

The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy, Psychological Well-Being, And Work Motivation Among Guidance and Counselling Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The professional effectiveness of school guidance and counseling teachers is closely associated with their psychological resources and motivation to perform their professional responsibilities. This study examined the levels of self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation among Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia, and investigated the relationships between self-efficacy and work motivation and between psychological well-being and work motivation. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was employed involving 100 Guidance and Counseling Teachers from primary and secondary schools, recruited using total population sampling. Data were collected using the Counselor Activity Self-Efficacy Scales (CASES; $\alpha = .91$), Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS; $\alpha = .88$), and the Short Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (SWEIMS; $\alpha = .89$). Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings indicated high overall levels of self-efficacy ($Mdn = 6.3$), psychological well-being ($Mdn = 6.0$), and work motivation ($Mdn = 6.0$). Correlation analysis revealed no statistically significant relationship between self-efficacy and work motivation ($r = -.051$), whereas psychological well-being demonstrated a positive and statistically significant relationship with work motivation ($r = .197$). These findings highlight psychological well-being as a relevant factor associated with the work motivation of school guidance and counseling teachers, while suggesting that high perceived professional self-efficacy does not necessarily correspond to stronger work motivation. The study underscores the importance of strengthening psychological well-being through targeted professional development, organizational support, and psychological support initiatives. The findings provide practical implications for the Ministry of Education Malaysia, school administrators, and other relevant stakeholders in developing evidence-informed strategies to sustain counselor motivation and enhance the quality and effectiveness of school guidance and counseling services.

Keywords – Self-efficacy, Psychological well-being, Work motivation, Guidance and counseling teachers school counseling

INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian National Education Philosophy emphasizes the holistic development of students across intellectual, emotional, spiritual, physical, and social domains. Within this framework, school guidance and counseling services play an important role in supporting students' academic, personal, social, emotional, and career development. Guidance and Counseling Teachers (GCTs) therefore contribute significantly to promoting student well-being and supporting the broader goals of the Malaysian education system.

The responsibilities of GCTs extend beyond providing individual and group counseling. They are also involved in career guidance, academic support, psychosocial interventions, motivational program, personal development activities, and preventive program. These responsibilities require GCTs to possess adequate professional knowledge, counseling skills, emotional stability, and confidence in managing diverse student needs. As the complexity of students' psychosocial and emotional concerns increases, GCTs are required to remain professionally competent while maintaining their own psychological well-being.

One important psychological factor associated with professional functioning is self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their ability to organize and perform actions required to achieve specific outcomes. In the context of school counseling, higher self-efficacy may enable GCTs to manage counseling sessions, address students' concerns, implement interventions, and cope with professional challenges more confidently. Previous studies have associated self-efficacy with positive occupational outcomes such as job satisfaction, work engagement, professional commitment, and well-being (Carkit, 2023; Xiao & Zheng, 2025).

Psychological well-being is another important factor in sustaining effective counseling practice. Ryff (1989) conceptualized psychological well-being through six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. For GCTs, maintaining psychological well-being is particularly important because they frequently manage emotionally demanding situations and students with diverse psychosocial needs. Previous studies have also highlighted concerns related to burnout and moderate levels of well-being among school counselors, suggesting the need to pay greater attention to counselors' psychological functioning (Huat, 2018; Kuen, 2015; Reping, 2017).

In addition, work motivation is essential for maintaining commitment and effectiveness in professional practice. Motivated GCTs are more likely to remain actively engaged in their responsibilities and provide consistent support to students. Previous research has shown that psychological resources such as self-efficacy and well-being are associated with various occupational outcomes, including motivation, job satisfaction, work engagement, and professional commitment (Mokhtar et al., 2021; Silinskas & Raiziene, 2024). Nevertheless, existing research has commonly examined these variables separately or has focused on teachers in general rather than specifically on school guidance and counseling professionals.

This represents an important research gap, particularly in the Malaysian context. Limited empirical evidence is available on the relationships between self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation among GCTs. Given the distinctive responsibilities and psychological demands associated with school counseling, findings from general teacher populations may not fully explain the experiences of GCTs. Examining these variables within this professional group may therefore provide a more specific understanding of the psychological factors associated with their work motivation.

