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Motional labor, leisure time literacy, and well-being levels in individuals with pedagogical formation training

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the relationships among emotional labor, leisure literacy, and perceived well-being in individuals with pedagogical formation training. A correlational and comparative research design was employed in the study. The Emotional Labor Scale, the Leisure Time Literacy Scale, and the Perceived Well-being Scale were used as data collection tools in our research. The study was conducted on a voluntary basis. The population of the research consists of individuals who have completed teacher training in Istanbul, and the sample consists of individuals selected from this population using a convenience sampling method. In conclusion, a significant and robust relationship was identified between emotional labor, leisure literacy, and perceived well-being among individuals receiving pedagogical formation training. Individuals demonstrating more adaptive emotional regulation patterns and more effective leisure management were found to report higher levels of psychological well-being. Regression analyses indicated that emotional labor significantly predicted perceived well-being, whereas leisure literacy did not demonstrate a significant mediating effect. The findings suggest that integrating emotional regulation training and supporting leisure awareness within teacher education programs may contribute to psychological well-being and professional resilience.

Keywords: Emotional labor, leisure literacy, well-being, teacher training

Formasyon eğitimi alan kişilerde duygusal emek, serbest zaman okuryazarlık ve esenlik düzeyi

Öz

Bu çalışma, pedagojik eğitim almış bireylerde duygusal emek, boş zaman okuryazarlığı ve algılanan iyilik hali arasındaki ilişkileri incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Çalışmada korelasyonel ve karşılaştırmalı bir araştırma tasarımı uygulanmıştır. Araştırmamızda veri toplama araçları olarak Duygusal Emek Ölçeği, Boş Zaman Okuryazarlığı Ölçeği ve Algılanan İyilik Hali Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Çalışma gönüllülük esasına göre yürütülmüştür. Araştırma popülasyonu, İstanbul'da öğretmenlik eğitimini tamamlamış bireylerden oluşmakta olup, örneklem bu popülasyondan kolay örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen bireylerden oluşmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, pedagojik eğitim alan bireyler arasında duygusal emek, boş zaman okuryazarlığı ve algılanan iyilik hali arasında anlamlı ve güçlü bir ilişki tespit edilmiştir. Daha yüksek duygusal yeterliliğe ve daha etkili boş zaman yönetimine sahip bireylerin, belirgin şekilde daha yüksek psikolojik iyilik hallerine sahip oldukları bulunmuştur. Regresyon analizleri, duygusal emeğin algılanan iyilik halini anlamlı bir şekilde tahmin ettiğini, boş zaman okuryazarlığının ise anlamlı bir aracı etki göstermediğini ortaya koymuştur. Bulgular, duygusal düzenleme ve boş zaman okuryazarlığı eğitiminin öğretmen eğitim programlarına entegre edilmesinin, bireylerin psikolojik refahını ve mesleki dayanıklılığını artırabileceğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Duygusal emek, boş zaman okuryazarlığı, refah, öğretmen eğitimi*

INTRODUCTION

Emotional demands have become a defining characteristic of modern professional environments, particularly in teaching, where sustained interpersonal interaction and affect regulation are essential. The concept of emotional labor, first introduced by Hochschild (1983), refers to the regulation of emotions in order to meet organizational expectations and often involves suppressing or modifying one's genuine emotional expressions (Kumari et al., 2025). When performed excessively or without adequate coping resources, emotional labor may lead to increased stress, emotional exhaustion, and ultimately burnout (Wharton, 2009; Brunetto et al., 2014). In contrast, emotional competence, grounded in emotional intelligence theory, represents an individual's capacity to perceive, understand, and regulate both their own emotions and those of others (Guy & Lee, 2015). This competence functions as a protective factor that can buffer the negative effects of emotional demands (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Karimi et al., 2013). Although emotional competence is conceptually discussed as a relevant construct within

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e-ISSN: 2717-9508/© 2026 Red & River Publications. All rights are reserved, including those for text and data mining, AI training, and similar technologies.

the framework of emotional intelligence, it is important to clarify that the present study does not directly measure emotional competence as a separate variable. Instead, emotional labor is operationalized as the primary construct reflecting individuals' emotion regulation processes in professional contexts. In this sense, emotional competence is treated as a theoretical background variable that informs the interpretation of emotional labor rather than as an independently measured construct. This distinction ensures conceptual clarity between the theoretical framework and the variables included in the empirical analysis.

