

**POSITIVE TRAITS, PERMA AND WELL-BEING OF ESL
TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

PUNITHAN SHANMUGAM

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
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PUNITHAN SHANMUGAM

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Name of Candidate: **Punithan Shanmugam**

Matric No: **17005801/1**

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ABSTRACT

With the advancement of Positive Psychology within the field of SLA over the years, research on the emerging positive traits of hope, optimism, grit, and PERMA has been found to yield productive outcomes on health, life satisfaction and meaning in life. Nonetheless, there is a scarcity of research involving the positive traits and PERMA on the well-being of ESL teachers within the Malaysian context. Thus, this paper examines the influence of positive traits on the well-being of the primary level ESL teachers in Malaysia. This paper also analyses the strength of PERMA in predicting the relationships between the positive traits and the three well-being outcomes of health, life satisfaction and meaning in life of the ESL teachers. A convenience sample of 150 ESL teachers from primary schools around Kuala Lumpur participated in this cross-sectional survey study. The data obtained were analyzed via simultaneous regressions and mediation analyses. The findings revealed that the positive traits significantly explained the changes in all the three well-being outcomes. Hope appeared as the strongest predictor of well-being among the ESL teachers. Last but not least, the results of the mediation analyses documented that PERMA emerged as both significant strong and partial mediators in the links between the positive traits and the well-being outcomes. Thus, the strength and uniqueness of PERMA in this study provide evidence that the model can be considered as an effective well-being pillar of support for the ESL teachers in this study. With this, the results of this study establish theoretical and practical implications and perspectives not only concerning the well-being of L2 teachers but also on L2 teaching and learning. The positive well-being of the ESL teachers in relation to the positive traits, may possess meaningful implications on their professional well-being, coping and adaptive strategies, and teaching quality as well

as performance efficiency. These implications inadvertently influence a positive classroom climate, well-being and the language learning outcomes of their L2 learners.

Keywords: Positive Psychology, positive traits, PERMA, language teacher psychology, well-being of language teachers

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TRAIT POSITIF, PERMA DAN KESEJAHTERAAN GURU ESL DI SEKOLAH RENDAH

ABSTRAK

Selaras dengan perkembangan Psikologi Positif dalam bidang SLA kebelakangan ini, kajian terhadap trait positif seperti *hope*, *optimism*, *grit* dan PERMA didapati membuahkan impak yang positif ke atas kesihatan, kepuasan hidup dan makna kehidupan seseorang individu. Namun begitu, terdapat kekurangan dalam bilangan penyelidikan mengenai trait positif dan PERMA yang melibatkan kesejahteraan guru ESL dalam konteks Malaysia. Oleh itu, kajian ini mengkaji keberkesanan pengaruh trait positif terhadap kesejahteraan guru ESL sekolah rendah di Malaysia. Kajian ini juga menganalisis kekuatan PERMA dalam meramalkan hubungan antara trait positif dan tiga aspek kesejahteraan guru ESL, iaitu kesihatan, kepuasan hidup dan makna kehidupan. Seramai 150 guru ESL dari sekolah-sekolah rendah di sekitar Kuala Lumpur telah mengambil bahagian dalam tinjauan keratan-lintang. Data yang diperolehi telah dianalisis melalui regresi pelbagai dan analisis perantara. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa trait positif mempunyai pengaruh relevan terhadap kesemua aspek kesejahteraan guru. *Hope* muncul sebagai peramal yang paling kuat untuk kesejahteraan guru dalam kalangan guru ESL. Akhir sekali, dapatan analisis perantara menunjukkan bahawa PERMA muncul sebagai kedua-dua perantara kuat dan separa yang signifikan dalam hubungan antara trait positif dan kesejahteraan guru. Oleh itu, kekuatan dan keunikan PERMA dalam kajian ini membuktikan bahawa model ini boleh dipertimbangkan sebagai satu sistem sokongan kesejahteraan guru yang efektif untuk guru-guru ESL dalam kajian ini. Dengan ini, hasil dapatan kajian ini menawarkan implikasi dan perspektif teori dan praktikal

bukan sahaja berkenaan kesejahteraan guru L2, malahan terhadap pengajaran dan pembelajaran L2. Kesejahteraan guru ESL yang positif yang berhubung dengan trait positif, mungkin mempunyai implikasi yang bermakna terhadap profesionalisme kesejahteraan guru, strategi penanganan masalah dan penyesuaian diri, dan kualiti pengajaran serta efisiensi prestasi. Secara tidak langsung, implikasi-implikasi ini meninggalkan kesan positif terhadap suasana bilik darjah, kesejahteraan dan hasil pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris dalam kalangan murid L2.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SLA	Second Language Acquisition
L2	Second Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
ID	Individual Differences
ELT	English Language Teaching
KSSR	Primary School Standard Curriculum
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
Ofsted	The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
NUTP	National Union of the Teaching Profession
WHO	World Health Organization
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
CSD	Comprehensive Soldier Fitness
IV	Independent Variable
DV	Dependent Variable
VIA	Values in Action
AHS	Adult Hope Scale
Lot-R	Life Orientation Test
Grit-S	Short Grit Scale

SWB	Subjective Well-Being
AHT	Authentic Happiness Theory
JPWPKL	Kuala Lumpur Education Department
EPRD	Educational Planning and Research Division
SK	National Primary School
SJKC	National-Type Chinese Primary School
SJKT	National-Type Tamil Primary School
SES	Socioeconomic Status
PPSMI	English for Teaching Mathematics and Science
CPT	Cambridge Placement Test
KSSM	Secondary School Standard Curriculum
MBMMBI	To Uphold Bahasa Malaysia and to Strengthen the English Language
SBA	School Based Assessment
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
Cook's D	Cook's Distance

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Teacher well-being has emerged as a longstanding area of interest (Kern, Waters, Adler, & White, 2014). Conventionally, the field of language learning psychology is no stranger to the field of second language acquisition (SLA), with studies concentrating around learner motivation, learner autonomy, learning styles and strategies in the past (Mercer, Oberdorfer, & Saleem, 2016). However, since the birth of Positive Psychology, a large volume of publications and research have spanned across the psychology field to other areas of interest like education and organizational behaviour (Rusk & Waters, 2013).

Thus, recent developments in the area of Positive Psychology have provided a fresh new perspective and a renewed interest in the field of well-being among SLA researchers. Modern-day scholars have acknowledged the influential area of Individual Differences (ID) research within the psychology field, where ID in general or specific dimensions like motivation and attitude are being studied (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015).

Nonetheless, several researchers have criticized the conventional cognitivist tradition among SLA scholars where most studies on emotions had been conducted within the shadows of negative affect, in particular, anxiety, stress and depression (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015). Dewaele, Witney, Saito, and Dewaele (2017) further emphasized the dire need to reduce the emotional limitations within the SLA field

by pondering on the role of positive emotions and well-being with respect to the influence of Positive Psychology.

With this, the PERMA model (Seligman, 2011a) has emerged as an important advancement in the evolution of Positive Psychology and well-being. Based on the five pillars of well-being, the PERMA model has yielded positive outcomes across studies in various fields, including education, music, public policy, health, and sports (Adler & Seligman, 2016; Allen, 2017; Ascenso, Williamon, & Perkins, 2017; Doyle, Filo, Lock, Funk, & McDonald, 2016; Thompson, 2017; Umucu, 2017).

Several studies involving the PERMA model in the education field have focused on the well-being of adolescents and college students. However, there is insufficient empirical evidence to demonstrate the impact of PERMA on the well-being of teachers. Hence, a large and growing body of literature abroad has examined the essence of Positive Psychology in the field of teacher well-being.

However, the study of positive affect and emotions in second and foreign language classrooms in the past had been mostly attributed to motivation (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Nonetheless, interest in the role of positive affect on SLA has been increasing in recent years and has been further strengthened due to the evolution of Positive Psychology. Besides, the responsibility of alerting and enabling the learners to thrive via their strengths begin from the language practitioners themselves. Hence, many language practitioners are aware of the significance of infusing and strengthening their learners' motivation, perseverance, resiliency and other positive emotions (Dewaele et al., 2017).

Thus, recent studies have shifted towards the emerging positive traits of Positive Psychology in the education field, namely hope, optimism, resilience & grit

(Liu, Wang, Shen, Li, & Wang, 2015; Luthans, Youssef, Sweetman, & Harms, 2013; Vela, Lu, Lenz, & Hinojosa, 2015). Based on the existing literature, the emerging positive traits have been found to contain supportive links to health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life (Butler & Kern, 2016; Damasio, Melo, & Silva, 2013; Desrumaux et al., 2015; McIlveen & Perera, 2015; Opeyemi, 2016). These positive traits have been proven to yield encouraging results such as greater occupational success, improved psychological health and enhanced quality of life in a certain subpopulation (Butler & Kern, 2016).

Nonetheless, the focus of most of the studies has been on adolescents, college/university students and adults with medical deficiencies rather than teachers. McCallum, Price, Graham, and Morrison (2017) asserted that a substantial amount of studies to date instead “have focused primarily on the negative influences related to teachers’ work, such as work overload, or having to respond to ongoing change” (p. 2). Therefore, the composite function of these positive traits cannot be neglected as they contribute to an individual’s organizational behaviour in terms of the development of a positive psychological state (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007).

Thus, the relationship between the positive traits and the aforementioned outcomes may help to define a teacher’s well-being more comprehensively. These traits may appear to be able to define well-being in terms of health outcomes, life satisfaction and meaning in life of the teachers with respect to the PERMA model. Therefore, this paper is aimed to explore the English as a second language (ESL) teachers’ health outcomes, the satisfaction of life and meaning in life in terms of hope, optimism, grit and PERMA in the Malaysian primary school context.

1.2 Background of the Study

This study revolves around the context of national primary level ESL teachers in Malaysia, where English is taught as a second language (L2). The emphasis on English as a strong L2 in Malaysia was mandated at the national level based on the English Ordinance 1957, the Education Act 1961 and the National Education Policy in 1970 (Azman, 2016). With the status of English as a prominent L2 in Malaysia, the language has been taught compulsorily at the primary level for pupils aged 6 to 12 years old based on the national curriculum (Azman, 2016).

Nonetheless, in this competitive globalization era, the assimilation of information and communication technology-based content in teaching and learning practices reinvented the need to utilize English as a fundamental medium of instruction in national primary schools (Ali, Hamid, & Moni, 2011). Hence, in recent times, with English now perceived as a predominant asset in obtaining knowledge and enhancing development, much awareness has been created to take the language more seriously in Malaysia (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2014).

Thus, in a long list of language-based initiatives in line with the English language education roadmap of Malaysia 2015-2025, it is an undeniable fact that English teachers play a fundamental role in shaping their students into competent language learners (Sukri & Yunus, 2018). From the introduction of the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR) in 2011 to the recent Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), the primary level ESL teachers in Malaysia function as the key implementers of the English language policies and their subsequent teaching and learning process within the L2 classroom context.

However, within the ESL classroom dynamics, the core of effective teaching and process lays in the positive psychology of the teachers, which appears beneficial

for the well-being of both the teachers and their students (Mercer et al., 2016). Nonetheless, there is a need to confront the sad reality of the current state of the ESL teachers in national schools in Malaysia, which appears a roadblock to the government's vision in aligning the current English language education system to international standards.

To begin with, on why this study is necessary, a foreign-based well-being report indicated that the teachers' self-reported well-being at their workplace was found to be low or moderate in general, with low general life satisfaction and health issues appearing to be among the common challenges faced by the teachers (Ofsted, 2019). Although there appears to be an absence of a comprehensive report detailing the well-being of teachers in Malaysia, various physical and psychological complications besides job dissatisfactions have been reported among the ESL teachers in Malaysia that force them to grapple with the dilemmas between their organizational demands and students' learning outcomes in an L2 classroom (Ghavifekr & Pillai's, 2016; Moy et al., 2015; Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010; Muniandy, 2017; Subon & Sigie, 2016; Zamri, Moy, & Hoe, 2017). Correspondingly, in a general overview, this comes as no surprise as Malaysia declined 45 spots from 2018 to be ranked 80th in the global happiness poll of 2019 based on the World Happiness Report (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2019).

Thus, the Ministry of Education has expressed its commitment in improving the quality of the teaching profession and the standard of English in Malaysia in the upcoming years, beginning with an emphasis on the well-being of teachers by reducing their workload and clerical jobs as addressed by Dr. Maszlee Malik when he stepped in as the Education Minister in 2018 (Hwok-Aun, 2018). Similar to Mercer et al. (2016), the Education Minister was also aware on the causal connection

between teachers' well-being, quality teaching, and students' learning outcomes, with failed students' outcomes significantly connected to the low well-being of teachers (Rajaendram, 2019).

Furthermore, it has been reported that the Malaysian national school teachers who have been categorized to possess moderate to low well-being will undergo exclusive prevention programs managed by the school head and mental health counsellors (Rajaendram, 2019). However, with the unpredictable and growing demands of the teaching profession in Malaysia, which subsequently leads to an increased number of teachers with decreased levels of well-being, there is a dire need to instill a positive awareness on the essence of thriving and flourishing as a form of self-recovery among our ESL teachers, rather than over-reliance on health counsellors or mental health practitioners.

With the advancement of Positive Psychology within the field of SLA, recent evidence has suggested that Positive Psychology can offer valuable interventions and directions for L2 teachers, which could sustain teacher professional well-being if centered on the PERMA model (Mercer et al., 2016). Kossakowska-Pisarek (2016) discovered that teachers' emotional attitude and mindset play an influential role in shaping positivity and engagement in learners. The same was reported in Guz and Tetiurka's (2016) study in which positively oriented foreign or second language teachers create a constructive learning environment by inspiring a similar positive learning mindset in learners.

Hence, factors that contribute to the detrimental effect of the teachers' well-being cannot be overlooked. The first line of victims may appear to be the students, who may suffer due to the teachers' inadequacy to regulate their emotions and provide quality and meaningful lessons in an L2 classroom (Mercer et al., 2016).

Due to these, Hashim (2013) urged for an advance of the Positive Psychology field in Asia, especially in Malaysia, an area that is deemed to have been overlooked by many educators and language practitioners.

1.2 Problem Statement

The Malaysian education sector has pledged for a reformation in living up to the challenges in fulfilling the increasing demands and global goals of the 21st century as in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). At the core of this reformation is the focus on the teachers, who are assigned with various job scopes that range from interpersonal relations with students, parents, administrators, colleagues and the wider community (Subon & Sigie, 2016) to involvement in administrative tasks.

Many of the challenges experienced by the ESL teachers in Malaysia have been due to the continuous reformation of the English Language Teaching (ELT) policies and their corresponding workloads and organizational demands over the years (Rashid, Rahman, & Yunus, 2016). On top of this, the teachers are expected to shoulder extra responsibilities in keeping up with the curriculum changes and attending professional development courses outside school hours. Thus, moderate to lower levels of job satisfaction have been reported among Malaysian ESL teachers and academicians (Ghavifekr & Pillai's, 2016; Muniandy, 2017; Panatik et al., 2012; Zarisfizadeh, 2012), mainly due to increased job demands.

Besides, a growing number of studies on the issues faced by Malaysian school teachers have been conducted over the years. The researchers have reported that musculoskeletal pains, voice disorders, and burnouts in terms of physical and emotional exhaustion experienced by the teachers have been associated to high

psychological job demands, heavy workloads, high expectations from the superiors and declined health-related quality of life (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010; Moy et al., 2015; Subon & Sigie, 2016; Zamri et al., 2017). The National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) also revealed a surprising finding that approximately 90% of teachers have considered leaving their careers due to heavy workload (Johari, Tan, & Zulkarnian, 2017). Moreover, in a cross-cultural study, Khaw and Kern (2015) provided further support that the Malaysian sample scored lower on all the PERMA constructs and concluded that Malaysians possessed lower well-being compared to the Americans.

Despite all these issues, there have rarely been any studies that lay importance on the well-being of Malaysian ESL teachers. Although PERMA has begun to receive its deserved attention within the Malaysian context lately (Mohd, Othman, Ibrahim, & Jaafar, 2018; Khaw & Kern, 2015; Othman, Noordin, Lokman, Jaafar, & Mohd; 2018), none of these studies have laid attention on the well-being of the teachers. The primary emphasis of many studies has been on the problems and the ill-being of the teachers rather than on their strengths and well-being (Kern et al., 2014; McCallum et al., 2017). Thus, there appears to be a lack of preventive measures and well-being frameworks in guiding and nurturing our ESL teachers to improve their well-being intrinsically.

Regardless of the rising number of studies on various positive traits to date, most of them have been conducted in America, the African continent and several in the Southeast Asian continent (Damasio, Melo, & Silva, 2013; Desrumaux et al., 2015; Liu, Wang, Shen, Li, & Wang, 2015; Luthans, Youssef, Sweetman, & Harms, 2013; McIlveen & Perera, 2015; Opeyemi, 2016; Vela, Lu, Lenz, & Hinojosa, 2015). In addition, many of these studies as well laid a focus on different outcomes,

primarily on academic performances and student outcomes. Thus, the exploration of these positive traits has been derived from various subpopulation with varying educational systems, beliefs, cultural contexts and attitudes to name a few. Therefore, the generalizability of much published research on this area is problematic.

With this, it will be rather interesting to explore the well-being of our primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur based on the three positive traits and the PERMA model.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

Although the positive traits, PERMA and the well-being outcomes in this study hail from the big umbrella of the much advanced Positive Psychology in studies abroad, the scope of this study is firmly concentrated within the domain of “language learning psychology” (Mercer et al., 2016, p. 214), where language teachers have been considerably neglected over the years (Mercer et al., 2016). Besides, with the continuous exhaustive demands of the teaching profession in Malaysia, in particular, within a national education system where English is taught as L2, the initial exploration of the well-being dimensions in this study with respect to Positive Psychology is anticipated to function as a pillar of support to the positive well-being of the ESL teachers in the near future.

Thus, this study was aimed to shed light on the relationship between the emerging Positive Psychology traits of hope, optimism, and grit on the well-being of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur in terms of health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life. Since this research functioned as a preliminary study on the well-being of the selected subpopulation, this paper also attempted to examine if the PERMA model mediated the relationships between the positive traits

and health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life. Through this study, readers will be informed on the most common positive traits that appear significant to the primary level ESL teachers' well-being in primary schools in Kuala Lumpur.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

Based on the aforementioned purpose of the study, the primary objective of this study is to explore the understudied component of the well-being of ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur in relation to positive traits and PERMA. In an attempt of meeting the goal of this study, the following objectives are dealt with:

1.5.1 To examine if the positive traits (hope, optimism, and grit) significantly predict the health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur.

1.5.2 To identify if PERMA mediates the relationships between the positive traits (hope, optimism, and grit) and the health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur.

1.6 Research Questions

Based on the purpose and objectives of the research, two research questions helped to shape the study and provided the research with a sense of direction. The research questions are:

1.6.1 Do the positive traits (hope, optimism, and grit) significantly predict the health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur?

1.6.2 Does PERMA mediate the relationships between the positive traits (hope, optimism, and grit) and the health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur?

1.7 Research Hypotheses

Based on the two research questions above, the following null and research hypotheses have been derived.

Null Hypothesis 1: The positive traits (hope, optimism, and grit) do not significantly predict the health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur.

Research hypothesis 1: The positive traits (hope, optimism, and grit) significantly predict the health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur.

Null Hypothesis 2: PERMA does not mediate the relationship between the positive traits (hope, optimism, and grit) and the health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur.

Research hypothesis 2: It is hypothesized that PERMA mediates the relationship between the positive traits (hope, optimism, and grit) and the health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur.

1.8 Advances in Scientific Knowledge

Thus far, Ryff (2014) mentioned that “over 350 publications using the eudaimonic scales of well-being have appeared in more than 150 scientific journals” (p. 13) across various disciplines. With a myriad of studies focusing on happiness,

flourishing and thriving, other prominent psychologists have simultaneously highlighted the significance of other positive constructs like hope, optimism, gratitude, character strengths and several other elements (Park, 2014).

In his book “Flourish”, Seligman (2011a) acknowledged the strength of the positive constructs within Positive Psychology in helping veteran soldiers affected by post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Further research led to the establishment of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CFS) program in nurturing mentally and psychologically fit soldiers. Thus, Seligman (2011a) proposed the PERMA model of well-being only after Positive Psychology intervention programs such as the CFS and the Penn Resilience Program were formed with positive outcomes. Alongside such intervention programs, recent developments within the field have highlighted PERMA as a dominant force within Positive Psychology.

A variety of conceptualizations of well-being have evolved over the years, which offers diverse novel conceptual and methodological perspectives to well-being. Several years ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) (2013) addressed the need for a review of the definitions, concepts, and domains of well-being in line with current research. With this, the WHO-5 Well-Being Index was adapted and developed based on its initial WHO-10 questionnaire in the late 1990s to assess mental well-being (Topp, Ostergaard, Sondergaard, & Bech, 2015). Nonetheless, the WHO’s initiative of conceptualizing well-being merely based on health did not help in explaining the other extended dimensions or outcomes related to well-being.

Besides conceptual, methodological limitations of the measuring instruments for the various constructs under well-being remain evident. From a methodological perspective, Cooke, Melchert, and Connors’ (2016) study highlighted the differing conceptual basis and psychometric properties of the 42 existing measuring

instruments in well-being literature to date. Thus, the debate continues on the best well-being model that conceptualizes and measures health and well-being accurately (Cooke et al., 2016).

The researchers further argued on the absence of a single instrument that captures the WHO's (1948) definition of health that encompasses physical, social, and mental well-being. Although this issue has yet to see some light at the end of the tunnel, people's self-reports of their well-being have emerged as "a focus of intense debate in public policy and economics" (Stephoe, Deaton, & Stone, 2014, p. 1). Nevertheless, major improvement concerning the measurement and interpretation of subjective well-being has emerged (Stephoe et al., 2014).

At present, a notable theoretical advancement of well-being in the education field is the strengths-based approach. Resting within the shoulders of Positive Psychology, the strengths-based approach conceives that students' opportunities for progress and effort should be built around their natural talents or strengths rather than the reconciliation of their weaknesses (Lopez & Louis, 2009; Passarelli, Hall, & Anderson, 2010).

At the heart of this approach is the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), which provides support to how and why positive affect may lead to enhanced educational outcomes (Passarelli et al., 2010). In her theory, Fredrickson (2001) posited that positive emotions broaden one's mind in terms of cognitive and behavioural perspectives, which in turn function as enduring personal resources ranging from physical to psychological.

Over the past several years, research on well-being and Positive Psychology has taken a fundamental shift in the SLA field. Three books have been published to demonstrate the influential impact of Positive Psychology research on classroom

practices, assessments and the well-being of the learners and the teachers within the SLA field (Gabrys-Barker & Galajda, 2016; Galajda, Zakrajewski, & Pawlak, 2016; MacIntyre, Gregerson, & Mercer, 2016).

Many of the researchers in these books have noted the efficient classroom practices and improved well-being of the learners as a forte of Positive Psychology in the SLA field. In particular, Helgesen (2016) had demonstrated the effective ESL classroom activities based on the PERMA model and how these activities generated higher well-being among the learners beyond happiness. In line with the focus of this paper, Mercer et al. (2016) have urged for more teacher-centredness in language learning psychology, suggesting the role of Positive Psychology in advancing the well-being of language teachers in diverse settings.

1.9 Significance of the Study

This paper functioned as a preliminary study on the dimensions of well-being among the English teachers within the chosen subpopulation. Thus, this research paves way for further exploration in the near future focusing on teacher well-being, conducted on a wider population of English teachers with different demographics across other specializations in Malaysia.

In addition, the findings of this study can be taken as initial data in identifying the positive traits that relate to each well-being outcome. Further studies are required to validate the findings in this study. Upon validation, this topic will be a fruitful research area for future researchers who are interested in developing interventions that enhance the well-being of the primary school teachers in Kuala Lumpur.

This study also adds to the growing body of literature on teacher well-being in the ESL field. Through this study, the researcher aspires that future Malaysian ESL researchers will focus on teachers' well-being from a positive perspective by exploring other dimensions of well-being, rather than just hiding within the shadows of negative affects like stress and anxiety.

Moreover, this study may aware the state education department and public safety organizations on the overall well-being of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. Lower well-being may affect the teachers' responsibility and commitment towards their students and the organization as a whole. Hence, the results in this study may enable relevant public safety organizations and the state education department to take proactive measures in enhancing the well-being of the teachers in relation to Positive Psychology.

This study also attempted to suggest if the PERMA model can be considered as an effective well-being model for the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. Thus, further investigation of the PERMA model can be extended to a wider scope of Malaysian teachers. Provided that the model demonstrates positive links to relevant outcomes, PERMA can be applied to educational institutions to develop interventions or programs targeted on teacher well-being.

1.10 Measures

A total of seven measures were utilized in this study. Besides the sociodemographic background questionnaire, which is a self-developed measure, the other six measures were based on the works of prominent psychologists and researchers within the field of psychology. Each of the measures consists of unique psychometric properties that make them apt for this study.

The Adult Hope Scale (AHS) originated based on the seminal work of Snyder, Harris, et al. (1991). The scale of this 12-items instrument had been designed to measure two specific subscales: (1) Agency and (2) Pathways, which are based on Snyder's cognitive model of hope (Snyder, Harris, et al., 1991). Snyder (2002) established that this instrument possessed acceptable internal reliability values in between .74 and .88 with a wide variety of samples. Several recent studies involving this measure in the education field have laid a focus on validating the translated versions of the questionnaire with different subpopulations (Abdullah et al., 2018; Marques, Lopez, Fontaine, Coimbra, & Mitchell, 2014), with positive internal consistency scores reported across the studies.

The revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R) (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994) was based on the seminal work of Scheier and Carver (1985), in which optimism was viewed merely based on dispositional optimism. The revised 10-items LOT-R measure extended beyond the paradigm of dispositional optimism based on optimism and pessimism (Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994). Previous studies had ascertained that this instrument possessed acceptable internal reliability between .73 and .86 (Cano-Garcia et al., 2015; Monzani, Steca, & Greco, 2014; Scheier, Carver, & Bridges, 1994). A number of recent studies have attempted to examine the factor structure and the psychometric properties of the different versions of this questionnaire with subpopulations from various contextual backgrounds (Cano-Garcia et al., 2015; Monzani, Steca, & Greco, 2014; Pan et al., 2017), with mixed results reported in one of the studies but were duly attributed to "translation and cultural adaptation issues" (Pan et al., 2017, p. 657).

The Short Grit Scale (Grit-S) (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009) was a revised version of the original Grit Scale based on the seminal work of Duckworth, Peterson,

Matthews, and Kelly (2007). The revised 8-items of the Grit-S instrument retained the original focus of the measurement, which was to measure perseverance and passion for long-term goals (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). In the validation of the Grit-S, the 8-items portrayed acceptable internal consistency values in between .73 and .79 across four different samples (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Recent studies on the Grit-S have revolved around validating the psychometric properties and the translated versions of the Grit-S with various subpopulations (Arco-Tirado, Fernandez-Martin, & Hoyle, 2018; Datu, Valdez, & King, 2016; Li, Zhao, Kong, Du, Yang, & Wang, 2016), with convincing outcomes on the criterion validity and the internal consistency of the scales reported.

