

Educating the Heart and Mind: Linking Value-Based Education for Psychological Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the crucial intersection between value-based education and the psychological well-being of students and teachers also in contemporary educational contexts. The primary aim of the study is to explore how embedding moral and ethical values within the education system can foster holistic development, enhance emotional resilience, and promote well-being among learners. Drawing on the foundational philosophy of integrating emotional, moral, and spiritual development alongside cognitive growth, the study underscores the urgency of reorienting education towards nurturing the "heart" as much as the "mind".

The methodology adopted for this conceptual study is qualitative and analytical in nature. It relies on secondary data derived from theoretical literature, policy documents, educational frameworks, and prior empirical studies on psychological well-being and value-based education. A thematic analysis approach is employed to interpret and synthesize diverse sources, enabling the researcher to identify key patterns, concepts, and recommendations relevant to the integration of values into educational practices.

The study finds that value-based education significantly contributes to students' psychological well-being by fostering empathy, self-regulation, integrity, and a sense of purpose. It also emphasizes the development of positive character traits, emotional intelligence, and a moral compass that guide students in making ethical decisions, managing stress, and establishing healthy interpersonal relationships. The findings affirm that a curriculum infused with values enhances students' self-awareness, motivation, and mental stability, particularly in the face of growing emotional and psychological challenges among youth.

Moreover, the study recognizes the role of educators as facilitators of value-based learning. It stresses the importance of teacher training and school culture in cultivating a value-oriented learning environment. Schools that model respect, compassion, and democratic practices tend to produce emotionally secure and socially responsible individuals. The research also highlights the importance of aligning educational policies

with holistic development frameworks, such as those proposed by UNESCO and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

The study concludes with several key recommendations. Firstly, it advocates for the systematic inclusion of value education across all stages of schooling, not as an add-on but as an integrated component of all subjects and co-curricular activities. Secondly, teacher education programs should be restructured to include emotional literacy and ethical sensitivity as core competencies. Thirdly, assessment systems should evolve to measure socio-emotional growth alongside academic achievement. Finally, policy makers, educators, and stakeholders must collaborate to build an education system that is compassionate, inclusive, and grounded in universal human values.

In summary, the study makes a compelling case for reshaping education to address not only the intellectual but also the emotional and moral dimensions of learners, thereby laying the foundation for a more just, empathetic, and psychologically resilient society.

Keywords: Value-based education, Psychological well-being, Moral development, Holistic education, Teacher training

Introduction

In today's educational landscape, the psychological well-being of teachers has emerged as a pressing concern with far-reaching implications. As the world recognizes the complex role teachers play not only as educators but as caregivers, counsellors, and moral guides, the conversation around their mental health becomes ever more vital. Particularly in secondary education, teachers are expected to balance academic delivery with student engagement, classroom discipline, administrative compliance, and increasingly, emotional support roles—all within constrained resources and under persistent scrutiny. These multifaceted responsibilities, compounded by evolving policy demands and digital transformation, are taking a profound toll on teachers' mental well-being (Andrade, Zurita, & Bravo, 2024).

Recent literature overwhelmingly identifies teaching as one of the most emotionally demanding professions. Symptoms of stress, burnout, emotional fatigue, and anxiety are prevalent among educators, especially at the secondary level where academic pressures converge with adolescent behavioral challenges (Baghoori, Roduta Roberts, & Chen, 2022). A study by Watson (2024) reveals that many teachers report experiencing emotional exhaustion, with consequences that ripple into their professional efficacy, student-teacher relationships, and ultimately, student learning outcomes. The chronic nature of these stressors leads to high attrition rates, disengagement, and declining instructional quality.

Moreover, the emotional labor associated with teaching is frequently underestimated. Teachers often find themselves performing dual roles—educators and informal mental health facilitators—without the necessary psychological training or institutional backing (Austin et al., 2025). This ongoing emotional toll not only exhausts their coping resources but also reinforces the cycle of stress and burnout. Compounding this reality is the cultural and institutional stigma that surrounds mental health in many educational environments. Teachers often hesitate to seek psychological support due to fear of professional judgment or reputational

damage (Rooney et al., 2024). The result is a pervasive culture of silence, where psychological challenges go unaddressed and unacknowledged.

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified these challenges by forcing a rapid shift to digital modes of instruction. Teachers were required to master new technologies overnight, manage disengaged students virtually, and adapt curricula without adequate training or emotional preparation (Pacea & Portelli, 2024). The blurring of boundaries between professional and personal spaces further strained their work-life balance, leaving little time for recuperation or self-care. Even in the post-pandemic recovery period, residual effects—such as heightened stress and a persistent digital divide—continue to affect teacher morale and wellness (Boulden & Schimmel, 2024).

