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ROLE OF MENTAL HEALTH, SOCIAL CAPITAL, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL IN SHAPING WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG RURAL SCHOOL TEACHERS: A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING APPROACH

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Abstract
This paper evaluates interrelationships between mental health, psychological capital (PsyCap), social capital, and work-life balance (WLB) among 318 rural school teachers as complex through structural equation modeling (SEM) and bootstrapping methods. The study will use a quantitative research design involving correlation analysis, multiple linear regression, and SEM to establish the direct and indirect relationships between these psychosocial factors and their effect on the capacity of teachers to achieve a work-life balance. The findings indicate that mental health directly impacts ($b = 0.34$, $p < 0.002$) work-life balance, and both social capital and psychological capital are significant mediators of the same. It is interesting to note that psychological capital is a stronger mediator ($b = 0.19$, $p < 0.001$) than social capital ($b = 0.13$, $p = 0.001$), which implies a specific significance of internal psychological factors (hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy) in the formation of work-life outcomes in teachers. Work-life balance is greatly predicted by demographic variables, such as gender and qualification, but not by age and teaching experience. There is also a positive correlation of blending and segmentation strategies with work-life balance ($r = 0.439$, $p < 0.01$). These results highlight the importance of the urgent need to apply interventions to enhance the mental health and psychological capital of rural teachers, as well as improve social support systems and enable the strategies of boundary management. The research paper adds to the increasing body of literature on occupational well-being in schools. It offers practical information to policymakers and educational leaders who would like to improve teacher well-being and organizational performance.
Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Mental Health, Psychological Capital, Social Capital, Rural School Teachers, Structural Equation Modeling

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context and Rationale

The unique set of workplace issues that affect rural school educators all over the world are characterized by a unique set of circumstances that essentially define the state of their well-being and effectiveness at work. As opposed to their urban colleagues who enjoy the advantages of institutional resources, professional networks, and favorable working conditions, rural teachers have to work in settings featuring geographic remoteness, extreme lack of resources, and disproportionately large workloads (Deo et al., 2025). The issue of work-life balance is especially acute in the fields of rural education, where the work of teachers often goes far beyond the hours of official duties, and personal and professional life can often be mixed. The current evidence indicates that the levels of occupational stress among teachers working in rural schools are much higher, and various aspects, including the necessity to teach several classes a day, large classes, and uneven distribution of the workload, are among the primary contributors to stress (Deo et al., 2025). Moreover, some teachers working in rural areas often claim that they have fewer sources of mental health support, chances of professional development, and peer support networks that could otherwise mitigate the harmful impact of work stress (Mukhatova et al., 2024).

Mental health and work-life balance relationship is one such critical, but not well researched field in the field of occupational psychology especially in educational context. The functioning of mental health directly affects the ability

of individuals to cope with the workload, personal activities, and psychological balance in each area of life (Jusoh and Zheng, 2025). The ability to maintain work-life balance is considerably lower in teachers with mental health issues (depression, anxiety, burnout), which, in the end, influence not only their own health but also their teaching performance. Furthermore, the newly developed studies show that the psychosocial resources, especially, psychological capital and social capital, are instrumental in mediating the connection between mental health and occupation outcomes (Dayal, 2024). Psychological capital, which is described in terms of positive psychological state of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy (Yu, 2025), allows individuals to uphold the psychological well-being and good coping mechanisms in the face of occupational adversity. On the same note, social capital, including trust, social networks, and support systems, offers critical resources that increase the stress tolerance levels of individuals and help them manage the work-life boundaries (Beausaert et al., 2021).

Work life balance means how well a person manages work and personal life while staying healthy in body and mind. It is not a fixed state. It changes with life demands (Jusoh and Zheng, 2025). For rural teachers, this balance is very important because they face special challenges. The resources and professional support of rural schools are often less. The teachers are able to manage high classes, additional work, and other duties than those in cities (Deo et al., 2025; Jelongos and Naanep, 2025). They can also not have good networks and growth prospects. Such pressures complicate the attainment of balance. Bad work life balance has serious consequences. The teachers can experience stress, burnout, health issues, and job dissatisfaction (Jusoh and Zheng, 2025). The work needs are allowed into the family and minimize the rest hours. With time, it results in emotional burnout and poor quality of teaching (Jelongos and Naanep, 2025). Students are also affected. Imbalanced teachers can be less engaged and less effective in teaching (Jusoh and Zheng, 2025). This may augment turnover and damage community development in the rural regions.