Accordingly, this study examined the levels of self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation among Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia. It also investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and work motivation and the relationship between psychological well-being and work motivation. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on school counselor well-being and motivation and provide practical insights for the Ministry of Education Malaysia, school administrators, and relevant stakeholders in developing appropriate professional development and psychological support initiatives.

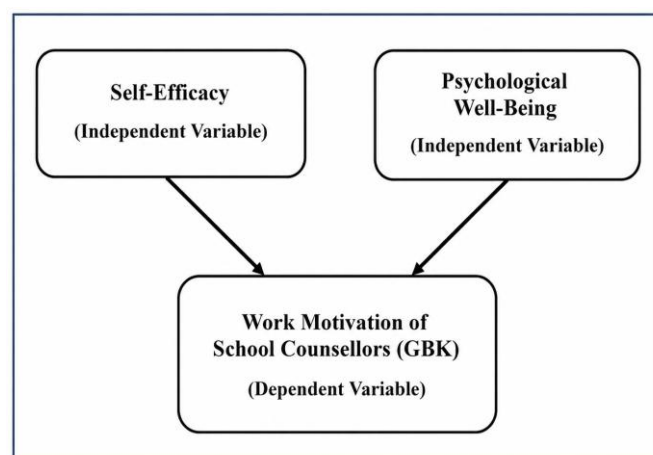


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study examines the relationships between self-efficacy and psychological

well-being as independent variables and work motivation as the dependent variable among school guidance and counselling teachers (GBK). The framework assumes that individual psychological resources are important in shaping motivation to perform professional responsibilities. Accordingly, counsellors with greater confidence in their professional capabilities and higher psychological well-being are expected to demonstrate stronger motivation, commitment, and engagement in delivering guidance and counselling services.

Self-efficacy refers to individuals' confidence in their ability to perform tasks and achieve desired goals. In the school counselling context, higher self-efficacy may enable counsellors to manage professional challenges, address students' needs, and implement counselling interventions more effectively. Previous research has shown that teacher self-efficacy is associated with greater work engagement and well-being (Shu, 2022). Similarly, Duan et al. (2024) reported positive associations between teacher self-efficacy and psychological and professional outcomes. These findings suggest that perceived professional competence may contribute to stronger motivation and engagement at work.

Psychological well-being refers to positive psychological functioning that enables individuals to manage personal and occupational demands effectively. This construct is particularly relevant to school counsellors, who frequently manage students' psychosocial concerns alongside multiple professional responsibilities. Previous studies have linked teacher well-being with self-efficacy, work engagement, and professional functioning (Shao, 2023). Chamani et al. (2023) further demonstrated that occupational self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and meaningful work were significantly associated with teachers' subjective well-being. Thus, positive psychological functioning may support counsellors in maintaining motivation and commitment despite occupational demands.

In this study, work motivation refers to the internal and external forces that initiate, direct, and sustain work-related behaviour. Higher work motivation may encourage school counsellors to remain committed to their professional responsibilities and continuously improve the quality of services provided to students. Previous evidence suggests that self-efficacy is positively associated with teachers' motivation and professional involvement (Malmstrom & Oqvist, 2025), while Isna et al. (2025) reported a significant relationship between self-efficacy and teachers' motivation in implementing a new curriculum.

Overall, the conceptual framework proposes two relationships: self-efficacy with work motivation and psychological well-being with work motivation. School guidance and counselling teachers with higher self-efficacy and psychological well-being are expected to demonstrate higher levels of work motivation. This framework therefore provides the conceptual basis for examining these relationships among GBK in Batu Pahat, Johor, and guides the formulation of the study hypotheses.

LITERATURE

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to organize and perform the actions required to achieve desired outcomes (Bandura, 1977, 1997). In the context of counseling, counseling self-efficacy reflects counselors' confidence in performing professional tasks such as applying helping skills, managing counseling sessions, and responding to challenging client concerns (Larson & Daniels, 1998; Lent et al., 2003).