Given these realities, there is an urgent need to reimagine teacher support systems through a more holistic lens. This paper argues that Value-Based Education (VBE)—a pedagogical and institutional philosophy that emphasizes ethical, emotional, and social development—holds transformative potential for promoting psychological well-being among educators. VBE seeks to “educate the heart and mind” by cultivating values such as compassion, empathy, mindfulness, integrity, and community consciousness (Acharya & Mohanty, n.d.). Traditionally targeted at students, this study extends the application of VBE to the well-being of teachers themselves, positioning it as a preventive and nurturing approach to mental health.

The underlying premise is that when educators operate in value-rich environments—where kindness is practiced, mutual respect is the norm, and emotional expression is validated—they are more likely to develop resilience against burnout and stress. Indeed, schools that embed VBE into their institutional culture report higher levels of teacher satisfaction, lower attrition rates, and improved staff cohesion (Rooney et al., 2024). Such environments enable teachers to align their personal values with professional practices, reducing emotional dissonance and fostering inner harmony.

NEP 2020 emphasizes inclusive and equitable education, ensuring that individuals of all ages have access to learning opportunities. By providing adult education, the policy aims to empower adults from all walks of life and enable their active participation in the development of the nation (Tikader, 2025a).

Furthermore, value-based frameworks have shown promise in addressing some of the most intractable issues in teacher well-being—such as stigma. For instance, when school systems promote values like openness, inclusivity, and psychological safety, the fear associated with mental health disclosure diminishes (Austin et al., 2025). Teachers feel more empowered to seek help, share vulnerabilities, and participate in support networks. These behaviours not only aid individual recovery but contribute to a broader culture of mental wellness.

In addition to institutional ethos, the development of life skills through VBE—such as emotional regulation, conflict resolution, and time management—can significantly enhance teachers’ capacity to cope with everyday stressors. Studies affirm that teachers who have access to training in emotional literacy and mindfulness practices report better psychological outcomes and stronger classroom management skills (Harnett, Leach, Karzon, & McIntyre, 2024). When applied effectively, these skills reduce reactive stress responses and promote a sense of agency and control.

Moreover, value-based engagement with digital literacy and extracurricular programs can serve as stress buffers. Teachers who are digitally competent experience less anxiety during technology integration, while those engaged in balanced extracurricular involvement often report increased emotional satisfaction and community belonging (Watson, 2024). However, when such responsibilities are assigned without regard for well-being or support structures, they can contribute to overwork and exhaustion. Thus, VBE also offers a guiding principle for ethically aligning institutional demands with human limitations. The policy focuses on ensuring students 'learn to learn' and advocates an activity-based, experiential learning methodology, with a strong emphasis on choice for students in the schools. NEP has introduced a change in curriculum and pedagogy to ensure students develop outstanding cognitive skills, mathematical and computational thinking, 21st-century skills, and critical thinking skills, among others. These skills will result in a future-ready workforce with the proficiency to meet the changing needs required for future jobs (Tikader, 2025b).

Despite the increased awareness of teacher mental health, most interventions remain reactive and fragmented. Very few strategies address the emotional and moral dimensions of teaching or seek to enhance internal capacities alongside external supports. In this context, VBE stands out as a comprehensive, preventive, and sustainable solution that addresses the “whole teacher”—intellect, emotion, and spirit.

This study explores how the integration of VBE within teacher training, school leadership, and institutional practices can mitigate mental health risks and foster long-term psychological well-being. Through a thematic synthesis of contemporary literature, it examines five key objectives: understanding the nature of mental health challenges among secondary school teachers; identifying root causes of stress and exhaustion; analyzing the role of stigma; evaluating the impact of digital literacy and extracurricular engagement; and finally, proposing VBE-based policy recommendations for systemic transformation.

By linking value-based principles with practical strategies for well-being, this research aims to contribute to the evolving discourse on mental health in education. It calls for a paradigm shift in how we support our educators—not just as knowledge workers, but as emotional beings deserving of care, respect, and fulfillment.