Within educational contexts, teachers frequently engage in roles that require continuous emotional regulation. They must balance instructional responsibilities with empathy, classroom management, and student engagement. Empirical evidence suggests that while emotional labor may contribute to the development of professional identity and pedagogical effectiveness, it also constitutes a significant risk factor for psychological strain when institutional support mechanisms are insufficient (Kinman et al., 2011a; Nath & Pandey, 2025). Moreover, persistent reliance on surface acting and emotional suppression has been associated with decreased job satisfaction and increased burnout, highlighting the importance of adaptive coping resources (Brunetto et al., 2014). Despite these findings, existing research has often examined emotional labor as an isolated construct, overlooking the complex interplay between emotion regulation capacities, personal recovery strategies, and psychological resilience.

An increasing body of literature highlights the potential role of leisure literacy as a complementary mechanism that supports emotional well-being. Leisure literacy can be defined as the awareness, knowledge, and ability to engage in restorative and meaningful leisure activities that contribute to psychological recovery (Newman et al., 2014). Studies indicate that individuals with higher levels of emotional competence are more likely to participate in enriching leisure activities that facilitate emotional recovery and reduce stress-related symptoms (Bates, 2016; Petrović et al., 2025). However, the integration of leisure literacy into educational research remains limited, and its potential mediating role in the relationship between emotional labor and well-being has not yet been sufficiently clarified.

Collectively, prior research has provided valuable insights; however, several important limitations remain. First, emotional labor, emotional competence, and leisure-related behaviors are often treated as independent constructs rather than as components of an interconnected system. Second, much of the existing literature focuses on professions outside the educational sector, which limits the generalizability of findings to teaching contexts. Third, teacher candidates—who are still in the process of developing their professional emotional skills—have rarely been examined in this line of research. Addressing these gaps is essential for designing preventive and educational interventions aimed at fostering emotional sustainability within teaching professions.

The present study aims to examine the relationships among emotional labor, leisure literacy, and perceived well-being among individuals enrolled in teacher education programs. By integrating perspectives from emotion regulation theory (Gross, 1998), emotional intelligence frameworks (Mayer & Salovey, 1997), and leisure psychology (Newman et al., 2014), this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how emotional and leisure-related resources jointly contribute to psychological resilience and professional well-being. Ultimately, the findings are expected to inform evidence-based strategies for incorporating emotional literacy and self-care training into teacher education curricula, thereby contributing to the development of sustainable and emotionally competent educators. Within this framework, emotional labor is considered as the observable manifestation of emotion regulation processes, whereas emotional competence remains a broader theoretical construct underlying these processes.

Hypotheses

H_1: Emotional labor is significantly associated with perceived well-being.

H_2: Emotional labor is significantly associated with leisure literacy.

H_3: Leisure literacy is positively associated with perceived well-being.

H_4: Leisure literacy mediates the relationship between emotional labor and perceived well-being.

METHOD

Research design

This study employed a relational survey model to examine the relationships among emotional labor, leisure literacy, and perceived well-being. The relational survey model is a research approach that aims to identify the presence and degree of relationships among two or more variables (Karasar, 2007). Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, and the study was conducted on a voluntary basis.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of individuals in İstanbul who had completed pedagogical formation training. The sample comprised 485 participants selected from this population using a convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling enables researchers to collect data quickly and easily from an accessible group of participants (Karasar, 2007). Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, and participation was entirely

voluntary. In terms of demographic characteristics, 26.0% (n = 126) of the participants were female and 74.0% (n = 359) were male. Regarding age distribution, 24.5% (n = 119) of the participants were aged 18–22 years, 20.0% (n = 97) were aged 23–27 years, 13.4% (n = 65) were aged 28–32 years, and 42.1% (n = 204) were aged 33 years and above.