The PERMA-Profilier (Butler & Kern, 2016) was developed to measure the five elements of PERMA, which was based on Seligman's (2011a) Well-being Theory. This 23-items measure uniquely considered the interplay between both positive affects (positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, accomplishment, happiness, and physical health) and negative affects (loneliness and negative emotions) in contributing to well-being (Butler & Kern, 2016). In the development of the PERMA-Profilier, Butler and Kern (2016) discovered that the acceptable internal consistency values in between .92 and .95 of the overall well-being scores across a large sample confirmed the unique psychometric properties of the five elements of PERMA.

The popularity of this instrument had resulted in the validation of its scales in another foreign language (Ayse, 2018). Besides, current studies utilizing the PERMA-Profilier have as well focused on assessing the well-being of a particular community and staff within an organization (Iasiello, Bartholomaeus, Jarden, & Kelly, 2017; Kern, Adler, Waters, & White, 2015), with theoretical and practical

assumptions applied. Nonetheless, the significant impact of PERMA on teacher well-being remained unclear due to a scarcity of research involving the use of this measure in assessing the well-being of teachers.

The PROMIS Global Health (PROMIS 10) measure emerged as the simplified version of the original PROMIS 29. This measure can be employed to efficiently assess the physical and mental health of individuals (Hays, Bjorner, Revicki, Spritzer, & Cella, 2009). In the development and validation of PROMIS 10, the internal consistency reliability of the 10 items was ascertained to be high (.92) (Hays et al., 2009). However, the PROMIS 10 had been merely applied across an unlimited number of studies involving clinical health and patient-related outcomes. Nonetheless, this measure has been progressively attaining considerable attention in the field of well-being in recent years. Some researchers have attempted to adapt the items from PROMIS 10 in developing new well-being measures for children (Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2014a; Ravens-Sieberer et al., 2014b), with positive outcomes reported on the validity of the new measures.

The Satisfaction With Life Scale was based on the seminal work of Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985). This short 5-items measure was designed to specifically assess global satisfaction of life (Diener et al., 1985) within the dimension of subjective well-being. Previous researchers had reported convincing internal reliability values of this instrument (.82 and .89) in studies across different subpopulations (Diener et al., 1985; Kern et al., 2014; Kern et al., 2015; Olcar, Rijavec, & Golub, 2017). With relevance to the area of teacher well-being, several current researchers have displayed an interest in utilizing this scale to assess and capture the overall satisfaction of teachers or educators within an organization in

different contexts (Kern et al., 2014; Kern et al., 2015; Olcar, Rijavec, & Golub, 2017; Vesely, Saklofske, & Nordstokke, 2014).

Last but not least, the Meaning in Life questionnaire, which was utilized in this study, was based on the seminal work of Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler (2006). This 10-items measure was developed to assess two primary domains of meaning in life: (1) Presence of Meaning and (2) Search for Meaning (Steger et al., 2006). Previous studies had provided sufficient evidence of high internal reliability in between .81 and .90 of this measure in various contexts (Bailey, & Phillips, 2015; Shoshani, & Russo-Netzer, 2017; Steger et al., 2006; Yalcin, & Malkoc, 2015). Current researchers have portrayed interest in utilizing this measure to assess the purpose of life among school and college/university students (Bailey, & Phillips, 2015; Shoshani, & Russo-Netzer, 2017; Yalcin, & Malkoc, 2015). Nonetheless, since researchers have not focused much on teacher well-being, the extent of how the two dimensions of meaning in this measure determine teachers' purpose of life remains unclear.

1.11 Operational Definition of Terms

The terms listed below were important to the purpose of this research. These terms had been defined operationally to provide a clear understanding of the content of this study.

i.) Positive Psychology

The concept of Positive Psychology was based on three levels and referred to the “valued subjective experiences (subjective level), positive individual traits

(individual level), and civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship (group level)” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5).

ii.) Well-being

The concept of well-being can be interpreted as “optimal psychological functioning and experience” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 142). However, in this study, well-being was conceptualized as multidimensional components that consist of three outcomes: health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life.

iii.) Hope

Snyder, Harris, et al. (1991) defined hope as “a cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed determination) and (b) pathways (planning of ways to meet goals)” (p. 570).

In another study, Snyder, Irving, and Anderson (1991) defined hope as “a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (p. 287).

In this study, only the composite scores were calculated to represent the construct of Hope.

iv.) Optimism

Seligman (1991) defined optimism as reacting to adversities and problems with a sense of self-confidence and high personal capability. In their seminal work of dispositional optimism, Scheier and Carver (1985) interpreted dispositional optimism

as one's circumstances which is influenced by one's thoughts about the future, which in turn affects that individual's well-being.

v.) Grit

Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly (2007) defined grit as “perseverance and passion for long term-goals” (p. 1087). What it implies is that once the goal is formulated, the individual sticks to the goal with the commitment to achieve the targeted objective.

vi.) PERMA

In his seminal work on PERMA based on the book “Flourish”, Seligman (2011a) defined PERMA as the five well-being pillars that promote flourishing, namely positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. There were several ways to conceptualize PERMA as a predictor that relates to positive outcomes (Butler & Kern, 2016).

However, PERMA in this study acted as a mediator and it was one of the elements that built up well-being in this study.

vii.) Health Outcomes

Within the perspective of positive health outcomes, Keyes (2002; 2005) viewed complete health based on four factors: (1) physical health; (2) subjective or emotional health; (3) social health; and (4) psychological health.

In this study, health emerged as the first construct that conceptualized well-being. The PROMIS 10 represented the entire definition of health outcomes and therefore was the measurement tool.

viii.) Life Satisfaction

The satisfaction of life or life satisfaction (used interchangeably) can be defined as “a global evaluation by the person of his or her life” (Pavot, Diener, Colvin, & Sandvik, 1991, p. 150), which was deemed as a “cognitive and judgemental process” (Diener et al. 1985, p. 71).

In this study, the second construct that conceptualized well-being was life satisfaction. Life satisfaction can either stand on its own or require both health outcomes and meaning in life to build the constructs of well-being. The construct was measured using the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985).

ix.) Meaning in Life

Meaning in life was perceived as “the web of connections, understandings, and interpretations that help us comprehend our experience and formulate plans directing our energies to the achievement of our desired future” (Steger, 2012, p.165).

In this study, meaning in life represented another component of the well-being of an individual. The construct was measured using the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006).

1.12 Limitations

The respondents in this study were limited to primary level ESL school teachers from Kuala Lumpur. Due to the regional background of the schools in this state, the results of this study were not generalizable to primary level ESL teachers from schools in other states. Teachers’ self-report on their well-being varies according to the geographical setting of the schools and the sociocultural factors surrounding the

participants, especially in urban areas. Thus, the findings in this study cannot be generalized to all primary level ESL teachers from public schools in Malaysia.

The researcher was also fully aware that the results of this survey study cannot be generalized to the wider population due to the sampling method. The convenience sampling method employed in this study did not provide adequate credibility to warrant for generalization. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2015) stressed that non-random sampling methods, including convenience samples, cannot be considered as representative of the population. Since this non-randomized sampling method did not reflect the actual population, every ESL teacher within the population did not possess an equal opportunity of being selected for this study. Thus, the researcher is also aware of the possibility of a sampling error in this study.

Yet, convenience sampling was utilized as the main sampling method in this study. With a targeted sample size of 150 participants, it was not possible to acquire a random sample due to the stipulated time frame of the researcher in obtaining the completed questionnaires. Besides, the hectic schedule of most of the English teachers hindered the smoothness of the data collection process, which made non-random sampling more convenient and feasible for the time and energy of the researcher.

Nonetheless, the researcher was aware of the major disadvantage that arose due to convenience sampling, which was the biased identity of the respondents. Thus, in an attempt of minimizing this limitation, the researcher provided the survey link of the questionnaires via the English Language Unit officers of each district education department in Kuala Lumpur. The demographic information of the sample included in this study also minimizes the possibility of biased identities, as suggested by Fraenkel et al. (2015).

1.13 Delimitations

The participants in this study encompassed only the English teachers from primary national schools in Kuala Lumpur. Samples of English teachers from primary national schools from other states in Malaysia were not considered. This practical consideration was made to minimize the scope of the study within the context the researcher is familiar with.

In addition, the PERMA-Profil questionnaire was multidimensional in nature as proposed by Butler and Kern (2016). Hence, each dimension of PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, relationship, meaning, and accomplishment) had been viewed as distinct and unique rather than as a single well-being score. However, the researcher had conceptualized PERMA from a unidimensional perspective and as a composite element that enhances well-being in this study. This decision was required as PERMA was tested as a well-being model that facilitated the relationships between the variables in this study.

Last but not least, many studies on well-being and positive traits abroad had focused on a longitudinal design to observe changes over time. However, the researcher reckoned on the unimportance of a longitudinal design since the focus of this study was not to establish a cause and effect. Nonetheless, given the limited time frame and cost, it was not possible to conduct a longitudinal study. As for this study, a cross-sectional design was sufficient to infer possible relationships and collect preliminary data for future studies and experimentations.

1.14 Summary

This cross-sectional quantitative study was inspired by foreign studies abroad which had implemented Positive Psychology within the field of SLA. Thus, this paper functioned as a preliminary study on the relationship between the three positive traits of hope, optimism, and grit and the health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. Based on the positive results in studies abroad, this study also attempted to investigate the strength and the mediating effect of PERMA on the aforementioned outcomes within the Malaysian ESL context.

Universiti Malaysia

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the overview of Positive Psychology based on the assumptions and theories of well-being. The discussion of the theories in this chapter revolves mainly around the hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives of well-being. From this, the discussion of the positive traits in this chapter, based on past literature from both the fields of psychology and SLA, highlights their strong relevance to the well-being of both L2 teachers and learners and how they indirectly generate successful student outcomes in an L2 context. The empirical evidence and the relationship between each studied trait are delineated in detail before moving on to the final part of this chapter, which highlights the theoretical background and proposed conceptual framework of this study.

2.2 Overview of Positive Psychology Theory

WHO (1948) defined health as “a state of complete, physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (p. 1). This definition is in contrast with the focal point of mental health before World War 2, which was directed more towards pathology repair, including those of diseases and disabilities (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Cooke et al., 2016).

Post World War 2, the Constitution of the WHO marked a new beginning in light of a fresh perspective that holds a holistic view on well-being, which over the years has endured a major transformation until giving rise to the field of Positive

Psychology. Although Abraham Maslow first practised Positive Psychology in humanistic psychology, the contemporary view of it originated from the President of the American Psychological Association, Martin Seligman (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; MacIntyre, 2016).

Positive Psychology has been conceptualized as an “umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005, p. 410). From the perspective of Positive Psychology, the emphasis is laid on a strength-based model that enables individuals to capitalize and thrive on their character strengths via positive traits and virtues (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2002a).

Unlike a focus on the deficit aspects of health in terms of illnesses and diseases, the importance of inculcating positivity and flourishing via character strengths exercises an awareness on the essence of positive human functioning (Seligman et al., 2005). Although inculcating and nurturing individuals with skills in enhancing their well-being have emerged as the primary focus of Positive Psychology, this field has never appeared to be more interesting without its fair share of critiques.

Sheldon (2009) expressed her concern with the broad notion of Positive Psychology that is misconceived as a “grab-bag or smorgasbord of phenomena and topics” (Sheldon, 2009, p. 268) in explaining optimal functioning. Besides that, although the overall belief on Positive Psychology has emerged promising, another concern is on the “differences in emphasis and interpretation” (Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2006, p. 5) in explaining and representing Positive Psychology.

2.3 Positive Psychology Background and Assumptions

Seligman et al. (2005) explained that Positive Psychology is aimed at augmenting instead of replacing what has been known about the gloomy side of human nature, including disorders and human suffering. Emphasis is on providing a balanced understanding of the human experience in terms of both positive and negative affects in an attempt to “relieve suffering and increase happiness” (Seligman et al., 2005, p. 875). Therefore, Positive Psychology functions based on the science of “positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5), that promises to enhance one’s well-being and quality of life.

2.3.1 Levels of Analysis in Positive Psychology

The dimensions and constructs within Positive Psychology operate within three levels; namely the subjective level, the individual level, and the group level (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2002b). The subjective level encompasses cherished positive subjective experiences, which include well-being, life satisfaction, optimism, hope, sensual pleasures, flow, and happiness (Diener et al., 1985; Scheier & Carver, 1985; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2002b; Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991).

In contrast, the individual level revolves around positive individual qualities, including courage, perseverance, capacity for love, interpersonal skills, forgiveness, authenticity, spirituality, future mindedness, high talent, aesthetic sensibility, and wisdom (Duckworth, Matthews, Kelly, & Peterson, 2007; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2002b). Lastly, the group level concerns one’s responsibility towards others than self in terms of

nurturance, altruism, obligation, civility, tolerance, moderation, and work ethic (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2002b).

2.3.2 Character Strengths in Relation to L2 Teachers

Character strengths can be referred to as “positive traits reflected in thoughts, feelings, and behaviours” (Park et al., 2004, p. 603). In a broader picture, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) perceived the significance of strength and virtue within the field of psychology beyond and above pathology and human weaknesses. Hence, good character was regarded as a “family of positive traits” (Park et al., 2004, p. 604; Park & Peterson, 2008, p. 86), which appeared fundamental to both psychological and social well-being (Park & Peterson, 2008).

Peterson and Seligman (2004) first attempted to define, distinguish and classify various important positive traits. The project, which was fondly known as Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Strengths (Park et al., 2004; Park & Peterson, 2008; Peterson & Seligman, 2004), was formed focusing on strengths of character that contribute to optimal human functioning (Park & Peterson, 2008). The VIA classification addresses 24 character strengths which are organized within six broad virtues; courage, justice, wisdom and knowledge, temperance, humanity, and transcendence (Park & Peterson, 2008; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). For youth development, the strengths-based approach prepares youngsters to lead a productive and fulfilling life rather than surviving in the face of adversities (Park & Peterson, 2008).

Within the context of SLA, the study of character strengths are closely related to personality factors such as attitude, motivation, and aptitude that indirectly impact the teaching and learning process of L2 (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015; Reyes,

2018). According to Reyes (2018), although successful L2 learning can be attributed to various factors, the non-cognitive personality factor, which functions as an internal factor should never be ignored as they significantly explain a major amount of success in the L2 teaching and learning process. Therefore, for successful L2 learning to take place, adequate knowledge on linguistics, pedagogical methods, and instructional strategies and techniques of the L2 teachers are simply insufficient (Reyes, 2018).

In reality, L2 teachers must be realized with the importance of character strengths, which extends beyond mere teaching (Majid, Ali, & Alias, 2014). Majid et al. (2014) emphasized the importance of “teachers to possess good characters to be supportive and accommodative of their students’ learning needs, and to nurture students’ intra and interpersonal skills” (p. 175). Yin and Majid (2018) further highlighted that good and positive teachers possess strong character strengths, with the humanitarian feature within the teachers appearing influential on the students in return (Majid et al., 2014). Besides positive work ethics and influence on colleagues, the character strengths for a teacher have also been found to correlate with teaching professionalism and quality teaching, which in turn contribute beneficially to the well-being of both teachers and learners (Yin & Majid, 2018).

Thus, research in character strengths with respect to Positive Psychology within the L2 context have been complemented with productive topics such as positive emotions, hope, optimism, grit, well-being, happiness, courage, emotional creativity, health, flourishing, resilience, flow, life longings, strengths, wisdom, and laughter (Lopez & Snyder, 2009), with hope, optimism, grit, and well-being forming the main foundation of this study among ESL teachers.

2.3.3 Subjective Well-Being and General Life Satisfaction

At one particular point in time, Diener (1984) argued that the importance of positive subjective well-being (SWB) had been overlooked with the central attention given to happiness as the primary stimulus of human action. Since then, interest in the area of SWB has been increasing gradually with life satisfaction being viewed as a significant dimension within SWB. SWB has been perceived in terms of three main components; positive emotion, negative emotion, and satisfaction of life (Diener, 1984). With the first two components referring to the emotional or affective state, life satisfaction denotes the cognitive-judgemental aspect (Diener et al., 1985).

Thus, the modern view of subjective well-being is perceived as “a broad category of phenomena that includes people’s emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgments of life satisfaction” (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999, p. 277). From the perspective of a global judgement of SWB, life satisfaction differs across societies with different cultures, as the values, norms, and goals embedded within the culture may possess a pervasive impact on life satisfaction (Diener, 2000).

2.4 Theories of Well-Being

One of the most significant current discussions on positive traits and affects concerns the conceptualization of well-being. The current focus on the conceptualization of well-being is based on four broad approaches; hedonic, eudaimonic, quality of life and wellness, with the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches emerging as the most influential school of thought in most studies (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

The hedonic approach laid attention to pleasure, enjoyment, and happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Conversely, the theoretical underpinning of Positive

Psychology laid a focus on the eudaimonic school of thought, which concerns “meaning and self-realization and defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 141). In particular, the eudaimonic approach illustrated a diverse number of fundamental dimensions that help us to understand well-being better (MacIntyre, 2016).

For more than a decade now, many researchers have shown an increased interest in developing several different theories that assist in explaining the constructs within well-being (Huppert & So, 2013; Rusk & Waters, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Seligman, 2011a). Ryff and Keyes (1995) conceptualized psychological well-being in terms of six dimensions; namely personal growth, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, positive relations with others, and self-acceptance.

On the other hand, Huppert and So (2013) outlined ten features of flourishing, including emotional stability, meaning, competence, engagement, positive emotion, optimism, resilience, positive relationships, self-esteem, and vitality. Huppert and So’s (2013) conceptualization of flourishing draws a close connection to Seligman’s (2011) PERMA model, in which well-being is interpreted in terms of five pillars; positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Seligman’s seminal work on PERMA inspired Butler and Kern (2016) to develop the PERMA-Profiler as a valid and reliable instrument in measuring the five elements of PERMA.

Last but not least, Rusk and Waters (2015) defined positive functioning in terms of five domains, which are comprehension and coping, goals and habits, attention and awareness, emotions, and virtues and relationships. Although a single universal theory that conceptualizes well-being remains absent, the constructs that

underpin the aforementioned theories deserve much attention due to their interdependence in contributing to the overall paradigm of well-being.

2.5 The Significance of Positive Psychology on the Well-Being of L2 Teachers and Learners

The domains of well-being, which constitute the overarching concept of Positive Psychology address the aspects of “positive emotion, positive character traits, and institutions that enable individuals to flourish, all of which are major concerns of language learning” (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 3). Thus, the Positive Psychology movement ensures that previously ignored positive traits and institutions deserve better attention within the field of SLA today (MacIntyre, 2016).

Several researchers have noted the significant impact of Positive Psychology classroom practices on the well-being of both foreign language teachers and learners (Gabrys-Barker, 2016; Gallo, 2016; Guz & Tetiurka, 2016; Mercer et al., 2016; Wieczorek, 2016; Wlosowicz, 2016). Nonetheless, Wieczorek (2016), in particular, expressed her concern on how foreign language teachers could improve their well-being in coping with the heavy demands of their job scope, especially when attention had been directed more towards the well-being of L2 learners (Mercer et al., 2016). In reality, the psychology of the language teachers is equally important to the psychology of the learners in a language classroom, as positive teacher psychology benefits the well-being of both the teachers and their learners too (Mercer et al., 2016).

As documented in several studies, there appears to be a causal link between teacher well-being, teaching quality and students’ performance (Bajorek, Gulliford, & Taskila, 2014; Yin & Majid, 2018). Bajorek et al. (2014) stated that a “teacher

with high job satisfaction, positive morale and who is healthy should be more likely to teach lessons which are creative, challenging and effective” (p. 6). This is in line with the close association between positive emotions and the professional development of L2 teachers as emphasized by Gallo (2016). In addition, Frenzel and Stephens (2013) explained that the positivity of the teachers is significantly connected to the positivity of their learners via the process of contagion, in which the teacher plays the powerful role as the leader that empowers positivity and nurtures the well-being of the entire group of students under him/her. Thus, with the teachers functioning “as the driving force behind the teaching/learning process” (Mercer et al., 2016, p. 216), their well-being plays a critical role in developing an emotionally healthy classroom (Frenzel & Stephens, 2013), which indirectly influences the teachers’ motivation as well.

In line with the focus of this study, the positive traits of hope, optimism, and grit have been similarly documented in several studies to contribute to the well-being of L2 learners via their teachers (Moghari et al., 2011; Snyder & Shorey, 2002). The positive trait of hope enhances teachers’ well-being by empowering “adaptive patterns of behaviour and works to inhibit negative outcomes by optimizing the livelihood of positive outcomes” (Snyder & Shorey, 2002, p. 9). These features of hope eventually generate highly hopeful teachers, who would be able to infuse a similar positive and hopeful thinking among their students besides constructing a positive L2 classroom environment for their students (Snyder & Shorey, 2002).

Besides, optimism has been discovered to assist in the well-being of L2 teachers via an increase in their self-efficacy and trust in students (Moghari et al., 2011). In return, high levels of self-efficacy and trust in optimistic L2 teachers infuse a similar impact on their L2 learners and empower them to learn the language by

facilitating their learning (Moghari et al., 2011). As for grit, this positive trait has been known to inculcating adaptability and coping skills among teachers in the face of adversities, which relates significantly to teacher quality in terms of teacher determination and performance efficiency (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). This enables L2 teachers to manage their L2 teaching obstacles effectively and observe the impact of their teaching practices on their learners over time (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014), eventually contributing to successful L2 learning (Keegan, 2017).

Therefore, as the well-being of both teachers and learners and successful L2 learning outcomes are strongly connected, the key to the success of this complex relationship to a large degree lies on the shoulder of the teachers (Mercer et al., 2016). Thus, aligned to what has been discussed in this section, Mercer et al. (2016) emphasized that the domains of Positive Psychology could yield positive outcomes in supporting teacher well-being, especially with activities or interventions concentrating around the PERMA model of well-being.

2.6 The Emerging Positive Traits of Positive Psychology in Relation to SLA

According to MacIntyre and Mercer (2014), the aggressive movement of the humanistic approaches in language teaching in the 1970s and 1980s acknowledged a more holistic view of the learners, comprising a combination of affect and cognition. However, in the past decades, applied linguists may have overlooked and undermined the relevance of emotions or non-cognitive positive affects due to the sovereignty of cognitive perspectives in L2 teaching and learning (Smith, 2017). Nonetheless, with the advancement of humanistic psychology in SLA, MacIntyre and Mercer (2014) asserted that “integrating affect and cognition remains a key tenet

of many contemporary SLA models” (p. 158). As such, in Gardner’s (2010) socio-educational model, the positive association between socio-affective factors and positive attitudes towards language learners were well highlighted. Positive traits or attitudes displayed by the teachers in a learning context facilitates successful language learning (Gardner, 2010).

On a similar note, the study of positive traits possesses a positive link with Krashen’s (1985) well-known perspective of “affective filter” (p. 81). Krashen (1985) proposed that with the existence of positive traits or emotions, the affective filter can be lowered, which enables language learners to gain more access to comprehensible input. Another perspective offered by Dornyei (2005) in his “L2 Motivational Self System Model” (p. 9) emphasized much on the importance of positive traits in L2 learning with respect to hope and optimism. Based on the model, MacIntyre and Mercer (2014) noted that Dornyei’s approach “stresses the importance of having positive future goals, a requisite level of optimism that one is able to change and positively achieve these future self-states, as well as the strategic knowledge necessary in order to achieve future goals” (p. 159).

In recent times, with the evolution of positive traits within the field of Positive Psychology, a myriad of studies have shifted towards assessing the influence of the positive traits of hope, optimism, and grit in the education field, with students emerging as the most commonly studied subpopulation. A rising number of studies have indicated that happiness, subjective well-being, optimism, and other positive constructs have been positively linked to better health and educational outcomes (Butler & Kern, 2016). In particular, these positive traits which are infused across the five elements of the PERMA model are positively associated with life satisfaction and flourishing (Butler & Kern, 2016).

Hope and optimism, which have been perceived as interdependent traits (Scheier & Carver, 1985; Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991) significantly contribute to greater health outcomes of college teachers and university employees (Liu, Wang, Shen, Li, & Wang, 2015; Luthans, Youssef, Sweetman, & Harms, 2013). Besides, hope, grit, and life satisfaction have also emerged as significant predictors of teacher performance (Duckworth, Quinn, & Seligman, 2009). Lately, Positive Psychology research has pointed towards a meaningful relationship between hope and grit. Higher levels of hope have appeared to possess a significant correlation with psychological grit among Latino college students (Vela, Lu, Lenz, & Hinojosa, 2015; Vela, Smith, Whittenberg, Guardiola, & Savage, 2018).

2.7 The Significance of Hope on L2 Teachers and Learners

Hope is perceived as one of the 24 strengths that contribute to greater well-being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In the past, researchers have subscribed to the assumption that hope is a unidimensional element that is based on goal attainment (Snyder, Harris, et al, 1991). However, in Snyder's hope theory, Snyder revised the conventional view of hope in terms of the cognitive resolution to progress towards one's goal (agency) and the ability to generate means in attaining the goals (pathways) (Snyder, 1995). Thus, hope is now conceptualized as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)" (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991, p. 287).

In providing a conceptual definition for hope, Scheier and Carver (1985) drew a close link between hope and optimism as well as several other individual differences' constructs like self-efficacy, as highlighted by Bandura (1986). Snyder,

Irving, and Anderson (1991) further agreed with Scheier and Carver's (1985) work on the optimism construct, in which both hope and optimism "share an emphasis on the importance of generalized expectancies in predicting goal-directed behaviour" (p. 289). In a qualitative study on the adversity of African adolescents in Ghana, Wilson and Somhlaba (2016) mentioned that the participants viewed hope as a psychological strength and interpreted it in terms of optimism towards achieving their future goals despite socioeconomic destitution.

Within the context of L2, the role of hope has appeared significant as one of the positive traits that were assessed by Positive Psychology interventions in schools and universities in strengthening the experience of both teachers and learners (Dewaele, Chen, Padilla, & Lake, 2019). The interest in how hope could influence the lives of teachers was primarily noted by Bullough and Hall-Kenyon (2012). A common consensus was achieved that hope and happiness are crucial conditions for successful learning outcomes and the professional well-being of the teachers (Hiver, 2016), in which hope pertains to how teachers "channel their professional efforts" (p. 172). This was well portrayed in Hiver's (2016) qualitative study on hope and novice L2 teachers. Regardless of the adversities faced by the L2 teachers during their early years of teaching, hope assisted them to adapt to their continuous struggles, in which the meaningful behaviour of the hopeful L2 teachers gradually increased and the awareness that pathways to solutions did exist (Hiver, 2016).

As for learners, Snyder and Shorey (2002) reported that hopeful students can perform better than those with lower hopes due to their ability to discover various pathways in accomplishing their educational goals, instead of feeling insecure by thoughts of failure or anxiety. Nonetheless, rather than the learners, the teachers, in reality, play an important part in inculcating hope and a positive mindset among their

learners (Snyder & Shorey, 2002). Highly hopeful teachers, as compared to their counterparts, can create positive classroom climates that promote and encourage hopeful thinking among the students (Snyder & Shorey, 2002). Snyder and Shorey (2002) further added that hopeful teachers are able to “infect students with a sense of enthusiasm and the belief that they too can attain their goals” (p. 3). This appears particularly crucial for students from poor living environments, where they have not been modelled to think hopefully at home to achieve their dreams (Snyder & Shorey, 2002).