Review of Literature

The exploration of psychological well-being among secondary school teachers has increasingly become a global academic priority, particularly in the context of the evolving demands of the profession. The literature indicates that teachers often face chronic stress, emotional fatigue, and professional dissatisfaction. These challenges not only affect educators' personal lives but also influence the quality of education delivered in classrooms (Baghoori et al., 2024). With value-based education (VBE) gaining traction as a holistic approach to teaching and learning, there is growing interest in how values such as empathy, integrity, mindfulness, and compassion can contribute to mental well-being. This section synthesizes the findings of both international and Indian studies, highlighting the mental health challenges faced by secondary teachers and the emerging role of VBE in addressing them.

1. Mental Health Challenges of Teachers: A Global Concern

Research across countries points to a high prevalence of stress, burnout, and anxiety among educators. Varela et al. (2022), in a study conducted in Chile during the COVID-19 pandemic, revealed that burnout significantly reduced teacher well-being. Positive and negative emotions served as mediators in this relationship, and social support was identified as a crucial buffer. Similarly, Sadeghi and Pourbahram (2024) emphasized that Iranian EFL teachers experienced heightened stress due to financial strain, workload, and diminished intrinsic motivation, exacerbated by pandemic-related uncertainties. These findings reinforce the necessity of fostering emotional and social support systems within educational environments.

McQuade (2024), studying secondary school teachers in England, found that tensions between neoliberal managerial practices and traditional professional values contributed to discontent and mental strain. Teachers struggled with the internal conflict of aligning their personal values with institutional expectations. This study suggests that value alignment—or the lack thereof—plays a significant role in teacher well-being. In Sweden, Klapp et al. (2023) conducted a longitudinal study demonstrating that students' well-being was negatively impacted by increased performance pressures, with psychological well-being inversely related to academic achievement. While the focus was on students, the implication was clear: teacher stress directly correlates with heightened academic demands, which in turn affect the emotional atmosphere of the classroom.

2. Stigma and the Silence Around Mental Health

Stigma remains a significant barrier preventing teachers from seeking psychological help. According to Austin et al. (2024), educators often conceal mental health concerns due to fear of judgment and professional repercussions. This aligns with Rooney et al. (2024), who found that many school cultures perpetuate silence around mental distress, thereby worsening emotional fatigue. The normalization of suffering and the reluctance to disclose mental health issues result in untreated conditions and an eventual decline in performance and morale.

These global insights are echoed in South Africa, where Vazi et al. (2013) established a strong inverse relationship between psychological well-being and occupational stress in public school teachers. The study emphasized the importance of subjective well-being indicators—such as emotional satisfaction, autonomy, and purpose—as protective factors against mental health deterioration.

3. Indian Context: A Parallel Struggle

Indian research presents a similar narrative of stress and psychological vulnerability among secondary school teachers. A study by Rajesh et al. (2020) in Southern India found that autonomy, personal growth, and positive relationships were key predictors of psychological well-being among teachers. Moreover, self-acceptance was significantly influenced by gender, income, and travel time, indicating that socio-economic and logistical factors also play a role in well-being.

Mandal et al. (2024), comparing government and private school teachers in West Bengal, found that educators in government schools reported better mental health, possibly due to greater job security and

institutional support. The study urged systemic reforms to build mental health awareness and ensure equal support across all school types.

Kamboj and Garg (2021) highlighted the mediating role of emotional intelligence and resilience in enhancing teacher well-being in Haryana. Teachers with higher emotional intelligence and resilient traits demonstrated better coping mechanisms, particularly in the face of occupational stress. These findings support the inclusion of life skills and value-based training in teacher preparation programs.

Dawn et al. (2021) examined job-related stress in urban, rural, and semi-urban West Bengal. Urban teachers reported higher stress levels due to long commutes and higher workloads, while administrative positions—despite offering higher pay—were linked with more stress. These results reiterate the complexity of teacher stress and the need for targeted interventions.

4. Value-Based Education as a Protective Framework

There is growing international interest in the integration of value-based education (VBE) as a solution to the mental health crisis in education. Fouché (2015), examining teachers in South Africa, found that intrinsic motivation and well-being were enhanced by autonomy, competence, and relatedness—core values of the self-determination theory. Schools that emphasized meaning in work and collegial support witnessed reduced burnout and higher retention rates.

In Pakistan, Samar and Chaudhary (2021) explored the relationship between spiritual leadership and workplace well-being. The findings revealed a strong correlation between leadership grounded in values and the emotional wellness of teachers. Similarly, Hussain and Saba (2022) confirmed that job satisfaction—strongly influenced by communication and trust—predicted well-being among secondary teachers.