Data collection tools

In addition to a personal information form designed to identify the demographic characteristics of the participants, three standardized instruments were used in the study: the Emotional Labor Scale, the Leisure Literacy Scale, and the Perceived Wellness Scale.

Emotional Labor Scale

The Emotional Labor Scale was developed by Diefendorff et al. (2005), and its Turkish adaptation was conducted by Basım and Beğenirbaş (2012). The scale consists of three dimensions: surface acting (6 items), deep acting (4 items), and naturally felt emotions (3 items). The scale is structured using a 5-point Likert format, with responses ranging from "Never" to "Always." The internal consistency coefficients reported for the scale were α = 0.92 for surface acting, α = 0.85 for deep acting, and α = 0.83 for naturally felt emotions.

Leisure Literacy Scale

The Leisure Literacy Scale, developed by Arslan (2018), consists of 21 items and is structured as a 5-point Likert-type scale. The instrument includes three subdimensions: basic literacy, functional literacy, and operational literacy. The overall internal consistency coefficient of the scale was reported as Cronbach's α = 0.93. In the present study, the scale demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's α of 0.91.

Perceived Wellness Scale

The Perceived Wellness Scale was developed by Adams et al. (1997) to assess individuals' perceived levels of wellness. The scale consists of 36 items and six dimensions. The Turkish adaptation and validity–reliability analysis of the scale were conducted by Memnun (2006). Responses are rated on a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Of the 36 items, 21 are positively worded and 15 are negatively worded. The total score ranges from 36 to 216, where scores below 144 indicate a low level of perceived wellness, while scores 144 and above indicate a high level of perceived wellness. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was reported as α = 0.84 (Memnun, 2006). In the current study, the scale showed good reliability, with Cronbach's α of 0.88.

Data analysis

The data obtained from the participants were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. Prior to the main analyses, the dataset was screened for accuracy, missing values, and outliers. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants.

The normality of the data distribution was assessed using skewness and kurtosis coefficients. In line with the literature, skewness and kurtosis values provide important information regarding distributional properties (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Büyüköztürk, 2018). However, the obtained values indicated that the data did not conform to a normal distribution. Therefore, non-parametric statistical methods were preferred in the subsequent analyses. To examine differences in emotional labor, leisure literacy, and perceived well-being according to binary demographic variables such as gender and marital status, the Mann–Whitney U test was used. For variables with more than two categories, such as age groups and income levels, the Kruskal–Wallis H test was conducted. To test the predictive relationship between emotional labor and leisure literacy, simple linear regression analysis was performed. In addition, multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of emotional labor and leisure literacy on perceived well-being. Furthermore, mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS Macro for SPSS (Model 4) to examine whether leisure literacy mediated the relationship between emotional labor and perceived well-being. The indirect effect was tested using a bootstrap procedure with 5,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals. An indirect effect was considered statistically significant when the confidence interval did not include zero (Hayes, 2018).

Ethical approval

This study was conducted with the approval of the Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of İstanbul University-Cerrahpaşa (Date: 03.06.2025, Decision No: 2025/434). All procedures were conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	126	26.0
	Male	359	74.0
	Total	**485**	**100.0**
Age	18–22	119	24.5
	23–27	97	20.0
	28–32	65	13.4
	33 and above	204	42.1
	Total	**485**	**100.0**
Marital Status	Married	193	39.8
	Single	292	60.2
	Total	**485**	**100.0**
Income Level	0–20,000	84	17.3
	20,001–40,000	192	39.6
	40,001–60,000	116	23.9
	60,001 and above	93	19.2
	Total	**485**	**100.0**

As shown in Table 1, 26.0% of the participants were female (n = 126), while 74.0% were male (n = 359). Regarding age distribution, 24.5% of the participants were between 18–22 years, 20.0% were 23–27 years, 13.4% were 28–32 years, and 42.1% were 33 years or older. In terms of marital status, 39.8% of the participants were married, whereas 60.2% were single. With respect to income level, 17.3% of the participants reported an income between 0–20,000, 39.6% between 20,001–40,000, 23.9% between 40,001–60,000, and 19.2% reported an income of 60,001 or above.