Thus, it is rather clear that being hopeful establishes positive classroom conditions for L2 teaching and learning and a positive sense of enthusiasm on behalf of the learners. Nonetheless, the reality of nurturing hopeful and successful L2 learners may appear delusional without the significant role of hopeful L2 teachers. As in Snyder and Shorey’s (2002) paper, the authors straightforwardly mentioned that “in order to give hope to others, you must first have hope yourself” (p. 3). With this, the L2 teachers’ hopefulness and well-being will be given importance in this study.

2.7.1 Empirical Evidence between Hope and Health Outcomes

Empirical evidence in the past has pointed out that hope and optimism displayed stronger associations with mental health symptoms if compared to physical health, accounting for a significant variation on life stress alone (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991). Regardless, none of the constructs functioned as a moderator between life stress and symptoms of mental health, suggesting that hope and optimism are efficient moderators only when high levels of negative stress is experienced by an individual (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991).

In addition, those with higher levels of hope possess lower levels of negative affect like anxiety and depression (Snyder, Sympson, Michael, & Cheavens, 2001). Higher levels of hope are also associated to one's continuous positive thinking in life (Snyder et al., 2001), which aligns with the empirical finding that college students who score higher on hope measures feel more encouraged, confident, energized and goal challenging (Snyder, Harris, et al., 1991).

In recent times, the findings of the correlation analysis undertaken by Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, and Lopez (2011) suggested that hope, life satisfaction, and self-worth possess a meaningful relationship with mental health and academic achievement. Besides mental health, Berg, Ritschel, Swan, An, and Ahluwalia (2011) have noted the association between hope and physical health in their study. Lower hope scores were associated with frequent drinking and smoking among college undergraduate students. On the contrary, higher hope scores were attributed to healthy living and dietary habits like frequent exercising and fat limitation in the diet.

Furthermore, Dowling and Rickwood (2015) conducted a cross-sectional study to investigate the status of youth mental health in online counselling surrounding in relation to hope and expectations. Interestingly, the researchers discovered that only hope was strongly associated with psychological distress and life satisfaction among the youth, although there were no particular differences in the symptoms due to variations in hopes and expectations.

Nonetheless, based on the results of the multiple regression analysis, it was identified that Psychological Capital, which comprises hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism were strongly associated to the college teachers' physical and mental health (Liu, Wang, Shen, Li, & Wang, 2015). The findings were consistent with

another study on 523 employees, where Luthans, Youssef, Sweetman, and Harms (2013) ascertained that a person with a higher Psychological Capital (hope, resilience, efficacy, and optimism) will also acquire a healthy BMI and cholesterol level.

2.7.2 Empirical Evidence between Hope and Life Satisfaction

Addressing the interrelationship between hope and optimism, both the constructs have been found to positively contribute to life satisfaction among adolescents (Edwards, 2003), with or without cognitive disabilities (Shogren, Lopez, Wehmeyer, Little, & Pesgrove, 2006). However, based on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, Bailey, Eng, Frisch, and Snyder (2007) discovered that the Agency scale under hope appeared to be a stronger predictor of life satisfaction among students from a university compared to optimism.

In more recent studies, researchers have displayed an interest in evaluating the impact of hope on life satisfaction based on the theory of Psychological Capital. Liu et al. (2015) concluded that the four traits of Psychological Capital (hope, resilience, self-efficacy, and optimism) appeared as significant predictors of the college teachers' quality of life. They further suggested that the traits of Psychology Capital be considered as the key to enhancing the teachers' quality of life. Similarly, with hope underlying as one of the core traits, Psychology Capital was also discovered to be positively linked with job satisfaction among university teachers in Shenyang, China (Pan, Shen, Liu, Yang, & Wang, 2015).

Besides teachers, the results of linear regression based on 339 middle school students in west Turkey portrayed that hope scores significantly predicted a high variation in overall life satisfaction scores (Gungor & Avci, 2017). Additionally, in

constructing an integrative model that contributes to successful aging, dispositional hope, social support, and perceived health had been identified as significant predictors of life satisfaction among older adults attending a learning program at a higher institution in Spain (Oliver, Tomas, & Montoro-Rodriguez, 2017).

2.7.3 Empirical Evidence between Hope and Meaning in Life

In the development of the PERMA-Profil, Butler and Kern (2016) identified a significant correlation between hope and the five elements of well-being, including meaning. In another study on the meaning in life and subjective well-being among university students, Yalcin and Malkoc (2014) discovered that “meaning in life is related to subjective well-being through forgiveness and hope” (p. 923). In other words, meaning in life of an individual increase correspondingly as hope increases, which in turn helps to influence the subjective well-being of the individual. Nonetheless, uncertainty exists in the relationship between hope and meaning in life among teachers due to a dearth of research.

2.8 The Significance of Optimism on L2 Teachers and Learners

Perceived as one of the key elements within Positive Psychology, optimism has been interpreted as dealing with problems with a sense of confidence and high personal ability (Seligman, 1991). Seligman (2002a) further classified optimism as one of the 24 character strengths that contribute to increased well-being. Thus, optimism is relevant to subjective well-being (Scheier & Carver, 1992).

This assumption is in line with the seminal work of Scheier and Carver (1985) on the theory of dispositional optimism, where the researchers raised the issue of individual differences in optimism that had not been addressed by other past

researchers (Scheier & Carver, 1985). Thus, dispositional optimism has been perceived as “generalized outcome expectancies” (Scheier & Carver, 1985, p. 219), referring to the propensity to believe that people will endure both good and bad outcomes in life (Scheier & Carver, 1985; 1992). Within the field of well-being, Desrumaux et al. (2015) discovered that optimism emerged as an important predictor of health, similar to the focus of past studies where the consequences of optimism were mostly health-related (Scheier & Carver, 1985; 1992).

The important role of optimism within the educational field has been significantly highlighted via a focus on academic optimism, which contains strong relevance to the L2 teaching and learning context. Over the years, grounded within the field of Positive Psychology, researchers have primarily investigated the impact of academic optimism on pupils’ academic achievements (Fejova & Uhlarikova, 2018; Moghari, Lavasani, Bagherian, & Afshari, 2011; Woolfolk Hoy, Hoy, & Kurz, 2008), which has serious implications on “individual teacher characteristic” at the individual teacher level (Woolfolk et al., 2008, p. 821). It has been discovered that academic optimism, via the pivotal role of the teachers, could influence a positive change in the academic outcomes of pupils via an emphasis on the teacher’s self-efficacy (cognitive), the teacher’s belief on pupils and parents (affective), and the teacher’s emphasis on the academic achievement of the pupils (behavioural) (Fejova & Uhlarikova, 2018; Woolfolk et al., 2008).

Eren (2014) further indicated that academic optimism strongly and positively mediated the interrelationships between prospective teachers’ feelings about teaching and obligation for students’ motivation, achievement, bond with students and teaching. Due to the humanistic nature between teachers and learners in an L2 context, Moghari et al (2011) asserted that optimistic English teachers with respect to

their self-efficacy and trust in students eventually enable students to enhance their own self-efficacy in return and facilitate their own learning. Thus, the trust placed on the students by the teachers empowers students to work effortlessly and satisfy their individual needs, which eventually contributes to successful academic outcomes (Moghari et al., 2011). Hence, as English could appear challenging for non-speakers in an L2 environment, affective factors within teacher optimism such as the element of trust may appear to be effective in assisting L2 learners to learn the language (Moghari et al., 2011).

From the above discussions, although the link between teachers' optimism and pupils' learning outcomes in an ESL classroom is apparently clear, the relationship somehow appears questionable when the level of optimism of L2 teachers are taken off the equation. Moreover, an assessment of L2 teachers' optimism on their well-being has not been given much importance. Thus, this study sought to understand the impact of optimism on the well-being of ESL teachers rather than its impact on the academic outcomes of ESL students, which explains why the common Life Orientation Test (Lot-R) scale was preferred instead of the Teacher Academic Optimism scale (Woolfolk et al., 2008).

2.8.1 Empirical Evidence between Optimism and Health Outcomes

There was a common consensus among researchers in the past that optimism aided for a faster rate of recovery and rehabilitation among individuals (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991; Peterson & Bossio, 2001). On the contrary, there were as well a number of studies that failed to recognize and address the association between optimism and health (Lin & Peterson, 1990). Nevertheless, Peterson and Bossio (2001) refuted the concept of positive thinking implied in these studies as an

optimistic belief is considered irrelevant and may even appear health-damaging when the belief is not allowed to be converted into a positive outcome.

Over the years, Baker (2007) argued on the inconsistency in the results between optimism or pessimism and health-related behaviour. In contrast, a recent study by Opeyemi (2016) on private secondary school teachers in Lagos State (Nigeria) proved the opposite. The researcher discovered that optimistic teachers were able to manage stress comparatively better than pessimistic teachers.

Nonetheless, Dosedlova et al. (2015) perceived that levels of optimism did not influence positive health behaviour among the sample of Czech students and adults. However, similar to the findings in a previous study, Dosedlova et al. (2015) concurred that optimism does have a significant impact on the promotion of mental well-being. Similarly, in line with Seligman's (2002) proposition, optimism also stood out to be strong predictors of well-being and distress level of 298 French school teachers, with the strongest correlation value acquired between optimism and well-being (Desrumaux et al., 2015).

2.8.2 Empirical Evidence between Optimism and Life Satisfaction

Approximately a decade ago, Cha (2003) identified optimism as the most influential predictor of life satisfaction among 350 Korean college students. Optimism and self-esteem also equally predicted affective well-being among college students, which suggested that high self-esteem and optimism were capable of enhancing the positive emotional experience of college students. Likewise, based on the results of the principal component factor analysis, Karademas (2006) also noted that optimism was connected with well-being in terms of predicting a higher level of life satisfaction and lower level of depressive symptoms.

However, the focus of some studies in recent times have shifted towards the relationship between optimism and the job satisfaction of teachers. Ahmed (2012) discovered that optimism, besides self-esteem, was significantly correlated with job satisfaction among 88 teachers from private universities in Bangladesh. In another study on prospective and in-service teachers, the findings revealed that career optimism helps to convert conscientiousness into satisfaction on academic major and career selection (McIlveen & Perera, 2015). Moreover, Desrumaux et al. (2015) observed that the positive association between optimism with distress and well-being was partially mediated by satisfaction on the need for competence among 298 French school teachers.

2.8.3 Empirical Evidence between Optimism and Meaning in Life

As meaning in life emerged as a form of mediator between quality of life and personal well-being, Damasio, Melo, and Silva (2013) implied that teachers with higher rates of meaning in life tend to regard life more optimistically. Similarly, Sahin-Baltaci and Tagay (2015) discovered that optimism positively predicted the presence of meaning in life, meaning in life and the search for meaning in life compared to humour styles and hopelessness among Turkish University students. However, several studies have captivatingly captured the unique trait of optimism as a mediator in terms of its relationship with meaning in life.

As optimism mediated the relationship between meaning in life and psychosocial symptoms, Ho, Cheung, and Cheung (2010) implied that “meaning in life is crucial to optimism and contributes to a happier and satisfying life” (p. 662). In another study on 211 late adolescents, findings from the path analysis indicated that optimism partially mediated the relationship between sense of coherence and both

subjective and psychological well-being (Krok, 2015). The findings here correspond with Gustavsson-Lilius, Julkunen, Keskivaara, Lipsanen, and Hietanen's (2012) study on 147 cancer patients in Finland. The researchers found that the relationship between coherence, optimism, and well-being was perceived in terms of the "comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness" (p. 180) in the process of comprehending the meaning of life.

2.9 The Significance of Grit on L2 Teachers and Learners

Besides hope and optimism, grit or perseverance has also been characterized as another strength that leads to enhanced well-being (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Hence, grit was defined as the "perseverance and passion for long term-goals" (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007, p. 1087). Many studies on grit have acknowledged the positive trait as a strong predictor of academic achievement and socioeconomic success (Duckworth et al., 2007; Farrington et al., 2012). Psychological grit, which is deemed as one of the principal factors of positive psychology is linked to academic success, well-being, and hope (Duckworth et al., 2007). Recently, researchers have also attempted to demonstrate that individual differences in pursuing long term-goals with passion and determination were influenced by individual differences in motivation (Von Culin, Tsukayama, & Duckworth, 2014). Nevertheless, there remains a dearth of research on the link between grit and health outcomes (Guerrero et al., 2016; Stoffel & Cain, 2018).

Although grit appears to be an understudied concept within the ESL classroom context (Taspinar & Kulekci, 2018), MacIntyre (2016) posited that grit is one of the most significant positive traits that influence L2 learning. However, Keegan (2017) addressed that the features of grit have been explored in foreign and

second language learning indirectly in the past via research on aptitude, personality traits, attitudes and motivation of L2 learners. Notably, Keegan (2017) highlighted the similarity between the interpretations of gritty individuals by Duckworth et al. (2007) and the persistence portrayed by the second language learners in Naiman, Frohlich, Stern, and Todesco's (1978) study. Naiman et al. (1978) concluded that a good L2 learner "finds ways to overcome obstacles, whether linguistic, affective or environmental" (p. 17), which holds relevance to the notion of grit as success due to perseverance over time regardless of adversities and obstacles (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Nonetheless, grit has begun to receive its deserved attention within the SLA field lately. This non-cognitive trait has been found to strongly influence academic performance and achievement among ESL learners from China and America respectively (Banse & Palacios, 2018; Wei, Gao, & Wang, 2019). The role of grit on L2 learning, including ESL learners, appears crucial to learners of diverse levels, abilities, and ages as proficiency in the target language correlates with long term goal setting (Taspinar & Kulekci, 2018). Thus, ESL learners in an L2 classroom should be informed that language proficiency is a demanding and challenging goal that consumes time to be acquired (Taspinar & Kulekci, 2018). Eventually, learners with a high level of grit will successfully overcome all challenges and barriers in acquiring the target language and obtaining positive academic achievement (Aparicio, Bacao, & Oliveira, 2017). With this, most of the recent discussions and research on grit have pointed towards an emphasis on L2 learners' academic outcomes and performances.

However, Keegan (2017) pointed out that grit possesses serious implications on language teachers since they play a fundamental role in fostering grit and

generating successful L2 learners. However, due to the exceptional demands placed on teachers and other factors beyond their control (e.g., poor school condition, unsupportive parents, mediocre teaching resources), the final result is rather disheartening with many teachers conceding defeat in handling the challenges effectively and subsequently failing to observe the impact of their teaching practice on their students over time (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). Nonetheless, based on the findings in their longitudinal study, Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth (2014) hinted on the ability of grit to infuse adaptability or coping skills among the teachers. Thus, due to its nature of predicting adaptive personality over time, the researchers suggested that grit may appear the solution to improving teacher quality in terms of teacher persistence and efficiency in performance (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014).

From this, the positive connections between grit in ESL teachers and students and students' academic achievements are apparent. However, the promising impact of grit on L2 learning and students' learning outcomes appear questionable when the language teachers' level of grit is low. Nonetheless, at this point of writing, no possible solutions can be offered on this issue as a dearth of research of grit on the well-being of ESL teachers still appears a primary concern.

2.9.1 Empirical Evidence between Grit and Health Outcomes

Although the relationship between grit and health remain blurry, grit emerged as a successful predictor of psychological health in a sample consisting of 141 surgical residents (Salles, Cohen, & Mueller, 2014). Based on the results of the linear regression analyses, grit was a strong predictor of increased psychological well-being and decreased burnout levels among the residents. Thus, the researchers believed that

measuring grit would appear helpful in identifying “those who are at risk for burnout and lower overall well-being” (p. 253).

Correspondingly, in a study on the risk behaviors of Latina adolescents, Guerrero, Dudovitz, Chung, Dosanjh, and Wong (2016) further established the plausible connection between grit and health outcomes. Based on the findings of the regression analyses, the researchers identified that adolescents with higher grit displayed lower tendencies of alcohol and marijuana use, fighting as well as involvement in juvenile activities.

In predicting the influence of grit on stress, Meriac, Slifka, and LaBat (2015) conducted a study on the connection between grit and work ethic among 322 employed students from a large university in the US. Although the study found that grit and work ethic did not correlate with stress, it was asserted that “grit explained incremental variance in stress beyond work ethic” (p. 404). This implied that determined individuals may possess dissimilar coping strategies when dealing with stress in their daily lives.

2.9.2 Empirical Evidence between Grit and Life Satisfaction

In a study on beginner teachers in the Teach for America (TFA) program, Duckworth, Quinn, and Seligman (2009) found that grit, life satisfaction and optimism (explanatory style) distinctly predicted the teachers’ performance as assessed by the academic achievement of their students. However, when the traits were assessed simultaneously using the logistic regression model, only grit and life satisfaction appeared to be strong predictors of the novice teachers’ performance.

The findings in Duckworth, Quinn, and Seligman’s (2009) study corresponded with the findings in a recent study on 100 employees from various

professional sectors. Khan and Khan (2017) also noted that the level of grit, happiness, and life satisfaction were all positively interrelated. However, results of the factor analyses in another similar study on Romanian working adults do not warrant sufficient evidence on the positive relationship between grit and job satisfaction (Ion, Mindu, & Gorbanescu, 2017).

Nonetheless, based on the basic psychological needs embedded in the self-determination theory, the results of the regression analysis summarized that the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) possessed a statistically significant link with grit (Akbag & Umme, 2017). In a study on the impact of grit in the success of the e-learning systems, Aparicio, Bacao, and Oliveira (2017) further confirmed the positive influence of grit on user satisfaction and individual performance of 387 university students.

2.9.3 Empirical Evidence between Grit and Meaning in Life

In a fascinating study by Kleiman, Adams, Kashdan, and Riskind (2013), the findings revealed that the amalgamation of high grit and gratitude, which was partially mediated by meaning in life aided in the withdrawal of suicidal ideas among college students. Conversely, in a study on Latina college students, Vela, Lu, Lenz, and Hinojosa (2015) discovered that search for meaning in life was negatively linked with psychological grit, unlike hope.

This finding is consistent with another similar study where psychological grit was also found to be not associated with life meaning (search for meaning and presence of meaning) among 130 Mexican American college students (Vela, Lu, Lenz, Savage, & Guardiola, 2016). The similarities in the results can be implied due to the identical nature of the subpopulation in both the studies.

On the contrary, based on a longitudinal study by Ross (2016) on the orientations of happiness and well-being of adults, the results of the mediation analysis suggested that grit positively influenced one's well-being, which in turn leads to increased engagement and meaning of that individual. Besides that, the findings also portrayed that having a higher orientation of meaning correspondingly influenced an increase in grit via positive well-being. Nonetheless, engagement rather than meaning was found to be a significant mediator between grit and well-being.

The findings in Ross's (2016) study are particularly similar to a study by Von Culin, Tsukayama, and Duckworth (2014), in which grittier individuals tend to seek for happiness via engagement (medium effect) compared to meaning (small to medium effect). Nevertheless, the findings in Suzuki, Tamesue, Asahi, and Ishikawa's (2015) study contradicted the results of the aforementioned studies. The results of the multiple regression analyses portrayed that orientation towards meaning rather than engagement was a stronger predictor of grit in a sample of 1134 working adults in Japan. Thus, the inconsistency of the findings in these studies may be due to the dissimilar nature of the subpopulations.

2.10 Seligman's Conceptualization of Well-Being: From Positive Psychology to PERMA

With Martin Seligman being elected as the President of the American Psychological Association before the new millennium, an entire millennial issue of the American Psychologist was dedicated to the evolving science of Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In this issue, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) drew upon the pioneering work conducted by other positive psychologists

(Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005) and envisaged the future direction of Positive Psychology in understanding and building “the factors that allow individuals, communities, and societies to flourish” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5).

Approximately half a century, the domination of the conventional disease model and pathology failed to prevent serious problems among humans (Seligman, 2002b). Instead, Seligman (2002b) discovered the essence of “positive human traits” (p. 5) that function as a safeguard against mental illness; including hope, optimism, perseverance, and flow to name a few. Over the years, much research on the positive traits generated sufficient empirical evidence that revised the positive traits of what is now known as character strengths and virtues (Seligman et al., 2005). The study of strengths is grounded on the belief that individuals choose what constitutes their good life and happiness (Seligman, 2002a; Seligman, 2002b).

With the constant rapid progress of the Positive Psychology field, the amalgamation of fresh perspectives with what was already known paved way for more new theoretical foundations and movements under Positive Psychology (Scorsolini-Comin, Fontaine, Koller, & Santos, 2013). One particular movement that was entangled in a debate once was none other than the Authentic Happiness Theory (AHT) (Scorsolini-Comin et al., 2013). In AHT, Seligman (2002a) drew a close connection between happiness and life satisfaction and defined well-being in terms of three dimensions; namely positive emotion, engagement, and meaning. The theory postulated that: (a) happiness as the key idea in Positive Psychology, (b) the main criteria for assessing happiness is life satisfaction, and (c) the main aim of Positive Psychology is to enhance life satisfaction (Seligman, 2002a; Umucu, 2017).

Nonetheless, Seligman (2011b) himself addressed the shortcomings in the AHT nearly a decade later. The flaws were mainly attributed to the overemphasis on the importance of life satisfaction and the misconception of the link between positive emotion, engagement and meaning in defining happiness (Seligman, 2011b). Thus, with what appeared as a fundamental paradigm shift (Scorsolini-Comin et al., 2013), Seligman (2011a) expanded the theoretical concepts within AHT by adding another two additional elements of relationships and accomplishment. With sufficient empirical supports from researchers around the world (Scorsolini-Comin et al., 2013), Seligman (2011a) proposed a fresh new perspective of well-being in terms of five main domains: (a) Positive Emotion, (b) Engagement, (c) Relationships, (d) Meaning, and (e) Accomplishment.

With his new multidimensional theory of well-being, flourishing was identified as the main condition in measuring well-being and increasing flourishing as the primary objective of Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2011b, Umucu, 2017). The concept of flourishing was well received by Huppert and So (2013), who claimed that “flourishing could be conceived as the opposite of mental disorder, rather than its mere absence” (p. 849). In their study, Huppert and So (2013) discovered that flourishing among a sample of 43,000 Europeans comprised a combination of both positive functioning (eudaimonic) and positive feeling (hedonic). Per the view of Seligman (2011b) on the weaknesses in AHT, Huppert and So (2013) also acknowledged that important information would be absent if well-being was merely measured in terms of life satisfaction.

2.10.1 Empirical Evidence between PERMA and Health Outcomes

There appears to be limited empirical support between PERMA and the health outcomes of ESL teachers. Researchers have mainly displayed an interest in the relationship between PERMA and the well-being of students/college students (Coffey, Wray-Lake, Mashek, & Branand, 2016; Kern et al., 2015). Nonetheless, Kern, Waters, Adler, and White (2014) indicated that the well-being components (PERMA and negative emotion) possessed a significant link with health among 148 employees from an Australian private college. In addition, positive emotion and accomplishment were strongly connected to health (Kern et al., 2014).

However, in another similar study on a different subpopulation of 516 Australian male college students, Kern et al. (2015) discovered that only positive emotion and accomplishment were significantly associated with vitality and better physical activity. In particular, positive emotion was reportedly connected to many other outcomes as well besides the health outcomes (Kern et al., 2015), which made positive emotion a core element of flourishing as supported by Huppert and So (2013).

In the validation of the PERMA-Profiler, Butler and Kern (2016) found that “physical health was moderately to strongly correlated with each of the PERMA factors” (p. 17 & 18). The findings by Butler and Kern (2016) were in harmony with the results in another study conducted by Coffey et al. (2016) on 831 college students. Over two years, PERMA successfully predicted flourishing in terms of greater physical health and college life success among the students (Coffey et al., 2016). Notably, the researchers specified that with well-being “conceptualized and measured as PERMA, has direct relevance for physical health” (Coffey et al., 2016, p. 206).

2.10.2 Empirical Evidence between PERMA and Life Satisfaction

Over the years, many researchers have displayed a primary interest in the study of well-being and PERMA in relation to the life satisfaction of college and university students (Coffey et al., 2016; Kern et al., 2015; Tansey et al., 2017). This resulted in a dearth of research of PERMA on the life satisfaction of ESL teachers. Nonetheless, the five PERMA components of well-being are significantly associated with the life satisfaction of 148 employees from an Australian college (Kern et al., 2014).

Kern and her colleagues further added that positive emotion, meaning, and accomplishment emerged as the strongest predictors of life satisfaction among the employees (Kern et al., 2014). In particular to the role of positive emotion, the element had also appeared to be the strongest predictor of life satisfaction among 7,188 adults over three consecutive studies (Butler & Kern, 2016). On the other hand, in a similar study, Kern et al. (2015) discovered that life satisfaction was predicted by positive emotion, relationships, and accomplishment among 516 Australian male college students.

In a study on the factorial structure of PERMA, results of the correlation analyses illustrated that PERMA was significantly associated with life satisfaction among 97 college students with disabilities (Tansey et al., 2017). Remarkably, Tansey et al. (2017) also discovered that the relationship between functional disability and life satisfaction of the students was mediated by PERMA completely. Last but not least, PERMA had also been consistently found to be significantly linked with indicators of well-being including life satisfaction across Study 1 (longitudinal) and Study 2 (cross-sectional) on college students (Study 1) and a large sample of American citizens (Study 2) (Coffey et al., 2016).

2.10.3 Empirical Evidence between PERMA and Meaning in Life

At this point, there is scant literature examining the effect of PERMA on meaning in life in relation to ESL teachers' well-being. Nonetheless, in a study based on the multidimensional PERMA model, meaning had been found to predict better health and greater life satisfaction besides positive emotion and accomplishment of 148 employees from an Australian private college (Kern et al., 2014). Besides, the results of the hierarchical linear regression indicated that meaning appeared as the strongest predictor of satisfaction of life among the employees (Kern et al., 2014).

In Fouche, Rothmann, and Vyver's (2017) study on 513 secondary school teachers in South Africa, factors like job design, the relationship among the colleagues, and a calling orientation were positively associated to meaningful work among the 513 teachers, which in turn functioned as a protective factor against burnout. Correspondingly, meaning in life had been identified as a protective factor of unhealthy risk behaviours and poor psychological health in a large sample of 2,152 Romanian high school students (Brassai, Piko, & Steger, 2011).

2.11 Challenges Faced by Malaysian ESL Teachers

This section outlines a comprehensive discussion on the challenges and dilemmas faced by the Malaysian ESL teachers in national schools over the years, which may have appeared as well-being barriers for the teachers. This section is delineated in terms of five subsections; namely issues on the reforms in English language policies over the years and their relevance to the proficiency levels of the ESL teachers, teachers' workloads, issues faced by ESL pre-service and novice teachers, parental pressure, and school influence.

2.11.1 Issues on the Reforms in English Language Policies and Proficiency Level of the ESL Teachers

In an effort of improving the quality of English language education in the country, the Malaysian education system has undergone constant English Language Teaching (ELT) policy changes over the years (Hall, 2015; Rashid, Rahman, & Yunus, 2016). However, Rashid et al. (2016) argued that “implementation was often made in haste without considering the voices and opinions of the wider society” (p. 10), with the ESL teachers often falling as the victims in the face of new policies.

In what was perceived as the most controversial reform (Rashid et al., 2016), the PPSMI policy was implemented beginning 2003 to ensure that the pupils prepared themselves competitively by learning the two core subjects with English as the main medium of instruction. Although the focus was not on enhancing the mastery of the target language, English language teachers nonetheless felt the pressure “as they had to ensure that the students reached a particular level of proficiency for them to be able to use the language in Mathematics and Science classes” (Rashid et al., 2016, p.3). On top of this, the Science and Mathematics teachers who were not proficient in the target language had a share of their part in this issue as they found it difficult to comprehend and deliver the contents (Selvaraj, 2010).