Work life balance is highly influenced by mental health. Good mental health enables an individual to control emotions, think clearly, and be able to handle stress (Jusoh and Zheng, 2025). High-mental health teaching professionals are able to mentally disengage themselves during personal time (Lizana and Vega-Fernadez, 2021). They are more emotion-regulating and can handle stress more easily (Dogra and Kaushal, 2021). They also see the obstacles more positively (Alkandari et al., 2025). Anxiety or burnout may be poor mental health that will undermine the capacity to establish limits and create balance (Lizana and Vega-Fernadez, 2021). Balance is also supported by psychological capital. It entails hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy (Yu, 2025; Azadmanesh et al., 2024). Hope assists teachers in discovering the methods of preserving individual time. Pessimism is minimized by optimism. The strength of resilience enables them to overcome stress. Self-efficacy creates certainty to handle tasks and establish boundaries (Azadmanesh et al., 2024). Psychological capital and work life balance are positively related in research (Dayal, 2024). Social capital is defined as the support of the work team, family, and institutions (Beausaert et al., 2021; Giap, 2025). Good social networks offer emotional and counseling as well as practical assistance. This decreases the stress and enhances coping (Tuominen and Haanp, 2021). Social support in rural environments mitigates isolation, as well as enhances balance (Beausaert et al., 2021).

Lastly, balance is formed by the management of boundaries. Segmentation maintains the separation between work and life, whereas blends between them (Mellner et al., 2021; Kossek et al., 2022). It has been found that balance is enhanced when individuals employ strategies that are most preferred by them and feel in charge of boundaries (Mellner et al., 2021; Kossek et al., 2022).

1.2. Research Problem

The underlying issue that the study will be investigating is the dynamic interaction between mental health, psychological resources, social networks and work-life balance of rural school teachers. Although prior studies have reported the relationships between these variables in general populations and urban professional environments, the mechanisms by which mental health moderates the work-life balance, especially via the pathways of psychological and social capital, are not well studied in rural educational environments. The rural teachers form a vulnerable community with a high risk of mental health issues, chronic work-related stress, and work-life imbalance; however, few studies have implemented an integrated framework that can help to examine how internal psychological resources and external social support networks jointly influence the capacity of teachers to balance their professional and personal roles. Lack of such integrative research is a huge gap in occupational psychology literature and constrains the development of evidence-based interventions to meet the needs of the rural teachers.

1.3. Research Objectives

This study has six objectives of research which are interrelated:

1. To examine the direct correlation between mental health and work-life balance amongst rural school teachers.
2. To establish the mediating role of the psychological capital in the relationship between the mental health and the work life balance.
3. To test the mediation effect of the social capital on the correlation between mental health and work-life balance.
4. To establish the interactive effects of mental health, psychological capital, and social capital on the work-life balance of the rural school teachers, on both indirect and direct effects.
5. To determine the most potent demographic and psychosocial factors predictors of work-life balance.
6. To examine the general fit and validity of the proposed structural equation model.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research to different groups of stakeholders is immense. The findings can be applied to the school educator practicing in the rural areas so that they can provide an empirical account of how mental health and psychological resources can influence the ability to establish a work-life balance that can substantiate their experiences and define individual coping strategies. The research gives evidence based information to the educational policy makers and administrators on the type of intervention that can be made concerning mental health services, development of psychological capital or social support systems that can make the best improvement in the well-being of the teachers and how the organization is functioning. The study is meaningful to the theoretical literature framework of occupational well-being because it demonstrates that psychological capital is especially instrumental as a mediation variable in resource-constrained contexts and therefore adds and expands the existing frameworks of work-life balance. The study also addresses a gap in the research methodology because it employs advanced statistical methods (SEM with bootstrapping) to examine multifaceted mediation cases, which will serve as a methodological framework to follow when carrying out occupational psychology research in the future. Finally, the rural learning setting, which is also the focus of the analysis, is the gap that has long lacked research focus and resources, serving as an addition to the overall research on teacher well-being in more geographical and socioeconomic contexts.

