to expect such a relationship, but direct evidence remains limited. Studies of teacher self-efficacy have examined its structure, measurement, predictors, and outcomes across teacher groups and educational settings (Duffin et al., 2012; Fives & Buehl, 2010; Klassen et al., 2009; Ma et al., 2023). Studies of positive mental health show that emotional, social, and psychological well-being should not be treated as interchangeable indicators of a single well-being score (Iasiello et al., 2022; Keyes et al., 2008; Lamers et al., 2011). What remains unclear is whether these three dimensions help explain teaching self-efficacy among pre-service primary teachers after background, academic, living-condition, economic, and career-orientation differences are taken into account. The gap is not only empirical. It is also conceptual: student well-being is often treated as an outcome to protect, but less often as a resource that may shape professional confidence.

Vietnam is a useful setting for examining this issue. Primary teacher education is expected to prepare future teachers for more active, flexible, and child-centred classrooms. At the same time, students differ in academic performance, living arrangements, perceived economic condition, and commitment to becoming primary teachers. These differences may shape both positive mental health and teaching self-efficacy. Although student mental health has received growing international attention (Auerbach et al., 2018), including in Southeast Asia (Dessauvagie et al., 2022), less is known about positive mental health among Vietnamese pre-service teachers and its connection with their developing sense of teaching capability.

The focus on Vietnam also has value for the international literature. Much evidence on teacher self-efficacy and well-being comes from Western or East Asian settings, while Southeast Asian teacher education remains less visible. Evidence from Vietnam can show whether established constructs such as positive mental health and teaching self-efficacy travel meaningfully into a different institutional and cultural context. It also allows the discussion of well-being to move beyond symptom reduction and toward professional preparation in an emerging education system. Against this background, the present study examines the association between positive mental health and teaching self-efficacy among Vietnamese pre-service primary teachers. It focuses on whether emotional, social, and psychological well-being are related to overall teaching self-efficacy and to three task-specific domains: student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. By distinguishing among the three dimensions of positive mental health, the study aims to clarify which aspects of well-being are most closely connected with the development of professional confidence during teacher preparation.

The study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it extends teacher self-efficacy research by examining positive mental health as a potential psychological resource rather than treating student well-being only as an outcome to be protected. Second, it provides evidence from Vietnam, a Southeast Asian teacher education context that remains underrepresented in international research. Third, it offers practical implications for primary teacher education by showing how support for well-being may be connected with the development of teaching confidence.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

Positive mental health research begins from the premise that mental health has both negative and positive sides. The absence of distress does not necessarily imply flourishing, and the presence of positive functioning cannot be inferred from low symptom scores alone. Keyes (2002, 2005) describes flourishing as a state in which people experience positive emotions, function well psychologically, and feel connected to social life. This dual emphasis has been reinforced by recent work on dual-factor models of mental health, which argues for examining well-being alongside psychological difficulties (Magalhães, 2024).

Within this framework, the three components of positive mental health have different implications. Emotional well-being is affective and evaluative. It captures whether people feel happy, interested in life, and satisfied. Social well-being is more outward-looking. It reflects whether people see themselves as belonging to society and contributing to it. Psychological well-being concerns personal functioning: purpose, growth, autonomy, self-acceptance, relations, and mastery. Validation studies of the Mental Health Continuum–Short Form support this structure, while also showing that the dimensions are strongly related (Keyes et al., 2008; Lamers et al., 2011; Yeo & Suárez, 2022).

Teacher education is a context in which these distinctions matter. Pre-service teachers are students, but they are also preparing for a relational profession. Their well-being is therefore not only relevant to their adjustment to university life. It may also influence how they understand their future professional role. Recent studies have treated pre-service teacher well-being as multidimensional and context-sensitive (Haldimann et al., 2024). Evidence also links subjective well-being with belonging, trust, and self-efficacy among pre-service teachers (Bjorklund et al., 2021). Well-being profiles with stronger positive functioning have been associated with higher teacher self-efficacy (Lee et al., 2024), and motivational and behavioural profiles have been linked to psychological well-being and occupational commitment (Zhou et al., 2025).

Teaching self-efficacy is commonly organised around three task domains: engaging students, using instructional strategies, and managing classrooms. The short form of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale reflects these domains and has been widely examined across teacher and pre-service teacher samples (Duffin et al., 2012; Fives & Buehl, 2010; Klassen et al., 2009). Evidence from Vietnam also suggests that the scale can be used in the Vietnamese educational context (Ho et al.,

2023). These domains are especially relevant for pre-service primary teachers because primary classrooms require high levels of interaction, flexibility, and classroom organisation.

Positive mental health may be connected to all three domains, but the relationship is unlikely to be uniform. Emotional well-being may support motivation and openness to learning, which could strengthen confidence during teacher preparation. Social well-being may be more closely linked to student engagement and instructional strategies, because these tasks involve interaction, responsiveness, and a sense of educational purpose. Psychological well-being may have the broadest role because it includes growth, purpose, environmental mastery, and positive relations. These features are close to the sources through which self-efficacy develops, including interpretation of experience, feedback, and perceived capacity to improve (Bandura, 1997).