Hall (2015) remained skeptical about the execution of the policy as its implementation stage was highly dependable on the teachers although the policy had been mandated at the national level. Despite all the gradual collaborative efforts undertaken by the English teachers in lending support to the Science and Mathematics teachers (Tan, 2011) prior to its full implementation, the then Minister

of Education, however, abolished the policy and reversed the medium of instruction of both the subjects back to Bahasa Malaysia in 2012 (Rashid et al., 2016).

The lack of success of the policy was mainly attributed to the inadequacy of the teachers to convey the lessons efficiently due to language constraints (Kepol, 2017; Rashid et al., 2016). Nonetheless, the Malaysian English Language Teaching Association (2015) deemed that the policy had been evaluated unfairly and was discontinued too soon as approximately 13 years of implementation was required for its success to be measured.

The PPSMI policy was replaced with another new policy MBMMBI (translated into English as “To Uphold Bahasa Malaysia and to Strengthen the English Language”) (Kepol, 2017; Rashid et al., 2016), as part of the first wave of the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013 – 2025) (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Although the implementation of the new policy was not objected by the stakeholders, the abolishment of PPSMI did not go down well with many, especially the parents and proficient students (Rashid et al., 2016). Without considering the opinions of these stakeholders and gaining feedback from related parties, Rashid et al. (2016) critically viewed the policymakers’ efforts of toying with the policy had appeared confounding and troublesome for many, especially the teachers. In the end, not only did they have to adapt to the new policy immediately, the whole affair made the “teachers and students feeling no less than lab rats” (Yunus & Sukri, 2017, p.135).

Besides, the upskilling of the proficiency level of the English language teachers was emphasized in the blueprint as all 61,000 teachers were required to undergo the Cambridge Placement Test (CPT) by 2012 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Although many appreciated the Ministry of Education’s initiatives

in upgrading the quality of English teaching in Malaysia, approximately two-thirds of the teachers failed to achieve the minimum proficiency level of the test (Rashid et al., 2016). Under the Pro-ELT initiative in 2013, teachers who failed the test were required to attend English training courses organized by the British Council outside school hours for four hours a week spanning 44 weeks (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013; Sukri & Yunus, 2018).

Nonetheless, many teachers who failed the CPT test were not convinced on the manner the test was being conducted and further expressed their dissatisfaction with the online server issues in certain schools that deprived their capability to complete and submit the answers on time (Rashid et al., 2016). On top of that, many had complained that “the results did not reflect their true competency and proficiency” (Rashid et al., 2016, p. 8). Unfazed by the complaints, the Ministry of Education “still sent the teachers for retraining without negotiating or considering their willingness” (Rashid et al., 2016, p. 8), leaving the teachers helpless in such demanding situations.

Yet, the declining quality of the Malaysian English language teachers has been continuously linked to the deteriorating standards of English among the pupils over the years (Sukri & Yunus, 2018). Nonetheless, Sukri, Yunus, and Rahman (2017) had a different take on the low proficiency level of the teachers, claiming that many of the English teachers “have been the victims of vicious cycle developed in the education system resulting in detestable level of English proficiency” (p.808). Consequently, concerning job satisfaction levels, Ghavifekr and Pillai (2016) found that teachers who have served between 6 to 10 years experienced a sharp decline in their job satisfaction due to changes in the educational policies that affect how they work.

Further adding to the predicament, Aziz and Uri (2017) argued that Malaysia still lacks qualified teachers who are capable of implementing the recent CEFR of aligned curriculum and assessment in primary levels one and two. Many English teachers in Malaysia are non-optionists (Kepol, 2017), although they are experienced teachers. The non-English-optioned teachers have been assigned to teach English due to the shortage of English optionists in certain national schools (Kepol, 2017). Yesuiah (2016; 2017) narrated in detail on the backlash faced by the English teachers in recent years and how the Education Ministry have overlooked the actual scenario of the non-optionist teachers in public schools, as primary interest was merely laid on the end result of the pupils' outcomes (Yesuiah, 2016).

Nonetheless, many had been sent to receive the cascade training for the CEFR programme simply because they were slightly better equipped with the knowledge of the language compared to their counterparts (Aziz & Uri, 2017). Thus, the teachers may have displayed a lack of interest in appreciating and adopting the framework when they have failed to comprehend it well, eventually bringing down the entire purpose of the cascade training at the school level (Aziz & Uri, 2017).

Furthermore, the CEFR framework was aligned with the provision of new imported textbooks for Year 1 (Super Minds) and Form 1 (Pulse 2) in line with the KSSR and KSSM curriculums respectively. This was perceived as a controversial move as many had criticized the absence of local content and the unnatural references made to foreign culture and context throughout the textbooks (Johari, 2017). On the bright side, the government's indirect effort of promoting the use of technology in the teaching and learning of English via the references to digital materials in the textbooks was in line with the ministry's aspirations of the 21st-century learning and appeared commendable. Nonetheless, merely references to

digital materials were not sufficient as the textbooks provided did not contain any CDs or any other alternatives in accessing the video and audio materials (Johari, 2017), much to the displeasure of the teachers. On top of that, any intention of purchasing the textbooks or their corresponding workbooks on the teachers' expenses was greatly hampered due to their exorbitant prices.

Moreover, Johari (2017) also stressed that teachers were not provided sufficient guidance on how the textbook was to be adapted to suit the local context. Regardless of the cascade training, many still appeared confused about how the textbook was to be utilized effectively with the absence of the other supporting resources. This appeared vital as the foreign textbooks not only contained alien references to the foreign cultural context but “also stresses on different pedagogical aspects compared to the local KSSR and KSSM curriculum” (Johari, 2017, para. 14). Hence, an experienced teacher may have been able to formulate the lesson plans without much assistance, but this certainly did not apply to the majority of the teachers (Johari, 2017). Thus, a lack of preparation and detailed planning on behalf of the Education Ministry may have thwarted the teachers' ability in utilizing the textbooks efficiently in the classroom (Johari, 2017). As suggested by Rashid, Rahman, and Yunus (2016), the English language teachers may have to seek out social support in surviving in the teaching profession and coping with the other ongoing reforms.

2.11.2 Workloads

According to the Malaysian Education Blueprint, a survey in 2011 by the Ministry on 7,853 Malaysian teachers demonstrated that the teachers were found to be working between 40 and 80 hours every week, with a surprising average of 57

working hours (Ministry of Education, 2013). Malaysian teachers were also discovered to merely teach between 2.4 to 2.9 hours per day on average and this does not constitute time spent on interaction with students, lesson preparations and grading of homework (Ministry of Education, 2013). Many teachers have also raised concerns that administrative duties and their related paperwork have disrupted their core attention on classroom teaching and learning (Ministry of Education, 2013; Razak, 2011).

As such, when the 2011 large scale survey was conducted, one of the reforms that affected our English language teachers detrimentally was the initiation of the School-Based Assessment (SBA) in both primary and secondary schools in 2011 (Rashid et al., 2016). Having been implemented successfully in countries like Finland and Canada, the SBA format was perceived as a break away from the conventional examination-oriented format in the education system. It provided much-required autonomy for the teachers to assess the pupils on a wide range of outcomes over a predetermined period (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).

Nonetheless, the sudden implementation of SBA triggered an uproar as both the teachers and the parents failed to acquire sufficient information on how the system would work (Rashid et al., 2016). With the existing responsibilities and administrative duties, the majority of the teachers “felt overburdened since they had to prepare extra materials and documents” (Rashid et al., 2016, p.6). Raman and Yamat’s (2014) semi-structured interviews with 17 English teachers depicted that they were unhappy with its implementation and felt much pressure although SBA was viewed as a promising prospect of education transformation. Most of the teachers’ spare time was spent on updating the students’ portfolios and an online recording and storage system was introduced only after many complaints from the

teachers (Rashid et al., 2016, p. 6). Nevertheless, problems yet continued as the teachers spent much of their time keying in excessive data into the online system, which was at times difficult to access (Goon, 2014). This issue affected the rural teachers badly as they experienced internet access problems on top of the inefficient access to the new online system (Ghazali, 2016; Raman & Yamat, 2014). According to Ghavifekr and Pillai (2016), teachers who are overloaded with excessive responsibilities may experience a decline in job satisfaction and their motivation to educate the students. Johari, Tan, and Zulkarnian (2018) further concurred that heavy workload further degrades the organizational commitment and job performance of the teachers.

Furthermore, with regards to the Pro-ELT initiative, the 30 English teachers in Sukri et al. (2017) sample admitted that the programme contributed to a vast improvement in their listening and speaking skills. Despite their overall satisfaction on the programme, they experienced an inconvenience of having to complete a 480-hour course within just 12 months on top of their already hectic school schedule. Many voiced out that the policymakers ought to comprehend “the other responsibilities and stints that English teachers are tasked with” as they felt “very much burdened with tons of workloads at school” (Sukri et al., 2017, p. 819). Their concerns were acceptable as teachers these days are loaded with non-teaching related duties besides being emotionally encumbered with expectations on their work efficiency and performance (Sukri et al., 2017).

With the current ongoing focus on the teachers’ professional development (TPD) programmes, which are managed by the Teacher Education Division (TED) (Rashid et al., 2016), the efficiency of the initiatives remains questionable. Osman and Kassim (2013) pointed out that many teachers have complained that they were

required to leave the classrooms during school hours to attend the courses, which added much burden on the other teachers who had to spend more time as relief teachers. Above and beyond, the TPD programmes failed to promote creativity and independent learning among the teachers, as “teachers are being spoon-fed and instructed in what they should do in the classroom” (Rashid et al., 2016, p. 9). Consequently, many teachers have reportedly suffered from heavy workloads and lack of opportunities for personal professional growth due to ineffective TPD programmes (Rashid et al., 2016).

Over the years, excessive workloads have been strongly associated with other forms of physical problems among the teachers in recent years. Subon and Sigie (2016) discovered that the teachers in their sample portrayed symptoms of burnout due to heavy workloads and high demands from their superiors, similar to Mukundan and Khandehroo’s (2010) findings earlier. Besides, Zamri et al. (2017) acknowledged the significant association between high job demand and lower back pain among the teachers in their study due to the physical demand in completing the tasks at school.

2.11.3 Issues Faced by ESL Pre-Service and Novice Teachers

Ariff, Mansor, and Yusof (2016) defined novice teachers as teachers who have been formally trained and worked in between one to three years. However, Senom, Zakaria, and Shah (2013) asserted that the perplexing transition from teacher education institutions to real-life classrooms leaves the teachers often feeling inadequately prepared in facing the challenging realities of a school environment and its corresponding organizational demands. With the inconsistent challenges and complexities within the education field, a novice TESL teacher can't manoeuvre the

challenges and adapt to the actual environment without any additional support or guidance (Senom et al., 2013; Singh & Omar, 2018; Zakaria, Saidin, & Mohamad, 2016).

A part of the issues affecting ESL teachers was attributed to a lack of support experienced by the novice teachers, who find themselves assuming the duties of an experienced teacher upon transition from college life (Senom et al., 2013). Singh and Omar (2018) further added that beginner ESL teachers confront various issues that they require support in such as classroom management, differentiated learning, students' motivation and attitude towards L2 learning, instructional strategies and resources, engaging with colleagues and the wider community, and coping with the school culture. A large-scale study in Malaysia back in 2006 noted that novice Malaysian teachers also deal with issues pertaining "inadequate and irrelevant teaching preparation course, fatigue, time consuming and tedious teaching preparation and lesson planning as well as difficulty in applying theory to practice" (Senom et al., 2013, p. 123).

Thus, as means to support the TESL novice teachers, it was rather unsurprising when Singh and Omar (2018) pointed out that the TESL mentor teachers in their study laid more importance on having clear communication, providing encouragement, and feeling comfortable in interacting with the TESL novice teachers, rather than prioritizing on their well-being. Ironically, pre-service teachers towards the end of their teaching programme have essentially experienced the aforementioned realities. Two qualitative studies (Macalister, 2017; Masry & Saad, 2017) delineated the complexities faced by Malaysian ESL pre-service teachers that functioned well as a demotivating indication of what was awaiting them as in-service teachers. In Macalister's (2017) study, one out of the two TESOL

undergraduate students under a twinning program in New Zealand was uncertain of his ability to impart his knowledge and implement changes to his school environment back in Malaysia, perceiving that the education system has been designed in a predetermined manner and that he was just a part of the government's modernization initiative.

This was supported by the four pre-service teachers in Masry and Saad's (2017) study as they were perplexed to notice the immense difference between theory (learned in a formal setting at the university) and practice during their practicum. Their actual practices turned out to be baffling and exhausting both physically and mentally due to inconsistencies in the organizational demands. The pre-service teachers in Masry and Saad's (2017) study may have encountered "teaching approach complications" (Senom et al., 2013, p.122); a common conflict among the novices where they have to reconcile the differences between their notion of effective teaching than the normative approach that was implemented in school. Eventually, creativity and innovativeness were obstructed as the teachers were forced to conform to the syllabus or course content, which is rigidly influenced by the examination system (Senom et al., 2013).

Hence, with a long list of problems affecting novice teachers, Zakaria et al. (2016) summarized that novice teachers were required to deal with issues pertaining work stress, emotional quotient, and job commitment. Thus, it was rather unsurprising when Zamri et al. (2017) study highlighted that the younger teachers were more inclined to acquiring lower back pains as "they were given more tasks at the beginning of their career" (p.11).

2.11.4 Parental Factors

The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 highlighted the important roles played by the parents in empowering their children's academic progress and personal development (Ministry of Education, 2013). Through the blueprint, the ministry has envisioned the significance of shared collaboration between teachers and parents in assuring quality learning takes place and optimal academic achievement is attained (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Within the context of English education, this initiative aligns well with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, in which parents with a positive relationship with their children will appear supportive and encouraging in their children's attempts to thrive academically, even in the English language subject (Mansor & Ahmad, 2016). Thus, the notion of parental support today differs from its conventional perspective, which exceeds beyond mere advice, monitoring, and finance and includes involvement in the learning process at both home and school besides good parenting skills (Mansor & Ahmad, 2016). Thus, the ministry's vision can only be accomplished if parents are aware of their imperative duties in engaging with the school community and assisting and monitoring their children's learning (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Nonetheless, with the arising awareness on global competition and English language proficiency, parents' concerns on the poor proficiency of the students have subsequently led to heightened expectations on the standard of English in the Malaysian education system. As an instance, The Malaysia Primary School Parents (2018), a Facebook group consisting of 27,000 members highlighted some of the major concerns within the current education system at the primary level. Among the key demands voiced out included allowing children to express themselves via drama,

arts, music, and creative writing, balancing between eat and play during recess, and extending the period per subject in the daily schedule so that fewer books will be brought to school (Malaysia Primary School Parents, 2018).

In another event, Teo Kok Seong, an academician from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia pointed out that the deteriorating standard of English in national schools was mainly attributed to the poor proficiency of the English teachers and the parents were well aware of it (Jun, 2019). Nonetheless, Arshad Abd Samad of Universiti Putra Malaysia opposed that other factors such as the school environment, the curriculum, teacher training, and selection are required to be examined rather than solely blaming the teachers (Jun, 2019). Thus, there appears to be a mismatch between the parents' expectations and the current educational policies and implementations, in which ESL teachers may be feeling lost within a "complex education ecosystem" (Jun, 2019). Such complexities make it unsurprising that novice teachers, in particular, struggled with the heightened expectations of the pupils' parents (Senom et al., 2013). Nevertheless, when perceived from a positive viewpoint, the increased demands from the pupils' parents are understandable as they demonstrate the love and concern the parents possess on their children.

However, the neglectful attitude of certain parents, when compared to the heightened expectations, appear unacceptable and intolerable to the well-being of our ESL teachers. In a qualitative study on 24 teachers from an urban and a rural school in Malaysia, Razak (2011) discovered that the parents from the urban school assumed a marginalized role in supporting the academic progress of their children and entrusted the teachers entirely with the role of disciplinarians, due to their hectic schedules. Whereas, the parents from the rural school had a poor educational background and failed to comprehend the growing demands of the new education

policies (Razak, 2011). Thus, excessive demands and pressure were entirely placed on the teachers as the parents did not assume any responsibility for their children's learning (Razak, 2011).

Similarly, in a study abroad, Lodhi et al. (2019) highlighted that the primary level Pakistani English teachers from both urban and rural schools attributed the ineffective teaching outcomes in their L2 classrooms to certain parental factors such as a lack of cooperation from the parents, illiteracy level of the parents and a lack of interest displayed by the parents. Conversely, in literacy development, the OECD reported that a little active engagement and interest displayed by the parents at home are sufficient in boosting the reading performance of their children (Ministry of Education, 2013). Thus, due to the difficulties in coping with the demands of the teaching profession, many teachers have experienced a lack of motivation and suffered from burnouts (Subon & Sigie, 2016).

Cheng and Tam (2007) noted that "in many Asian areas like Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Thailand, a tradition of parental participation and community partnership in school education has been largely absent" (p. 255). In general, the researchers indirectly hinted on the disappointing mentality of many Asian parents in perceiving that schools hold the absolute responsibility of educating and disciplining their children without their assistance required. Subsequently, this overdependence results in failed academic outcomes and the self-discipline of the students (Razak, 2011). Thus, besides emerging as a challenge to the well-being of the ESL teachers, the negligence of Malaysian parents may effectively thwart the government's aspirations on the productive partnership between the school and the parents as envisioned in the blueprint.

2.11.5 School Influence

Within the Malaysian school system, the Ministry of Education (2013) outlined that a routine teacher's role comprises various job scopes and activities. Besides instructional activities, teachers are also involved in other teaching and learning unrelated activities such as administering co-curricular activities, engaging in administrative programs and duties, and dealing with parents and the wider community (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Hence, besides excessive workloads, burnouts among Malaysian teachers have been detected to be due to teachers having to continuously work hard to fulfill the expectations of the school management, superiors, education departments and the Ministry of Education (Subon & Sigie, 2016). Correspondingly, the beginner ESL teachers in Senom et al. (2013) study reported on the struggles they faced at their schools such as new leadership roles, lack of guidance and support, school politics, isolation, and high expectations. In particular, Subon and Sigie (2016) noted that work-related factors such as heightened demands from the school administrators could lead to physical and emotional exhaustion besides depersonalization. Moreover, Ghavifekr and Pillai (2016) mentioned that teachers have also been found to be unsatisfied with the recognition factor within the organization, in which school administrations and the Education Ministry tend to overlook the teachers' efforts and sacrifices and focus on amending what is not done well in schools. The focus should instead lay on what works best for our students and how to improvise the teaching and learning process in the classroom (Ghavifekr & Pillai, 2016).

Numerous studies on the school organizational climate in Malaysia denoted that teachers are unhappy with their schools' internal working environment (Ghavifekr & Pillai, 2016). Razak (2011) highlighted several predominant internal

school issues that have been troubling Malaysian national school teachers over the years, such as overemphasis on summative assessments or examinations, comparisons of examination outcomes among schools regardless of the social setting of the schools, non-optionist teachers, and inadequate basic amenities, in particular at rural schools. Besides, a teacher's stress or dwelling on his/her workplace issues when at home could effectively generate work-family conflicts and upset their quality of life at home (Erdamar & Demirel, 2016). Thus, Salehi, Taghavi, and Yunus (2015) emphasized the significance of "educational institution to improve teachers' perception of their job through improving job environment and condition" (p. 56).

Last but not least, a non-supportive L2 learning environment in national schools emerges as a major concern among our ESL teachers. Although the primary level ESL teachers in Ying, Abdullah, and Tan's (2018) study noted the positive initiatives undertaken by the government in refining the standard of English in primary schools, a core concern that arises was that English is still ignored compared to the mother tongue languages in national and national-type (vernacular) primary schools. Due to the varying social background of the pupils, the importance of the English language is undermined and is utilized merely within the classroom setting as a means of communication with the ESL teachers (Ying et al., 2018). As an instance, in national primary schools, an ESL teacher argued that the Malay language has been prioritized since it is a compulsory subject to be passed in the public examination unlike English before students are allowed to progress to Form 1 (Ying et al., 2018).

Thus, English may have appeared as a foreign language rather than as L2 to such learners, which does not help in infusing a positive motivation and attitude

towards learning the language (Ying et al., 2018). In such circumstances, it is highly likely that teachers may be requiring support in dealing with the complications in their teaching situations (Rashid et al., 2016). Nonetheless, an ESL teacher asserted that both the school and the social environment are equally responsible in “contributing to the language experiences of the students” (Ying et al., 2018, p. 52). School setting appears as a catalyst that facilitates English language learning among ESL learners, as schools enable them to learn the conventions of interacting with their teachers, friends, and staff around the school (Hashim & Yunus, 2018).

2.12 Impact on the Well-Being of Malaysian ESL Teachers

Consensus agrees that teachers who are happier and possess higher job satisfaction will emerge more productive at the workplace, which in turn influences positive learning outcomes of students (Erdamar & Damirel, 2016). Nonetheless, common trends of research in the ESL field in Malaysia have customarily pointed towards factors and solutions that are directed towards students’ outcomes in a second language environment. With primary importance laid on the language and academic outcomes of the ESL students, researchers have tended to overlook the problems that have been affecting ESL teachers.

A cause for concern here, as highlighted by Jamaludin and Ghazali (2013) is that teaching appears to be a job where “potentially high levels of stress can be generated on a regular basis as it is contributed by many factors within the school environment” (p. 74). In addition, general health outcomes, burnout, and job satisfaction have been frequently highlighted as predictors of well-being among educators in many studies (Panatik et al., 2012). Thus, an increasing number of

studies in recent times have attempted to assess the challenges that appear to be hindrances to the well-being of teachers in the Malaysian context.

2.12.1 Physical and Psychological Health Problems

Over the years, a number of severe physical health issues that affect the productivity of Malaysian teachers have been identified, with burnout emerging as the most common problem (Mousavy & Nimehchisalem, 2014; Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010; Mukundan et al., 2015; Subon & Sigie, 2016).

In a study on the burnout level of 184 primary and secondary English school teachers in Malaysia, the results of the one-sample t-test displayed a high burnout level among the teachers with emotional exhaustion, in particular, affecting the younger teachers (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010). Conversely, the results of another similar study focusing on the burnout level of 714 Malaysian primary school teachers portrayed a moderate level of burnout in terms of physical exhaustion (Mukundan et al., 2015).

Over 12 months, findings of the multivariate analysis among 1482 Malaysian school teachers highlighted the prevalence of low back pain and neck and/or shoulder pain, which were attributed to severe anxiety and depression besides high job demand (Zamri et al., 2017). Moy et al. (2015) also highlighted the high degree of absenteeism, low quality of life, and high anxiety levels among Malaysian secondary school teachers, which were all attributed to voice disorders among the teachers.

Thus, the aforementioned issues affecting the well-being of Malaysian teachers require crucial attention as they bring about adverse effects to the classroom

environment, besides yielding unsuccessful student outcomes (Mukundan & Khandehroo, 2010).

2.12.2 Job Satisfaction Issues

In recent times, job satisfaction among teachers has emerged as a central area of research in many developed countries (Salehi, Taghavi, & Yunus, 2015). Higher levels of happiness and job satisfaction have reportedly been found to contribute positively to one's life satisfaction (Aydintan & Koc, 2016; Erdamar & Damirel, 2016). Empirical evidence has as well pointed towards a positive correlation between job satisfaction of the teachers and their attitudes towards students' motivation and beliefs (Salehi, et al., 2015). Thus, in the Malaysian ESL context, an increasing number of studies on job satisfaction have been conducted on teachers and academicians (Ghavifekr & Pillai, 2016; Muniandy, 2017; Panatik et al., 2012; Zarisfizadeh, 2012).

Findings from a study on the job satisfaction of 30 English teachers from a public university in Malaysia indicated moderate levels of job satisfaction and psychological well-being among the teachers (Muniandy, 2017). Regardless of the limitation in sample size, the results of this study concurred with the findings in Ghavifekr and Pillai's (2016) study, in which the 245 secondary school teachers from Penampang, Sabah were discovered to be fairly satisfied with their job. The researchers also established a significant positive association between school organizational climate and job satisfaction of the teachers (Ghavifekr & Pillai, 2016).

Zarisfizadeh (2012) also conducted a study on the job satisfaction of 35 English teachers in Malaysia and discovered that high workload turned out to be the central factor that triggered dissatisfaction among the teachers. Similar to

Muniandy's (2017) study, regardless of the limitation in sample size, the findings of Zarisfizadeh's (2012) study appeared consistent with another previous research on 267 academicians from three public universities in Malaysia, in which increased job demands have been found to decrease job satisfaction level (Panatik et al., 2012).

Conversely, in a study abroad, Salehi et al. (2015) asserted that the job satisfaction of their sample of 340 Iranian English teachers was high although financial issues appeared to be a reason for dissatisfaction. However, the results of the descriptive statistics in another study abroad on 406 teachers in Ankara drew similarities with the findings in the Malaysian context, in which the life satisfaction of the teachers was slightly above average (Erdamar & Damirel, 2016). Erdamar and Damirel (2016) further indicated that job satisfaction was influenced by the work-family conflict among teachers. Panatik et al. (2012) concurred with Erdamar and Damirel's (2016) work as the work-family conflict had also been found to interfere with the life satisfaction of the 267 Malaysian academicians.

2.13 Theoretical Background

Research has shown that happiness based activities boost the well-being of an individual (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009), but it is unclear under what conditions they work best (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Therefore, the theoretical underpinning that underlay the constructs and the outcomes in my study is based on Lyubomirsky and Layous's (2013) positive-activity model.

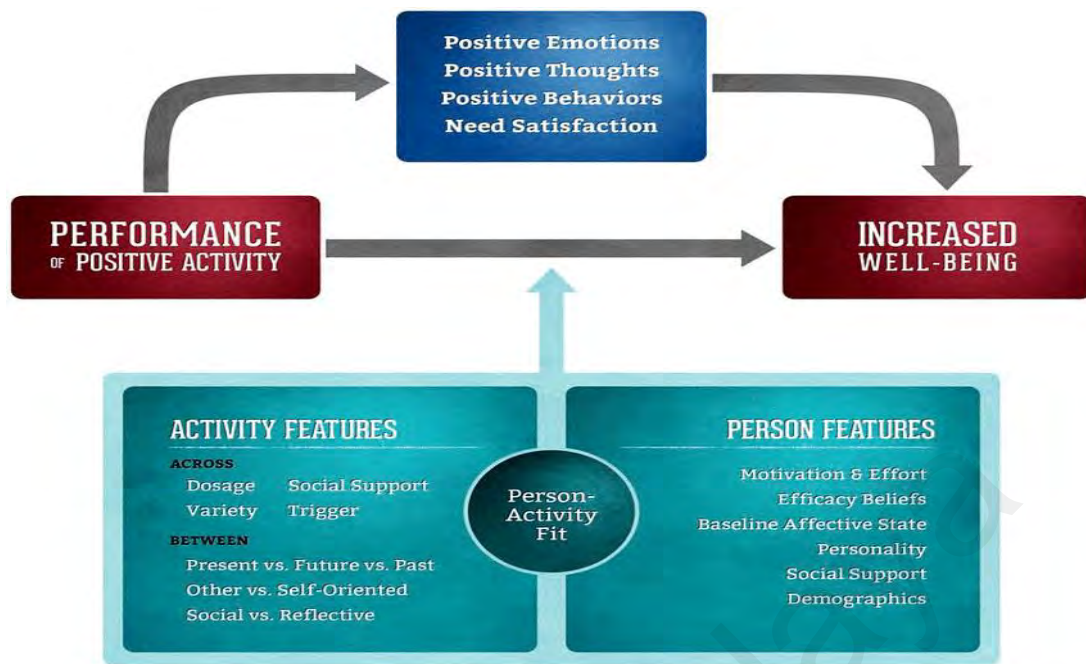


Figure 2.1. The Positive-Activity Model by Lyubomirsky & Layous (2013)

The model attempts to explain why and how positive activities increase happiness in people. Lyubomirsky and Layous (2013) posited that “positive activities increase positive emotions, positive thoughts, positive behaviours, and need satisfaction, all of which in turn enhance well-being” (p. 58). Connection to an earlier meta-analysis study revealed that individuals who engage in positive intentional activities, such as thinking optimistically and mindfully appear to be happier (Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009). Thus, the strength of this model is the capacity of individuals to benefit from happiness and satisfaction via the deliberate positive actions of the individuals themselves.