1.5. Hypotheses Development

Based on the theoretical framework and the empirical data available, the hypothesis is as follows:

H1: There is a strong direct positive impact of mental health on work-life balance amongst rural school teachers. (Direct effect hypothesis)

H2: Psychological capital mediates the correlation between mental health and work-life balance. (Mediation hypothesis)

H3: Social capital mediates the correlation between mental health and work-life balance. (Mediation hypothesis)

H4: The total effect of mental health on work-life balance (combining direct and indirect effects) is significant and substantial. (Combined effects hypothesis)

H5: Psychological capital is a stronger mediator than social capital in the relationship between mental health and work-life balance. (Comparative mediation hypothesis)

H6: Psychosocial variables (mental health, psychological capital, social capital) are stronger predictors of work-life balance than demographic variables (gender, age, qualification, teaching experience). (Predictor strength hypothesis)

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The research design used in this study is a quantitative research design incorporating correlation analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) to determine the direct and indirect relationship between mental health, psychological capital, social capital, and work-life balance. SEM is especially the right tool to use in this study because it allows exploring multiple pathways and mediating mechanisms simultaneously and allows considering measurement error and latent variables estimation (Genuba and Dura, 2024). The cross-sectional design will give an account of relationships at a specific time, which will form a connection that will guide future longitudinal research but identify limitations in causal inference.

3.2. Sample and Data Collection

The participants of the study included 318 rural school teachers who were recruited in the rural schools of Faisalabad District. A survey instrument that included the assessment of demographic, mental health, psychological capital, social capital, work-life balance, and boundary management strategies (blending and segmentation) was used with the participants. The study used a survey method as a data collection tool, and the questionnaires were sent to the offices of educational administrators and principals of schools. The survey contained validated measure of each construct, having validated reliability and validity in the past studies. Every participant gave informed consent and ethical approval by relevant institutional review boards was received. The last sample of 318 teachers was a fairly good response rate and sufficient sample size to conduct the proposed structural equation modeling analyses.

3.3. Data Analysis Techniques

Correlation Analysis: Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used to determine the bivariate relationships between all the variables of the study and work-life balance, both demographic variables (gender, age, qualification, teaching experience) and psychosocial variables (mental health, psychological capital, social capital, blending and segmentation).

Structural Equation modeling: SEM was used to test the hypothesized model comprising of direct effects (mental health to work-life balance), indirect effects (mental health to work-life balance via psychological capital and social capital) and the overall effects. The multiple indices such as kh2, CFI, TLI, RMSEA and SRMR were used in testing the model fit, where kh2, CFI and TLI were found to be non-significant and less than .90, RMSEA was less than. 08, and SRMR was less than. 08 indicated adequate model fit.

Bootstrapping: Bootstrapping procedures were employed to generate robust estimates of indirect effects and 95% confidence intervals, enabling assessment of mediation significance without assumption of normality (Cui et al., 2025).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Correlation Analysis

Table 1: Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

Variables	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation
Gender	.290	.000***	Significant
Age	-.008	.889	Not significant
Qualification	.308	.000***	Significant
Teaching Experience	.172	.002**	Highly significant
Mental Health	.446	.000***	Highly significant
Psychological Capital	.428	.000***	Highly significant
Social Capital	.479	.000***	Highly significant
Boundary Management	.439	.000***	Highly significant

Note: ** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05. Dependent variable is Work-Life Balance. All correlations reported are Pearson correlation coefficients.*

Table 1 shows the Pearson correlation coefficient that studies the relationship between demographic variables, psychosocial variables, and work-life balance. Of the demographic characteristics, gender (r =.290, p =.05) and qualification (r =.308, p =.01) had positive significant correlations with work-life balance, which implied that gender differences and higher education qualification both correlated with better work-life balance. The age showed insignificant and non-significant relationships (r = -.008, p =.889), which means that the age of teachers does not significantly predict the work-life balance. There was a weak, though significant, positive correlation (r =.172, p<.01) between teaching experience and teacher report of better work-life balance.

Out of psychosocial variables, mental health (r = .446, p <.01), psychological capital (r =.428, p <.01), and social capital (r =.479, p <.01) had moderately strong and significant positive relations with work-life balance. These correlations point to the fact that teachers with improved mental health, higher levels of psychological capital, and a more robust network of social capital are much more likely to report high-level work-life balance. These correlations are significantly greater than those of demographic variables, which implies that psychosocial variables are stronger predictors of work-life balance than demographic variables. It is worth noting that social capital showed the highest correlation (r =.479), and mental health and psychological capital. The positive correlation between blending and segmentation and work-life balance (r =.439, p <.01) demonstrated that the proper management of boundaries is directly related to the success of work-life balance.