For primary teacher education, this issue is more than a question of student adjustment. Primary teachers work with young children whose learning is closely tied to attention, emotion, routine, and relationships. Pre-service primary teachers therefore need to develop confidence in tasks that are both instructional and relational. A well-being perspective helps connect these two sides of preparation. It allows teacher self-efficacy to be examined not only as a consequence of practicum exposure or methodological training, but also as part of a broader process in which students build a professional self capable of learning from challenge.

This reasoning leads to four hypotheses. First, positive mental health is expected to be positively associated with teaching self-efficacy. Second, emotional, social, and psychological well-being are expected to explain additional variance in teaching self-efficacy after student background and contextual variables are controlled. Third, psychological well-being is expected to be the strongest predictor because it captures agency and functioning rather than affect alone. Fourth, the three well-being dimensions are expected to show different patterns across the three task-specific domains of teaching self-efficacy.

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

The study used a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. This design was appropriate because the aim was to describe levels of positive mental health and teaching self-efficacy, examine correlations among their dimensions, and test whether positive mental health explained additional variance in teaching self-efficacy after control variables were included. Cross-sectional designs measure predictor and outcome variables at the same time; therefore, the analyses are interpreted as statistical associations rather than evidence of temporal order or causality (Setia, 2016).

3.2. Participants

The initial dataset included 627 students. After data screening, 596 valid cases were retained for descriptive, reliability, and correlation analyses. Participants were third- and fourth-year students in primary education programmes at two teacher education institutions in Vietnam. To preserve institutional confidentiality, the institutions are referred to as Institution A and Institution B. Table 1 summarises the institutional, demographic, academic, living-condition, economic, and career-orientation characteristics of the participants.

Hierarchical regression models used listwise deletion and included 561 cases. This reduction is reported because listwise deletion reduces the analytic sample and should be interpreted with attention to the amount and pattern of missing data (Kang, 2013).

3.3. Measures

Positive mental health was measured with the Mental Health Continuum–Short Form. The scale includes 14 items assessing how often respondents recently experienced positive mental health indicators. Responses range from 0 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher positive mental health. The scale includes three subscales: emotional well-being (3 items), social well-being (5 items), and psychological well-being (6 items). Subscale scores were calculated as the mean of their

Table 1
Participant characteristics

Variable and Group	*n*	*%*
Institution		
Institution A	204	34.2
Institution B	392	65.8
Year of study		
Third year	392	65.8
Fourth year	204	34.2
Gender		
Male	92	15.4
Female	503	84.4
Self-rated academic performance		
Average/good	193	32.4
Very good	226	37.9
Excellent	177	29.7
Current living arrangement		
Family/relatives	130	21.8
Dormitory	106	17.8
Rented accommodation	360	60.4
Self-rated economic condition		
Difficult	77	12.9
Average	304	51.0
Good/favourable	181	30.4
Prefer not to answer/missing	34	5.7
Career orientation		
No/probably no	68	11.4
Uncertain	118	19.8
Positive orientation	409	68.6
Missing	1	0.2

Note. Percentages are based on the full sample after data screening (N = 596).

items, and overall positive mental health was calculated as the mean of all 14 items. In this sample, internal consistency was high for the total scale (α = .959), emotional well-being (α = .913), social well-being (α = .914), and psychological well-being (α = .949).

Teaching self-efficacy was measured with the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale–Short Form, adapted for pre-service primary education students. The scale includes 12 items answered on a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating higher teaching self-efficacy. It includes three four-item subscales: efficacy for student engagement, efficacy for instructional strategies, and efficacy for classroom management. The total teaching self-efficacy score was calculated as the mean of all 12 items. Internal consistency was high for the total scale (α = .957), student engagement (α = .891), instructional strategies (α = .914), and classroom management (α = .915). Cronbach's alpha was used as an indicator of internal consistency, not as complete evidence of scale validity (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

The control variables were institution, year of study, gender, self-rated academic performance, current living arrangement, self-rated economic condition, and career orientation. Categorical variables were entered as dummy variables. Institution A, third-year status, female gender, average/good academic performance, rented accommodation, average economic condition, and no/probably no intention to become a primary teacher were used as reference categories.

3.4. Data Collection, Screening, and Analysis

Data were collected using a self-report questionnaire. Participants were informed about the academic purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the anonymous

handling of responses. Because predictors and outcomes were collected from the same source, the survey emphasised anonymity and voluntary participation to reduce common method concerns (Rodríguez-Ardura & Meseguer-Artola, 2020). Before analysis, item responses were checked to ensure that values fell within the valid response ranges.

Data screening focused on low-quality response patterns, especially straight-line responses across the main scale items. For each case, standard deviations were calculated across the 14 Mental Health Continuum–Short Form items, the 12 Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale items, and all 26 main items. Cases with a standard deviation of zero across all main items were treated as insufficiently differentiated responses and removed. After screening, 596 valid cases remained.