Table 2. Examination of emotional labor, leisure literacy, and perceived wellness levels according to participants' gender

Scales	Dimensions	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Rank Sum	U	P
Emotional Labor Scale	Surface acting	Female	126	238.00	29,987.50	21,986.50	0.640
		Male	359	244.76	87,867.50		
	Deep acting	Female	126	236.10	29,748.00	21,747.00	0.518
		Male	359	245.42	88,107.00		
	Naturally felt emotions	Female	126	237.53	29,928.50	21,927.50	0.607
		Male	359	244.92	87,926.50		
	Emotional Labor Scale (total score)	Female	126	231.38	29,153.50	21,152.50	0.278
		Male	359	247.08	88,701.50		
Leisure Literacy Scale	Basic literacy	Female	126	230.10	28,993.00	20,992.00	0.229
		Male	359	247.53	88,862.00		
	Functional literacy	Female	126	250.45	31,557.00	21,678.00	0.485
		Male	359	240.38	86,298.00		
	Operational literacy	Female	126	241.72	30,457.00	22,456.00	0.905
		Male	359	243.45	87,398.00		
	Leisure Literacy Scale (total score)	Female	126	233.81	29,460.50	21,459.50	0.392
		Male	359	246.22	88,394.50		
Perceived Wellness Scale	Physical wellness	Female	126	239.64	30,194.50	22,193.50	0.754
		Male	359	244.18	87,660.50		
	Spiritual wellness	Female	126	245.53	30,936.50	22,298.50	0.813
		Male	359	242.11	86,918.50		
	Psychological wellness	Female	126	232.83	29,337.00	21,336.00	0.342
		Male	359	246.57	88,518.00		
	Social wellness	Female	126	223.49	28,159.50	20,158.50	0.068
		Male	359	249.85	89,695.50		
	Emotional wellness	Female	126	246.12	31,011.50	22,223.50	0.771
		Male	359	241.90	86,843.50		
	Intellectual wellness	Female	126	238.29	30,024.00	22,023.00	0.659
		Male	359	244.65	87,831.00		
	Perceived Wellness Scale (total score)	Female	126	232.88	29,342.50	21,341.50	0.346
		Male	359	246.55	88,512.50		

As shown in Table 2, no statistically significant differences were observed between female and male participants in any subdimension or total score of the Emotional Labor Scale, Leisure Literacy Scale, or Perceived Wellness Scale (p> 0.05).

Table 3. Examination of emotional labor, leisure literacy, and perceived wellness levels according to participants' marital status

Scales	Dimensions	Marital	N	Mean	Rank	U	P
Emotional Labor Scale	Surface acting	Married	193	225.86	43,590.50	24,869.50	**0.028**
		Single	292	254.33	74,264.50		
	Deep acting	Married	193	249.76	48,204.00	26,873.00	0.385
		Single	292	238.53	69,651.00		
	Naturally felt emotions	Married	193	238.89	46,105.50	27,384.50	0.596
		Single	292	245.72	71,749.50		
	Emotional Labor Scale (total score)	Married	193	234.72	45,300.50	26,579.50	0.289
		Single	292	248.47	72,554.50		
Leisure Literacy Scale	Basic literacy	Married	193	245.05	47,294.00	27,783.00	0.793
		Single	292	241.65	70,561.00		
	Functional literacy	Married	193	248.34	47,930.50	27,146.50	0.492
		Single	292	239.47	69,924.50		
	Operational literacy	Married	193	242.48	46,799.50	28,078.50	0.947
		Single	292	243.34	71,055.50		
	Leisure Literacy Scale (total score)	Married	193	250.08	48,265.50	26,811.50	0.365
		Single	292	238.32	69,589.50		
Perceived Wellness Scale	Physical wellness	Married	193	245.18	47,320.00	27,757.00	0.780
		Single	292	241.56	70,535.00		
	Spiritual wellness	Married	193	252.07	48,650.00	26,427.00	0.245
		Single	292	237.00	69,205.00		
	Psychological wellness	Married	193	244.13	47,116.50	27,960.50	0.885
		Single	292	242.26	70,738.50		
	Social wellness	Married	193	246.35	47,545.50	27,531.50	0.668
		Single	292	240.79	70,309.50		
	Emotional wellness	Married	193	243.63	47,021.00	28,056.00	0.935
		Single	292	242.58	70,834.00		
	Intellectual wellness	Married	193	248.38	47,937.50	27,139.50	0.490
		Single	292	239.44	69,917.50		
	Perceived Wellness Scale (total score)	Married	193	251.27	48,495.00	26,582.00	0.291
		Single	292	237.53	69,360.00		