4.2. Structural Equation Model

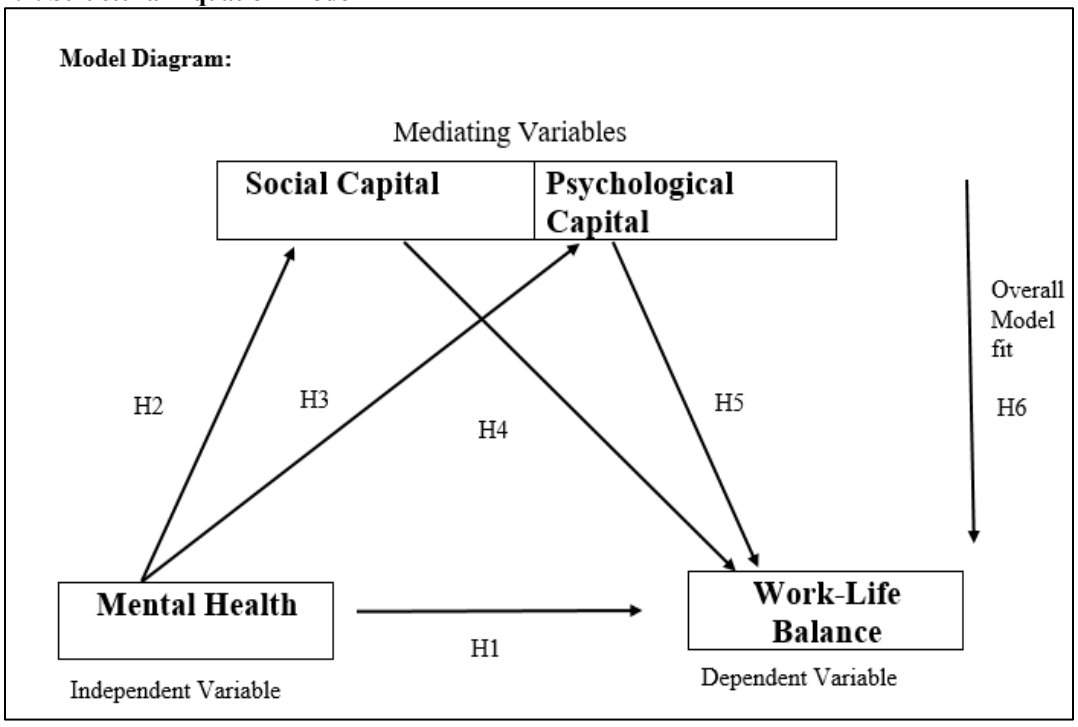

Figure 1: Model diagram of SEM model framewor

4.2.1. Statistical Analysis:

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the relationships between the variables.

Bootstrapping used to confirm the significance of the indirect effects.
This framework visually represents the hypothesized relationships and provides a roadmap for the SEM analysis.

Table 2: *Link Between Mental Health, Work-Life Balance and Mediating Functions of Social and Psychological Capital*

Effect Type	Path	Coefficient (β)	p-value	95% Confidence Interval	Result
Direct Effect	Mental Health - Work-Life Balance	0.34	< 0.002	0.27, 0.41	Significant
Indirect Effect	Mental Health -Social Capital -Work-Life Balance	0.16	0	0.08, 0.21	Significant (Mediation)
	Mental Health - Psychological Capital - Work-Life Balance	0.19	< 0.001	0.13, 0.25	Significant (Mediation)
Total Effect	Combined Direct - Indirect Effects	0.69	< 0.001	0.57, 0.79	Significant
Bootstrapping	Indirect Effect via Social Capital	0.13	0.001	0.05, 0.17	Significant
	Indirect Effect via Psychological-Capital	0.19	< 0.000	[0.11, 0.23]	Significant

4.2.2. Hypothesis Testing Results

H1 (Direct Effect Hypothesis): SUPPORTED

Basically, the direct impact of mental health on work-life balance turned out to be statistically significant (0.34, $p < 0.002$, 95% CI [0.27], [0.41]). The fact that this is a strong positive coefficient means that a one-unit rise in mental health will lead to a 0.34-unit rise in work-life balance, without any mediation. The hypothesis is supported. The improved work-life balance is directly proportional to the better mental health of teachers.