Previous studies indicate that self-efficacy is associated with several positive professional outcomes. Ooi et al. (2021) found that mastery experiences, access to training, and supervisory support contributed significantly to school counselors' self-efficacy. Similarly, Mohd Yusoff et al. (2023) reported that self-efficacy strengthened resilience among Guidance and Counseling Teachers (GCTs). Structured professional development has also been shown to improve counselors' confidence and professional competence (Chow et al., 2024). These findings suggest that self-efficacy is an important psychological resource in supporting effective counseling practice.

Psychological well-being refers to positive psychological functioning and includes self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989; Ryff &

Keyes, 1995). For GCTs, psychological well-being is particularly important because counseling involves continuous emotional engagement and exposure to complex student concerns.

Previous research has shown that psychological well-being among teachers and counselors is associated with emotional stability, social support, resilience, and positive working conditions (Espinoza-Diaz et al., 2023; Mukhlis et al., 2024). Ku Johari et al. (2022) further found that counseling self-efficacy, self-compassion, emotional intelligence, and spiritual intelligence were significantly associated with psychological well-being among Malaysian school counselors. Similarly, Voon et al. (2021) highlighted the role of resilience in supporting counselors' psychological well-being.

Work motivation refers to the internal and external forces that initiate, direct, and sustain work-related behaviour (Vo et al., 2022). In the school counseling context, work motivation is important in maintaining GCTs' commitment, persistence, and effectiveness in delivering counseling services.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory distinguishes between intrinsic motivators, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and professional growth, and hygiene factors, such as salary, supervision, organizational policies, and working conditions (Herzberg, 1959). Previous studies have shown that work motivation is positively associated with professional performance and job satisfaction among school counselors (Lisnadora et al., 2021; Tengku Elmi Azlina, 2023). Organizational factors, particularly leadership and professional support, may also contribute to counselors' motivation and satisfaction (Subrumanian & Shunmugam, 2023).

Existing literature suggests that self-efficacy and psychological well-being are important psychological resources associated with positive occupational outcomes. Higher self-efficacy has been linked with job satisfaction, resilience, and work engagement (Ooi et al., 2021; Xiao & Zheng, 2025), while stronger psychological well-being has been associated with lower burnout and greater occupational engagement (Mullen et al., 2020).

Despite these findings, limited research has examined self-efficacy and psychological well-being simultaneously in relation to work motivation, particularly among Malaysian GCTs. Most previous studies have focused either on teachers generally or on related outcomes such as job satisfaction, burnout, resilience, and professional commitment. Therefore, further investigation is needed to understand how self-efficacy and psychological well-being are associated with work motivation within the specific professional context of school guidance and counseling.

Accordingly, this study examines the relationships between self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation among Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia.