When Table 3 is examined, a statistically significant difference was observed in the surface acting subdimension of the Emotional Labor Scale according to marital status ($p< 0.05$). The mean rank values indicated that single participants reported higher levels of surface acting compared to married participants. No significant differences were found in the other subdimensions or total scores of the Emotional Labor Scale, Leisure Literacy Scale, or Perceived Wellness Scale ($p> 0.05$).

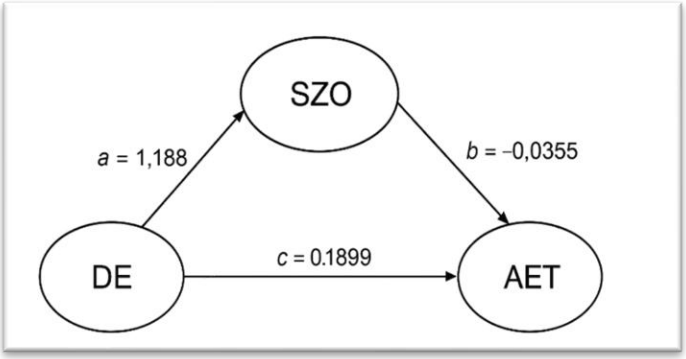

Fig. 1. The mediating role of Leisure Literacy (LL) in the relationship between Emotional Labor (EL) and Total Perceived Wellness (TPW)

Fig 1 shows that emotional labor significantly and positively predicts leisure literacy (a = 1.188). This finding indicates that the elasticity of emotional labor increases with the level of leisure literacy. In contrast, the effect of leisure literacy on well-being was found to be negative and quite low (b = −0.0355). This suggests that leisure literacy plays a well-being-enhancing role within this model. On the other hand, emotional labor appears to have a direct and positive effect on well-being (c = 0.1899).

Table 4. Regression analysis results examining the relationship between Emotional Labor (EL) and Leisure Literacy (LL)

Variable	B	SE	T	p	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Constant	70.8767	2.6578	26.6679	< 0.001	65.6545	76.0989
EL	0.1188	0.0532	2.2317	0.026	0.0142	0.2234

The regression analysis results presented in Table 4 indicate that Emotional Labor (EL) has a positive and statistically significant effect on Leisure Literacy (LL) (B = 0.1188, SE = 0.0532, t(483) = 2.23, p = 0.026, 95% CI [0.0142, 0.2234]). This finding suggests that as the level of emotional labor increases, the level of leisure literacy also increases significantly. The constant term (B = 70.8767, p < 0.001) represents the expected average level of leisure literacy when the emotional labor score is zero within the regression model.

Table 5. Regression analysis results examining the effects of Emotional Labor (EL) and Leisure Literacy (LL) on Total Perceived Wellness (TPW)

Variable	B	SE	t	P	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Constant	124.6092	7.2072	17.2897	< 0.001	110.4479	138.7705
EL	0.1899	0.0923	2.0585	0.040	0.0086	0.3712
LL	-0.0355	0.0785	-0.4525	0.651	-0.1897	0.1187

According to the regression analysis results presented in Table 5, Emotional Labor (EL) has a positive and statistically significant effect on Total Perceived Wellness (TPW) (B = 0.1899, SE = 0.0923, t(482) = 2.05, p = 0.040, 95% CI [0.0086, 0.3712]). This finding indicates that higher levels of emotional labor are associated with higher levels of perceived wellness. In contrast, the effect of Leisure Literacy (LL) on TPW was negative but not statistically significant (B = −0.0355, SE = 0.0785, t(482) = −0.45, p = .651, 95% CI [−0.1897, 0.1187]). The constant term (B = 124.6092, p < 0.001) represents the expected average level of total perceived wellness when both EL and LL values are zero within the regression model.