In India, Sharma and Sood (2023) found that perceived authenticity and job crafting—both of which are aligned with personal values—played a mediating role in improving job satisfaction and work engagement. Teachers who felt aligned with their institutional ethos reported lower burnout and greater psychological resilience.

Acharya and Mohanty (2022) emphasized that traditional academic success metrics often neglect the human dimension of teaching. Their philosophical reflections argue for an educational system that teaches not just knowledge but the wisdom of emotional balance, empathy, and ethical living—a direct call for VBE integration.

5. Role of Digital Literacy and Extracurricular Activities

The digital shift in education has introduced a paradox. While technology can streamline tasks and enhance instructional delivery, inadequate training increases anxiety and workload. Watson (2024) observed that teachers confident in digital skills reported better stress management and higher job satisfaction. In contrast, teachers who lacked digital fluency experienced techno-anxiety and reduced self-efficacy. Teachers play a pivotal role by incorporating digital literacy into the curriculum and promoting extracurricular activities that reduce dependency on virtual interactions (Bikram Tikader et al., 2025).

Pacea and Portelli (2024) noted that extracurricular involvement enhances emotional resilience by fostering teacher-student relationships and offering a break from academic pressure. However, when such activities are mandated without workload adjustments, they can exacerbate burnout. Thus, balanced engagement in these domains is essential. Technology enables teachers to collaborate and share knowledge regardless of their geographical location. Online platforms, video conferencing, and virtual classrooms allow educators from different regions to connect, exchange ideas, and work together on various educational initiatives. This overcomes the limitations of distance and enables a global community of educators to collaborate and learn from each other (Tikader, 2024).

6. Policy Implications and Gaps

Policy-level efforts across the globe vary in scope and effectiveness. While some countries have introduced mental health awareness campaigns in schools, few have embedded mental well-being into teacher training or school evaluation frameworks. Harnett et al. (2024) advocated for mental health to be recognized not as an add-on but as a foundational component of educational quality. Technology offers multiple avenues for improving teacher education, particularly through digital learning platforms, online certification courses, and AI-driven assessment tools (Khatun & Tikader, 2025).

In India, Roy (2018) and Sharma and Srivastava (2019) called for comprehensive well-being policies that address not only teacher workloads but also their socio-emotional needs. Their findings suggest that gender, institutional location, and years of experience influence well-being, which must be accounted for in policy design.

7. Synthesis of Literature

The reviewed literature confirms a consistent pattern: secondary school teachers are at high risk of mental health decline due to occupational demands, inadequate support, and social stigma. The integration of value-based education emerges as a promising solution, not just for students but for teachers themselves. VBE fosters alignment between institutional ethos and personal values, builds emotional resilience, and provides a framework for ethical and mindful practice.

However, the success of VBE depends on its integration at all levels—curriculum, institutional culture, policy, and teacher development. When values such as empathy, purpose, and emotional awareness are embedded in teaching environments, they serve as both preventive and restorative tools for mental health.

8. Objectives

1. To investigate how the integration of Value-Based Education (VBE)
2. To assess the impact of VBE on reducing mental health stigma
3. To propose a framework for linking VBE to psychological well-being

Operational Definitions

1. Value-Based Education (VBE): *Value-Based Education refers to an educational approach that deliberately integrates core human values—such as empathy, integrity, compassion, mindfulness,*

cooperation, respect, and responsibility—into the curriculum, pedagogy, institutional culture, and teacher-student relationships to promote holistic development and emotional resilience.

In this study, VBE is operationally defined as the implementation of ethical and emotional principles in teaching practices, curriculum design, school leadership, and interpersonal interactions that contribute to nurturing a supportive environment for both teachers and students. It includes:

- The promotion of compassion, empathy, and moral reasoning in school settings (Fouché, 2015; Samar & Chaudhary, 2021).
- The role of spiritual leadership and authentic relationships in improving teacher motivation and workplace well-being (Samar & Chaudhary, 2021).
- The development of emotional intelligence, resilience, and reflective practice as coping tools for mental challenges in both educators and learners (Kamboj & Garg, 2021).

2. Psychological Well-being: *Psychological well-being refers to a person's overall emotional, cognitive, and social functioning, characterized by positive affect, self-acceptance, personal growth, autonomy, meaningful relationships, and the ability to cope with stress and adversity.*

In this study, psychological well-being is operationally defined as the mental and emotional state of teachers and students in relation to their school environment, including:

- Levels of stress, burnout, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion among secondary school teachers (Baghoori et al., 2024; Andrade et al., 2024).
- Indicators of well-being such as self-esteem, emotional regulation, job satisfaction, purpose in life, and interpersonal harmony (Rajesh et al., 2020; Pau et al., 2022).
- The impact of institutional support, stigma, coping strategies, and value-aligned practices on one's ability to maintain emotional balance and resilience (Austin et al., 2024; Varela et al., 2022; Roy, 2018).

9. Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, literature-based research design aimed at exploring the relationship between Value-Based Education (VBE) and psychological well-being among secondary school teachers. Through thematic synthesis of contemporary academic literature, this research seeks to identify how VBE practices can serve as both preventive and restorative tools to enhance teachers' mental health.

The study follows an integrative approach, merging insights from empirical studies, conceptual papers, and policy analyses to offer a comprehensive perspective. This design was selected to accommodate the multi-dimensional and context-sensitive nature of both psychological well-being and educational values, and to align with the exploratory and theoretical goals of the research.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

The literature reviewed in this study was sourced from peer-reviewed journals, research reports, and academic books published between 2015 and 2025. Electronic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC,

Scopus, PubMed, and Web of Science were employed to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant research.

The selection of literature was guided by the following criteria:

- Studies explicitly addressing psychological well-being among secondary school teachers.
- Research examining Value-Based Education (VBE) in both student and teacher contexts.
- Papers that discuss institutional policies, stigma, digital literacy, extracurricular engagement, and their effects on teacher mental health.
- Publications available in English.
- Both international and Indian studies were included to ensure global relevance and cultural diversity.

Sources that did not directly discuss the intersection of value-based frameworks and mental health or were editorials, opinion essays, or unpublished theses were excluded.

Data Analysis

The chosen literature was subjected to thematic analysis. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, the analysis was conducted in six phases: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

The literature was coded under five key thematic domains derived from the research objectives:

1. Understanding the mental health challenges faced by secondary school teachers.
2. Identifying the root causes of stress and emotional exhaustion.
3. Exploring the role of stigma in preventing mental health support-seeking.
4. Evaluating the influence of digital literacy and extracurricular activities on mental health.
5. Assessing the potential of Value-Based Education (VBE) as a framework for psychological well-being.

Each study was analyzed for its contributions to these domains, and recurring patterns were identified to develop a synthesized understanding of how VBE influences teacher mental health.

Ethical Considerations

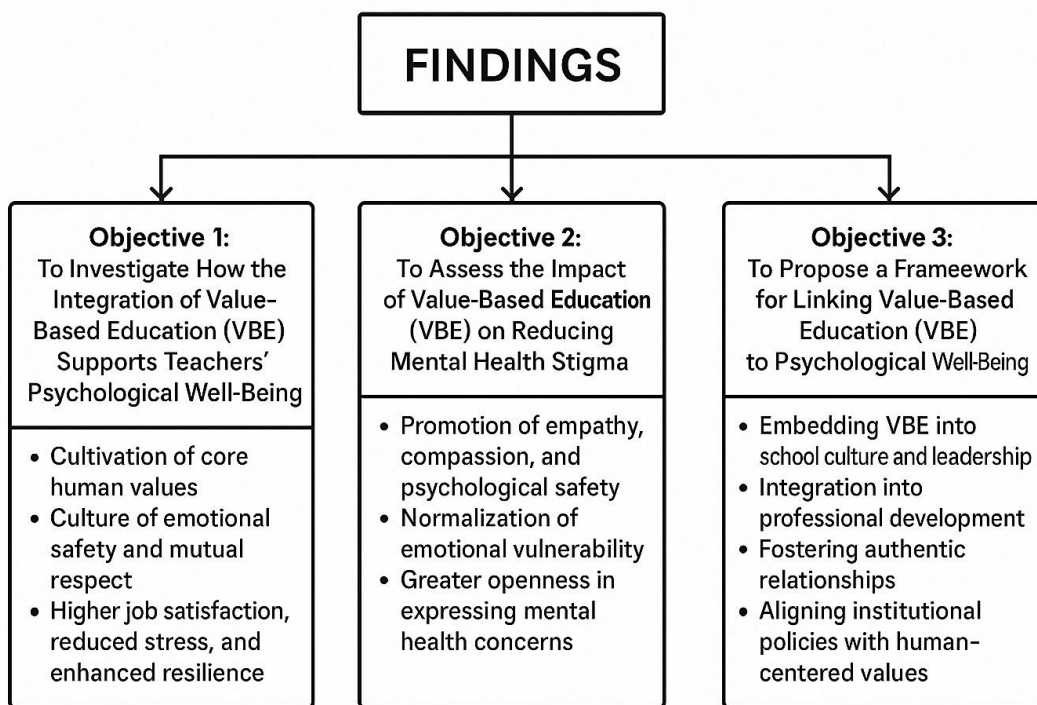
As a literature-based inquiry, this study did not involve human participants or primary data collection. The research adhered to academic integrity and ethical research practices, including accurate citation, acknowledgment of sources, and transparency in data interpretation. The secondary data used were publicly available and obtained from peer-reviewed and credible academic sources.