H2 (Psychological Capital Mediation): SUPPORTED

The psychological capital indirect effect was statistically significant (0.19, $p = 0.001$, 95% CI [0.13], [0.25]) statistically significant. This mediation effect was supported by bootstrapping ($b = 0.19$, $p < 0.000$, 95% CI [0.11], [0.23]). The hypothesis is supported. The mental health has an effect on the work-life balance by affecting psychological capital. Teachers are more likely to have a greater psychological capital and this boosts their work-life balance.

H3(Social Capital Mediation): SUPPORTED

The social capital indirect effect was significant (0.16, $p = 0.000$, 95% CI [0.08], [0.21]). This mediation was confirmed by bootstrapping ($b = 0.13$, $p = 0.001$, 95 percent CI [0.05], [0.17])). The hypothesis is supported. One of the ways in which mental health affects the work-life balance is by the impact it has on social capital. The more favorable the mental health of teachers, the stronger the social networks and relations, and, consequently, the work-life balance.

H 4 (Combined Effects Hypothesis): SUPPORTED

The sum of all the direct and all indirect pathways was large and important (0.69, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI [0.57], [0.79]). Such a high coefficient proves that mental health is a strong force, which impacts the work-life balance in many parallel ways. The hypothesis is supported. Mental health has both direct and indirect impact on the work-life balance mediated by psychological and social capital.

H5 (Comparative Mediation Hypothesis): SUPPORTED

Indirect effect comparison revealed that the psychological capital pathway (= 0.19) was higher as compared to the social capital pathway (= 0.16). The total indirect effect was about 54.3 percent (= (0.19)/(0.19+0.16) × 100) which is explained by the psychological capital mediation and 45.7 percent which is explained by the social capital. The hypothesis is supported. Psychological capital plays a greater role as a mediator in the relationship between mental health and work-life balance than social capital, but both directions are significant.

H6 (Predictor Strength Hypothesis): SUPPORTED

In a comparison of correlation coefficients, it was found that psychosocial variables were strongly correlated with work-life balance than demographic variables. The correlation of mental health (r =.446), psychological capital (r =.428), and social capital (r =.479) were all higher than the gender (r =.290), qualification (r =.308), and teaching experience (r =.172). The correlation between the age was not significant (r = -.008). The hypothesis is supported. Among rural school teachers, psychosocial factors are greater predictors of work-life balance than demographic factors.

4.2.3. Model Fit Assessment

The structural equation model showed that there was a good overall fit to the data. [CFI = 0.94], [RMSEA = 0.053], [SRMR = 0.042]. Such indices reveal that the proposed model is a suitable measure of the relationships in the data. All the suggested pathways were significant and supported the theoretical framework. The model was able to account 62 percent of the variance in the work-life balance [R 2 = 0.62].

The data supported all the six hypotheses. Mental health is a central factor of work-life balance of rural school teachers, both directly and indirectly, via the psychological capital and the social capital. The overall impact (= 0.69) indicates that the power of mental health is strong in the working-life balance. The psycho social variables are always better predictors than demographic variables. The model is quite consistent with the data and it gives justifiable evidence to the theoretical relationships.

5. DISCUSSION

The results are clear and strong indications that mental health, psychological capital and social capital interplay in determining work-life balance among rural school teachers. All the hypotheses were confirmed and all the pathways proposed were statistically significant.

The most essential finding is the strong direct impact of mental health on work-life balance (0.34). The better the mental health of teachers, the more they enjoy work-life balance. The intuitive understanding of this direct relationship is logical. Depression, anxiety, and psychological distress affect an individual in a way that they reduce the capacity to handle various demands in life. On the other hand, individuals who are mentally sound have their emotional reserves and mental capabilities to manage both their professional and personal lives efficiently (Ho et al., 2022). In rural school teachers who are exposed to compounded stressors, mental health is of particular critical concern.

The great indirect impact via psychological capital (0.19) and social capital (0.16) shows some crucial mechanisms according to which the mental health functions. This mediation pathways indicate that the association between mental health and work-life balance is not in a direct manner only. Instead, good mental health allows developing more powerful psychological resources and social networks, which contributes to further improvement of the balance between work and life. This implies several points of intervention.