Thus, well-being is influenced by positive activities under two conditions; activity features (the type of activity and how often it is done) and person features (the values or traits that influence the individual’s pursuit to happiness) (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013), the latter which is the focus of this study. In other words, the relationship between the performance of the activity and well-being is

moderated by activity features and person features of the individual. For instance, the well-being outcomes may depend on the individual's features such as motivation and effort, efficacy beliefs, affective state, personality, and social support.

Besides, the positive-activity model postulates on the indirect link between positive activity and well-being. The relationship between the two is theorized to be mediated by four factors, namely positive emotions, positive thoughts, positive behaviours, and need satisfaction. Although the direct connection between positive activity and well-being appears unclear, the relationship is assumed to appear transparent with the presence of the four aforementioned mediating factors.

Therefore, this model is particularly useful in association with the PERMA model in this study. Based on the literature reviewed in this chapter, the five elements of the PERMA model (positive emotions, engagement, relationship, meaning, and engagement) have been found to contain positive links to well-being outcomes. Nonetheless, the indirect influence of PERMA from the positive values or traits to well-being remains unknown.

Thus, the composite model of PERMA is hypothesized to mediate in a positive direction for the well-being outcomes in terms of health outcomes, life satisfaction and life meaning in this paper. With respect to Lyubomirsky and Layous's (2013) model, the association between the positive traits and the well-being outcomes is assumed to be clearer when the PERMA model functions as the mediator.

2.14 Conceptual Framework

Based on the formulated hypotheses in Chapter 1 and the theoretical background, Figure 2.2 illustrates the conceptual framework that portrays the hypothesized relationship between the variables in this study.

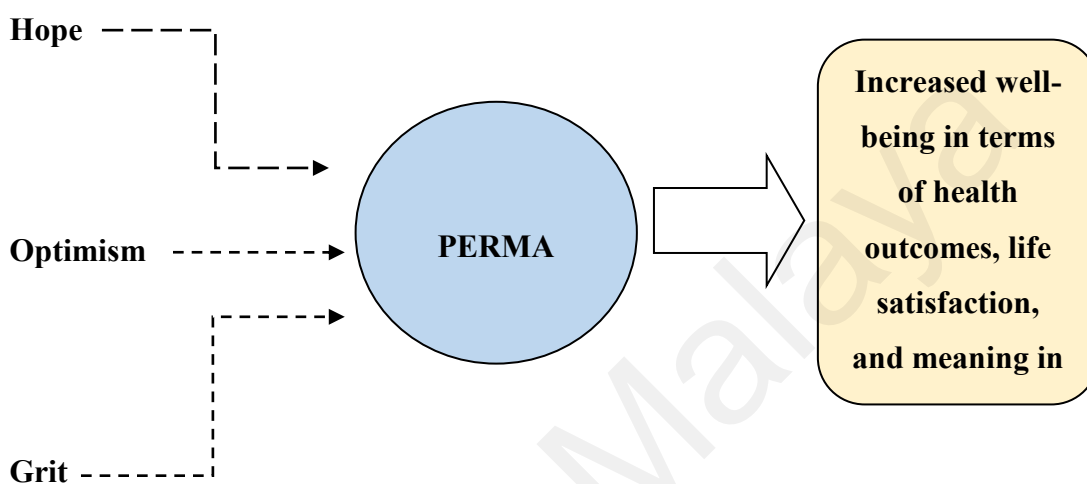


Figure 2.2. Conceptual Framework of Well-Being Model for Malaysian ESL Teachers

2.15 Summary

Although there appears to be a growing body of knowledge on the efficiency of the positive traits with various well-being outcomes, most of the studies have pointed towards gaps and limitations still left to be discovered. Such limitations are evident in the field of well-being of ESL teachers, in particular within the Malaysian context.

Thus, this study attempts to shed light on the impact of the three positive traits of hope, optimism, and grit on well-being in terms of health, life satisfaction, and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. With this, the next chapter moves towards the methodology that had been utilized in this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methodology employed in this study. The methodology is described in detail; the research design, the population, the sample and setting of the study, the instruments used, validity and reliability of the instrument, the procedure of the study, pilot test, data analysis, and last but not least, the ethical consideration. This study comprised cross-sectional survey research, which employed a quantitative approach of data collection and analysis in examining the relationships between the positive traits of Positive Psychology and the well-being of the ESL teachers in this study.

3.2 Research Design

The research questions in this study were answered through the use of quantitative design. Common consensus has acknowledged the strength of quantitative research in testing the hypotheses and establishing a widely agreed formulation of steps that assist researchers in their studies (Fraenkel et al., 2015). With this, the cross-sectional survey design was employed in gathering quantitative data in this study. Cresswell (2012) mentioned that cross-sectional designs explore current beliefs, opinions, attitudes or practices.

This was in line with the focus of this paper, which was to examine the current perceptions of the ESL teachers across several well-being dimensions and explore the relationships between these dimensions. Functioning as a preliminary

study within the Malaysian context, the survey was sufficient to be conducted at just one particular point in time, unlike longitudinal survey designs. Many previous studies on the exploration of positive traits had generated fruitful results with the implementation of a cross-sectional design (Desrumaux, et al., 2015; Liu, Wang, Shen, Li, & Wang, 2015; Luthans, Youssef, Sweetman, & Harms, 2013; Umucu, 2017; Vela, Lu, Lenz, & Hinojosa, 2015). Thus, the cross-sectional survey design was sufficient to fulfill the purpose of this study.

3.3 Population

The population in a research study refers to the entire group of interest to the researcher, to whom the results of the study would be generalized to (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Fraenkel et al. (2015) stated that population can be further divided into two; namely the target population (the actual entire population of interest to the researcher) and the accessible population (the generalizable population).

Thus, the target population of this study was all the primary national school ESL teachers in Malaysia. Since the entire population was not a realistic option, the accessible population was opted for, which were all the primary national school ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur.

3.4 Subject of the Study (Sample)

Sampling refers to a smaller group (subgroup) from the bigger population that is of interest to the researcher (Kumar, 2011), which is used to represent the accessible population. As the accessible population is still deemed large, sampling is done to save the researcher's time and financial resources (Kumar, 2011). Although a sample of 500 subjects was considered a very good sample (Comrey & Lee, 1992), Voorhis

and Morgan (2007) had argued that “an underpowered study may not yield useful results” (p. 43).

Therefore, a priori power analysis was executed using the G*Power 3 software to determine the adequate sample size required for this study. For a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$) in a multiple regression analysis (Cohen, 1988), power was set at .80 with $\alpha = .05$ for a total of 4 predictors including 3 positive traits (hope, optimism, and grit) and the PERMA variable. Cohen’s (1988) power of .80 was employed as powers should be determined to be at least between 80% and 90% (Biau, Kerneis, & Porcher, 2008). A higher power reduces the probability of making a Type II error and a significant difference will be able to be detected if it exists (Biau, Kerneis, & Porcher, 2008). Thus, the results of the power analysis indicated that a sample size between 98 to 150 is sufficient for medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$).

Thus, a sample of 150 ESL teachers was targeted in ensuring that the minimum sample size required for the statistical analyses was surpassed. Convenience sampling was employed to select the participants based on the availability of the teachers. As ESL teachers in national primary schools, the respondents in the sample conveyed English lessons based on the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR).

3.5 Setting of the Study

Primary schools under the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur have been divided into three different regions; Bangsar/Pudu zone, Sentul zone, and the Keramat zone.

According to the official website of the Kuala Lumpur Education Department (JPWPKL, 2011-2013), the Bangsar/Pudu zone encompassed the largest number of 93 primary schools (63 SK, 21 SJKC, 8 SJKT, and 1 special education school) in

Kuala Lumpur. The Sentul zone comprised of 56 primary schools (34 SK, 16 SJKC and 6 SJKT). Finally, the Keramat zone consisted of the lowest number of 40 primary schools (34 SK, 5 SJKC and 1 SJKT). In total, 189 primary schools in Kuala Lumpur emerged as a potential data collection site for the primary level ESL teachers.

With this, the researcher possessed the option of administering the questionnaires to ESL teachers from 56 primary national schools around the Sentul region which was in closer proximity to the researcher. Nonetheless, this was not possible due to the sample size intended.

Thus, a detailed explanation of the setting of this study was necessary since the researcher opted for available respondents from schools around the Bangsar/Pudu and the Keramat zones since the response rate from the Sentul zone was very low.

3.6 Instruments

An Internet survey was employed as the main method of data collection for this study. The seven measures were constructed online via Google Form and administered via the Google Form link. The Internet survey was perceived as a convenient method of gathering the data since it was budget efficient, easier and can be conveniently accessed by the concerned population as well as a much faster reception of the completed questionnaires (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

The survey questionnaires that were assigned to the participants in this study were in the form of self-report data. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) highlighted specifically two types of survey designs, namely descriptive surveys, and analytic surveys. Descriptive surveys merely “describe data on variables of interest” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 207). However, the questionnaires that were utilized in this

study were analytical, in which they enabled the examination of the relationship between variables (Cohen et al., 2007).

All the instruments measuring the independent and the dependent variables had been designed by previous scholars as personality inventories (See section 1.10: Measures). Such measures were aimed at measuring “certain traits of individuals or to assess their feelings about themselves” (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 128).

Likert scales with different levels of measurement were applied across all the items in the survey. The Likert scale, or also referred to as the summated rating scale draws upon the assumption that each item in the scale contained an equal value (weight) in terms of representing a particular attitude towards the item (Kumar, 2011).

3.6.1 Sociodemographic Backgrounds

A short sociodemographic background questionnaire was developed by the researcher to acquire information on the participants’ age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, and education level.

The variable age functioned as a continuous variable in this study with 7 values (20 – 24 years old; 25 – 29 years old; 30 – 34 years old; 35 – 39 years old; 40 – 44 years old; 45 – 49 years old; and 50 and above). This variable was assessed on the interval scale. On the other hand, the variable gender appeared as a dichotomous categorical variable with only two values (Male = 1; Female = 2) and was assessed on the nominal scale.

Likewise, the variable race functioned as a categorical variable with six values (Malay = 1; Chinese = 2; Indian = 3; Sabahan Bumiputera = 4; Sarawakian Bumiputera = 5; Other = 6). This variable was also assessed on the nominal scale.

On the contrary, the variable socioeconomic status was treated as a continuous variable with five levels (RM2000 – RM3000; RM3001 – RM4000; RM4001 – RM5000; RM5001 – RM6000; and Above RM6000). The variable was assessed on the interval scale.

Last but not least, the variable education level emerged as a categorical variable in this study. Nonetheless, the five education levels were organized in a significant manner of importance in this study [1 = Certificate; 2 = Diploma; 3 = Bachelor's Degree; 4 = Master's Degree; 5 = Doctorate Degree (PhD)]. With this, this variable was assessed on an ordinal scale.

3.6.2 Independent Variables

The positive trait of hope was measured using the Adult Hope Scale (AHS). The Adult Hope Scale required respondents to rate themselves on an 8-point rating scale ranging from “Definitely False” (1) to “Definitely True” (8). This instrument contained 12 items altogether but only 8 items were included as 4 items (Items 3, 5, 7, and 11) which were filler items were omitted (Snyder, Harris, et al., 1991). Therefore, the total score for this measure ranged from 0 to 64. Based on the result of the pilot test, the internal consistency reliability coefficient of this instrument was found to be .79 and resembled the internal reliability values in between .74 and .88 portrayed in Snyder's (2002) study.

The second positive trait of optimism was assessed using the Life Orientation Test (LOT-R). The Life Orientation Test involved respondents to rate themselves on a 4-point rating scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” (0) to “Strongly agree” (4). This measure encompassed a total of 10 items but only 6 items were used as 4 items (items 2, 5, 6, and 8) which were filler items were omitted. Items 3, 7, and 9 were

reverse scored as per the scoring guidelines provided by Scheier, Carver, and Bridges (1994). However, the internal consistency reliability of the 6 items were found to be low and unacceptable at .46 (Chua, 2013). Thus, based on the guidelines provided by Chua (2013) on the scale if item deleted, the internal reliability value of this measure was increased by discarding items 3 and 10. The new internal consistency reliability coefficient was discovered to be .67, which is deemed satisfactory and acceptable (Chua, 2013). Hence, with a total of 4 items assessing Optimism in this study, the total score ranged from 0 to 16.

The Short Grit Scale (Grit-S) was utilized in measuring the positive trait of grit. This instrument comprised of 8 items in total. Respondents rated themselves on a 5-point rating scale ranging from “Not like me at all” (1) to “Very much like me” (5). Items 1, 3, 5, and 6 were reverse scored as per the guidelines provided by the original authors of the instrument (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). Upon reverse scoring the four aforementioned items, the scores of all the 8 items were added and divided by 8. Thus, the total score of this instrument ranged from 1 to 5 on an interval scale. The internal consistency reliability coefficient for this instrument was found to be .77 based on the pilot test, matching the discovered internal consistency values ranging between .73 and .79 in Duckworth and Quinn’s (2009) original study.

Lastly, PERMA was measured using the PERMA-Profilier. The PERMA-Profilier had also undergone several minor changes in terms of the number of items for this study. Out of the original 23 items, only 16 items (3 for Positive Emotion, 3 for Engagement, 3 for Relationship, 3 for Meaning, 3 for Accomplishment and an item on happiness) were included in this study. In other words, the remaining seven items that measure Negative Emotion (3 items), Health (3 items), and Loneliness (1 item) were omitted as they functioned as filler items (Butler & Kern, 2016).

Participants rated themselves on a 10-point scale ranging from “Not at all” (0) to “Completely” (10) or “Never” (0) to “Always” (10) under each item in PERMA. The scores of all the 16 items were added together and averaged by the total number of items. Therefore, the total score of the PERMA-Profiler ranged from 0 to 10 on an interval scale. The unique psychometric properties of the five elements of PERMA are confirmed in this study as well as the pilot test revealed a high internal consistency coefficient of .95, parallel to Butler and Kern’s (2016) high alpha values between .92 and .95.

3.6.3 Dependent Variables

The first dependent variable of Health Outcomes was assessed using the PROMIS Global Health (PROMIS 10). The rating scales of the PROMIS 10 required respondents to rate their general health condition on a 5-point scale ranging from “Poor” (1) to “Excellent” (5). Out of the 10 items in this measure, only 8 items were included as the remaining 2 items (Global01 and Global 09) functioned as filler items based on the guidelines provided (Hays, Bjorner, Revicki, Spritzer, & Cella, 2009). For this study, the scoring system had been adapted in a manner in which the raw scores of both the Global Physical Health and Global Mental Health scales were added together in providing a single Global Health score for each respondent. Nonetheless, as emphasized by Hays et al. (2009) in the original measure, items Global07, Global08, and Global10 were recoded and reverse scored before being added together to the other items. Thus, the total score ranged from 8 to 40, in which higher scores portray better health. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of this measure was found to be .74 based on the result of the pilot test.

Life satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale. This measure required respondents to rate themselves on a 7-point scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (7). The Satisfaction with Life Scale encompassed a total of 5 items. Therefore, the overall score for this measure comprised of the summed up scores of all the items, ranging from 5 to 35. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of this instrument was found to be .75 based on the pilot test.

Last but not least, the Meaning in Life questionnaire was employed in measuring the third criterion variable of life meaning. Respondents rated themselves on a 7-point rating scale ranging from “Absolutely Untrue” (1) to “Absolutely True” (7) for the Meaning in Life questionnaire. This measure comprised of 10 items altogether. Nonetheless, item 9 was reverse-scored as per the guidelines provided by Steger, Frazier, Oishi, and Kaler (2006). Thus, an overall Life Meaning score was obtained by adding the responses of all the 10 items, with total scores ranging from 10 to 70 (Rose, Zask, & Burton, 2017). The result of the pilot test revealed an internal consistency reliability coefficient of .72 for this measure.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

3.7.1 Validity of the Instruments

Although the questionnaires had been proven to be valid and reliable in many studies abroad across various fields, their credibility was substantially evident merely within the foreign context. Thus, the validity and reliability of these instruments were still required to be established to suit the local context.

Moreover, although the source language (American English) of the questionnaires were retained in this study, several aforementioned changes to the number of items had been made. Hence, establishing the validity and reliability of these instruments was deemed important to ensure that the psychometric properties of these subscales were not diminished.

Thus, as suggested by Fraenkel et al. (2015), the content validity of the questionnaires was validated by three experts in the field to ascertain the credibility of the instruments within the chosen subpopulation. The experts comprised of a lecturer in the field of Psychology, a statistician and a lecturer in the field of English Language Studies from the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya. The views and suggestions for modifications from all three individuals were taken into consideration in an attempt of increasing the validity of the instruments.

3.7.2 Internal Threats to Validity

Fraenkel et al. (2015) have further highlighted four threats to internal validity in survey research; namely, location, instrumentation, instrument decay, and mortality. Thus, as a researcher, I attempted to minimize these threats that might be present in the survey.

Since the survey was completed online, the respondents had no reason to rush themselves in completing the survey as the data collection period lasted for approximately two months. Thus, the location and instrument decay threats were able to be controlled since the participants undertook the survey wherever and whenever convenient to them within the stipulated duration. Simultaneously, the threat to the instrumentation was minimized.

Besides, the probability of mortality (loss of participants) to occur was very minimal. The likelihood of mortality, if any, was higher in longitudinal studies compared to cross-sectional studies (Fraenkel et al., 2015). Nonetheless, the researcher did not encounter any cases of mortality throughout this study. With this, the researcher believed that the possible threats to internal validity that may have emerged in this study were able to be controlled.

3.7.3 Pilot Test

Kumar (2011) stated that pre-testing a research instrument before the actual data collection enables the researcher to identify the problems that the potential respondents might face in comprehending or interpreting a question/item. Hence, a pilot test was conducted separately with another smaller group of ESL teachers that were representative of the subpopulation.

As suggested by Hertzog (2008), samples of 10 to 40 in a group were deemed sufficient in “providing estimates precise enough to meet a variety of possible aims” (p. 180). Therefore, the pilot test was conducted on a conveniently selected sample of 30 primary level ESL teachers, who were pursuing their studies at the Faculty of Education, University of Malaya. The results of the pilot test were checked for their consistency and reliability using the Cronbach’s alpha reliability method. The actual process of data collection commenced after the reliability of the instruments had been established.

3.7.4 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability refers to the “consistency of the scores obtained – how consistent they are for each individual from one administration of an instrument to another and from one set of items to another” (Fraenkel et al., 2015, p. 155).

Therefore, following the internal consistency approach, the Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient was computed to determine the reliability of the scores obtained from the pilot testing of the questionnaires. Chua (2013) stated that items with satisfactory to high correlation values ($\alpha = .65$ to $.95$) possess high reliability, whereas items with low correlation values ($\alpha < .65$) will be eliminated. The results of the reliability analysis for the seven measures are presented in Chapter 4 (See section 4.2).

3.8 Data Collection Procedure

Several basic protocols were required to be satisfied before the commencement of the actual data collection. The first step constituted obtaining the approval of the Malaysian Educational Planning and Research Division (EPRD) and the Faculty of Education Internal Review Board (University of Malaya). Upon approval, permission was sought from the Kuala Lumpur Education Department (JPWPKL). The process of seeking approval from all the aforementioned parties consumed approximately three months.

After acquiring the consents, a pilot test was conducted on 30 ESL teachers who represented the targeted sample. The participants for the pilot test were conveniently selected among the primary level English teachers pursuing their studies at the Faculty of Education (University of Malaya). The consistency of the participants’ scores across the seven measures was assessed using the Cronbach

alpha coefficient method. This was a significant final step in ensuring that the instruments were valid and reliable to be employed in the actual data collection.

Before the actual data collection, the content of the research was discussed and permission was sought from the three district education offices in Kuala Lumpur. Approval letters from the Faculty of Education Internal Review Board (See Appendix A), the EPRD (See Appendix B and C), and the JPWPKL (See Appendix D) were shown to the English Language Unit officers as evidence that this study was following the designated procedure.

The final step was to administer the survey link to the English teachers in the primary schools in Kuala Lumpur. With the assistance of the English Language Unit officers in each district education office, the survey link was provided to the Head of the English Panel of each school through their respective official social media platforms.

As an agreement to participate in the study, all participants were required to provide their approval via the informed consent form (See Appendix E) before they were provided access to the Google Form link containing the questionnaires (See Appendix F). The informed consent form was attached along with the survey link. The informed consent form informed the participants thoroughly on the purpose of the study, their voluntary rights as the participants and the contents of the questionnaires.

Last but not least, the participants were provided with the contact number and the email address of the researcher in case assistance was required. A duration of two months was initially allocated to ensure that the respondents had sufficient time in completing the survey. Nonetheless, the timeframe was extended to nearly three months due to the hectic schedule of most of the English teachers.

3.9 Data Entry and Screening

Responses obtained from the completed questionnaires were entered into the SPSS database. The IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 software was used to manage and analyze the raw data. The raw data were screened for missing responses before being entered into SPSS.

Missing data is an ongoing common problem and has always appeared as a cause for concern during survey analysis (Brick & Kalton, 1996). Brick and Kalton (1996) further associated the issue of missing data to four sources: (a) total or unit nonresponse; (b) noncoverage; (c) item nonresponse; and (d) partial nonresponse. Although a single universal method of handling missing data efficiently remains unavailable, Schlomer, Bauman, and Card (2010) convincingly suggested that multiple imputation (MI) and Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) were reliable strategies across 10% and 20% of missing data.

Thus, the data with the missing values were not discarded in this study. The multiple imputation (MI) strategy was instead employed to replace the missing values in the data since the amount of missing data across the 150 responses was found to be below 10% in this study.

3.10 Data Analysis

Simultaneous multiple regression and mediation analysis (Baron & Kenny, 1986) were employed as the central data analysis methods for this study. Nonetheless, several assumptions were required to be met before the aforementioned analyses were able to be conducted.

3.10.1 Preliminary Analyses

According to Chua (2013), the data obtained from the sample should be checked for normality before the use of inferential statistics can be permitted. Thus, descriptive data were used to illustrate that all the IVs and the DV were normally distributed in terms of mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. Correlational analyses between each IV and DV in this study were also presented. Frequencies and percentages were employed to summarize and present the sociodemographic background of the sample. All findings were presented in tables.

Besides that, Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003) had emphasized that several major assumptions will have to be satisfied before the regression analysis can be carried out. These assumptions include: (a) tests of linearity and homoscedasticity (scatterplot); (b) condition of independent variables; (c) measurement error (coefficient alpha); (d) multicollinearity; and (e) assumption of normality of residuals. Violation of the above assumptions may lead to biasedness of the regression coefficients, which in turn will correspondingly affect the confidence intervals and the significance tests (Cohen et al., 2003).

3.10.2 Simultaneous Regression

The regression analysis was applied in assessing the impact of multiple variables on an outcome (Cresswell, 2012). Thus, in testing hypothesis one, a series of 3 simultaneous regressions were conducted to analyze the effects of the positive traits (hope, optimism, and grit) on the three dependent variables of health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life. The results of the simultaneous regressions, including the standardized regression coefficients (β) for the predictors, F-statistic of the ANOVA test and the p-value were presented in tables.

3.10.3 Mediation Analysis

In testing the second and final hypothesis, nine mediation analyses were conducted to investigate the mediating effect of PERMA on the relationships between the independent variables of hope, optimism, and grit on each dependent variable (health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life). The mediation analysis was done based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) three-step regression equations.

As proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986), the steps included: (1) regress the dependent variable onto the independent variable to identify the possibility of a causal relationship; (2) regress the mediating variable (PERMA) onto each independent variable (hope, optimism, and grit) to illustrate that they can be causally connected; and (3) simultaneously regress the independent variable and the mediator (PERMA) onto the dependent variable to illustrate that the independent variable is significantly related to the dependent variable when the mediator is controlled.

As an alternative to the commonly applied Sobel test, the bootstrap procedure was opted for in determining the significance of the indirect effect as the method had begun to gain popularity in recent years (Hayes, 2009). Unlike the Sobel test, the bootstrapping test enables statistical interpretations to be made based on the estimates of the indirect effect and has been utilized as a supplement to the causal steps approach by Baron and Kenny (1986) (Hayes, 2009). Thus, the indirect effect for the mediation models based on bootstrapping was analyzed via SPSS using the PROCESS macro version 3.3 software, which was designed by Andrew F. Hayes himself.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Approvals were sought from the Faculty of Education Internal Review Board (University of Malaya), the EPRD, the JPWPKL, and the English Language Unit officers from the district education offices before the study commenced. Participants were also informed about their voluntary participation in this study and their rights as the participants in the informed consent form.

The anonymity of the participants was ascertained in this study. The sociodemographic background questionnaire was designed in a manner that did not require the names of the respondents to be included. Confidentiality of the participants was also assured as the data from the questionnaires was strictly used only for the purpose of this study.

3.12 Summary

In summary, the cross-sectional survey design was employed in this study. The 150 primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur participated in this study based on convenience. The seven measures that answered the two research questions were adapted based on the guidelines provided by the original proponents of each measure. The ESL teachers participated in the Internet survey via a Google Form link.

Various ethical considerations were undertaken before the respondents were able to gain access to the Google Form link containing the survey. The data collection process spanned for approximately three months. Hence, the obtained responses were initially analyzed using descriptive statistics to check for normality in data. Subsequent data analyses involving simultaneous regressions and mediation

analyses were utilized in testing the two hypotheses in this study. Thus, findings from the analyses were displayed in the following chapter.

Universiti Malaya

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the aforementioned data analysis methods in this study. The results of the Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis for the 7 measures utilized in this study are presented followed by a descriptive discussion on the sociodemographic background of the ESL teachers who have participated in this study. The chapter then moves on towards the preliminary analyses of the data to ensure that all the assumptions are met before the simultaneous regressions are conducted. The final part of this chapter delineates the results of the simultaneous regressions and the mediation analyses based on the two research questions in this study.

As a recapitulation, the primary purpose of this study is to explore (a) the relationship between the positive traits of hope, optimism, and grit and the well-being of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur; and (b) PERMA as a mediator between the positive traits and the well-being outcomes.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

Based on the pilot test on 30 ESL primary level ESL teachers, the Cronbach's alpha values were computed to determine the internal consistency of the scores of the 7 measures. Table 4.1 displays the results of Cronbach's alpha test.