Table 6. Total, direct, and indirect effects of Emotional Labor (EL) on Total Perceived Wellness (TPW)

Effect Type / Mediator	B	SE / BootSE	t	P	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Total Effect	0.1857	0.0917	2.0248	0.043	0.0055	0.3659
Direct Effect	0.1899	0.0923	2.0585	0.040	0.0086	0.3712
Indirect Effect (LL)	-0.0042	0.0105	—	—	0.0158	-0.0279

Table 6 shows that the total effect of emotional labor on total perceived well-being (TPW) was statistically significant (B = 0.1857, SE = 0.0917, t = 2.0248, p = 0.043, 95% CI [0.0055, 0.3659]). Similarly, the direct effect of emotional labor on well-being was also significant (B = 0.1899, SE = 0.0923, t = 2.0585, p = 0.040, 95% CI [0.0086, 0.3712]). However, the indirect effect mediated by leisure literacy was not statistically significant (B = -0.0042, BootSE = 0.0105, 95% CI [-0.0279, 0.0158]), as the confidence interval included zero.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Teaching professionals face high emotional demands, and developing strategies to maintain psychological well-being is critical. This study contributes to the understanding of how emotional labor, leisure literacy, and perceived well-being interact among individuals receiving pedagogical formation training.

In an era where emotional demands increasingly shape professional and personal well-being, understanding the interplay between emotional processes and life quality has become more critical than ever. The findings of this study revealed significant relationships among emotional labor, leisure literacy, and perceived well-being. Participants who demonstrated higher emotional awareness and regulation skills tended to report better perceived well-being and greater leisure literacy. These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the critical role of emotional competence, psychological resilience, and emotional regulation in enhancing well-being in emotionally demanding professions (Karimi et al., 2013; Brunetto et al., 2014; Nath & Pandey, 2025; Kabak & Baş, 2026).

First, the demographic findings (Table 1) indicate that the sample was predominantly male and composed largely of individuals aged 33 and above. These characteristics provide an important contextual background for interpreting the subsequent findings.

Regarding gender differences, the results presented in Table 2 demonstrated that there were no statistically significant differences between female and male participants in any subdimension or total score of emotional labor, leisure literacy, or perceived well-being. This finding suggests that these psychological constructs operate similarly across genders within this

sample. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies indicating that emotional competencies and resilience are influenced more by individual and contextual factors than gender alone (Brunetto et al., 2014).

In terms of marital status (Table 3), a statistically significant difference was observed only in the surface acting subdimension of emotional labor, with single participants reporting higher levels than married individuals. This finding suggests that single individuals may experience higher levels of emotional dissonance and may be more likely to rely on surface-level emotional regulation strategies.This interpretation is consistent with the emotional labor framework proposed by Hochschild (1983), which highlights the psychological costs associated with surface acting, and is further supported by empirical studies emphasizing emotional strain and burnout related to such regulation strategies (Kinman et al., 2011a; Bates, 2016). Moreover, this result aligns with previous research indicating that stress levels and coping strategies may vary according to socio-demographic characteristics, including marital status (Baş & Kabak, 2024).

The regression results further clarify the relationships among variables. As shown in Table 4, emotional labor was found to be a significant and positive predictor of leisure literacy. This suggests that individuals who are more actively engaged in emotional regulation processes may also develop greater competence in managing their leisure time. This finding is in line with previous research highlighting the role of self-regulation and psychological resilience in shaping adaptive behaviors and engagement in meaningful activities (Kabak & Baş, 2026).