Limitations

Although the thematic synthesis offers a broad and deep understanding of the role of Value-Based Education in promoting teacher mental health, it is constrained by the limitations inherent to literature-based research. The findings depend on the availability, quality, and scope of the existing studies and may not fully capture the situational nuances of specific school contexts. Further empirical research, particularly case studies and longitudinal investigations, is recommended to validate the theoretical conclusions presented in this paper.

Findings:

The findings explore how Value-Based Education (VBE) influences secondary school teachers' psychological well-being. Drawing from research, they highlight VBE's role in fostering emotional resilience, reducing mental health stigma, and promoting supportive institutional cultures. A proposed framework connects VBE principles with sustainable strategies for enhancing teacher mental health and workplace harmony.



Objective 1: To Investigate How the Integration of Value-Based Education (VBE) Supports Teachers' Psychological Well-Being

The integration of Value-Based Education (VBE) within school environments offers a promising framework for nurturing the psychological well-being of secondary school teachers. VBE emphasizes the cultivation of core human values such as empathy, integrity, mindfulness, compassion, and respect, which not only shape students' moral development but also influence the emotional climate in which teachers operate (Acharya & Mohanty, 2022). Schools that embed these principles into their policies, leadership styles, and daily interactions tend to foster a culture of emotional safety and mutual respect, which directly supports teacher well-being.

Research indicates that when teachers work in environments where value-based practices are emphasized, they report higher job satisfaction, reduced emotional exhaustion, and enhanced resilience against stress (Rooney et al., 2024). The alignment between personal values and institutional ethos enables teachers to experience a sense of authenticity in their roles, reducing the emotional dissonance that often contributes to burnout (Sharma & Sood, 2023). In such schools, professional relationships are grounded in trust and

empathy, allowing teachers to express concerns and seek help without fear of stigma or judgment (Austin et al., 2025).

Moreover, VBE equips educators with essential life skills such as emotional regulation, ethical decision-making, and self-reflection, which act as protective factors against mental health decline (Kamboj & Garg, 2021). These practices not only enhance individual coping capacity but also strengthen the collective emotional fabric of the school community. Ultimately, integrating VBE offers a proactive and human-centered approach to mental health that addresses both external stressors and internal resilience, making it a vital component of any strategy aimed at improving teachers' psychological well-being.

Objective 2: To Assess the Impact of Value-Based Education (VBE) on Reducing Mental Health Stigma

The reviewed literature highlights that stigma remains one of the most significant barriers preventing teachers from addressing their mental health concerns. Teachers often hesitate to disclose their emotional struggles due to fear of judgment, professional repercussions, and the misconception that mental health issues indicate weakness or incompetence (Austin et al., 2025). This culture of silence contributes to untreated stress, burnout, and emotional fatigue, further reinforcing isolation and diminishing psychological well-being (Watson, 2024).

However, the integration of Value-Based Education (VBE) into school environments shows promising potential in reducing this stigma. VBE promotes core values such as empathy, compassion, respect, mindfulness, and psychological safety — principles that encourage open dialogue and mutual understanding (Acharya & Mohanty, 2022). When schools embed these values into their institutional culture, teachers feel more supported and secure in expressing mental health concerns without the fear of professional or social stigma.

Furthermore, VBE fosters a community-centered ethos where emotional vulnerability is normalized rather than stigmatized. Schools that prioritize values such as inclusivity and authentic communication tend to create environments where mental health discussions are treated with acceptance and empathy (Rooney et al., 2024). This cultural shift enables teachers to seek support more freely, improving access to mental health resources and peer networks.

In essence, VBE not only cultivates ethical and compassionate school communities but also acts as a preventive measure against stigma-driven silence. By reinforcing emotional openness, shared responsibility, and non-judgmental support, VBE serves as a powerful tool for breaking down mental health stigma and creating psychologically safe spaces for educators to thrive.