Data were analysed in SPSS. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha were calculated for the main variables. Before selecting the main statistical procedures, the distributional properties of the composite variables were examined using Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests, skewness and kurtosis values, histograms, and normal Q-Q plots. Because formal tests of normality can be overly sensitive in large samples, decisions about statistical treatment were based on the combined evidence from these diagnostics and on the scale-level nature of the composite scores. The distributions showed no severe departures from normality; therefore, parametric procedures were retained for the main analyses, including Pearson correlations and hierarchical multiple regression. No independent-samples t-tests or Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted because the hypotheses concerned associations and incremental prediction rather than mean differences between two groups.

Hierarchical regression was used to test whether positive mental health explained additional variance in teaching self-efficacy. The main dependent variable was overall teaching self-efficacy. Predictors were entered in three blocks. Block 1 included institution, year of study, and gender. Block 2 added self-rated academic performance, living arrangement, economic condition, and career orientation. Block 3 added emotional, social, and psychological well-being. Three additional regression models used the same block structure to predict efficacy for student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management. Multicollinearity was examined using tolerance and variance inflation factor values. VIF values were below 5, indicating no serious multicollinearity problem (Kim, 2019). Residual plots and normal P-P plots were inspected to evaluate the linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality assumptions for the regression models. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted with voluntary participation. Students were informed about the purpose of the survey and their right to decline or stop participation. Responses were collected and analysed in aggregate form, and no personally identifying information is reported. Ethical approval details are not reported because the study was conducted as an anonymous, minimal-risk educational survey and the participating institutions did not have a dedicated Institutional Review Board or Research Ethics Committee for this type of survey research.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlations

Table 2 reports the means, standard deviations, internal consistency coefficients, and correlations among the main variables. The mean overall positive mental health score was 3.25 on the 0–5 scale (SD = 0.94). Emotional well-being had the highest mean (M = 3.40, SD = 1.09), followed by psychological well-being (M = 3.27, SD = 1.03) and social well-being (M = 3.14, SD = 1.01). The mean overall teaching self-efficacy score was 3.68 on the 1–5 scale (SD = 0.64). The three teaching efficacy domains were close in level: instructional strategies (M = 3.70, SD = 0.69), classroom management (M = 3.67, SD = 0.70), and student engagement (M = 3.67, SD = 0.68).

All scales showed high internal consistency. Positive mental health was positively correlated with teaching self-efficacy. The correlation between overall positive mental health and overall

teaching self-efficacy was r = .556, p < .001. Among the positive mental health dimensions, psychological well-being had the strongest correlation with overall teaching self-efficacy (r = .547, p < .001), followed by social well-being (r = .497, p < .001) and emotional well-being (r = .447, p < .001).

Table 2
Descriptive statistics, reliability, and correlations among main variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	α	*1*	*2*	*3*	*4*
1. EWB	3.40	1.09	.913	—			
2. SWB	3.14	1.01	.914	.707**	—		
3. PWB	3.27	1.03	.949	.721**	.763**	—	
4. PMH	3.25	.94	.959	.855**	.914**	.938**	—
5. ESE	3.67	.68	.891	.428**	.476**	.519**	.531**
6. ISE	3.70	.69	.914	.423**	.482**	.518**	.531**
7. CME	3.67	.70	.915	.397**	.429**	.491**	.492**

Note. N = 596. EWB = emotional well-being; SWB = social well-being; PWB = psychological well-being; PMH = positive mental health; ESE = efficacy for student engagement; ISE = efficacy for instructional strategies; CME = classroom management efficacy; TSE = overall teaching self-efficacy. **p < .01.

4.2. Hierarchical Regression Predicting Overall Teaching Self-Efficacy

Table 3 shows the hierarchical regression results for overall teaching self-efficacy. In Model 1, institution, year of study, and gender explained 3.6% of the variance, R^2 = .036, $F(3, 557)$ = 6.925, p < .001. Students in Institution B reported higher teaching self-efficacy than those in Institution A (β = .094, p < .05), and fourth-year students reported higher efficacy than third-year students (β = .158, p < .001). Gender was not a significant predictor.

Table 3
Hierarchical regression predicting overall teaching self-efficacy

Predictor	*Model 1 β*	*Model 2 β*	*Model 3 β*
Institution B	.094*	.091*	.033
Fourth year	.158***	.155**	.130**
Male	−.042	−.026	.017
Very good academic performance	—	−.083	−.076
Excellent academic performance	—	−.092	−.065
Living with family/relatives	—	−.016	−.011
Dormitory	—	.016	.019
Difficult economic condition	—	.019	−.001
Good/favourable economic condition	—	.116**	.041
Uncertain career orientation	—	.049	−.047
Positive career orientation	—	.193**	.054
EWB	—	—	.043
SWB	—	—	.148*
PWB	—	—	.370***
R^2	.036	.078	.336
Adjusted R^2	.031	.060	.319
ΔR^2	.036***	.042**	.258***
F	6.925***	4.233***	19.713***

Note. N = 561. Reference categories: Institution A; third year; female; average/good academic performance; rented accommodation; average economic condition; no/probably no intention to become a primary teacher. EWB = emotional well-being; SWB = social well-being; PWB = psychological well-being. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Model 2 added academic performance, living arrangement, economic condition, and career orientation. The explained variance increased by 4.2 percentage points, ΔR^2 = .042, $\Delta F(8, 549)$ = 3.144, p = .002. Model 2 explained 7.8% of the variance, R^2 = .078, $F(11, 549)$ = 4.233, p < .001. Good/favourable economic condition (β = .116, p = .007) and positive orientation toward becoming a primary teacher (β = .193, p = .002) were significant predictors.