Table 4.1

Results of the Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient

Measure	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (α)
Adult Hope Scale	8	.79
Life Orientation Test	4	.67
Short Grit Scale	8	.77
PERMA-Profilier	16	.95
PROMIS Global Health (PROMIS 10)	8	.74
Satisfaction With Life Scale	5	.75
The Meaning in Life Questionnaire	10	.72

Based on Chua's (2013) guidelines, an alpha value between .65 and .95 is deemed satisfactory and acceptable. Thus, the Cronbach's alpha test in Table 4.1 indicated that the seven measures were reliable and acceptable for this study. Therefore, it was deemed necessary to establish the reliability of the measures before conducting the study on the primary level ESL teachers.

4.3 Sociodemographic Characteristics of the ESL Teachers

Table 4.2 below illustrates the characteristics of the sample of 150 primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur, who participated as respondents in this study.

Table 4.2

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the 150 Primary Level ESL Teachers in Kuala Lumpur

Sociodemographic Characteristics	Frequency (<i>N</i> = 150)	Percentage (%)
School Type		
National Primary School (SK)	110	73.8
National-Type Chinese Primary School (SJKC)	31	20.8
National-Type Tamil Primary School (SJKT)	9	5.4
Age		
20 – 24 years old	7	4.7
25 – 29 years old	57	38
30 – 34 years old	35	23.3
35 – 39 years old	17	11.3
40 – 44 years old	16	10.7
45 – 49 years old	6	4
50 and above	12	8
Gender		
Male	42	28
Female	108	72
Race		
Malay	62	41.3
Chinese	33	22
Indian	50	33.3
Sabahan Bumiputera	2	1.3
Sarawakian Bumiputera	2	1.3
Other	1	0.7
Socioeconomic Status		
RM2000 – RM3000	16	10.7
RM3001 – RM4000	46	30.7
RM4001 – RM5000	48	32
RM5001 – RM6000	26	17.3
Above RM6000	14	9.3
Highest Level of Education		
Certificate	2	1.3
Diploma	5	3.3
Bachelor's Degree	117	78
Master's Degree	26	17.3
Doctorate Degree (Ph.D.)	0	0

School Type. Out of the 150 respondents, a major proportion of 110 (73.8%) teachers hailed from the national primary schools (SK), followed by 31 (20.8%) teachers from the national-type Chinese primary schools (SJKC), and the lowest proportion of 9 (5.4%) teachers from the national-type Tamil primary schools (SJKT) around Kuala Lumpur.

Age. The majority of 57 (38%) ESL teachers who participated in this study voluntarily were found to be between the age range of 25 and 29 years old, followed by 35 (23.3%) teachers in between 30 and 34 years old, 17 (11.3%) teachers ranging between 35 and 39 years old, 16 (10.7%) teachers in between 40 and 44 years old, and 12 (8%) teachers aged 50 and above. The minority was represented by the 6 (4%) and 7 (4.7%) ESL teachers who were within the age ranges of 20 to 24 and 45 to 49 years old respectively. In summary, the younger ESL teachers were more inclined to participate in this study as the major percentage of 61.3% of them were aged between 25 and 34 years old.

Gender. A vast proportion of 108 female ESL teachers made up 78% of the respondents of this study, whereas only a smaller proportion of 42 (28%) males participated in this study. Nonetheless, there was no room for surprises as the proportion of female English teachers outnumbering the male teachers in Malaysian schools were reported across other studies as well (Ghavifekr & Pillai, 2016; Subon & Sigie, 2016). It is suggestive that this equivalent proportion of genders represents the reality of teaching phenomenon in Malaysia.

Race. In terms of ethnicity, 62 Malay ESL teachers constituted the largest percentage (41.3%) of the respondents, followed by 50 (33.3%) Indian teachers, and 33 (22%) Chinese teachers. The remaining proportion of the respondents comprised of 2 (1.3%) Sabahan Bumiputera teachers, 2 (1.3%) Sarawakian Bumiputera

teachers, and a teacher from other ethnicities (0.7%). With the Malay teachers forming the largest group of respondents in this study, the findings in this study correspond well with data from the previous studies in the Malaysian national school context (Moy et al., 2015; Zamri et al., 2017).

Socioeconomic Status. With the minimal difference in between the top two salary scales of the teachers, 48 (32%) ESL teachers are being paid in between RM4001 and RM5000 per month, whereas 46 (30.7%) teachers are within the salary range of RM3001 and RM4000. Out of the remaining 56 ESL teachers, 26 (17.3%) of them are within the salary scale of RM5001 and RM6000, with the balance 16 (10.7%) and 14 (9.3%) of them being paid in between RM2000 to RM3000 and above RM6000 respectively. This indicates that more than half of the teachers in this study, approximately 62.7% of them are being paid in between RM3001 to RM5000 monthly.

Highest Level of Education. In what was perceived as a large difference in between the graduates and non-graduates, a vast number of 117 (78%) ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur possessed a Bachelor's Degree, followed by 26 (17.3%) teachers with a Master's Degree, a small number of 5 (3.3%) teachers with a Diploma, and the remaining 2 (1.3%) teachers with a Certificate. Nonetheless, none of them possessed a Doctorate Degree (Ph.D.). These findings certainly concurred with the data revealed by the Educational Planning and Research Division (2018), in which the proportion of graduates outnumbers the non-graduates in both Malaysian primary and secondary schools.

4.4 Preliminary Analyses

This section highlights the results of several conducted tests that analyze if the basic assumptions were met before the simultaneous regressions can be conducted. Thus, this section encompasses five subsections, which are normality of data, correlation analysis, multicollinearity analysis, detection of outliers, and normality of residuals.

4.4.1 Normality of Data

Table 4.3

Descriptive Data of the Independent and Dependent Variables (N = 150)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
Hope	48.3	6.37	-.247	1.200
Optimism	14.9	2.15	.282	-.360
Grit	3.4	.54	-.111	.081
PERMA	7.5	1.03	-.657	1.217
Health Outcomes	26.8	3.81	-.016	.512
Life Satisfaction	23.9	4.21	-.817	1.771
Meaning in Life	51.3	6.78	.237	-.226

Table 4.3 portrays the means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis values of the variables in this study. With a focus on the displayed skewness and kurtosis values, Chua (2013) claimed that “the skewness and kurtosis values should be in the range of -1.96 to +1.96” (p. 126) for a data to assume a normal distribution. Thus, the skewness and kurtosis values of all the variables in this study were found to be within the range of -1.96 to +1.96 and indicated that the data were normally distributed.

In providing further evidence on the normality of the data, the scatterplots of the independent variables (IV) and the dependent variables (DV) (See Appendix G)

were analyzed. Based on the observations of the scatterplots, most of the points fit closely along the straight line and formed a linear pattern. In other words, the data collected was distributed along the straight line. Hence, it can be implied that the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were met.

4.4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 4.4

Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Hope	1						
2. Optimism	.15	1					
3. Grit	.34**	.27**	1				
4. PERMA	.52**	.22**	.39**	1			
5. Health Outcomes	.33**	.22**	.38**	.51**	1		
6. Life Satisfaction	.48**	.18**	.26**	.62**	.58**	1	
7. Meaning in Life	.53**	.18**	.29**	.42**	.35**	.36**	1

Notes. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed); * $p < .05$ (two-tailed)

Table 4.4 shows the Pearson correlation analyses between the IVs and the DVs in this study. The results revealed significant positive correlations between all the continuous variables in this study, except between hope and optimism. The strength of the correlation coefficients ranged from very low to moderate. The positive correlations between optimism and grit ($r = .27, p < .01$), optimism and PERMA ($r = .22, p < .01$), optimism and health outcomes ($r = .22, p < .01$), optimism and life satisfaction ($r = .18, p < .05$), optimism and meaning in life ($r =$

.18, $p < .05$), grit and life satisfaction ($r = .26, p < .01$), and grit and meaning in life ($r = .29, p < .01$) were found to be very low.

Low positive correlations were discovered between hope and grit ($r = .34, p < .01$), hope and health outcomes ($r = .33, p < .01$), hope and life satisfaction ($r = .48, p < .01$), grit and PERMA ($r = .39, p < .01$), grit and health outcomes ($r = .38, p < .01$), PERMA and meaning in life ($r = .42, p < .01$), health outcomes and meaning in life ($r = .35, p < .01$), and life satisfaction and meaning in life ($r = .36, p < .01$). Average/moderate positive correlations were portrayed between hope and PERMA ($r = .52, p < .01$), hope and meaning in life ($r = .53, p < .01$), PERMA and health outcomes ($r = .51, p < .01$), PERMA and life satisfaction ($r = .62, p < .01$), and health outcomes and life satisfaction ($r = .58, p < .01$).

4.4.3 Multicollinearity Analysis

Table 4.5

Multicollinearity Statistics

Independent Variables	Dependent Variable	Tolerance	Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)
Hope Optimism	Grit	.98	1.02
Optimism Grit	Hope	.93	1.08
Grit Hope	Optimism	.88	1.13

Table 4.5 displays the multicollinearity statistics among the IVs in this study, which was assessed in terms of the tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values. Multicollinearity was analyzed to ensure that the IVs were not very highly

correlated or remained identical, which may result in misleading conclusions during the regression analyses (Vatcheva, Lee, McCormick, & Rahbar, 2016).

Thus, Menard (1995) asserted that a tolerance value of less than 0.10 ($< .10$) or a VIF value of more than 10 (> 10) indicates multicollinearity among the variables. Nonetheless, as for this study, the results of the multicollinearity statistics from Table 4.4 revealed that none of the tolerance and VIF values were $< .10$ and > 10 respectively. From this, the findings indicated an absence of multicollinearity among the IVs in this study and the deletion or addition of the variables would not influence a large difference to the regression coefficients.

4.4.4 Detection of Outliers

Table 4.6

Cook's Distance Values on the Relationship between the Independent and the Independent and the Dependent Variables

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable		
	Health Outcomes	Life Satisfaction	Meaning in Life
Hope	.103	.206	.064
Optimism	.090	.082	.052
Grit	.106	.105	.049
PERMA	.088	.215	.078

Cook's Distance, or also known as Cook's D is utilized to assess and identify potential influential points in a regression model (McDonald, 2002). McDonald (2002) further asserted that points within a dataset are considered influential when they have exceeded a Cook D's threshold value of 0.85 ($D_i > 0.85$). Nonetheless, the regression analyses conducted in between each IV and DV as in Table 4.6 indicated

that none of the relationships portrayed a Cook's D value of > 0.85 . From this, it can be implied that there were no influential outliers as most of the points were centred around the means. Thus, no points were required to be discarded from the dataset as it would not result in a large impact on the simultaneous regressions.

4.4.5 Normality of Residuals

Table 4.7

Durbin-Watson Coefficients of the Regression Analysis between the Independent and the Dependent Variables

Variables	Health Outcomes	Life Satisfaction	Meaning in Life
Hope			
Optimism	2.29	2.09	1.89
Grit			

The regression analysis requires that residuals are independent or uncorrelated (Cohen et al., 2003), which can be determined via the Durbin-Watson coefficients. Lower residual values indicate a higher predictive accuracy of the IVs on the DVs in the regression analysis. Thus, Garson (2012) stated that the Durbin-Watson coefficients should be within 1.5 to 2.5 to portray the independence of residuals, which was further supported by Field (2009) who noted that coefficient values lesser than 1 or more than 3 warrants for concerns. However, the regression analysis demonstrated that the Durbin-Watson coefficients (Table 4.7) in between the variables in this study were between 1.5 and 2.5, providing sufficient evidence on the independence of the residuals and the absence of autocorrelation among the variables. After all the statistical normality tests were fulfilled, the simultaneous regression tests were carried out.

4.5 Simultaneous Regressions

This section is directed at testing hypotheses one via the simultaneous regression analyses. Thus, this section is dedicated to observing the impact of three simultaneous regressions between the positive traits and the well-being outcomes. The results of the regression analyses are summarized as in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8

Summary of Simultaneous Regression Analysis in between Positive Traits and Health Outcomes, Life Satisfaction, and Meaning in Life

Variables	Health Outcomes (N = 150)				Life Satisfaction (N = 150)				Meaning in Life (N = 150)			
	R ²	B	SE B	β	R ²	B	SE B	β	R ²	B	SE B	β
Positive Traits Covariates	.20*				.25*				.30*			
Hope		.13	.05	.21*		.29	.05	.43*		.52	.08	.49*
Optimism		.25	.17	.11		.23	.19	.09		.32	.29	.08
Grit		1.98	.57	.28*		.68	.62	.09		1.20	.95	.09

Note. * $p < .05$

Positive Traits and Health Outcomes. With health outcomes as the DV, the positive traits covariates accounted for 20% of the variance in health outcomes; $R = .45$, $R^2 = .20$, $F(3, 146) = 12.26$, was found to be significant at $p < .05$. The standardized regression coefficients further revealed that hope significantly influenced the variance in health outcomes at $\beta = .21$, $t(146) = 2.70$, $p < .05$. Moreover, grit was also found to significantly contribute to the variance in health outcomes at $\beta = .28$, $t(146) = 3.45$, $p < .05$. Hence, it can be implied that higher

levels of hope and grit were found to be affiliated with more positive health outcomes of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur.

Positive Traits and Life Satisfaction. With life satisfaction as the DV, the positive traits covariates accounted for 25% of the variance in life satisfaction; $R = .50$, $R^2 = .25$, $F(3, 146) = 15.80$, was found to be significant at $p < .05$. Further examination on the standardized regression coefficients indicated that only hope significantly contributed to the variance in life satisfaction at $\beta = .43$, $t(146) = 5.63$, $p < .05$. Thus, it can be inferred that greater levels of hope were found to be connected with more positive satisfaction of life of the primary level ESL teachers.

Positive Traits and Meaning in Life. With meaning in life as the DV, the positive traits covariates accounted for 30% of the variance in meaning in life; $R = .55$, $R^2 = .30$, $F(3, 146) = 20.97$, was found to be significant at $p < .05$. Likewise, the standardized regression coefficients portrayed that only hope significantly contributed to the variance in meaning in life at $\beta = .49$, $t(146) = 6.61$, $p < .05$. From this, it can be implied that greater levels of hope were found to be associated with more positive meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers. Thus, since the positive traits positively predicted all the three well-being outcomes, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the research hypothesis.

4.6 Mediation Analyses

This section is directed at testing hypotheses two via the mediation analyses based on the guidelines provided by Baron and Kenny (1986). Thus, this section is composed of nine mediation analyses assessing the influence of PERMA on the relationship between the positive traits and each well-being outcome. A summary of the

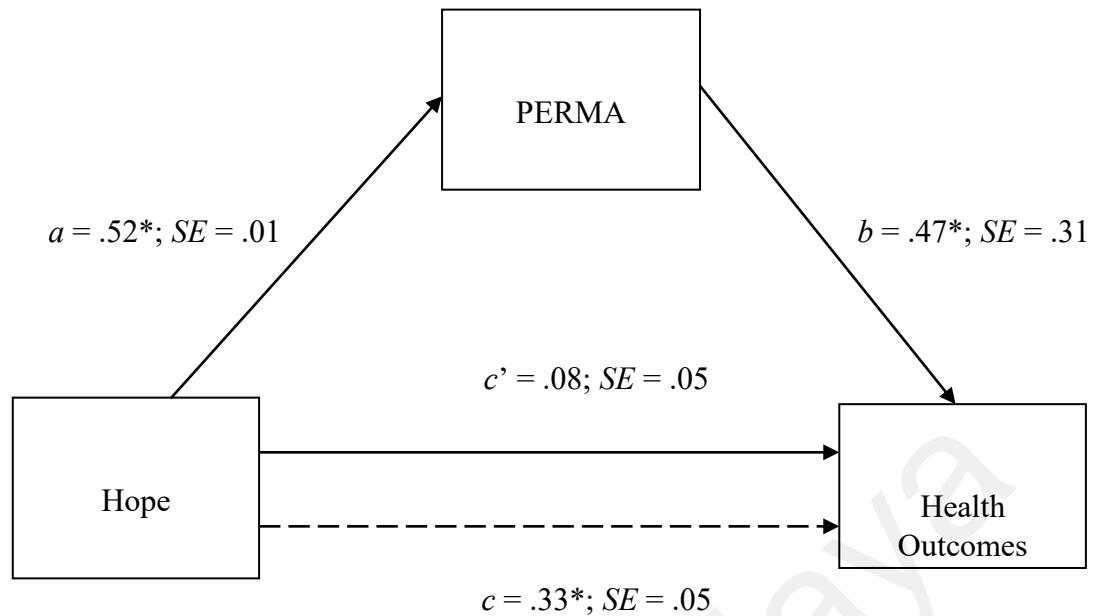
mediation models displaying the association between the positive traits and the well-being outcomes can be found at the bottom of each subsection.

4.6.1 PERMA as the Mediator in between Hope and Health Outcomes

Based on the guidelines by Baron and Kenny (1986), path a = regression between Hope (IV) and PERMA (M); path b = regression between PERMA (M) and Health Outcomes (DV) when Hope (IV) is controlled; path c (Total Effect) = regression between Hope (IV) and Health Outcomes (DV); and path c' (Direct Effect) = regression between Hope (IV) and Health Outcomes (DV) when PERMA (M) is controlled.

In Figure 4.1 below, the standardized regression coefficient indicated that the relationship between Hope and PERMA for path a was statistically significant at $\beta = .52$, $t(148) = 7.37$, $p < .05$. In addition, the relationship between PERMA and Health Outcomes for path b was also significant at $\beta = .47$, $t(147) = 5.71$, $p < .05$. Nonetheless, the direct effect between Hope and Health Outcomes in path c' was found to be insignificant at $\beta = .08$, $t(147) = .99$, $p > .05$.

The standardized indirect effect for path ab $(.52)(.47) = .24$. In examining the significance of the indirect effect of PERMA, the bootstrap test for the standardized indirect effect was .24, with the 95% confidence interval ranging between .14 to .36. Thus, with the absence of the direct effect between Hope and Health Outcomes, the indirect effect was statistically significant and portrayed PERMA as a strong mediator in the relationship between Hope and Health Outcomes.



Notes. The dotted lines signify the total effect of Hope and Health Outcomes when PERMA is not included as the mediator. *a*, *b*, *c*, and *c'* are the standardized regression coefficients. $*p < .05$

Figure 4.1. Path Coefficients for Mediation between Hope, PERMA, and Health Outcomes ($N = 150$)

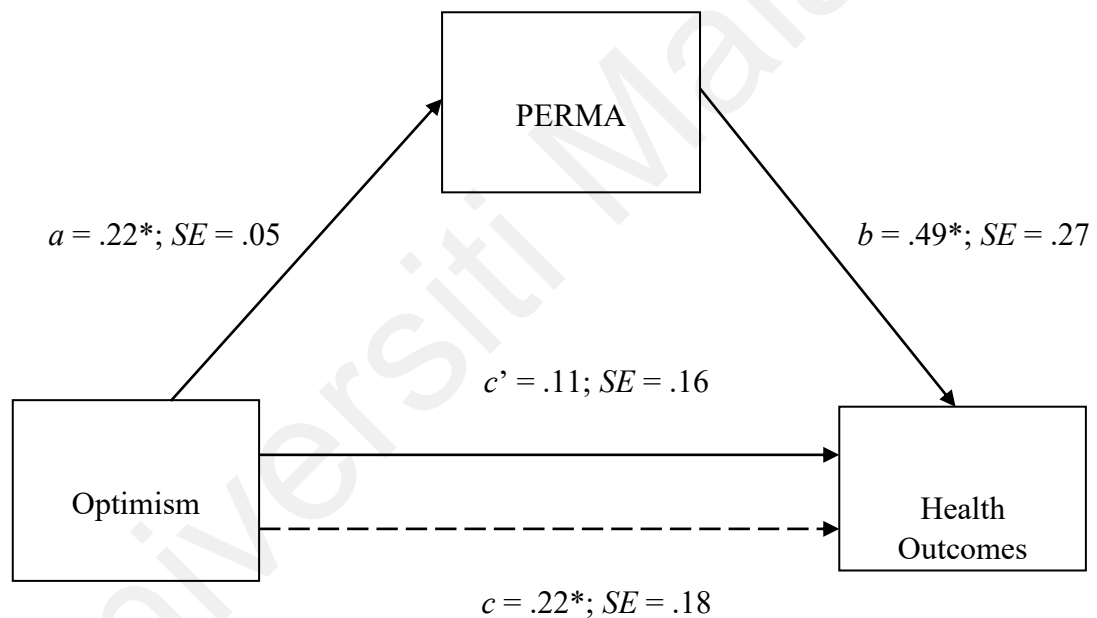
4.6.2 PERMA as the Mediator between Optimism and Health Outcomes

Based on the guidelines by Baron and Kenny (1986), path *a* = regression between Optimism (IV) and PERMA (M); path *b* = regression between PERMA (M) and Health Outcomes (DV) when Optimism (IV) is controlled; path *c* (Total Effect) = regression between Optimism (IV) and Health Outcomes (DV); and path *c'* (Direct Effect) = regression between Optimism (IV) and Health Outcomes (DV) when PERMA (M) is controlled.

In Figure 4.2 below, the standardized regression coefficient indicated that the relationship between Optimism and PERMA for path *a* was statistically significant at $\beta = .22$, $t(148) = 2.76$, $p < .05$. In addition, the relationship between PERMA and Health Outcomes for path *b* was also significant at $\beta = .49$, $t(147) = 6.79$, $p < .05$.

Nonetheless, the direct effect between Optimism and Health Outcomes in path c' was found to be insignificant at $\beta = .11$, $t(147) = 1.54$, $p > .05$.

The standardized indirect effect for path ab $(.22)(.49) = .11$. In examining the significance of the indirect effect of PERMA, the bootstrap test for the standardized indirect effect was .11, with the 95% confidence interval ranging between .03 to .19. Thus, with the absence of the direct effect between Optimism and Health Outcomes, the indirect effect was statistically significant and portrayed PERMA as a strong mediator in the relationship between Optimism and Health Outcomes.



Notes. The dotted lines signify the total effect of Optimism and Health Outcomes when PERMA is not included as the mediator. a , b , c , and c' are the standardized regression coefficients. $*p < .05$

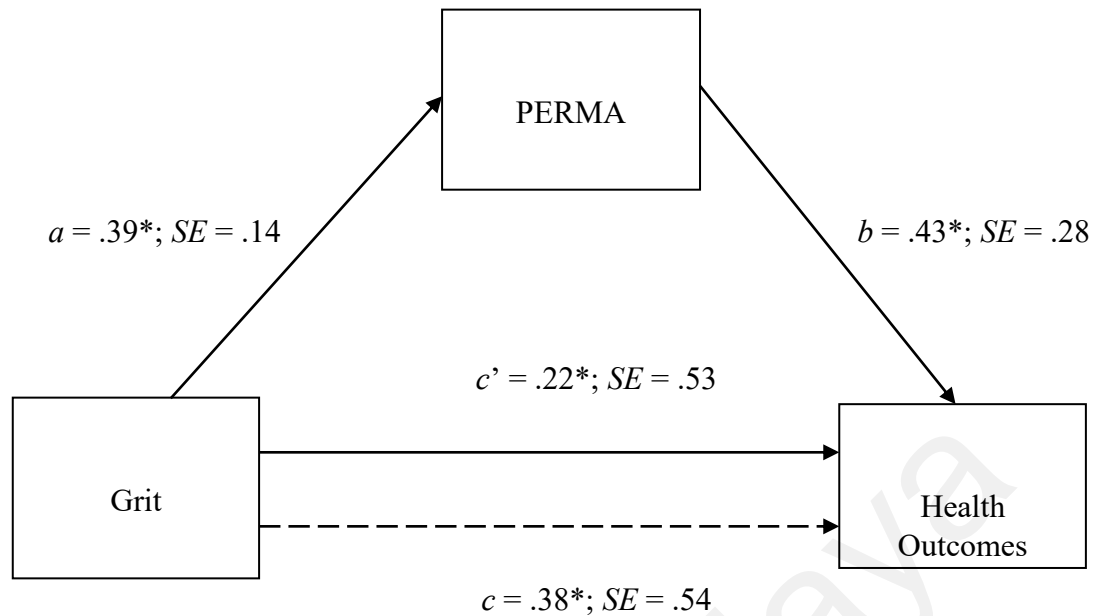
Figure 4.2. Path Coefficients for Mediation between Optimism, PERMA, and Health Outcomes ($N = 150$)

4.6.3 PERMA as the Mediator between Grit and Health Outcomes

Based on the guidelines by Baron and Kenny (1986), path a = regression between Grit (IV) and PERMA (M); path b = regression between PERMA (M) and Health Outcomes (DV) when Grit (IV) is controlled; path c = regression between Grit (IV) and Health Outcomes (DV); and path c' (Direct Effect) = regression between Grit (IV) and Health Outcomes (DV) when PERMA (M) is controlled.

In Figure 4.3 below, the standardized regression coefficient displayed that the relationship between Grit and PERMA for path a was statistically significant at $\beta = .39$, $t(148) = 5.19$, $p < .05$. In addition, the relationship between PERMA and Health Outcomes for path b was also significant at $\beta = .43$, $t(147) = 5.73$, $p < .05$. Moreover, the direct effect between Grit and Health Outcomes in path c' was found to be significant at $\beta = .22$, $t(147) = 2.87$, $p < .05$.

The standardized indirect effect for path ab $(.39)(.43) = .17$. In examining the significance of the indirect effect of PERMA, the bootstrap test for the standardized indirect effect was .17, with the 95% confidence interval ranging between .10 to .25. Thus, with the presence of the direct effect between Grit and Health Outcomes, the indirect effect was statistically significant and portrayed PERMA as a partial mediator in the relationship between Grit and Health Outcomes.



Notes. The dotted lines signify the total effect of Grit and Health Outcomes when PERMA is not included as the mediator. a , b , c , and c' are the standardized regression coefficients. $*p < .05$

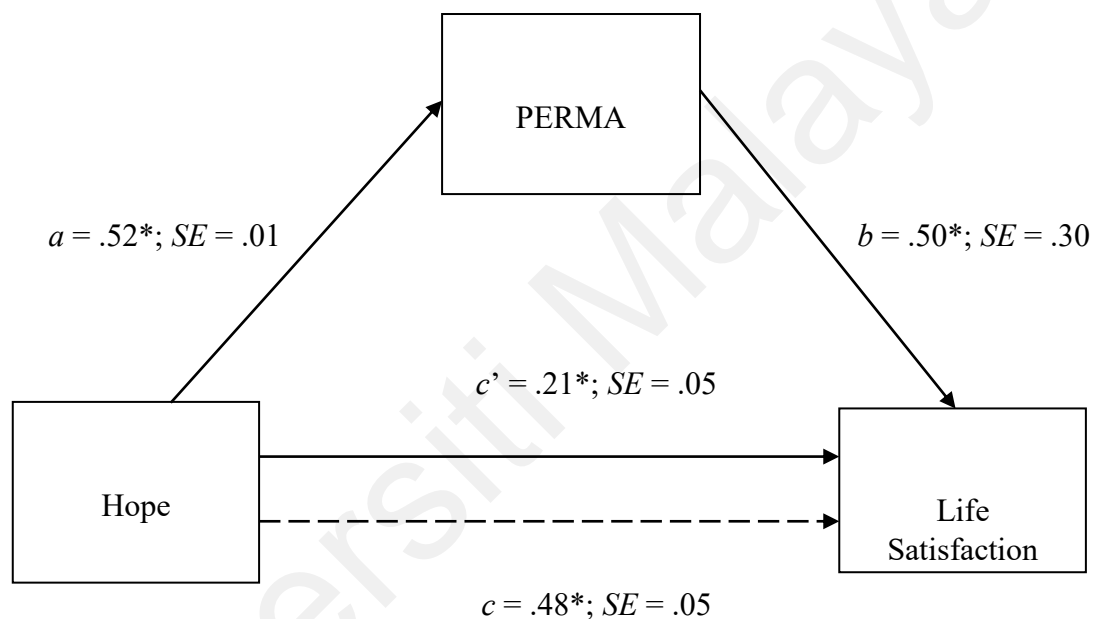
Figure 4.3. Path Coefficients for Mediation between Grit, PERMA, and Health Outcomes ($N = 150$)

4.6.4 PERMA as the Mediator between Hope and Life Satisfaction

Based on the guidelines by Baron and Kenny (1986), path a = regression between Hope (IV) and PERMA (M); path b = regression between PERMA (M) and Life Satisfaction (DV) when Hope (IV) is controlled; path c = regression between Hope (IV) and Life Satisfaction (DV); and path c' (Direct Effect) = regression between Hope (IV) and Life Satisfaction (DV) when PERMA (M) is controlled.