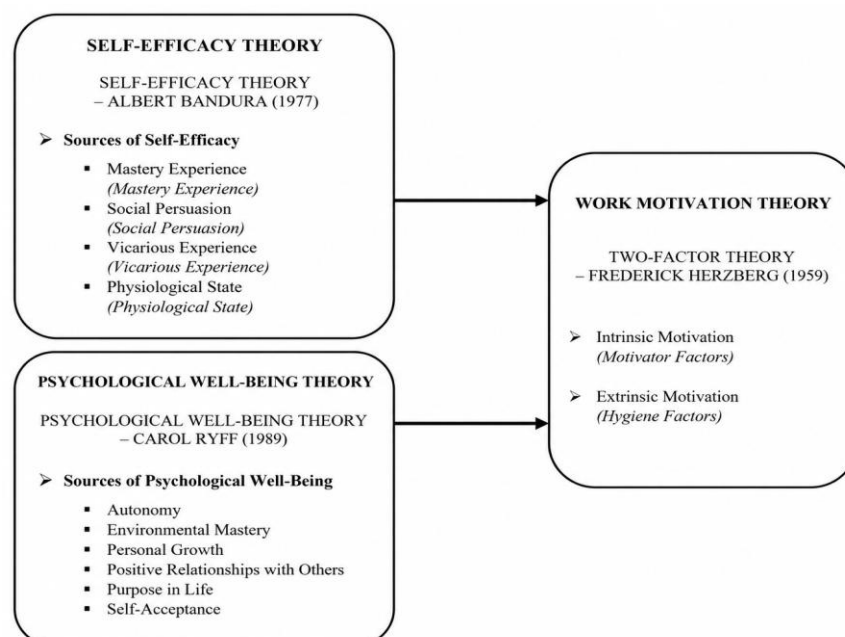


Figure 1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study integrates Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977), Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Model (1989), and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) to explain work motivation among school guidance and counselling teachers (GBK). Self-efficacy and psychological well-being are conceptualized as the independent variables, while work motivation is the dependent variable.

Bandura's (1977) theory defines self-efficacy as an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform specific tasks. It is developed through four main sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states. In the context of school counselling, higher self-efficacy may strengthen counsellors' confidence in conducting counselling sessions, managing student concerns, and addressing professional challenges. Previous studies have associated stronger self-efficacy with positive work-related outcomes, including job satisfaction and career goal attainment (Carkit, 2023; Xiao & Zheng, 2025).

Psychological well-being is based on Ryff's (1989) model, which comprises six dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Higher psychological well-being may enable school counsellors to manage occupational demands, maintain positive professional relationships, and remain engaged in their work. Previous research has also linked psychological well-being with greater work engagement and positive occupational functioning (Feng et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2023).

Work motivation is explained through Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory, which distinguishes between motivator factors and hygiene factors. Motivator factors, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and professional growth, promote positive work motivation, whereas hygiene factors, including working conditions, organizational policies, supervision, and interpersonal relationships, help prevent job dissatisfaction.

Overall, the framework proposes that self-efficacy and psychological well-being are positively associated with work motivation among school guidance and counselling teachers. Integrating these three theories provides a theoretical basis for understanding how professional confidence and positive psychological functioning may relate to counsellors' motivation to perform their professional responsibilities.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional correlational design to examine the relationships between self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation among Guidance and Counseling Teachers (GCTs) in Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia. The target population comprised 119 full-time Guidance and Counseling Teachers (GCTs) serving in government primary and secondary schools in Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia. Given the relatively small and clearly defined population, a total population sampling approach was adopted to maximize representation within the district. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination, a minimum sample of 92 participants was required. A total of 100 GCTs participated in the study, representing approximately 84% of the target population. Participants were eligible if they were serving as full-time GCTs, had at least one year of professional experience and were actively employed during the data collection period. Although the relatively high population coverage strengthens the representativeness of the sample within Batu Pahat, the geographically restricted sampling frame means that the findings should not be assumed to represent all GCTs across Malaysia. Differences in school environments, administrative practices, workload, organizational culture and access to professional support across districts and states may influence the relationships examined in this study.

The final sample consisted of 100 GCTs from primary and secondary schools in Batu Pahat, Johor. Female participants constituted 71% of the sample, while 29% were male. In terms of age, 30% were aged 20–30 years, 27% were aged 31–40 years, 26% were aged 41–50 years, and 17% were aged 51–60 years. Most participants were Malay (63%), followed by Chinese (33%) and Indian (4%). Regarding educational qualifications, 84% held a bachelor's degree and 14% held a master's degree. Participants were almost evenly distributed across primary (48%) and secondary schools (52%). In addition, 40% were registered with the Malaysian Board of Counsellors, while 60% were not registered. These demographic characteristics provide

important contextual information when interpreting the findings because professional experience, school level, qualification, registration status, and other background characteristics may potentially influence self-efficacy, psychological well-being and work motivation.

Data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire consisting of demographic information and three established instruments measuring self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation. Counseling self-efficacy was measured using the Counselor Activity Self-Efficacy Scales (CASES) developed by Lent et al. (2003). The CASES consists of 41 items assessing counselors' confidence across three broad domains: helping skills, session management, and managing challenging counseling situations. Responses are rated on a 10-point scale ranging from 0 (no confidence at all) to 9 (complete confidence), with higher scores indicating greater counseling self-efficacy.

