

Well-being of Early Childhood Educators in Singapore



Why care about the well-being of early childhood educators?

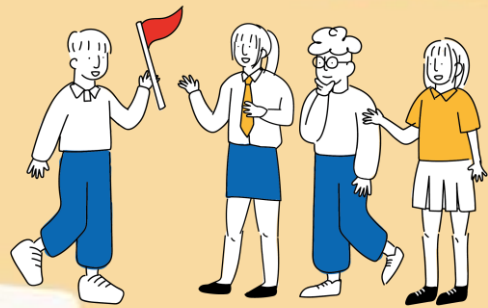
Research has shown that high-quality early childhood education (ECE) has a positive impact on children's learning and development, both in the short- and long-term. Over the past 20 years, the Singapore Government has rolled out a wide range of initiatives to raise the quality of ECE in the country.

(Campbell et al., 2012; Campbell et al., 2014; Hamre et al., 2014; Leyva et al., 2015; Mashburn et al., 2008; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Sum, 2022; Weiland et al., 2013; Yoshikawa et al., 2016)

What then is the problem?

There are challenges in attracting and retaining qualified and experienced early childhood (EC) educators. The high turnover and attrition rates interfere with efforts to create consistency in ECE classrooms, adversely affecting the quality of education and care provided.

(Lipponen et al., 2019)



Potential solutions

Local research studies are therefore needed to generate solutions to address these workforce challenges while contributing to the broader goal of improving the quality of ECE. Recent findings in the international literature suggest that **EC educators' well-being** is an important focal point of this research agenda.

What is Well-being?

The definition of well-being differs across disciplines, societies and cultures. In the ECE context, there is, at the moment, no widely accepted definition of educators' well-being. In this working paper, we adopt a holistic, multi-dimensional, and dynamic conceptualization of EC educators' well-being, which is congruent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and comprises psychological, physical/physiological, and workplace dimensions.

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Cumming et al., 2021; Hascher & Waber, 2021)





Well-being of Early Childhood Educators in Singapore

Why is EC Educators' Well-being Important?

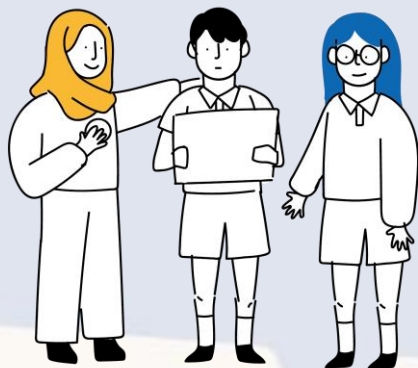
Socially and emotionally competent EC educators are better equipped to cultivate a healthy classroom climate.

Some studies have found that EC educator stress brings negative child outcomes, including poorer socio-emotional skills and classroom engagement.

(Ota et al., 2013; Siekkinen et al., 2013; Zinsser et al., 2013;)



Predictors of EC Educators' Well-being



1. **Job demands** - elements of the job that require prolonged psychological and/or physical effort.
2. **Job resources** - job characteristics that either facilitate the attaining of work goals, minimise job demands and its related psychological and physiological costs or encourage personal learning and growth.

(Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)

Local Research on EC Educators' Well-being

Two qualitative studies and one large-scale survey revealed important contributors to local EC educators' well-being:

Job demands

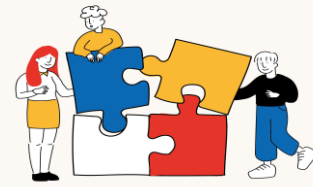
- excessive workload
- managing children with different needs
- managing students' behaviours
- lack of autonomy at work
- lack of work-life balance

Job resources

- fair employee remuneration and benefits
- supportive colleagues and supervisors
- professional development opportunities

(Ng & Meow, 2022; Pek-Greer & Wallace, 2017; Singapore Counseling Centre, 2021)

Well-being of Early Childhood Educators in Singapore



Implications

From a policy perspective, we propose several strategies to support and safeguard EC educators' well-being to ensure that they are able to sustainably provide high-quality education and care in preschools. A key priority would be to develop regulations that stipulate the elements of a quality work environment for EC educators, which goes beyond the current practice of providing a set of recommended practices to the sector.

Two elements of a quality work environment

that could be considered in the Singapore context

- **compensation and benefits**
- **working conditions**

Minimum standards for sector

The regulations suggested above would help to establish the minimum quality operational standards for the whole sector, facilitate the creation of equitable working environments across different ECE providers, and provide assurance to EC educators that their well-being is a priority.



This infographic was drawn from the WP:
Ng, E. L., Bull, R., Cumming, T., & Wong, S. (2023). Well-being of early childhood educators in Singapore. (NIE Working Paper Series No. 22).
Nanyang Technological University, National Institute of Education.

For more details and references cited, please refer to the WP.



Scan the QR for the WP