In Figure 4.4 below, the standardized regression coefficient indicated that the relationship between Hope and PERMA for path a was statistically significant at $\beta = .52$, $t(148) = 7.37$, $p < .05$. In addition, the relationship between PERMA and Life Satisfaction for path b was also significant at $\beta = .50$, $t(147) = 6.82$, $p < .05$. Moreover, the direct effect between Hope and Life Satisfaction in path c' was found to be significant at $\beta = .21$, $t(147) = 2.90$, $p < .05$.

The standardized indirect effect for path ab $(.52)(.50) = .26$. In examining the significance of the indirect effect of PERMA, the bootstrap test for the standardized indirect effect was .26, with the 95% confidence interval ranging between .16 to .36. Thus, with the presence of the direct effect between Hope and Life Satisfaction, the indirect effect was statistically significant and portrayed PERMA as a partial mediator in the relationship between Hope and Life Satisfaction.



Notes. The dotted lines signify the total effect of Hope and Life Satisfaction when PERMA is not included as the mediator. a , b , c , and c' are the standardized regression coefficients. $*p < .05$

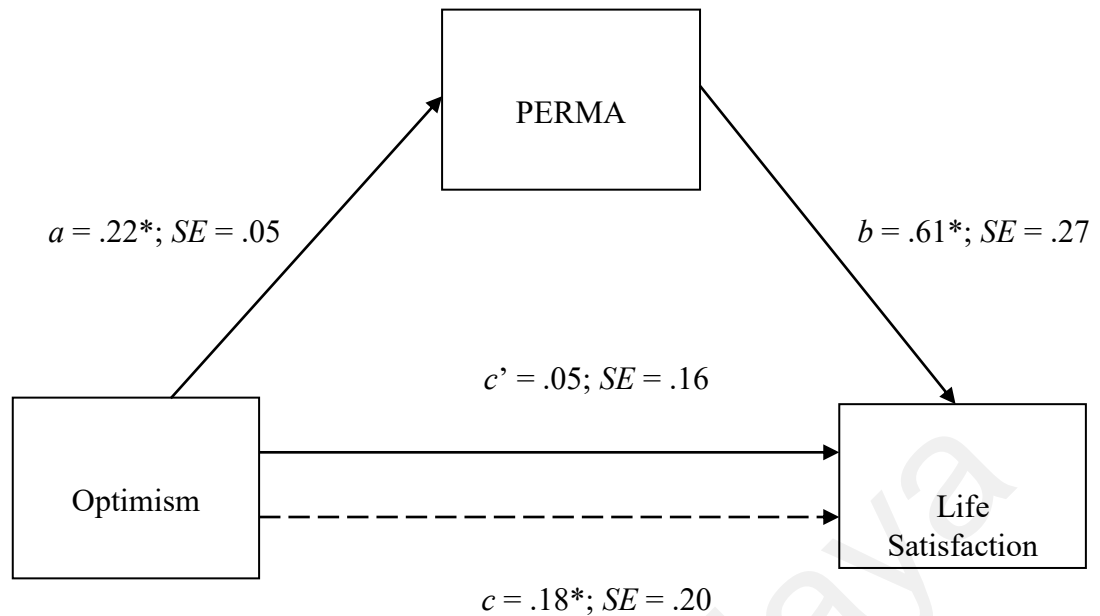
Figure 4.4. Path Coefficients for Mediation between Hope, PERMA, and Life Satisfaction ($N = 150$)

4.6.5 PERMA as the Mediator between Optimism and Life Satisfaction

Based on the guidelines by Baron and Kenny (1986), path *a* = regression between Optimism (IV) and PERMA (M); path *b* = regression between PERMA (M) and Life Satisfaction (DV) when Optimism (IV) is controlled; path *c* = regression between Optimism (IV) and Life Satisfaction (DV); and path *c'* (Direct Effect) = regression between Optimism (IV) and Life Satisfaction (DV) when PERMA (M) is controlled.

In Figure 4.5 below, the standardized regression coefficient indicated that the relationship between Optimism and PERMA for path *a* was statistically significant at $\beta = .22$, $t(148) = 2.76$, $p < .05$. In addition, the relationship between PERMA and Life Satisfaction for path *b* was also significant at $\beta = .61$, $t(147) = 9.10$, $p < .05$. Nonetheless, the direct effect between Optimism and Life Satisfaction in path *c'* was found to be insignificant at $\beta = .05$, $t(147) = .69$, $p > .05$.

The standardized indirect effect for path *ab* $(.22)(.61) = .13$. In examining the significance of the indirect effect of PERMA, the bootstrap test for the standardized indirect effect was .13, with the 95% confidence interval ranging between .04 to .22. Thus, with the absence of the direct effect between Optimism and Life Satisfaction, the indirect effect was statistically significant and portrayed PERMA as a strong mediator in the relationship between Optimism and Life Satisfaction.



Notes. The dotted lines signify the total effect of Optimism and Life Satisfaction when PERMA is not included as the mediator. *a*, *b*, *c*, and *c'* are the standardized regression coefficients. $*p < .05$

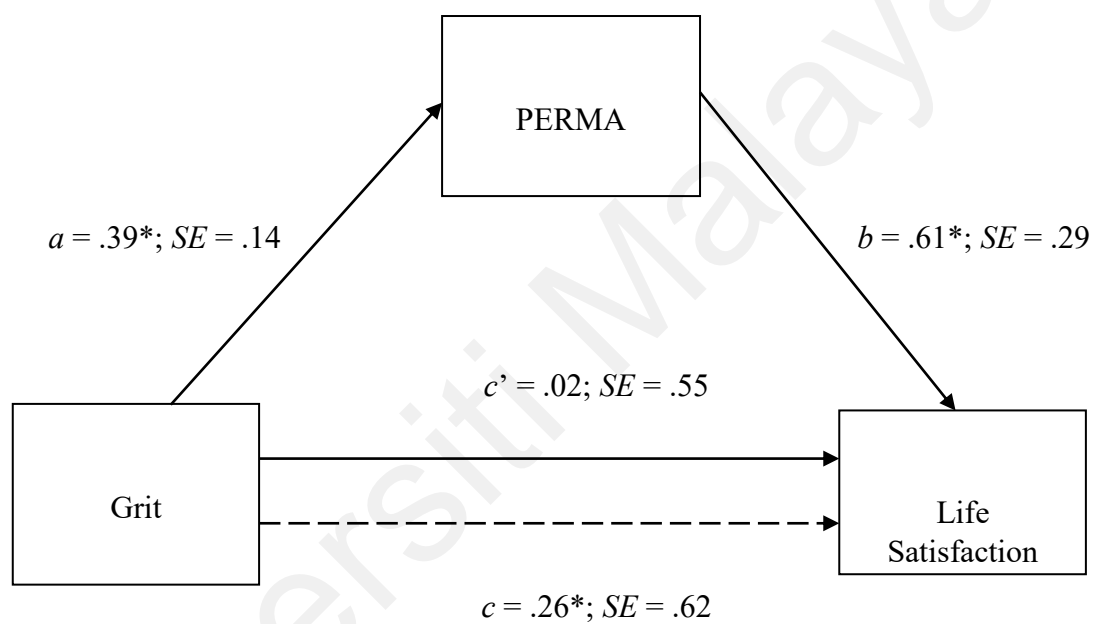
Figure 4.5. Path Coefficients for Mediation between Optimism, PERMA, and Life Satisfaction ($N = 150$)

4.6.6 PERMA as the Mediator between Grit and Life Satisfaction

Based on the guidelines by Baron and Kenny (1986), path *a* = regression between Grit (IV) and PERMA (M); path *b* = regression between PERMA (M) and Life Satisfaction (DV) when Grit (IV) is controlled; path *c* = regression between Grit (IV) and Life Satisfaction (DV); and path *c'* (Direct Effect) = regression between Grit (IV) and Life Satisfaction (DV) when PERMA (M) is controlled.

In Figure 4.6 below, the standardized regression coefficient indicated that the relationship between Grit and PERMA for path *a* was statistically significant at $\beta = .39$, $t(148) = 5.19$, $p < .05$. In addition, the relationship between PERMA and Life Satisfaction for path *b* was also significant at $\beta = .61$, $t(147) = .8.58$, $p < .05$. Nonetheless, the direct effect between Grit and Life Satisfaction in path *c'* was found to be insignificant at $\beta = .02$, $t(147) = .33$, $p > .05$.

The standardized indirect effect for path ab $(.39)(.61) = .24$. In examining the significance of the indirect effect of PERMA, the bootstrap test for the standardized indirect effect was .24, with the 95% confidence interval ranging between .14 to .34. Thus, with the absence of the direct effect between Grit and Life Satisfaction, the indirect effect was statistically significant and portrayed PERMA as a strong mediator in the relationship between Grit and Life Satisfaction.



Notes. The dotted lines signify the total effect of Grit and Life Satisfaction when PERMA is not included as the mediator. a , b , c , and c' are the standardized regression coefficients. $*p < .05$

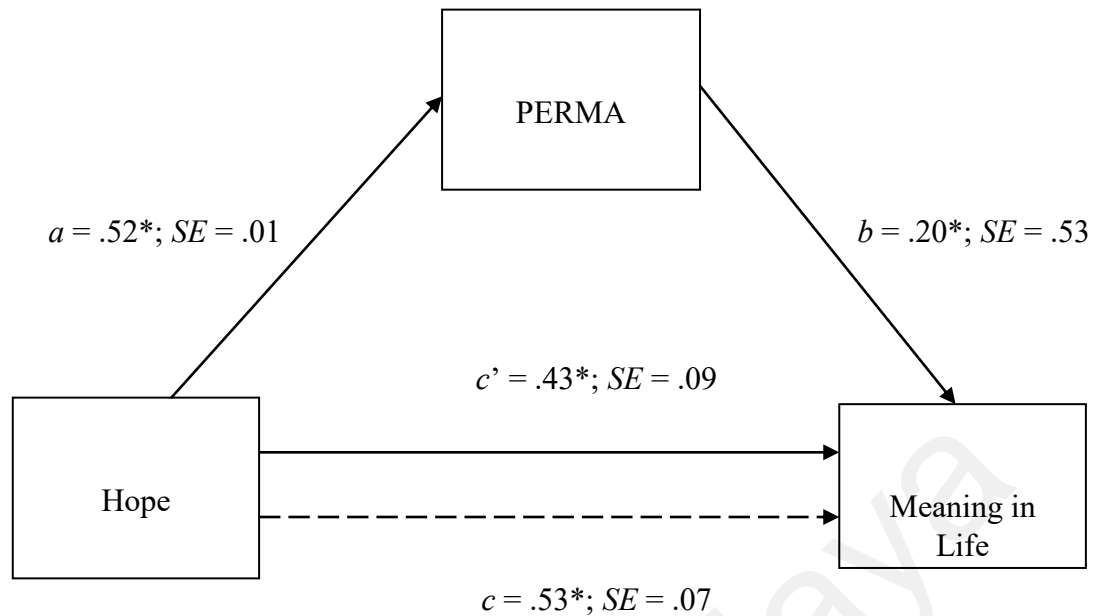
Figure 4.6. Path Coefficients for Mediation between Grit, PERMA, and Life Satisfaction ($N = 150$)

4.6.7 PERMA as the Mediator between Hope and Meaning in Life

Based on the guidelines by Baron and Kenny (1986), path a = regression between Hope (IV) and PERMA (M); path b = regression between PERMA (M) and Meaning in Life (DV) when Hope (IV) is controlled; path c = regression between Hope (IV) and Meaning in Life (DV); and path c' (Direct Effect) = regression between Hope (IV) and Meaning in Life (DV) when PERMA (M) is controlled.

In Figure 4.7 below, the standardized regression coefficient displayed that the relationship between Hope and PERMA for path a was statistically significant at $\beta = .52$, $t(148) = 7.37$, $p < .05$. In addition, the relationship between PERMA and Meaning in Life for path b was also significant at $\beta = .20$, $t(147) = 2.49$, $p < .05$. Moreover, the direct effect between Hope and Meaning in Life in path c' was found to be significant at $\beta = .43$, $t(147) = 5.37$, $p < .05$.

The standardized indirect effect for path ab $(.52)(.20) = .10$. In examining the significance of the indirect effect of PERMA, the bootstrap test for the standardized indirect effect was .10, with the 95% confidence interval ranging between .03 to .19. Thus, with the presence of the direct effect between Hope and Meaning in Life, the indirect effect was statistically significant and portrayed PERMA as a partial mediator in the relationship between Hope and Meaning in Life.



Notes. The dotted lines signify the total effect of Hope and Meaning in Life when PERMA is not included as the mediator. a , b , c , and c' are the standardized regression coefficients. $*p < .05$

Figure 4.7. Path Coefficients for Mediation between Hope, PERMA, and Meaning in Life ($N = 150$)

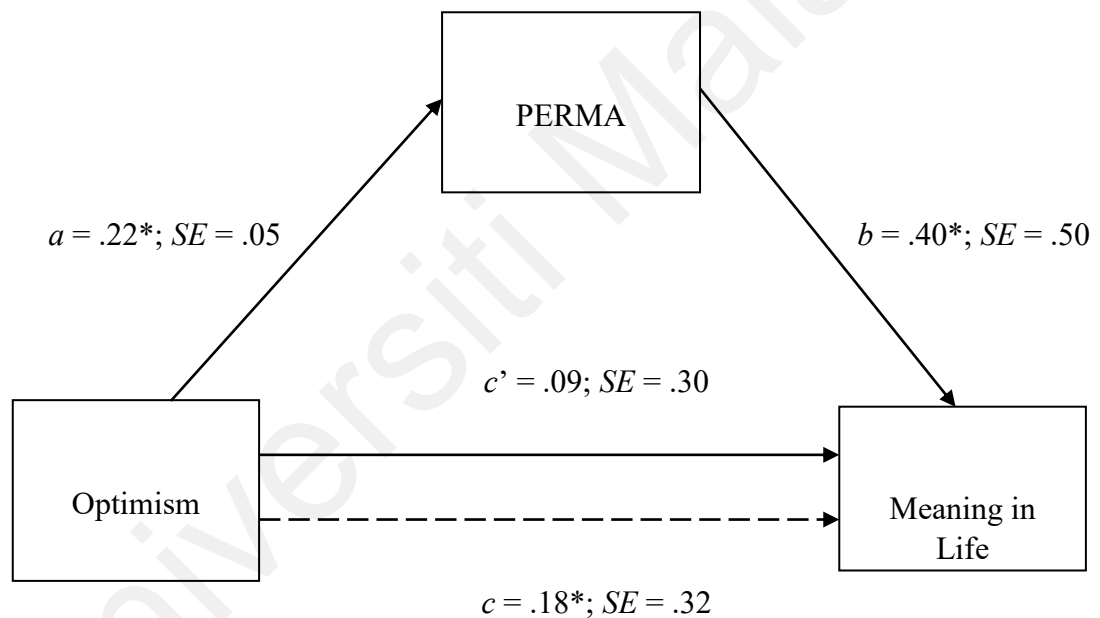
4.6.8 PERMA as the Mediator between Optimism and Meaning in Life

Based on the guidelines by Baron and Kenny (1986), path a = regression between Optimism (IV) and PERMA (M); path b = regression between PERMA (M) and Meaning in Life (DV) when Optimism (IV) is controlled; path c = regression between Optimism (IV) and Meaning in Life (DV); and path c' (Direct Effect) = regression between Optimism (IV) and Meaning in Life (DV) when PERMA (M) is controlled.

In Figure 4.8 below, the standardized regression coefficient displayed that the relationship between Optimism and PERMA for path a was statistically significant at $\beta = .22$, $t(148) = 2.76$, $p < .05$. In addition, the relationship between PERMA and Meaning in Life for path b was also significant at $\beta = .40$, $t(147) = 5.27$, $p < .05$.

Nonetheless, the direct effect between Optimism and Meaning in Life in path c' was found to be insignificant at $\beta = .09$, $t(147) = 1.15$, $p > .05$.

The standardized indirect effect for path ab $(.22)(.40) = .09$. In examining the significance of the indirect effect of PERMA, the bootstrap test for the standardized indirect effect was .09, with the 95% confidence interval ranging between .03 to .16. Thus, with the absence of the direct effect between Optimism and Meaning in Life, the indirect effect was statistically significant and portrayed PERMA as a strong mediator in the relationship between Optimism and Meaning in Life.



Notes. The dotted lines signify the total effect of Optimism and Meaning in Life when PERMA is not included as the mediator. a , b , c , and c' are the standardized regression coefficients. $*p < .05$

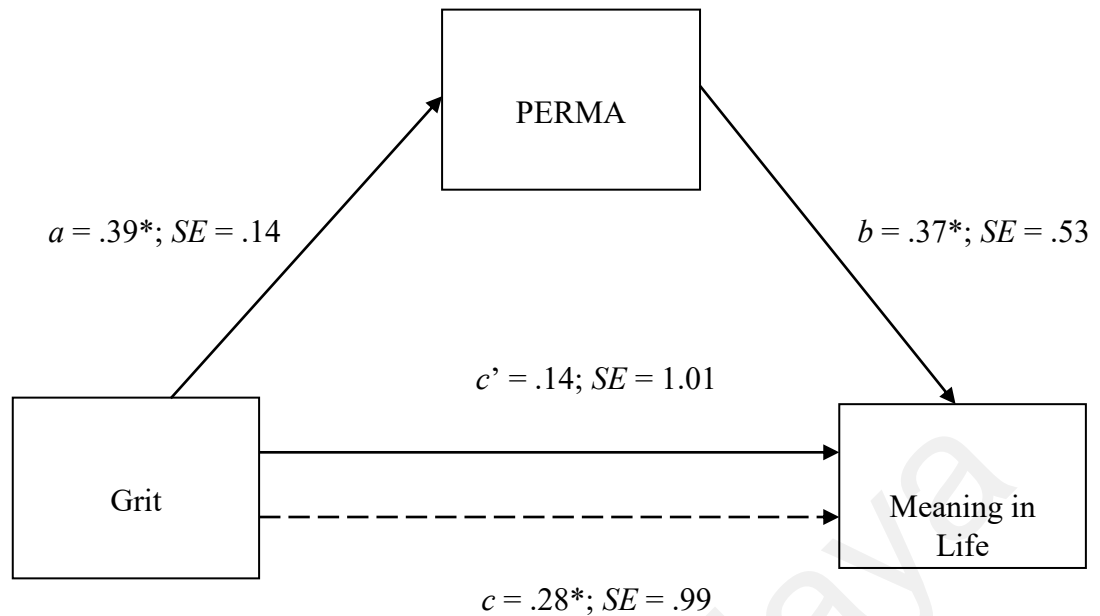
Figure 4.8. Path Coefficients for Mediation between Optimism, PERMA, and Meaning in Life ($N = 150$)

4.6.9 PERMA as the Mediator between Grit and Meaning in Life

Based on the guidelines by Baron and Kenny (1986), path a = regression between Grit (IV) and PERMA (M); path b = regression between PERMA (M) and Meaning in Life (DV) when Grit (IV) is controlled; path c = regression between Grit (IV) and Meaning in Life (DV); and path c' (Direct Effect) = regression between Grit (IV) and Meaning in Life (DV) when PERMA (M) is controlled.

In Figure 4.9 below, the standardized regression coefficient displayed that the relationship between Grit and PERMA for path a was statistically significant at $\beta = .39$, $t(148) = 5.19$, $p < .05$. In addition, the relationship between PERMA and Meaning in Life for path b was also significant at $\beta = .37$, $t(147) = 4.55$, $p < .05$. Nonetheless, the direct effect between Grit and Meaning in Life in path c' was found to be insignificant at $\beta = .14$, $t(147) = 1.75$, $p > .05$.

The standardized indirect effect for path ab $(.39)(.37) = .14$. In examining the significance of the indirect effect of PERMA, the bootstrap test for the standardized indirect effect was .14, with the 95% confidence interval ranging between .08 to .22. Thus, with the absence of the direct effect between Grit and Meaning in Life, the indirect effect was statistically significant and portrayed PERMA as a strong mediator in the relationship between Grit and Meaning in Life.



Notes. The dotted lines signify the total effect of Grit and Meaning in Life when PERMA is not included as the mediator. a , b , c , and c' are the standardized regression coefficients. $*p < .05$

Figure 4.9. Path Coefficients for Mediation between Grit, PERMA, and Meaning in Life ($N = 150$)

Thus, the results of the nine mediation analyses above delineated the positive impact of PERMA as a mediator in the relationships between the positive traits and the well-being outcomes of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. With this, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the research hypothesis.

4.7 Summary

In summary, the findings of the simultaneous regressions portrayed that the three well-being outcomes were significantly influenced by the positive traits collectively. Moreover, the relationships between the positive traits and the well-being outcomes are positively mediated by PERMA, functioning either as a partial or a strong mediator based on the results of the mediation analyses. Thus, the two null hypotheses were rejected as the findings have supported the research hypotheses.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In the surveyed literature review, we were briefly given a picture that well-being is one of the most important aspects to be accounted for by governmental health agencies and organizations of any country (WHO, 1948; 2013). For this non-cognitive aspect, since little has been carried out, the results to be expounded here will give a precursory picture of the well-being of ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. Hence, the discussions that take place in this chapter highlights how a focus on the well-being of ESL teachers may significantly contribute to the well-being and language learning outcomes of L2 learners. Thus, this section elucidates the findings in Chapter 4 with respect to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

5.2 Positive Traits and Well-Being of the Primary Level Malaysian ESL Teachers

The positive traits covariates significantly accounted for 20%, 25%, and 30% of the variance in health outcomes, satisfaction with life, and meaning in life respectively, at $p < .05$.

Further analyses of the standardized regression coefficients indicated that hope significantly predicted all the three well-being outcomes. On the contrary, optimism turned out to be an insignificant predictor of all three well-being outcomes. Nonetheless, grit was found to be a significant predictor of health outcomes, but an insignificant predictor of life satisfaction and meaning in life.

Thus, the subsections below further outline the association between each positive trait and the three well-being domains based on the results of the standardized regression coefficients.

5.2.1 Hope and Well-Being of the Primary Level ESL Teachers

The standardized regression coefficients portrayed that hope significantly explained the changes in the variance in health outcomes of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. This implies that positive health outcomes are significantly associated with greater or higher levels of hope of the ESL teachers. Similar to the findings in this study, the positive link between hope and health outcomes are supported in many previous studies (Berg, Ritschel, Swan, An, & Ahluwalia, 2011; Dowling & Rickwood, 2015; Liu, Wang, Shen, Li, & Wang, 2015; Luthans et al., 2013; Marques, Pais-Ribeiro, & Lopez, 2011; Snyder, Sympson, Michael, & Cheavens, 2001).

Hope works upon a goal-directed thought, which involves a dynamic process of thinking to progress towards one's goal (agency) and the ways of achieving it (pathways) (Dowling & Rickwood, 2015; Snyder, 2002). Thus, in the process of combatting health-related issues, the pathway of the hope component is deemed to play a pivotal role in generating "ground positive expectancies of future health" (Luthans et al., 2013, p. 121). Thinking (agency) and practising positive goals (pathways) related to healthy living habits, such as regular exercise, healthy eating habits, and frequent medical check-ups help to curb unwarranted health problems over the long term (Luthans et al., 2013).

Moreover, the standardized regression coefficients also displayed that hope significantly predicted the variance in life satisfaction of the primary level ESL

teachers in Kuala Lumpur. This signifies that positive life satisfaction is significantly associated with greater levels of hope of the ESL teachers. The finding here concurs with the positive association between hope and life satisfaction that were reported in past studies (Edwards, 2003; Gungor & Avci, 2017; Liu et al., 2015; Oliver et al., 2017; Pan et al., 2015; Shogren et al., 2006).

Based on past research and this current study, the crucial role of hope in providing a significant pathway to increased subjective well-being (Oliver et al., 2017) is quite clear. Regardless of the unique role of hope as a mediator or a direct predictor, life satisfaction is expected to increase as hope increases (Gungor & Avci, 2017). Those with high levels of hope have been discovered to be more confident in accomplishing specific tasks (Liu et al., 2015). Hence, as hope increases, teachers will preserve the determination to resolve a particular goal or a teaching task, which exerts a strong impact on their job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Pan et al., 2015).

Last but not least, hope was also found to be a significant predictor of meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. This denotes that increased levels of hope contribute to more positive meaning in life of the ESL teachers. The positive relationship between hope and meaning in life discovered in this study corresponds with the findings in several previous studies (Butler & Kern, 2016; Yalcin & Malkoc, 2014).

Although little has been explained on the link between hope and meaning in life, Yalcin and Malkoc (2014) asserted that hope and meaning in life are positively correlated, which in return positively influence subjective well-being. Despite the dearth of research that exists in this area, this interesting finding points in a positive

direction on the association between hope and meaning in life and adds to the existing literature in the field of teacher well-being.

5.2.2 Hope and Well-Being of the ESL Teachers in Relation to L2

Context

Based on the findings in this study, hope has appeared to be a healthy predictor of well-being among the primary level ESL teachers in this study. Nonetheless, besides the professional well-being of the teachers (Hiver, 2016), the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 documented that this positive trait equally possesses meaningful implications on the well-being of L2 learners and their learning environment when teachers are highly hopeful (Moghari et al., 2011; Snyder & Shorey, 2002). Thus, with the concrete empirical evidence on the positive association between hope and well-being in this study, it can be presumed that hope among the primary level ESL teachers in this study may indirectly help to increase their professional well-being, positive learner well-being and L2 environment within their teaching context.

As reported in Chapter 2, with various issues constantly affecting the health outcomes and job satisfaction levels of the Malaysian ESL teachers, the infusion of hopeful thinking among the ESL teachers in this study may assist them in discovering various ways to adapt to a difficult situation at their workplace and alienate negative thinking or outcomes by optimizing the prospect of positive outcomes (Snyder & Shorey, 2002). Thus, in the face of adversities, highly hopeful ESL teachers would be able to develop meaningful behaviours in their workplace and adapt to their continuous struggles as they acquire the awareness that various pathways to solutions do exist (Hiver, 2016). This potentially may explain how the

primary level ESL teachers could transmit their professional efforts more meaningfully on their L2 learners, which indirectly elevates their professional well-being (Hiver, 2016).