Psychological well-being was assessed using the 18-item Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS) based on Ryff's model of psychological well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The instrument measures six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Items are rated using a seven-point Likert scale. Negatively worded items were reverse-scored prior to computing the overall score, with higher scores representing greater psychological well-being.

Work motivation was measured using the Short Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (SWEIMS) developed by Kotera et al. (2022). The 12-item scale assesses six dimensions of work motivation: intrinsic motivation, integrated regulation, identified regulation, introjected regulation, external regulation, and amotivation. Responses are rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (does not correspond at all) to 7 (corresponds exactly).

Prior to the main data collection, the Malay-language questionnaire was reviewed by experts with relevant expertise in language and counseling. The expert review focused on linguistic clarity, conceptual consistency with the original constructs, appropriateness of terminology, and suitability of the items for the professional and cultural context of Malaysian Guidance and Counseling Teachers. Where necessary, wording was refined to enhance comprehensibility without altering the intended meaning of the original items.

A pilot study involving 30 GCTs with characteristics comparable to those of the main study participants was subsequently conducted to assess the clarity and internal consistency of the instruments. The Counselor Activity Self-Efficacy Scales (CASES), Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS), and Short Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (SWEIMS) demonstrated Cronbach's alpha coefficients of .91, .88, and .89, respectively, indicating good internal consistency. These coefficients were also comparable with reliability estimates reported in previous studies using the respective instruments.

Nevertheless, the present study did not conduct a comprehensive psychometric validation, such as exploratory or confirmatory factor analysis, specifically for the Malaysian GCT population. Therefore, although expert review, contextual adaptation, pilot testing and reliability analysis provided preliminary support for the appropriateness of the instruments, their full construct validity and measurement equivalence within the Malaysian cultural context should be established more extensively in future research.

The instruments demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .91 for CASES, .88 for PWBS, and .89 for SWEIMS, indicating good reliability for use in the main study. These values were also consistent with previous validation studies reporting acceptable to high internal consistency for the three instruments (Lent et al., 2003; Garcia et al., 2023; Kotera et al., 2022).

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant educational authorities, including the Ministry of Education Malaysia and the Johor State Education Department. Data were collected electronically using Google Forms. The questionnaire link was distributed to eligible GCTs through appropriate professional communication channels, including email and messaging applications.

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before respondents proceeded with the questionnaire. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality of their responses,

and their right to withdraw from participation. No directly identifiable personal information was collected. Completed responses were screened for completeness before analysis.

Data were analyze using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and the three study variables. Frequencies and percentages were reported for demographic variables, while median scores were used to describe levels of self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation.

Spearman's rank-order correlation was used to examine the relationships between self-efficacy and work motivation and between psychological well-being and work motivation. This non-parametric test was selected because the data were derived from Likert-type scales and did not satisfy the assumptions required for parametric correlation analysis. The strength and direction of relationships were interpreted using Spearman's correlation coefficient, with statistical significance determined at $p < .05$.

The study was conducted in accordance with established research ethics principles. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. Data were used solely for academic purposes and were reported in aggregate form to protect participants' identities.

DISCUSSION

A total of 100 Guidance and Counseling Teachers (GCTs) from primary and secondary schools in Batu Pahat, Johor, participated in the study. Most participants were female (71%), while 29% were male. The largest age group was 20–30 years (30%), followed by 31–40 years (27%), 41–50 years (26%), and 51–60 years (17%). Most respondents were Malay (63%), followed by Chinese (33%) and Indian (4%). Regarding educational qualifications, 84% held a bachelor's degree and 14% held a master's degree. The sample was relatively balanced by school level, with 48% serving in primary schools and 52% in secondary schools. In terms of professional registration, 40% were registered with the Malaysian Board of Counsellors, whereas 60% were not registered.

The Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests indicated that self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation were not normally distributed ($p < .05$). Consequently, non-parametric statistics were employed, with median scores used to describe the central tendency of the study variables and Spearman's rank-order correlation used to examine their relationships.