Model 3 added emotional, social, and psychological well-being. This block substantially increased explained variance, $\Delta R^2 = .258$, $\Delta F(3, 546) = 70.570$, $p < .001$. The final model explained 33.6% of the variance in overall teaching self-efficacy, $R^2 = .336$, adjusted $R^2 = .319$, $F(14, 546) = 19.713$, $p < .001$. Fourth-year status remained significant ($\beta = .130$, $p = .003$). Among the well-being dimensions, psychological well-being was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .370$, $p < .001$), followed by social well-being ($\beta = .148$, $p = .011$). Emotional well-being was not a significant independent predictor when the three well-being dimensions were entered together ($\beta = .043$, $p = .431$).

4.3. Regression Models Predicting Teaching Self-Efficacy Domains

Table 4 presents the final models for the three task-specific domains of teaching self-efficacy. For efficacy in student engagement, the final model explained 29.6% of the variance, $R^2 = .296$, adjusted $R^2 = .278$. The positive mental health block added 23.4 percentage points of explained variance, $\Delta R^2 = .234$, $\Delta F(3, 546) = 60.552$, $p < .001$. Psychological well-being ($\beta = .339$, $p < .001$) and social well-being ($\beta = .144$, $p = .017$) were significant positive predictors. Fourth-year status was also significant ($\beta = .128$, $p = .005$). Academic performance rated as very good showed a small negative coefficient ($\beta = -.099$, $p = .022$), which should be interpreted cautiously.

For efficacy in instructional strategies, the final model explained 31.4% of the variance, $R^2 = .314$, adjusted $R^2 = .297$. Positive mental health added 23.0 percentage points of explained variance, $\Delta R^2 = .230$, $\Delta F(3, 546) = 60.933$, $p < .001$. Psychological well-being ($\beta = .324$, $p < .001$) and social well-being ($\beta = .182$, $p = .002$) were significant predictors. Fourth-year status also predicted higher instructional strategy efficacy ($\beta = .149$, $p = .001$).

For efficacy in classroom management, the final model explained 27.4% of the variance, $R^2 = .274$, adjusted $R^2 = .255$. The positive mental health block added 20.7 percentage points of explained variance, $\Delta R^2 = .207$, $\Delta F(3, 546) = 51.978$, $p < .001$. Only psychological well-being was a significant well-being predictor ($\beta = .369$, $p < .001$). Social well-being was not significant ($\beta = .087$, $p = .153$), and fourth-year status approached but did not reach the .05 significance threshold ($\beta = .086$, $p = .061$). Across all three domain models, psychological well-being was the most consistent predictor.

Table 4

Final regression models predicting task-specific teaching self-efficacy domains

Predictor	*ESE β*	*ISE β*	*CME β*
Institution B	.033	.034	.025
Fourth year	.128**	.149**	.086
Male	.007	−.011	.051
Very good academic performance	−.099*	−.043	−.069
Excellent academic performance	−.067	−.033	-.082
Living with family/relatives	−.033	−.016	.016
Dormitory	−.002	.027	.028
Difficult economic condition	.019	−.002	−.020
Good/favourable economic condition	.023	.065	.027
Uncertain career orientation	−.012	−.043	−.076
Positive career orientation	.048	.053	.051
EWB	.055	.024	.042
SWB	.144*	.182**	.087
PWB	.339***	.324***	.369***
R^2	.296	.314	.274
Adjusted R^2	.278	.297	.255
ΔR^2 when adding PMH	.234***	.230***	.207***

Note. $N = 561$. ESE = efficacy for student engagement; ISE = efficacy for instructional strategies; CME = classroom management efficacy; PMH = positive mental health; EWB = emotional well-being; SWB = social well-being; PWB = psychological well-being. The table reports standardized beta coefficients from the final model. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.

5. Discussion

This study examined whether positive mental health is associated with teaching self-efficacy among Vietnamese pre-service primary teachers. The results support the central claim of the paper: positive mental health is related to professional confidence, not only to general student welfare. After the control variables were included, emotional, social, and psychological well-being together explained substantial additional variance in overall teaching self-efficacy. This increment is meaningful for a psychological and educational survey using several background controls. The finding is consistent with the broader view that efficacy beliefs are shaped not only by external experience but also by how individuals interpret themselves and their environment (Bandura, 1997).

One of the most important results of the study concerns the role of psychological well-being. Psychological well-being was the strongest predictor of overall teaching self-efficacy and the only positive mental health dimension that predicted all three task-specific domains. This pattern is theoretically coherent. Psychological well-being includes purpose in life, personal growth, self-acceptance, autonomy, positive relations, and environmental mastery, all of which are closely related to the developmental work of becoming a teacher. A student teacher who feels able to grow, act with purpose, build relationships, and manage demands may be more likely to report stronger beliefs about their capacity to engage pupils, select instructional strategies, and manage classroom situations. In this respect, the findings suggest that teaching self-efficacy is not only a technical or instructional belief but also a psychologically grounded form of professional confidence (Almajnuni & Alwerthan, 2024; Sarzhanova & Nurgabdeshov, 2025).