Besides, the influence of hope in between teachers and learners is reciprocal (Snyder & Shorey, 2002). This implies that hopeful thinking among the ESL teachers in this study may promote a similar positive mindset and a sense of enthusiasm among their L2 students (Snyder & Shorey, 2002), which helps to boost the language learning experience of their students. Thus, conscious awareness of the essence of high levels of hope on their L2 environment may enable the ESL teachers to construct a positive classroom climate that promotes similar hopeful thinking on their students (Snyder & Shorey, 2002). High levels of hope among their students, in return, may appear beneficial in enhancing their ability to discover and generate various approaches to accomplish their language learning goals (Snyder & Shorey, 2002). As further noted by Hiver (2016), hope and happiness are pivotal requirements that define the professional well-being of L2 teachers and the positive academic outcomes of L2 learners.

Hence, hope plays a significant role not only in enhancing the well-being of the primary level ESL teachers in this study but may as well in influencing the well-being and the language learning environment and experience of their students. With this, the findings in this study support the significant impact of hope as a Positive Psychology intervention in enhancing the L2 experience of both teachers and learners in schools and universities (Dewaele, Chen, Padilla, & Lake, 2019).

5.2.3 Optimism and Well-Being of the Primary Level ESL Teachers

The results of the standardized regression coefficients revealed that optimism did not significantly predict the changes in the variance in any of the three well-being outcomes. The findings indicate that higher levels of optimism do not necessarily exert a similar positive impact on the health outcomes, life satisfaction and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur.

Although numerous past studies on optimism had been health-related, in agreement with Baker (2007), past literature has appeared inconsistent in defining the link between optimism and health outcomes. While many researchers have demonstrated a promising association between the two (Opeyemi, 2016; Seligman, 2002; Peterson & Bossio, 2001), a few studies have supported the findings in this study (Baker, 2007; Dosedlova et al., 2015).

While the measure for health in this study took into account the aspects of physical and mental health, the inconsistency may have been due to optimism having been found to possess a certain positive link with mental well-being, but does not predict much on physical well-being (Desrumaux et al., 2015; Dosedlova et al., 2015). Moreover, with the various aspects of health being perceived as coping strategies, the variations that exist between optimists and pessimists “may become accentuated at difficult and stressful times” (Dosedlova et al., 2015, p. 1058).

On the contrary, previous studies have acknowledged the positive relationship between optimism and life satisfaction (Cha, 2003; Karademas, 2006), job satisfaction (Ahmed, 2012; Desrumaux et al., 2015, Mellveen & Perera, 2015), and also as a predictor (Damasio et al., 2013; Sahin-Baltaci & Tagay, 2015) and mediator (Eren, 2014; Krok, 2015) of meaning in life. Nevertheless, the findings in

this study contradict the significant bond between optimism and life satisfaction and meaning in life in the aforementioned studies.

With the positive outcomes reported in past literature, there is considerably little explanation to support the findings here. Nonetheless, although hope and optimism have been discovered to be complementary in numerous past studies, corresponding with the results of this study, Bailey et al. (2007) denoted that hope appeared to be a stronger predictor of life satisfaction compared to optimism. Thus, it can be inferred that the relationship between the positive traits and the well-being outcomes may have been explained more by hope, or other traits beyond the scope of this study.

5.2.4 Optimism and Well-Being of the ESL Teachers in Relation to L2 Context

Although the positive traits collectively were significantly correlated to the well-being of the primary level ESL teachers in this study, optimism failed to play a part in predicting the changes in any of the well-being outcomes. Thus, due to the ineffective influence of optimism on the well-being of the ESL teachers in this study, we can infer that higher levels of optimism among the ESL teachers may not necessarily generate a meaningful impact on the well-being and the language learning outcomes of their students.

Reviewed literature in Chapter 2 has portrayed that higher levels of hope and optimism among L2 teachers play a similar role in facilitating the infusion of the positive traits within their learners (Moghari et al., 2011; Snyder & Shorey, 2002). As for the crucial role of optimism within the L2 context, optimism in L2 teachers has been found to contribute to their well-being via a boost in their trust levels on

students and their self-efficacy (Moghari et al., 2011). The self-efficacy and positive trust levels of the optimistic English teachers collectively perform a vital role in their L2 students, particularly in increasing their personal competence in return and inspiring them to learn the language by facilitating their own learning (Moghari et al., 2011).

Nonetheless, in contradictory to the strength of hope, the statistical findings on optimism in this study failed to provide sufficient evidence that supports the findings in the study by Moghari et al. (2011) and bridges the gap between optimism among English teachers and its impact on the well-being and personal competence of their L2 learners. Thus, an increase in the optimism levels of the ESL teachers in this study alone may not contribute to a significant boost in their self-efficacy and trust levels on their students. The self-efficacy and the trust levels of the optimistic ESL teachers, if any, may appear incapable of explaining a considerable amount of significance in their learners' competence and their ability to facilitate their L2 learning.

According to Moghari et al. (2011), the affective factors within an optimistic L2 teacher may appear to be a driving force in inducing a positive change to their students in learning a language, primarily due to demands of the challenging L2 environment for the non-speakers. Nonetheless, unlike literature from abroad, such as Moghari et al. (2011), the positive impact of optimism on the ESL teachers in this study cannot be understood comprehensively, which requires further research within the local context.

5.2.5 Grit and Well-Being of the Primary Level ESL Teachers

The standardized regression coefficients indicated that grit significantly predicted the variance in health outcomes of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. This points out that an elevation in the level of grit significantly increases the health outcomes of the ESL teachers. The positive affiliation between grit and health outcomes has also been demonstrated in previous studies (Guerrero et al., 2016; Meriac et al., 2015; Salles et al., 2014). Although grit has not been explored comprehensively in the field of teacher well-being, it may appear to efficiently function as a protective factor in restraining health-related risk behaviours (Guerrero et al., 2016).

The finding here concurs with Salles et al. (2014) study, in which assessing grit could potentially detect those who are at risk for lower well-being or burnout. Besides, grittier individuals may possess different coping skills that enable them to adapt and approach their situations differently when encountering adversities or stressors in their daily lives (Meriac et al., 2015). Moreover, grit also explains the significance of perseverance and hard work at times of adversities and failures, which contributes to well-being in terms of increased self-efficacy and self-confidence (Guerrero et al., 2016). Thus, the positive finding here builds upon previous literature that discovered grit is associated with health outcomes.

Nonetheless, further analysis of the standardized regression coefficients revealed that grit did not explain the changes in both life satisfaction and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. From this finding, it can be inferred that increased levels of grit would not generate a similar influence on life satisfaction and meaning in life of the teachers.

Several studies have attempted to prove the positive association between grit and life satisfaction (Akbag & Ummet, 2017; Aparicio et al., 2017; Khan & Khan, 2017; Quinn & Seligman, 2009) and meaning in life (Kleiman et al., 2013; Ross, 2016; Von et al., 2014). Nonetheless, the finding here fails to provide sufficient evidence that concurs with the aforementioned researchers, but conversely supports the irrelevant impact of grit discussed by several other researchers on life satisfaction (Ion et al., 2017) and meaning in life (Vela et al., 2015; Vela et al., 2016).

Based on their findings, Ion et al. (2017) pointed out that grit scores may appear malleable and has the potential to change over time. Therefore, there may not be any substantial difference between the grittier and the less gritty individuals where job satisfaction is concerned, although their performance may increase as time progresses and will be more apparent in a longitudinal study (Ion et al., 2017). Correspondingly, Vela et al. (2015) reported sufficient evidence that suggests an absence in meaning in life and psychological grit may compel one to be vulnerable in stressful situations.

5.2.6 Grit and Well-Being of the ESL Teachers in Relation to L2

Context

The statistical analyses in this study have displayed that the positive trait of grit was predictive of health outcomes, but not life satisfaction and meaning in life of the ESL teachers in this study. Hence, the relevant impact of grit on the health outcomes of the ESL teachers, as per Robertson-Kraft and Duckworth (2014), may imply a considerable amount of influence on L2 teacher performance and efficiency over time, which eventually benefits their L2 learners.

Although grit relates directly to the academic outcomes of ESL learners via a long term goal setting (Taspinar & Kulekci, 2018), its implications on L2 teachers in managing the barriers to their L2 environment appear fundamental (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). Nonetheless, as reviewed in Chapter 2, the failure of L2 teachers to manage their challenging L2 environment effectively and monitor the influence of their teaching practices on their students over a longer period of time has been attributed to the exceptional organizational demands and expectations placed on them, some of which have been beyond their control (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). Inadvertently, this may trigger an unfavourable influence on the ability of the learners to manage their L2 environment effectively, along with the language learning challenges and demands that come with it.

Thus, with grit significantly linked to the health outcomes of the ESL teachers in this study, it can be implied that grit may assist the ESL teachers to manage their physical and psychological health issues via the ability of grit to infuse coping skills and adaptability among the teachers (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). As a result, this may help to improve the quality of their teaching practices besides determination over a longer period (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014), which is expected to contribute to successful L2 outcomes of their students (Keegan, 2017).

Moreover, as grit is equally beneficial for both L2 teachers and learners, gritty ESL teachers would be able to influence their students to comprehend that English language acquisition for the non-natives is a challenging goal that requires time, patience and determination (Taspinar & Kulekci, 2018), taking into account the diverse abilities, proficiency and needs of the L2 students in a Malaysian ESL classroom. Thus, grit comes into play here, as the grittier ESL students are

anticipated to overcome their language learning barriers and other challenges within their L2 environment by establishing a long term goal setting (Taspinar & Kulekci, 2018).

Hence, grit is anticipated to improve the well-being of the ESL teachers in this study by enhancing their health outcomes. Nonetheless, the influence of grit in improving life satisfaction and meaning in life of the ESL teachers is unclear, which necessitates further studies on grit within the local ESL context.

5.3 The Impact of PERMA between Positive Traits and Well-Being of the Primary Level Malaysian ESL Teachers

Based on the results of the mediation analyses, PERMA has been interestingly found to function either as a partial or a strong mediating variable across all the relationships between the positive traits and the well-being outcomes in this study.

The standardized indirect effect based on the bootstrap test displayed that PERMA completely mediated the relationship between hope and health outcomes, but partially mediated the relationships between hope and life satisfaction and meaning in life. On the other hand, PERMA emerged as a strong mediator in the relationships between optimism and all the three well-being outcomes. Last but not least, PERMA emerged as a partial mediator between grit and health outcomes but functioned as a strong mediator between grit and life satisfaction and meaning in life.

With this, the subsequent subsections delineate the influence of PERMA on the association between each positive trait and the well-being domains.

5.3.1 The Impact of PERMA between Hope and Well-Being of the Primary Level ESL Teachers

Based on the results of the standardized indirect effect using the bootstrap test, PERMA emerged as a strong mediator in the relationship between hope and health outcomes and as a partial mediator in the relationships between hope and satisfaction of life and meaning in life among the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. Regardless of the direct positive links between hope and the three well-being outcomes discussed in Chapter 4, the findings implied that the inclusion of PERMA accounted for a significant amount of changes in the well-being dimensions.

Despite the scarcity of research involving the subpopulation of ESL teachers, the positive findings on PERMA and well-being here are in accordance with previous studies on various subpopulations within an education context (Butler & Kern, 2016; Coffey et al., 2016; Kern et al., 2014; 2015). In particular, PERMA completely mediated the relationship between hope and health outcomes. The research findings here support the direct relevance of PERMA on physical health discovered in several studies (Butler & Kern, 2016; Coffey et al., 2016). Thus, the dynamics between hope and PERMA may appear as a crucial fruitful solution for the ESL teachers in this study who are at risk factors of musculoskeletal pains, burnouts, anxiety, and stress. From this, mental and physical health interventions based on the constructs of hope and PERMA could help the ESL teachers to curb the risk factors and improve their well-being.

Moreover, although PERMA was conceptualized as a unidimensional model in this study, the unique function of PERMA in predicting the well-being outcomes, in particular health outcomes, beyond the positive trait of hope is evident. In

layman's terms, PERMA adds to a comprehensive explanation of understanding the association between hope and well-being. Collectively, the findings suggest that the public safety organizations, health practitioners, and counsellors could provide a support system for the primary level ESL teachers who are struggling in their well-being, based on focused intervention initiatives that function around hope and PERMA.

5.3.2 The Impact of PERMA between Optimism and Well-Being of the Primary Level ESL Teachers

Based on the results of the standardized indirect effect using the bootstrap test, PERMA was discovered to be a strong mediator in the associations between optimism and all the three well-being outcomes among the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. Regardless of the aforementioned negative links between optimism and the well-being outcomes in this study, the findings denoted that PERMA completely mediated the relationship between optimism and well-being and explained a significant amount of changes in the variance of the well-being dimensions.

With PERMA emerging as significant strong mediators between optimism and the well-being outcomes, the research findings support the positive evidence between PERMA and well-being demonstrated in the previous studies (Butler & Kern, 2016; Brassai et al., 2011; Coffey et al., 2016; Fouche et al., 2017; Kern et al., 2014; 2015; Tansey et al., 2017). Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter 4, the direct insignificant relationships between optimism and well-being discovered in this study are in line with the inconsistencies in the findings from past literature. Thus, this implies that the association between optimism and well-being among the primary

level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur is completely explained by the unique effect of PERMA.

Nonetheless, with its functions as a preliminary study, further research is required to validate the impact of PERMA between optimism and well-being within a similar subpopulation. However, the positive impact of PERMA discovered here builds upon the past literature concerning the well-being of teachers and points out in a promising direction for future studies. Thus, the findings suggest that public safety organizations and other relevant agencies seek to utilize the five dimensions of PERMA holistically to construct well-being initiatives that assist the ESL teachers to enhance their optimism during adversities and challenges.

5.3.3 The Impact of PERMA between Grit and Well-Being of the Primary Level ESL Teachers

Based on the results of the standardized indirect effect using the bootstrap test, PERMA revealed itself as a partial mediator in the relationship between grit and health outcomes but functioned as a strong mediator in the relationships between grit and satisfaction of life and meaning in life among the primary level ESL teachers in Kuala Lumpur. The findings signified that PERMA played a major role in predicting a significant amount of changes in the variance of the well-being dimensions, in particular for life satisfaction and meaning in life.

With or without PERMA, although the link between grit and health outcomes is found to be positive, the associations between grit and both life satisfaction and meaning in life are found to be insignificant. Regardless, the affiliations between grit and both the well-being outcomes are found to be significant with the addition of PERMA. This signifies that the unidimensional model of PERMA in this study is

capable of significantly explaining the variations in life satisfaction and meaning in life beyond the influence of grit. Besides the positive influence of PERMA on health outcomes as stated in past literature (For instance Butler & Kern, 2016; Kern et al., 2014; 2015), the significant positive role of PERMA on life satisfaction and meaning in life are supported in previous studies as well (Brassai et al., 2011; Coffey et al., 2016; Fouche et al., 2017; Tansey et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, with a limited research base examining the effect of PERMA on grit, the findings here allude to the unique role of PERMA in delineating the relationships between grit and the different well-being domains. Although further studies still emerge a necessity, the positive impact of PERMA on grit and well-being demonstrated in this study pinpoints the prospect of PERMA as a means to enhance well-being in relation to grit. Thus, ESL teachers who are at risk of low levels of well-being need to be assisted. The research findings inform that proactive measures that contain the five elements of PERMA could be executed in elevating their grit or perseverance, which in turn improves their well-being comprehensively.

5.4 Implications of the Study

Functioning as the first full-fledged study on positive traits, PERMA and well-being of primary level ESL teachers within the Malaysian context, the findings reported and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively assure that the primary objectives for this study have been met. Thus, the analyses of the findings in this study leave significant implications in terms of theory and practice concerning the well-being of the ESL teachers and their indirect connection on the well-being and learning outcomes of ESL learners.

5.4.1 Theoretical Implications on the Field of Teacher Well-Being and the Positive Activity Model

As portrayed in Chapter 4, the positive traits collectively predicted the well-being of the ESL teachers. The standardized regression coefficients revealed that hope appeared the most significant to all the well-being domains, whereas grit was only relevant to health outcomes. Thus, the analyses of the positive traits of the ESL teachers in this study display agreement with their supportive links to health outcomes, life satisfaction, and meaning in life as portrayed in several past studies within a similar scope (Butler & Kern, 2016; Damasio et al., 2013; Desrumaux et al., 2015; McIlveen & Perera, 2015; Opeyemi, 2016). In particular, the effectiveness of PERMA as a potential well-being model as demonstrated in this study is emphasized per Butler and Kern's (2016) analysis.

The relationships between the positive traits and well-being were more transparent with the inclusion of PERMA. Hence, with a dearth of research within the area of teacher well-being, the significant interaction between the positive traits, PERMA and well-being in this initial small scale correlational study undoubtedly builds upon existing literature in the field of teacher well-being based on Positive Psychology. Nonetheless, the researcher predicts that a deeper study of PERMA as a unidimensional well-being model on various character strengths and positive traits of L2 teachers may contribute to significant theoretical advancements that inform us better on how to improve the well-being of L2 teachers.

Besides, the findings in this study suggest a significant influence on the Positive Activity model (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). As discussed in Chapter 2 (refer to 2.14 Theoretical Background), the proponents of the model posited that the significant relationship between positive emotions, thoughts and behaviours and

well-being is determined by positive activities. In layman's term, the interplay between activity features (type of positive activity) and person features (positive values or traits) greatly impact the well-being of an individual (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). With the strength of PERMA as a well-being mediator in this study, the researcher suggests that the Positive Activity model can be aligned with the findings in this study in providing a framework that guides ESL teachers on how to enhance their well-being from a theoretical perspective.

A common similarity between the model and the researcher's conceptual framework of this study, the latter which is inspired by Lyubomirsky and Layous' (2013) theory, is the pivotal role of the mediating factor/s that mediate the indirect link between positive activity/traits and well-being. As demonstrated in this study, PERMA, which theoretically encompasses the four mediating factors in the Positive Activity model, has demonstrated to be a reliable mediator in between the positive traits and the well-being outcomes of the ESL teachers in this study. Thus, with respect to the Positive Activity model, the theoretical implication here is that the role of the positive traits as person features and PERMA as the mediating factor may assist in explaining L2 teachers' well-being.

5.4.2 Well-Being Enrichment Initiatives and Interventions for the ESL Teachers

Although the findings in this study are not generalizable to a wider population of ESL teachers in Malaysia, they nonetheless appear significant when it comes to developing well-being initiatives that cater to the well-being of the primary level ESL teachers in this study. Thus, the findings inform us that proactive measures need to be taken to help the ESL teachers in this study to manage their well-being based

on the collective efforts by the public safety organizations, health counsellors, and the state education department. The concerned parties, in particular the state education department and the Ministry of Education, should comprehend that prior importance must be laid on the well-being of the ESL teachers, which precedes the quality of the teaching and learning process and successful academic outcomes of L2 learners, as the three are causally connected (Mercer et al., 2016).

In relation to the Positive Activity model, the ESL teachers at risk of well-being should be taught on how to channel their risk factors out by focusing on various positive activities daily. As an example, if a group of ESL teachers is found to be suffering from health issues like burnouts or musculoskeletal pains, the teachers should be taught on how to increase their Positive activities related to hope and grit, such as hopeful thinking and becoming grittier that would assist them to develop coping strategies in managing their health problems rather than dwelling on them. In another instance, for those ESL teachers experiencing unsatisfied and unfulfilled lives due to school-related issues such as excessive unmanageable workloads, parental pressure, and other demands should be nurtured on how to increase their hope to alleviate their risk factors.

Last but not least, more dynamic and proactive researchers within the Psychology or SLA field could seek to develop innovative interventions to help the ESL teachers in this study to handle their risk factors effectively and focus their positive well-being and motivation into the teaching and learning process in their L2 classroom. Based on the findings in this study and the Positive Activity model, future researchers could seek to develop the interventions based on a well-being framework that is built around hope and PERMA. Through this, although the challenges faced by the Malaysian ESL teachers are entirely unavoidable at this point of writing, the

ESL teachers at risk of low well-being due to various factors could nonetheless utilize the interventions as a support system and enhance their well-being intrinsically, rather than over-relying on health counsellors or safety organizations.

5.4.3 Positive Well-Being of ESL Teachers and its Impact on the Well-Being and Learning Outcomes of L2 Learners

The field of SLA has been flourishing with the dedications and contributions of Positive Psychology research on the well-being and prosperous academic outcomes of L2 learners (Gabrys-Barker, 2016, Guz & Tetiurka, 2016; Mercer et al., 2016). However, besides the role of L2 learners, a common consensus has been achieved among numerous researchers within the SLA field that positively-oriented L2 teachers account for a large difference on the environment and development of the L2 learners holistically (Guz & Tetiurka, 2016; Mercer et al., 2016; Wieczorek, 2016; Wlosowicz, 2016).

Thus, this study is dedicated to the well-being of the primary level ESL teachers within the Malaysian context. Although issues concerning the well-being of ESL learners are beyond the scope of this study, reviews of relevant literature in Chapter 2 highlight the significant link between the well-being of both L2 teachers and learners and their anticipated subsequent impact on the learning outcomes of the L2 learners. Thus, the significant implications of the findings on the L2 development of ESL learners, although a little, lay down some food for thought for our ESL teachers and scope for further research for interested future researchers.

Based on the findings in this study, with or without PERMA, the positive trait of hope played the most vital role compared to optimism and grit in defining the well-being of the ESL teachers. Thus, the strength of hope on well-being portrays

itself as the most crucial character strength that must be infused by the ESL teachers within the context of this study. Not only hopeful thinking or actions would help to build up their well-being, but a similar result would be able to be generated among their L2 learners as well. As suggested by Snyder and Shorey (2002), hopeful teachers can construct a positive classroom environment and infuse hopeful thinking among their students, where learners will be able to adapt to their L2 environment and discover various pathways in overcoming their language learning barriers. Thus, this informs us that an increase in hope among the ESL teachers may consequently lead to an increase in hopeful thinking and positive learning outcomes among their learners as well.

Besides, although the three positive traits collectively influenced the well-being of the ESL teachers, unlike hope, the direct impact of optimism and grit on the well-being outcomes were relatively weak, except for grit and health outcomes. Hence, the indirect significant role of the ESL teachers' optimism and grit in enhancing L2 pupils' self-efficacy (Moghari et al., 2011) and fostering long term goal setting in overcoming L2 acquisition barriers or challenges over time (Taspinar & Kulekci, 2018) respectively via the positive well-being of the ESL teachers cannot possibly be inferred here.

Nonetheless, the influence of optimism and grit on the well-being of the ESL teachers appeared livelier after the inclusion of PERMA. Although PERMA has never been explored in the ESL context before, the strength of its significant indirect effect in this study informs us of its plausible capability to predict the well-being and learning outcomes of ESL learners with regards to the positive traits. Even without the influence of the positive traits, PERMA may even be able to dictate the well-being of both ESL teachers and learners and connect them to positive classroom

climate and successful academic outcomes of ESL students, since it has yielded various fruitful outcomes from various fields (Adler & Seligman, 2016; Allen, 2017; Ascenso et al., 2017).

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

The analyses of the positive traits portrayed hope as the only positive trait that significantly influenced all the three well-being outcomes in this study. Nonetheless, as explored in several past studies (Gungor & Avcı, 2017; Yalcin & Malkoc, 2014), hope may also function as an effective mediator of well-being. Hence, this discovery warrants further studies on the role of hope as a potential mediator on meaning in life and subjective well-being within a similar subpopulation of ESL teachers in Malaysia. Snyder and Shorey (2002) have also emphasized on the reciprocal relationship between hope in teachers and learners and how they could impact positive classroom conditions. Thus, future research could investigate if higher levels of hope among ESL teachers possess a significant influence on the well-being and learning outcomes of ESL students.

On the contrary, optimism has been discovered to be an insignificant predictor of all the well-being outcomes in this study. Thus, due to the variations that exist between optimists and pessimists (Dosedlova et al., 2015), future research in this area should seek to explore the influence of optimism on well-being from a bidimensional perspective (optimism and pessimism) instead of a unidimensional perspective, to acquire more accurate results. Besides, similar to hope, research on the role of optimism as a mediator of well-being may as well appear interesting and promising, as demonstrated in past literature (Eren, 2014; Krok, 2015).

As for grit, this positive trait significantly predicted only the ESL teachers' health outcomes. Nonetheless, with the inconsistent findings reported in previous literature as well as in this study, the influence of grit on life satisfaction and meaning in life remains vague and may differ according to the nature of the subpopulation or other unexplored factors, such as time (Ion et al., 2017). Thus, future studies should consider the important impact of time on grit before conducting a longitudinal study to investigate the link between grit and life satisfaction and meaning in life within the ESL context.

As PERMA has been discovered to emerge as a stronghold between the positive traits and well-being of the ESL teachers in this study, further studies are required to validate the findings in this study. Provided that a similar impact of PERMA is further consolidated in other studies, future research could look beyond the subpopulation of Malaysian ESL teachers and assess PERMA in terms of well-being and academic outcomes of ESL students in Malaysia. Last but not least, for those concerned with the generalizability of this paper, as suggested by Fraenkel et al. (2015), the scope of this study can be replicated and extended to broader demography of primary level ESL teachers from other parts of Malaysia, including the rural areas.

5.6 Conclusion

This paper on positive traits, PERMA, and teacher well-being that is inspired by the amalgamation of both the Positive Psychology and SLA research fields is the first in Malaysia. With the primary level ESL teachers from Kuala Lumpur as the studied subpopulation in this study, the simultaneous regression analyses indicated that hope emerges as a strong direct predictor of all the three well-being outcomes. In addition, the positive trait of grit builds upon existing past literature as it significantly predicted health outcomes. On an overall basis, the relationship between the positive traits and the well-being outcomes are more comprehensible with the inclusion of PERMA. The unidimensional model of PERMA significantly functioned as both partial and strong mediators in the associations between the positive traits and the well-being dimensions.

Moreover, as hypothesized, the insignificant direct relationships between certain positive traits and well-being outcomes interestingly turned out to be more transparent with the addition of PERMA. Hence, PERMA has provided a positive indication that it can emerge as a stronghold that links various positive traits and well-being domains together, as hinted by the proponents and scholars in the Positive Psychology field. Thus, besides the influential multidimensional elements of PERMA portrayed in past studies, the unidimensional model of PERMA may equally appear as a strong and promising predictor of well-being. The positive impact of PERMA in this study also points in a positive direction for future research in the field of teacher well-being.

Besides, the reviewed literature indicates that the well-being of both L2 teachers and learners and their contribution to the L2 classroom context are indeed inseparable. Hence, the researcher is aware that a focus on the well-being of ESL

teachers does not only benefit the teachers but also the L2 learners. Thus, the area of well-being of ESL teachers should never be perceived as insignificant or unimportant in the SLA field as they contain supportive links to positive well-being and successful learning outcomes within a complex L2 classroom environment. Hence, based on the outcomes of this study, the positive traits and in particular PERMA, may emerge crucial in further explaining the role of well-being of ESL teachers' on the sociology and academic outcomes of L2 learners.

Therefore, the research findings in this preliminary study provide a new and interesting perspective in the area of ESL teachers' well-being based on the positive traits and the well-being dimensions under the Positive Psychology field. As discussed in the section on suggestions for future studies, future research is required to validate the findings in this study and uncover the research gaps and limitations that exist in refining the well-being model in relation to PERMA. To conclude, the content of this paper should inform public safety organizations, counsellors, health practitioners, and other relevant parties to develop well-being frameworks or interventions and enrichment programs that will benefit the health outcomes, life satisfaction and meaning in life of the primary level ESL teachers in this study.

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