

The Effect of Humor Styles and Stress Perception on Well-Being of Part-Time Students

Mohammad Saipol Mohd Sukor, Siti Aisyah Panatik, Syazwina Muhammad Khir

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, 81310 Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.909000749>

Received: 24 September 2025; Accepted: 29 September 2025; Published: 29 October 2025

ABSTRACT

Stress is often a major concern for many parties because it has a negative impact on well-being. As such, social science researchers nowadays are increasingly inclined to explore behavioural factors affected by stress in various strata of society. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify the effect of humor styles and stress perception on well-being among employees who are continuing their education. The study design was quantitative using the Humor Styles Questionnaire, Stress Perception Scale and the Well-Being Questionnaire. This study involved a total of 168 part-time students at a public university in Malaysia. The current research found that the affiliative humor (AFH) and self-enhancing humor (SEH) have a significant impact on well-being. In addition, perception of stress has a significant negative impact on respondents' well-being. The study also found that stress was significant in acting as a mediator in both the relationship between AFH and well-being, as well as the relationship between SEH and well-being. This study can indirectly help various parties, whether organisational management or social service bodies, to implement effective interventions to improve the well-being and happiness of life, especially among the population consisting of part-time students.

Keywords: Perceived stress; Humor; Well-being; Part-time student; University

INTRODUCTION

One of the major parts of life that is frequently influenced by stress and still requires further research in line with the goals of the "*Keluarga Malaysia*" idea is the subjective well-being (SWB). The World Health Organization has conceptualized SWB as an individual's inclination to feel cheerful, calm and happy with the life he or she is leading (Topp et al., 2015). According to Diener (2009) individual emotional responses, domain satisfaction, and global life satisfaction assessments all fall under the umbrella of SWB. SWB refers to both physical and mental health. A study conducted among cancer patients found that patients' SWB was linked to their ability to control negative emotions, to be positive, and to constantly attempt to think positively (Permanawati & Hertinjung, 2016). Moreover, a study from Sari and Wideasavitri (2017) showed that there is a relationship between SWB and bodily health in which personality, social support, and socio-cultural environment play an important role. In addition, based on Mohd Alwi (2018) a high level of SWB can have a positive impact on human mental health.

A great number of studies have been conducted on factors that influence well-being of individuals such as emotional intelligence (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2016; Li et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2022) and social support (Zhang et al., 2022). However, studies on the impact of attitude and behavioural characteristics like humor and stress on well-being among part-time students are still lacking. Therefore, this research was conducted to identify the factors that can influence employee well-being while also pursuing study. The goal of this study was driven by the recommendation of past researchers that future studies need to be conducted to explore the function of humor (Lang & Lee, 2010; Lefcourt, 2014; Martin, 2006). The researchers underline the importance of humor in decreasing stress and creating a friendly environment. This study was designed to fill a research gap on the impact and role of humor in the link between stress and well-being among part-time students.

Humor refers to a form of communication used by an individual to elicit pleasure or laughter and relieve stress (Hawkins, 2008). Aside from amusement, humour has a variety of purposes in human life (Lang & Lee, 2010).

At first glance, humor may seem like a lighter and more entertaining means of communication, but it can then take on a variety of emotional and cognitive purposes (Martin, 2006). Humor can be utilised to assist people in adjusting to their new surroundings and forming normative behaviours (Mak & Deneen, 2012). There are four (4) styles of humor that has been introduced by Martin (2003): affiliative humor (AFH), self-enhancing humor (SEH), aggressive humor (AGH) and self-defeating humor (SDH). First of all, AFH refers to an individual's desire to entertain others and create jokes with the objective of strengthening interpersonal relationships (Martin, 2003). SEH, on the other hand, refers to a person's tendency to keep a witty expression by recalling a funny occasion or event from the day before. AGH is a joke that uses sarcasm, ridicule, mockery, criticism, or insults in a joke meant at another person (Lang & Lee, 2010). Finally, SDH is the term used to describe people's inclination to make oneself the subject of jokes (Martin, 2003). Although there haven't been many studies on humor and well-being to date, some past studies have found humor to be a significant effect on well-being (Yadava, Awasthi & Saxena, 2019; Hussain, Khalily, Bhuttah, and Ghaffari, 2021; Lazzaro, Bolton, and Kieffer, 2022).

Next, stress is one of the most critical topics in society that has been examined since the early day till the present time. Over the last few decades, many social scientists have established and developed many theories and models to better understand the mechanics of stress and its consequences on human life. (Hish et al., 2019). Even still, high stress is a problem in society, particularly among individuals who work while attending university, and it has a severe impact on their life. A study by Lemma, Gelaye, Berhane, Worku, and Williams (2012) found that approximately 34.1% of university students face a variety of negative consequences as a result of stress. Furthermore, a survey conducted at Malaysian public universities found that 24.5% of university students experience high levels of stress on a regular basis (Khir et al., 2020). According to Biggs, Brough, dan Drummond (2017), stress is a psychological condition that occurs in response to the environment. It is a condition that develops as a result of biological, physiological, psychological, and social causes and is closely linked to mental health problems (Zawawi, & Sham, 2019). In other words, stress is a reaction characterised by emotional and physical disruptions as a result of an inability to cope with stressful events. When a person feels unable to cope with the problems or pressures they are faced with on a regular basis, they become depressed, anxious, and frightened (Zawawi, & Sham, 2019).