This finding aligns with recent studies showing links between psychological functioning and readiness for teaching. García-Pérez et al. (2025) showed that resilience, self-esteem, and healthy habits were associated with psychological well-being and readiness to teach among pre-service teachers. Hui et al. (2025) found that professional identity mediated the relationship between social support and psychological well-being, with emotional intelligence moderating this process. Lee et al. (2024) reported that well-being profiles among pre-service teachers in Hong Kong were associated with teachers' self-efficacy. The present study adds that psychological well-being remains important after accounting for institution, year of study, gender, academic performance, living arrangement, economic condition, and career orientation. It therefore appears not merely as a by-product of favourable background conditions, but as a distinct correlate of teaching self-efficacy.

The pattern can also be interpreted against broader Western and Asian perspectives on teacher education. In much Western literature, teacher self-efficacy is discussed through the language of individual agency, autonomy, mastery experiences, and professional confidence. Bandura (1997) emphasised the role of perceived capability in organising and executing action, while Tschannen-Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001) located teacher efficacy in teachers' judgments of their capability to accomplish teaching tasks. From this perspective, the strong role of psychological well-being in the present study is theoretically coherent because this dimension includes purpose, personal growth, self-acceptance, positive relations, and environmental mastery. These resources may help pre-service teachers interpret early teaching challenges as manageable and developmental rather than as signs of personal inadequacy.

In Asian and Southeast Asian teacher education contexts, professional confidence may also be shaped by relational expectations, social belonging, family and institutional expectations, and commitment to a socially valued profession. Klassen et al. (2009) demonstrated that teacher self-efficacy can be examined across culturally different settings, while Ho et al. (2023) provided evidence for the use of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale in the Vietnamese educational context. Recent work in the Journal of Pedagogical Research has also treated self-efficacy as responsive to learning experiences and self-regulatory resources in pre-service teacher samples (Asare & Boateng, 2025; Biçer & Yıldırım, 2023; Kyriazis et al., 2025). The present evidence from Vietnam

extends this line of work by showing that positive mental health is both a personal and socially embedded resource in the formation of professional confidence.

Social well-being also mattered, but in a more selective way. It predicted overall teaching self-efficacy and two task domains: student engagement and instructional strategies. This result fits the nature of social well-being. Teaching is a social practice, and student engagement depends on the teacher's capacity to connect with learners, recognise their needs, and create meaningful learning situations. Instructional strategies also involve sensitivity to pupils, classroom interaction, and the social purpose of teaching. Students who feel that they belong, contribute, and understand social life may be more likely to imagine themselves as effective in these interaction-oriented tasks. This interpretation is consistent with research showing that teacher self-efficacy is commonly examined through student engagement, instructional strategies, and classroom management, and that well-being, social support, and self-efficacy are closely connected in educational contexts (Almajnuni & Alwerthan, 2024; Biçer & Yıldırım, 2023; Sarzhanova & Nurgabdeshov, 2025; Yang & Yu, 2024). Social well-being did not predict classroom management efficacy after the other predictors were included. One interpretation is that classroom management confidence depends more directly on practicum experience, behavioural routines, feedback from school mentors, and opportunities to handle specific classroom situations. Depping et al. (2024) found that the fulfilment of basic psychological needs during teaching practicum was related to pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. Social connectedness may support the relational side of teaching, but classroom management may require more direct experience with classroom complexity.

Emotional well-being showed positive correlations with teaching self-efficacy, but it was not an independent predictor in the regression models once social and psychological well-being were included. This result should not be read as evidence that positive emotions are unimportant. Rather, it suggests that general happiness, interest, or life satisfaction may overlap with deeper forms of functioning. Confidence in teaching tasks may depend less on feeling good in a broad sense and more on having purpose, growth, self-acceptance, social contribution, and perceived mastery. For teacher education, this distinction is useful. Support for student well-being should not stop at improving mood or satisfaction; it should also strengthen the resources that help students interpret professional demands as manageable. Evidence from teacher and pre-service teacher education similarly points to the role of structured training, authentic tasks, field experience, feedback, problem-solving, and supportive conditions in developing self-efficacy and professional readiness (Ajani, 2024; Almajnuni & Alwerthan, 2024; Mohafa et al., 2026; Uluçınar & Sezer, 2026).

The control variables also offer useful information. Fourth-year students reported higher overall teaching self-efficacy than third-year students, and fourth-year status remained significant after positive mental health was included. This pattern fits the developmental logic of teacher education. Fourth-year students are likely to have had more opportunities for practicum, observation, lesson planning, and feedback. These experiences may provide mastery and vicarious learning opportunities, both central sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Yet year of study was far weaker than psychological well-being in the final model. Training exposure matters, but it does not fully explain confidence in teaching.

The small negative coefficient for very good academic performance in the student engagement model should be treated cautiously. It does not appear in the overall model or in the other task-specific models, and the study was not designed to explain differences among academic achievement groups. One possible interpretation is that students who rate themselves more strongly in academic terms may also judge pupil engagement more critically. Another is that the result reflects sampling variation or unmeasured differences in practicum experience. The coefficient should therefore be read as a finding to be checked in later work, not as evidence that stronger academic performance weakens teaching confidence.