Overall, the GCTs demonstrated a high level of counseling self-efficacy, with an overall median score of 6.3. Among the three CASES domains, helping skills and session management recorded median scores of 7, indicating high perceived competence in performing core counseling tasks. In contrast, counseling challenges recorded a lower median score of 5.

More specifically, respondents demonstrated strong confidence in fundamental helping skills, including attending, listening, restatement, interpretation, and information provision. The overall median for helping skills was 7. Similarly, session management recorded an overall median of 7, although developing a clear conceptualization of clients and their counseling issues emerged as a comparatively challenging competency.

Self-efficacy was comparatively lower when dealing with challenging counseling situations. Respondents reported greater confidence in managing interpersonal and culturally diverse counseling situations than in handling severe mental health and crisis-related cases. Lower confidence was particularly evident for cases involving clinical depression, suicide risk, severe anxiety, thought disturbances, sexual abuse, and recent trauma.

Table 1 Summary of Counseling Self-Efficacy

Domain	Median	Interpretation
Helping skills	7.0	High

Session management	7.0	High
Counseling challenges	5.0	Moderate-high
Overall self-efficacy	6.3	High

These findings suggest that although GCTs generally perceived themselves as competent in routine counseling skills and session management, their confidence was comparatively lower when dealing with complex clinical and crisis-related cases. The respondents also demonstrated a high level of psychological well-being, with an overall median score of 6. The findings reflected generally positive functioning across multiple aspects of psychological well-being. In particular, respondents demonstrated positive self-acceptance and autonomy, including confidence in their own opinions and a tendency to evaluate themselves according to personally meaningful values.

Positive interpersonal relationships and a clear sense of purpose in life were also evident. Despite some respondents reporting difficulties associated with daily demands, the overall findings indicated relatively positive psychological functioning.

The overall median score for work motivation was 6, indicating a high level of work motivation among the GCTs. Motivation was primarily characterized by intrinsic motivation, integrated regulation, and identified regulation, all of which recorded median scores of 6.

For example, 61% of respondents reported satisfaction from engaging in interesting challenges, while 57% reported satisfaction from successfully completing difficult tasks. Although respondents generally exhibited strong work motivation, amotivation recorded a median score of 4. This suggests that some respondents experienced external pressures related to unrealistic work demands and expectations, although these factors did not appear to substantially undermine their overall motivation.

Spearman's rank-order correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and work motivation. The results showed a very weak negative and non-significant relationship, $r_s = -.051$, $p = .613$. Thus, higher counseling self-efficacy was not significantly associated with higher or lower work motivation among the respondents.

Accordingly, the first null hypothesis (H_{01}) was not rejected. In contrast, psychological well-being demonstrated a weak but statistically significant positive relationship with work motivation, $r_s = .197$, $p = .005$. This finding indicates that GCTs with higher psychological well-being tended to report higher work motivation, although the magnitude of the association was small. Therefore, the second null hypothesis (H_{02}) was rejected.

Psychological well-being demonstrated a positive association with work motivation. However, the magnitude of the relationship was weak ($r_s = .197$). Therefore, the finding should be interpreted cautiously. Rather than suggesting that psychological well-being is a strong determinant of work motivation, the result indicates only a modest tendency for GCTs with higher psychological well-being to also report higher levels of work motivation. The finding does not demonstrate that greater psychological well-being causes increased work motivation because the cross-sectional correlational design does not establish temporal precedence or causal direction.

The weak magnitude of the association further suggests that psychological well-being represents only one component of a broader motivational process. Work motivation among GCTs is likely to be shaped by an interaction between individual psychological resources and contextual or organizational conditions.

Factors such as workload, administrative support, leadership, school climate, professional recognition, career advancement opportunities, job satisfaction, role clarity and occupational stress may contribute more substantially to variations in motivation. Therefore, psychological well-being should be understood as a relevant but relatively modest correlate of work motivation rather than a dominant explanatory factor.