However, as indicated in Table 5, while emotional labor significantly and positively predicted perceived well-being, leisure literacy did not have a statistically significant effect on well-being. This finding indicates that leisure literacy, although conceptually relevant, may not directly translate into enhanced well-being outcomes. Supporting this interpretation, prior studies have demonstrated that well-being is influenced not only by behavioral competencies but also by deeper psychological mechanisms such as self-worth, emotional adaptation, and resilience (Petrović et al., 2025).

The mediation model presented in Fig 1 further supports these findings. Emotional labor significantly predicted leisure literacy (a path), whereas the effect of leisure literacy on well-being (b path) was negative and not statistically significant. In contrast, the direct effect of emotional labor on well-being (c path) was positive and significant.

Consistent with this pattern, the mediation analysis results presented in Table 6 indicate that the relationship between emotional labor and perceived well-being is primarily driven by the direct effect. Although the indirect effect was estimated in the mediation model, it was not statistically significant, as the confidence interval included zero. This finding is supported by previous research indicating that psychological resilience and emotional competence may exert direct effects on well-being without necessarily operating through intermediary mechanisms (Belli et al., 2023).

Overall, these findings suggest that emotional labor, when supported by adequate emotional competence, may function as a developmental resource rather than merely a risk factor. In particular, the use of more adaptive emotional regulation strategies, such as deep acting, appears to enhance psychological well-being and emotional authenticity. This interpretation is consistent with previous research demonstrating that emotional regulation strategies and emotional competence contribute significantly to well-being and resilience (Kinman et al., 2011b; Karimi et al., 2013).

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that emotional labor, leisure literacy, and perceived well-being are closely interconnected among individuals receiving pedagogical formation training. Participants with higher emotional competence and the ability to manage emotional demands more effectively reported greater psychological well-being and higher leisure literacy, suggesting that emotional regulation serves as both a coping mechanism and a developmental resource. These results align with prior research emphasizing that while excessive emotional labor can lead to stress and burnout, emotional competence and meaningful leisure engagement can buffer these effects and promote resilience and satisfaction (Karimi et al., 2013; Brunetto et al., 2014; Nath & Pandey, 2025).

No statistically significant differences were observed according to gender, whereas marital status showed a significant difference only in the surface acting subdimension of emotional labor. This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating that emotional labor directly influences well-being, while leisure literacy functions as a complementary, supportive resource, even though it did not show a mediating effect in this sample. Therefore, developing emotional intelligence and integrating leisure education within teacher preparation programs are essential for fostering sustainable well-being and professional effectiveness in future educators.

Recommendations

Integrating structured emotional regulation training and leisure education modules into teacher training curricula may enhance long-term psychological resilience.

Limitations and strengths

This study contributes to both theory and practice by examining emotional labor, leisure literacy, and perceived well-being within a comprehensive framework and by employing validated scales along with advanced statistical analyses, which enhance the reliability of the findings. It also offers practical implications for teacher education by emphasizing the role of

emotional competence and effective leisure use in improving well-being. However, the cross-sectional design limits causal interpretations, the reliance on self-report data may introduce bias, and the use of convenience sampling within a specific region restricts the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the absence of a significant mediation effect suggests that other unmeasured variables may play a role in explaining the relationship between emotional labor and well-being.

Ethical statement

This study was conducted based on primary data collected from participants on a voluntary basis. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. The study adhered to the principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and ethical research conduct. Ethical approval was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of İstanbul University-Cerrahpaşa (Date: 03.06.2025, Decision No: 2025/434).

Generative AI Use Statement

Artificial intelligence–based tools, including ChatGPT (version 5.2), were used in this study solely for language editing purposes, such as improving grammar, clarity, and readability of the manuscript. No AI tools were used for data analysis, interpretation of results, or generation of scientific content.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Şahinler, Y.: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition; **Kaya, A.:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data curation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project administration, Funding acquisition.

Data availability

The data used in the study may be shared upon request, provided that the request is made to the corresponding author with reasonable justification.

Statements and Declarations

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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