Economic condition and positive career orientation were significant before the well-being variables were entered, but not in the final model. This pattern suggests that the link between

resources, career commitment, and self-efficacy may partly operate through broader psychological functioning. Students with more favorable perceived economic conditions may experience educational demands under more supportive circumstances, while those with stronger career adaptability, academic motivation, or positive attitudes toward teaching may approach professional preparation with greater commitment and resilience (Beruin, 2023; Dulay & Yurtseven, 2022). Because the design is cross-sectional, this interpretation remains tentative. The result does, however, point to a more integrated view of teacher preparation: material conditions, career orientation, well-being, and professional confidence are likely connected rather than separate.

6. Implications for Teacher Education

The findings have practical implications for primary teacher education. If teaching self-efficacy is a marker of professional readiness, then programmes should not rely only on coursework and practicum exposure to build it. They should also support the psychological resources that help students make use of those experiences. The strongest evidence in this study points to psychological well-being. Activities that strengthen purpose, reflection, self-acceptance, personal growth, autonomy, and environmental mastery may help students build a more stable sense of professional capability.

Several programme practices are relevant. Career guidance can help students connect their studies with a meaningful professional direction. Reflective journals and supervised discussion of practicum experiences can help students interpret difficulties as part of learning rather than as personal failure. Mentoring can support positive relations and self-acceptance. Micro-teaching with specific feedback can strengthen environmental mastery by allowing students to practise, receive guidance, and try again. Service-learning or community-based activities may also strengthen social well-being by helping students see teaching as a contribution to children, families, and communities.

The results also suggest that different teaching efficacy domains may require different forms of support. Student engagement and instructional strategy efficacy were associated with both social and psychological well-being. These domains may benefit from activities that strengthen professional belonging and social purpose. Classroom management efficacy, by contrast, was associated only with psychological well-being among the well-being dimensions. It may require more structured classroom simulations, video analysis, case discussion, and practicum feedback focused on behavioural and relational classroom situations.

These implications do not require teacher education programmes to become clinical mental health services. Rather, they suggest that professional preparation and well-being support should be better connected. A practicum debriefing, for example, can address lesson planning and classroom behaviour while also helping students interpret failure, recognise growth, and maintain a sense of purpose. In this sense, well-being support becomes part of professional learning rather than an additional activity placed outside the curriculum.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be considered. First, the cross-sectional design prevents causal interpretation. Positive mental health may support teaching self-efficacy, but stronger efficacy beliefs may also strengthen well-being, and both may be influenced by other factors. Longitudinal research is needed to examine how well-being and teaching self-efficacy develop across coursework, practicum, and graduation transitions.

Second, the study relied on self-report data. Responses may be affected by social desirability, subjective interpretation, or temporary mood. Although anonymity was emphasised, future studies should combine self-report measures with supervisor evaluations, practicum performance data, observational evidence, or qualitative accounts of professional learning. Third, the sample came from two teacher education institutions and was predominantly female. The findings should

therefore be generalised cautiously to other regions, institutions, and teacher education programmes.

Future research could test mediation and moderation models. Professional identity, resilience, social support, career motivation, and practicum quality may explain or condition the relationship between positive mental health and teaching self-efficacy. Person-centred analyses could also identify well-being and efficacy profiles among pre-service teachers (Zhou et al., 2025). Finally, intervention studies are needed to test whether mentoring, reflective practicum support, well-being programmes, and structured micro-teaching can improve both positive mental health and teaching self-efficacy.

Future studies should also examine whether the three dimensions of positive mental health operate differently across stages of teacher preparation. Emotional well-being may be more relevant during early adjustment to university, social well-being may become more salient during school placement, and psychological well-being may remain important throughout the transition into teaching. Such stage-sensitive evidence would help teacher education programmes design support that fits students' developmental needs rather than treating well-being as a single general target.

8. Conclusion

This study shows that positive mental health is associated with teaching self-efficacy among Vietnamese pre-service primary teachers. Psychological well-being was the most consistent dimension linked to overall teaching self-efficacy and to the three task-specific domains, while social well-being was especially relevant to student engagement and instructional strategies. These findings suggest that teacher education should connect professional preparation with support for students' positive functioning, particularly their sense of purpose, growth, relatedness, and environmental mastery. Future research should test whether interventions targeting psychological well-being also improve teaching self-efficacy.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Data Availability: The dataset is not publicly available because it contains student survey responses. De-identified data may be made available upon reasonable request and subject to institutional ethical requirements.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies: AI-assisted tools, including ChatGPT (OpenAI), were used only to support English language refinement, grammar checking, readability, and formatting consistency. They were not used to generate data, perform statistical analyses, create figures, or make substantive research decisions. The author reviewed and verified the manuscript and remain responsible for the accuracy of the data analysis, citations, interpretation, and conclusions.