Table 2 Spearman Correlations Between Study Variables and Work Motivation

Relationship	r_s	P	Interpretation	Decision
Self-efficacy ↔ Work motivation	-.051	.613	Very weak, non-significant	H ₀₁ not rejected
Psychological well-being ↔ Work motivation	.197	.005	Weak positive, significant	H ₀₂ rejected

Overall, the findings revealed that GCTs reported high levels of self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation. However, counseling self-efficacy was not significantly associated with work motivation. Psychological well-being, in contrast, showed a small but significant positive association with work motivation. These findings suggest that work motivation among school counselors may be more closely related to their psychological functioning than to their perceived counseling competence alone.

This study examined the levels of self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation among Guidance and Counseling Teachers (GCTs) in Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia, and investigated the relationships between self-efficacy and work motivation and between psychological well-being and work motivation. Overall, the findings indicated high levels of self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation. However, Spearman's correlation analysis showed that self-efficacy was not significantly associated with work motivation ($r_{s\leftrightarrow} = -.051$, $p = .613$), whereas psychological well-being demonstrated a weak but significant positive relationship with work motivation ($r_{s\leftrightarrow} = .197$, $p = .005$).

The absence of a significant relationship between counseling self-efficacy and work motivation ($r_s = -.051$) indicates that confidence in performing counseling-related tasks was not systematically associated with the level of work motivation reported by participants. This finding suggests that professional confidence and work motivation may represent related but distinct occupational processes. A GCT may perceive themselves as highly competent in counseling practice without necessarily experiencing stronger motivation toward their work. Conversely, motivation may be maintained through professional values, intrinsic satisfaction, organizational recognition, interpersonal relationships, or commitment to student development rather than perceived competence alone.

Accordingly, self-efficacy should not be interpreted as a direct determinant of work motivation in the present study. Contextual variables may condition the extent to which professional confidence translates into motivation. For example, highly self-efficacious GCTs working under excessive administrative demands, high caseloads, unclear professional roles, or limited organizational support may nevertheless experience reduced motivation. Future research could therefore investigate whether organizational and occupational factors moderate or mediate the relationship between self-efficacy and work motivation.

The findings showed that GCTs generally reported a high level of self-efficacy, particularly in helping skills and session management. This suggests that respondents were confident in performing core counseling tasks and managing counseling sessions effectively. These findings are consistent with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy framework, which proposes that stronger beliefs in personal competence are associated with greater persistence, confidence, and task engagement.

The findings are also consistent with previous studies reporting relatively high self-efficacy among educators and school counselors (Naqiyah & Sholeha, 2023; Rozi & A. Hamid, 2025). Ooi et al. (2021) further demonstrated that mastery experiences, training opportunities, and supervisory support were important contributors to school counselors' self-efficacy. Frequent exposure to counseling activities may therefore strengthen GCTs' confidence in routine professional tasks.

However, respondents demonstrated comparatively lower self-efficacy when managing complex counseling challenges, particularly cases involving severe mental health concerns and crisis-related situations. This finding suggests that confidence in routine counseling competencies does not necessarily translate into equal confidence when managing high-risk or clinically complex cases. Similar observations have been reported by Chow et al. (2024) and Alkeraida (2026), who emphasized the importance of specialized training, case-based learning, professional supervision, and continuous professional development in strengthening counselors'

competence in challenging situations. These findings highlight the need for targeted training in crisis intervention, case conceptualization, trauma-informed practice, and complex mental health cases.

The respondents also demonstrated a high level of psychological well-being. This indicates generally positive functioning in areas such as self-acceptance, interpersonal relationships, personal development, purpose in life, and environmental mastery. From Ryff's perspective, these dimensions reflect positive psychological functioning and the ability to manage life and occupational demands effectively.

The finding is consistent with research showing that psychological well-being is associated with emotional stability, positive workplace relationships, social support, and professional functioning (Espinoza-Diaz et al., 2023; Mukhlis et al., 2024). Ku Johari et al. (2022) similarly found that self-compassion, counseling self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and spiritual intelligence were associated with psychological well-being among Malaysian school counselors. Voon et al. (2021) also highlighted resilience and self-compassion as important psychological resources for counselors.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, this study employed a cross-sectional correlational design. Consequently, the findings represent statistical associations observed at a single point in time and cannot establish causal relationships or the direction of influence among self-efficacy, psychological well-being and work motivation. Although psychological well-being was positively associated with work motivation, it cannot be concluded that higher psychological well-being causes greater work motivation. Reciprocal relationships or the influence of unmeasured variables are also possible.