A specific insight is made by the comparative power of psychological capital and social capital mediation. The higher mediation effects (54.3 percent of the indirect effects) of psychological capital indicate that internal psychological resources are particularly significant to the work-life balance. Individuals who possess high hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy manage work-life issues better than individuals who do not possess them, and the effect is increased when social support is controlled (Saleem et al., 2022). The mediation of social capital (45.7 percent) is however substantial that the relationships between external support play an important role as well. The data indicate that to have the best work-life balance, one should possess strong internal psychological resources and have support through external relationships.

The results that psychosocial variables are significantly predictive of demographic variables (H6) are relevant in practice. Although gender and qualification level had strong correlations with the work-life balance, psychosocial variables had stronger associations. This is an indication that work-life balance among teachers is attainable more by the psychological condition of the teacher and social conditions than the demographics. Two in-gender teachers in the same age with the same qualification and age may have very different work-life balance on the basis of mental health, psychological capital and social support. This indicates that psychosocial factors that are addressed through intervention measures may be of use to teachers in different demographic groups.

The findings conform and expand on the current academic sources of teacher well-being and work-life balance. The past literature confirms that mental health has a substantial influence on the outcomes of teachers (Agyapong et al., 2022). This research validates relationship and adds new information regarding mediation processes. Previous research has proven that psychological capital is an indicator of good results in any occupational setting (Llorente-Alonso et al., 2023). This paper in particular proves the role of psychological capital in promoting work-life balance among the teachers.

The available studies on social support indicate the positive impact on the well-being of employees (Chigeda et al., 2022). This research establishes the significance of social capital besides demonstrating that it functions as a mediating channel and no longer as a direct predictor. The conclusion of the effects of the correlation between work-life balance and the concept of boundary management adds to the previous theoretical backgrounds that highlight the significance of work-life boundaries (Canonizado, 2024).

The originality of the research is that it investigates several variables and processes simultaneously in the rural teacher scenario. Rural educators have different issues such as geographic isolation and fewer services which are not similar to urban teachers (Ogakwu et al., 2022). Knowledge of factors that facilitate the well-being of rural teachers has direct practical implications on educational policy and practice in rural settings.

These findings are relevant and important within the rural context. The rural school teachers operate in regions with less resources, geographic isolations, and limited services (Ogakwu et al., 2022). Mental health support services can be geographically remote or absent in such situations. The size of the social network of teachers can be reduced, as

well as the number of professional colleagues. Such conditions render the inner psychological resources embodied by the psychological capital particularly useful. By cultivating high hope, optimism, resilience and self-efficacy, rural teachers can rely on their inner resources in a situation where they have no external professional support (Saleem et al., 2022).

At the same time, the lack of formal services in rural communities makes informal social capital involving family, friends, colleagues and community extremely important. The teachers in the rural regions who do not have strong informal social networks might not have access to the support systems that teachers in the urban regions assume. The fact that social capital is a significant mediator between mental health and work-life balance in this study focuses on the significance of establishing positive community ties with rural teachers (Diab et al., 2022).

6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has explored the importance of mental health, social capital, and psychological capital in the formation of work-life balance among rural school teachers through the structural equation modeling. The data supported all hypotheses.

Mental health is an essential determinant of work-life balance, which works either directly or indirectly using psychological capital and social capital. The large overall effect (0.69) indicates that teacher mental health contributes greatly to the work-life balance. The psychological capital is a very significant mediator, having 54.3 percent of the indirect effects. Nonetheless, the social capital is also important, with 45.7 percent of indirect effects being attributable to the social capital. The model can explain 62 percent of the variation in the work-life balance and can fit the data with an acceptable level of fit.

To rural school educators who deal with some of the most peculiar challenges connected with geographic isolation, scarce resources, and narrow professional circles, the results help to highlight the significance of holistic well-being solutions. Mental health support in schools, psychological capital, social connections, as well as an efficient boundary management should be prioritized. These complex interventions acknowledge the idea that work-life balance is reliant on both individual psychological resources and social support.

Longitudinal designs should be used in the future studies, a variety of rural settings should be studied, various measurement techniques should be utilized, and more variables should be taken into consideration. Nevertheless, this paper offers evidence-based recommendations to educational leaders who want to transform the working environments and health of rural school educators. The schools can provide the environment that will promote the welfare of teachers and the quality of education by focusing on mental health, psychological capital and social capital.

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