Ethics Declaration: The study was conducted as an anonymous, minimal-risk educational survey. At the time of data collection, the participating institutions did not have a dedicated Institutional Review Board or Research Ethics Committee for this type of survey research; therefore, no formal ethics approval number was available. Participation was voluntary, and students were informed about the academic purpose of the study before completing the questionnaire. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all data were analyzed and reported in aggregate form.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

References

Ajani, O. A. (2024). Enhancing problem-solving skills among pre-service teachers in higher education: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Pedagogical Sociology and Psychology, 6*(2), 98–113. https://doi.org/10.33902/jpsp.202424002

Almajnuni, K. M., & Alwerthan, T. A. (2024). Enhancing teacher self-efficacy: The power of effective training programs. *Journal of Pedagogical Research, 8*(3), 34–47. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202427265

Auerbach, R. P., Mortier, P., Bruffaerts, R., Alonso, J., Benjet, C., Cuijpers, P., Demyttenaere, K., Ebert, D. D., Green, J. G., Hasking, P., Murray, E., Nock, M. K., Pinder-Amaker, S., Sampson, N. A., Stein, D. J., Vilagut, G., Zaslavsky, A. M., & Kessler, R. C. (2018). WHO World Mental Health Surveys International College Student Project: Prevalence and distribution of mental disorders. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, *127*(7), 623–638. https://doi.org/10.1037/abn0000362

Asare, B., & Boateng, F. O. (2025). Self-awareness and self-regulatory learning as mediators between ChatGPT usage and pre-service mathematics teacher's self-efficacy. *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, *9*(2), 38–54. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202530637

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.

Beruin, L. C. (2023). Learning privilege divide: A framework for interrogating personal privileges of STEM students' education during the pandemic. *Journal of Pedagogical Sociology and Psychology, 5*(4), 40–56. https://doi.org/10.33902/jpsp.202323515

Biçer, A., & Yıldırım, Ş. (2023). Comparison of epistemological beliefs, teaching-learning conceptions, and self-efficacy of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers. *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, *7*(4), 414–438. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202322958

Bjorklund, P., Jr., Warstadt, M. F., & Daly, A. J. (2021). Finding satisfaction in belonging: Preservice teacher subjective well-being and its relationship to belonging, trust, and self-efficacy. *Frontiers in Education*, *6*, Article 639435. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.639435

Depping, D., Ehmke, T., Besser, M., & Leiß, D. (2024). How does pre-service teachers' self-efficacy relate to the fulfilment of basic psychological needs during teaching practicum? *Education Sciences*, *14*(12), 1312. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14121312

Dessauvagie, A. S., Dang, H. M., Nguyen, T. A. T., & Groen, G. (2022). Mental health of university students in Southeastern Asia: A systematic review. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health*, *34*(2–3), 172–181. https://doi.org/10.1177/10105395211055545

Duffin, L. C., French, B. F., & Patrick, H. (2012). The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale: Confirming the factor structure with beginning pre-service teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *28*(6), 827–834. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.03.004

Dulay, S., & Yurtseven, N. (2022). Career adaptability and academic motivation as predictors of student teachers' attitudes towards the profession: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Pedagogical Research, 6*(3), 53–71. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202214428

Elmali, S., & Balkan Kiyici, F. (2025). Pre-service primary teachers' STEM design experiences. *Journal of Pedagogical Research, 9*(3), 25–42. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202528478

Fives, H., & Buehl, M. M. (2010). Examining the factor structure of the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, *78*(1), 118–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220970903224461

García-Pérez, L., Ubago-Jiménez, J. L., Padial-Ruz, R., & Melguizo-Ibáñez, E. (2025). Profiling pre-service teachers' resilience, self-esteem, and healthy habits: Associations with psychological well-being and readiness to teach. *Acta Psychologica*, *261*, 105799. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105799

Haldimann, M., Hascher, T., & Flick-Holtsch, D. (2024). Well-being of pre-service teachers: A construct validation study across three countries. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, *7*, 100346. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2024.100346

Ho, V. T., Tran, V. D., & Nguyen, V. D. (2023). Examining the factor structure of the teachers' sense of efficacy scale in the Vietnamese educational context. *International Journal of Education and Practice*, *11*(1), 47–58. https://doi.org/10.18488/61.v11i1.3257

Hui, Q., Li, Y., Zhu, R., Li, Y., Wang, T., Che, X., & You, X. (2025). Emotional intelligence moderated the mediating effect of professional identity between social support and psychological well-being among pre-service teachers. *Scientific Reports*, *15*, 13107. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-93537-w

Iasiello, M., van Agteren, J., Schotanus-Dijkstra, M., Lo, L., Fassnacht, D. B., & Westerhof, G. J. (2022). Assessing mental wellbeing using the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form: A systematic review and

meta-analytic structural equation modelling. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, *29*(4), 442–456. https://doi.org/10.1037/cps0000074

Kang, H. (2013). The prevention and handling of the missing data. *Korean Journal of Anesthesiology*, *64*(5), 402–406. https://doi.org/10.4097/kjae.2013.64.5.402

Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *43*(2), 207–222. https://doi.org/10.2307/3090197

Keyes, C. L. M. (2005). Mental illness and/or mental health? Investigating axioms of the complete state model of health. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *73*(3), 539–548. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.73.3.539