Objective 3: To Propose a Framework for Linking Value-Based Education (VBE) to Psychological Well-being

The synthesis of research suggests that Value-Based Education (VBE) offers a transformative and sustainable approach to enhancing the psychological well-being of secondary school teachers. VBE emphasizes cultivating values such as empathy, compassion, mindfulness, integrity, and community

awareness—principles that not only enrich student development but also directly impact teacher mental health when embedded within institutional practices (Acharya & Mohanty, 2022).

The proposed framework begins with embedding VBE into school culture and leadership. When school leaders model values of openness, respect, and ethical care, it creates a psychologically safe environment where teachers feel supported and valued, reducing emotional isolation and stigma (Austin et al., 2025). Second, integrating VBE into professional development programs equips teachers with emotional regulation, mindfulness, and reflective skills, which have been shown to improve resilience and reduce burnout (Kamboj & Garg, 2021).

The framework also calls for fostering authentic relationships within schools through peer collaboration, mentoring, and community-building initiatives rooted in trust and compassion. These practices strengthen social bonds and reduce the feelings of isolation that often accompany emotional labor in teaching (Rooney et al., 2024).

Finally, the framework highlights the importance of aligning institutional policies with human-centered values—ensuring fair workloads, promoting mental health awareness, and encouraging help-seeking behaviors without fear of stigma. By embedding VBE principles at both the individual and organizational levels, schools can create an environment where psychological well-being is nurtured alongside professional growth.

This model positions VBE not only as a moral compass for educational practice but as a proactive mental health strategy—empowering teachers to sustain their well-being while fostering emotionally enriched learning environments.

Discussion

The mental health of secondary school teachers is an increasingly pressing concern, given the rising demands placed on educators in both academic and emotional capacities. This study aimed to explore how Value-Based Education (VBE) can contribute to the psychological well-being of teachers, particularly in the context of stress, stigma, emotional exhaustion, and the evolving dynamics of digital literacy and extracurricular engagement. The thematic synthesis of existing literature confirms that VBE is not only relevant to student development but can also serve as a preventive and restorative framework for teachers' mental health. Technology equips students with essential digital skills required in today's workforce. By utilizing technology tools and software, students develop skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, creativity, and collaboration, which are highly valued in the job market. Technology helps prepare students for the demands of the digital age (Tikader, 2023)

One of the most prominent themes that emerged is the persistent emotional strain experienced by teachers, driven by excessive workloads, limited institutional support, and unclear professional boundaries (Andrade et al., 2024; Baghoori et al., 2022). Teachers today are expected to fulfill complex roles as educators, mentors, counselors, and digital facilitators, often without adequate training or emotional resources. This role ambiguity, combined with high-performance expectations, contributes to emotional exhaustion and professional disillusionment, leading to high rates of burnout and attrition (Watson, 2024).

In this context, the role of VBE becomes increasingly valuable. Schools that embed empathy, compassion, and mindfulness as part of their institutional culture tend to foster safer and more supportive environments where teachers can align personal values with professional duties (Acharya & Mohanty, 2022). This alignment reduces emotional dissonance, which has been identified as a key contributor to mental fatigue and professional dissatisfaction. When teachers feel morally and emotionally secure within their work environment, their psychological resilience is strengthened, and their vulnerability to stress-related disorders is significantly reduced.

Another critical aspect identified in the literature is the role of stigma in mental health help-seeking behavior. Teachers often experience a fear of judgment and reputational harm, which prevents them from openly addressing their mental health challenges (Austin et al., 2025). This culture of silence perpetuates emotional suffering and professional isolation, weakening overall well-being. However, VBE offers a potential pathway to dismantling this stigma by promoting an environment rooted in psychological safety, mutual respect, and open dialogue. When schools prioritize values such as openness, authenticity, and inclusivity, the fear of mental health disclosure diminishes, allowing teachers to seek support without shame or fear of professional retribution (Rooney et al., 2024).

In addition to institutional culture, the integration of life skills training, including emotional regulation and mindfulness, into teacher development programs enhances psychological resilience. Teachers equipped with these tools are more capable of managing stress, navigating conflicts, and maintaining emotional balance, even in high-pressure situations (Kamboj & Garg, 2021). VBE encourages this type of holistic training, positioning emotional intelligence as equally important as academic expertise in shaping effective, mentally healthy educators.