Second, the study was geographically restricted to 100 GCTs from government primary and secondary schools in Batu Pahat, Johor. Although the sample represented approximately 84% of the identified population within the district, contextual differences across Malaysian states, urban and rural settings, school systems, organizational cultures, and administrative environments may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of Malaysian GCTs.

Third, the study relied exclusively on self-report questionnaires. Consequently, responses may have been affected by social desirability, response tendencies, or common-method variance, particularly because counseling professionals may perceive expectations to report positively regarding their professional competence, psychological functioning and occupational motivation.

Fourth, although the instruments demonstrated good internal consistency and the Malay-language questionnaire underwent expert review and pilot testing, comprehensive psychometric validation of all three measures specifically among Malaysian GCTs was beyond the scope of this study. Further research using confirmatory factor analysis and other measurement validation procedures would provide stronger evidence regarding their construct validity and cultural equivalence.

Fifth, the study examined only self-efficacy and psychological well-being in relation to work motivation. The relatively weak association between psychological well-being and work motivation suggests that additional individual, professional and organizational factors may contribute substantially to motivation. Variables such as workload, job satisfaction, burnout, occupational stress, organizational support, school climate, leadership practices, professional recognition, role ambiguity, years of experience and professional registration were not statistically controlled in the present analysis. Consequently, potential confounding, mediating and moderating effects cannot be ruled out.

Future research should extend the present findings in several ways. First, studies involving larger and more geographically diverse samples of GCTs across multiple Malaysian states are recommended to improve external validity and allow comparisons across different school and regional contexts. Stratified or multistage sampling approaches could be considered to ensure representation according to school level, location, professional experience, gender and other relevant characteristics.

Second, longitudinal research would enable researchers to examine how self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation change over time and provide stronger evidence regarding temporal relationships

among these constructs. Mixed-method designs could further complement quantitative results through interviews or focus groups examining how GCTs experience psychological demands, professional motivation, workload, administrative support and occupational challenges.

Third, future studies should incorporate additional explanatory variables, including organizational support, workload, leadership, job satisfaction, professional stress, burnout, school climate, professional recognition, role clarity, and opportunities for career advancement. Hierarchical or multiple regression analysis could initially be used to determine the relative contribution of psychological and organizational variables to work motivation while statistically controlling for demographic characteristics. With an adequately powered sample and validated measurement model, structural equation modelling could subsequently be employed to examine more complex direct, indirect, mediating and moderating relationships.

Finally, further psychometric investigation of the Malay-language instruments is recommended. Confirmatory factor analysis, convergent and discriminant validity testing and measurement invariance across relevant demographic groups could strengthen evidence regarding their suitability for Malaysian school counseling populations.

This study provides empirical evidence concerning the associations among self-efficacy, psychological well-being, and work motivation among Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Batu Pahat, Johor. Participants generally reported high levels of counseling self-efficacy, psychological well-being and work motivation. However, counseling self-efficacy was not significantly associated with work motivation, suggesting that perceived professional competence alone may not correspond with greater occupational motivation. Psychological well-being demonstrated a statistically significant but weak positive association with work motivation, indicating that positive psychological functioning may represent one of several factors related to GCTs' motivation.

Given the cross-sectional nature of the study and the small magnitude of the observed relationship, these findings should be interpreted as associative rather than causal. Work motivation among GCTs is likely to reflect the combined contribution of personal psychological resources and broader organizational and occupational conditions. Therefore, initiatives aimed at sustaining GCT motivation should extend beyond enhancing professional competence and psychological well-being to include appropriate workload management, supportive leadership, professional recognition, supervision, role clarity and opportunities for professional development. Future longitudinal, mixed-method, and multivariate studies involving GCTs from different Malaysian regions are needed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological and organizational mechanisms associated with work motivation.

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