Keyes, C. L. M., Wissing, M., Potgieter, J. P., Temane, M., Kruger, A., & van Rooy, S. (2008). Evaluation of the Mental Health Continuum–Short Form (MHC-SF) in Setswana-speaking South Africans. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*, *15*(3), 181–192. https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.572

Kim, J. H. (2019). Multicollinearity and misleading statistical results. *Korean Journal of Anesthesiology*, *72*(6), 558–569. https://doi.org/10.4097/kja.19087

Klassen, R. M., Bong, M., Usher, E. L., Chong, W. H., Huan, V. S., Wong, I. Y. F., & Georgiou, T. (2009). Exploring the validity of a teachers' self-efficacy scale in five countries. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *34*(1), 67–76. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2008.08.001

Kyriazis, N., Stylos, G., & Kotsis, K. (2025). Impact of inquiry-based laboratory activities on understanding heat concepts and self-efficacy in pre-service teachers. *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, *9*(1), 161–181. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202530426

Lamers, S. M. A., Westerhof, G. J., Bohlmeijer, E. T., ten Klooster, P. M., & Keyes, C. L. M. (2011). Evaluating the psychometric properties of the Mental Health Continuum–Short Form. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *67*(1), 99–110. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20741

Lee, A. S. Y., Fung, W. K., Datu, J. A. D., & Chung, K. K. H. (2024). Well-being profiles of pre-service teachers in Hong Kong: Associations with teachers' self-efficacy during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Psychological Reports*, *127*(3), 1009–1031. https://doi.org/10.1177/00332941221127631

Ma, K., Luo, J., Cavanagh, M., Dong, J., & Sun, M. (2023). Measuring teacher self-efficacy: Validating a new comprehensive scale among Chinese pre-service teachers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *14*, 1063830. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1063830

Magalhães, E. (2024). Dual-factor models of mental health: A systematic review of empirical evidence. *Psychosocial Intervention*, *33*(2), 89–102. https://doi.org/10.5093/pi2024a6

Mohafa, L. G., Makhechane, M., & Qhobela, M. (2026). Pre-service physical science teachers' self-efficacy for sustainable digital pedagogy: Evidence from teaching practice after emergency blended learning. *Sustainable Education and Digital Transformation, 1*(2), e43696. https://doi.org/10.33902/SEDT.202643696

Perera, H. N., Calkins, C., & Part, R. (2019). Teacher self-efficacy profiles: Determinants, outcomes, and generalizability across teaching level. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *58*, 186–203. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2019.02.006

Rodríguez-Ardura, I., & Meseguer-Artola, A. (2020). Editorial: How to prevent, detect and control common method variance in electronic commerce research. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, *15*(2), I–V. https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-18762020000200101

Sarzhanova, G., & Nurgabdeshov, A. (2025). Mapping psychological well-being in education: A systematic review of key dimensions and an integrative conceptual framework. *Journal of Pedagogical Research, 9*(3), 327–349. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202534832

Setia, M. S. (2016). Methodology series module 3: Cross-sectional studies. *Indian Journal of Dermatology*, *61*(3), 261–264. https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5154.182410

Sounoglou, M., Christodoulou, M., & Lytsiousi, S. (2026). Practicums and student teachers' identity formation: A study using the explanatory sequential design. *Journal of Pedagogical Sociology and Psychology, 8*(1), e29580. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPSP.202629580

Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. *International Journal of Medical Education*, *2*, 53–55. https://doi.org/10.5116/ijme.4dfb.8dfd

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *17*(7), 783–805. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(01)00036-1

Uluçınar, U., & Sezer, A. (2026). Exploring signs in nature: The vlog experiences of preservice teachers. *Journal of Pedagogical Sociology and Psychology, 8*(2), e45073. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPSP.202645073

Yang, T., & Yu, L.-J. (2024). Factors affecting the construction of the theoretical model of subjective well-being of Chinese higher vocational college students. *Journal of Pedagogical Research, 8*(4), 420–436. https://doi.org/10.33902/JPR.202429560

Yeo, Z. Z., & Suárez, L. (2022). Validation of the mental health continuum-short form: The bifactor model of emotional, social, and psychological well-being. *Plos One*, *17*(5), e0268232. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0268232

Zee, M., & Koomen, H. M. Y. (2016). Teacher self-efficacy and its effects on classroom processes, student academic adjustment, and teacher well-being: A synthesis of 40 years of research. *Review of Educational Research*, *86*(4), 981–1021. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315626801

Zhou, S., Slemp, G. R., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2025). Profiling pre-service teachers' motivational and behavioral characteristics: Relationships with psychological wellbeing and occupational commitment. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *164*, 105041. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2025.105041

Żemojtel-Piotrowska, M., Piotrowski, J. P., Osin, E. N., Cieciuch, J., Adams, B. G., Ardi, R., Baltatescu, S., Bhomi, A. L., Clinton, A., de Clunie, G. T., Czarna, A. Z., Esteves, C., Gouveia, V. V., Halik, M. H. J., Hosseini, A., Khachatryan, N., Kamble, S., Kawula, A., Maltby, J., & Wills-Herrera, E. (2018). The Mental Health Continuum–Short Form: The structure and application for cross-cultural studies: A 38-nation study. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, *74*(6), 1034–1052. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22570