Furthermore, digital literacy and extracurricular engagement were shown to be double-edged factors in influencing teacher mental health. Teachers who possess strong digital competencies tend to feel more confident and less anxious when faced with technological changes, especially during the abrupt digital shift caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Watson, 2024). Conversely, a lack of digital fluency contributes to heightened stress and self-doubt, especially when technology becomes central to classroom management and instructional delivery (Austin et al., 2025). Similarly, while extracurricular involvement offers opportunities for personal growth, creative expression, and social bonding, excessive or unbalanced expectations around these activities can lead to overwork and emotional fatigue (Pacea & Portelli, 2024).

VBE offers guiding principles for managing these complexities, advocating for ethical alignment between institutional demands and human limitations. Schools that adopt a value-based lens tend to structure responsibilities in a manner that respects teachers' emotional and cognitive capacities, thus preventing exploitation under the guise of professional commitment.

The findings also emphasize the need for systemic change rather than fragmented, reactive solutions. Current institutional responses to mental health are often episodic, focusing on short-term interventions rather than cultivating a long-term, preventive framework. VBE shifts the focus toward a more sustainable model that not only supports teachers in times of distress but proactively nurtures environments where

stressors are minimized, emotional well-being is normalized, and community care is embedded in everyday practice (Sharma & Sood, 2023).

In conclusion, the integration of Value-Based Education offers schools a clear and compassionate roadmap for addressing the psychological well-being of their teaching staff. VBE does not replace the need for counseling services, workload management, or professional development, but rather complements these structures by enriching the moral and emotional climate of educational institutions. When teachers work in value-driven environments where kindness, authenticity, and mindfulness are prioritized, they are more likely to develop emotional resilience and sustain their professional passion. Thus, VBE stands as both an ethical commitment and a strategic investment in the well-being of teachers and, by extension, the quality of education as a whole.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the urgent and ongoing mental health challenges faced by secondary school teachers, as well as the transformative potential of Value-Based Education (VBE) in addressing these concerns. Teaching is widely recognized as an emotionally and intellectually demanding profession, where educators must juggle academic, administrative, and increasingly, emotional roles within a high-pressure environment. These accumulated demands—often compounded by limited institutional support, job insecurity, and evolving technological requirements—have left teachers highly vulnerable to stress, burnout, anxiety, and emotional fatigue (Andrade et al., 2024; Baghoori et al., 2022).

Despite growing recognition of these issues, mental health stigma continues to prevent many teachers from seeking help, creating a persistent cycle of silence and emotional neglect within educational institutions (Austin et al., 2025). Teachers are often forced to internalize their struggles due to fear of professional judgment, which ultimately leads to untreated psychological conditions, reduced job satisfaction, and an increased risk of attrition. This reality not only affects the personal well-being of educators but also has a profound impact on the learning environment and student success (Rooney et al., 2024).

The synthesis of research in this study strongly suggests that integrating Value-Based Education can provide a meaningful and sustainable response to these challenges. When schools embrace VBE principles—such as empathy, mindfulness, compassion, authenticity, and community awareness—they create a culture of emotional safety, professional respect, and shared human values. Such an environment empowers teachers to align their personal beliefs with institutional practices, reducing emotional dissonance and fostering inner harmony (Acharya & Mohanty, 2022).

Moreover, the application of VBE extends beyond school culture into practical strategies, including teacher training in emotional regulation, reflective practice, and mindfulness techniques. These life skills have been shown to significantly enhance teachers' resilience, stress management, and sense of agency in the face of occupational challenges (Kamboj & Garg, 2021). VBE also plays a critical role in deconstructing stigma by promoting open dialogue and authentic relationships, where mental health is regarded not as a weakness but as a vital part of human well-being.

Additionally, this study reaffirms the dual impact of digital literacy and extracurricular activities on teacher mental health. When supported by value-based principles, these areas can evolve into platforms for creativity, social bonding, and professional growth, rather than sources of additional stress (Watson, 2024; Pacea & Portelli, 2024).

Ultimately, Value-Based Education offers a proactive and human-centered approach to safeguarding teacher mental health. It urges educational institutions to move beyond reactive policies and invest in building emotionally intelligent, ethically grounded, and psychologically nurturing work environments. Schools that integrate VBE not only cultivate more resilient and fulfilled teachers but also enhance the broader educational ecosystem, creating learning spaces where both teachers and students can thrive.

In conclusion, this study advocates for the adoption of VBE as a strategic framework that links ethical teaching practices to psychological well-being, ensuring that educators are supported, valued, and empowered in their roles—not just as instructors, but as human beings.

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