Generally, regulated stress can be beneficial depending on an individual's capacity to cope with it (Gaol, 2016). Among the positive effects of stress is increased job satisfaction (Jarinto, 2010), and it aids in the enhancement of individual concentration and memory (Rafidah et al., 2009; Schwabe & Wolf, 2012). High and uncontrolled stress, on the other hand, has a negative impact on emotional, cognitive, and behavioural aspects of life. The negative effects of stress include impaired academic achievement (Hamaideh, 2011; Talib & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2012), deteriorating health quality (Chambel & Curral, 2005), depression (Jayanthi, Thirunavukarasu, & Rajkumar, 2015), sleep deprivation (Waqas, Khan, Sharif, Khalid, & Ali, 2015) and others.

Although numerous research has been undertaken to identify the impacts of stress, limited studies have been conducted to examine the effects of stress on well-being, particularly among part-time students who work while studying. Studies on stress have tended to focus on work-related stressors rather than the overall perception of stress (Naseem, 2018; Ramli, 2019). Furthermore, stress research is increasingly focusing on workplace behaviours such as organisational commitment (Abdelmoteleb, 2019) and work performance (Ramli, 2019) rather than the effects of stress on aspects of life as a whole. Consequently, to fill the gap of the study, one of the objectives of this study was to identified the effect of stress perception on well-being among part-time students. In addition, it was discovered that there is a third element, perceived stress, that functioned as a mediator in the process of the effect of humour style on life well-being. This shows that the link between stress and well-being can occur in one of two ways: directly or indirectly. However, there is very little data in the literature on this subject. This means that previous research hasn't focused on the characteristics that mediate the impact of humor styles on well-being. Therefore, this research was carried out to fill a gap in the literature by determining the role of stress as a mediator in the relationship between humor styles and the well-being of part-time students. The study's objectives are as follows:

1. To investigate the effect of humor styles (AFH, SEH, AGH, SDH) on well-being.
2. To investigate the effect of perceived stress on well-being.

3. To study the effect of perceived stress as a mediator in the relationship between humor styles (AFH, SEH, AGH, SDH) and well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Humor

Humor is defined as any amusing or amusing behaviour that makes people laugh (Martin, 2006). According to Duncan Smeltzer and Leap (1990), when a group of individuals team up to execute a task, there is almost always some type of amusement involved. Humor is used in everyday encounters because it is thought to relieve stress and improve cohesion or collaboration among group members in the workplace (Mesmer, 2000). As a result, humor is frequently employed as one of the ways for resolving social interaction issues and tensions (Mak, Liu & Deneen, 2012). Humans, in general, have distinct tendencies when it comes to performing or responding to humor. The diverse traits and roles of humor in human existence can be used to identify such differences. There are four styles of humor that have been identified by Martin (2003) namely AFH, SEH, AGH, SDH.

AFH is humorous behavior directed at others (Cann et al., 2008). It involves activities like sharing stories or saying amusing things, laughing with others, and creating jokes with spontaneous actions (Lefcourt, 2001; Martin et al., 2003). According to Shirley (2013) AFH is categorized as positive humor. This is because such humour helps to develop social bonds and reduce interpersonal stress (Kalliny, Cruthirds & Minor, 2006). SEH, on the other hand, is a humorous activity directed at oneself (Kalliny et al., 2006). When faced with difficult or unexpected situations, SEH involves a process of cognitive assessment and serves to control emotions (Martin et al., 2003). SEH is also categorized as positive humor (Shirley, 2013), like AFH. This is because it is linked to feelings of happiness, self-esteem, optimism, psychological well-being (PWB), and social connection satisfaction.

AGH is the third style of humor. It is a joke directed at other people that incorporates sarcasm, derision, disdain, criticism, or insult (Lang & Lee, 2010). In contrast to AFH and SEH, AGH is classified as negative humor (Shirley, 2013). This is because it has a detrimental impact on self-esteem, PWB, and life satisfaction (Martin et al., 2003). The last style of humor is SDH, which includes funny actions or conversations about oneself in a joke (Cruthirds, 2006). This style of humor has a positive relationship with depression and anxiety (Martin et al., 2003), which were considered as negative humor. Not only that, SDH is frequently associated with higher levels of self-esteem, improved interpersonal interactions, and more positive facial expressions (Heintz & Ruch, 2018).

The concept of humorous behavioral style by Martin and his colleagues has received a positive reaction among past researchers in the social sciences. Various studies have been conducted to identify the effects of such humor styles in human life, and one of the variables that is often associated with humor is well-being.

Concept of Well-Being

Excellent well-being indicates that an individual has a positive attitude toward life, and this is the ultimate outcome that many people, particularly the working class, strive for. As a result, research that looks into work involvement and well-being is critical to achieving these goals, which are also one of the country's sustainable development goals. An individual's subjective perception of their own life, which includes emotional and cognitive assessments, is characterised as SWB (Diener, 2000; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Russell, 2008). SWB is a notion that has been widely employed in a variety of contexts, including education and employment (Garg & Singh, 2019; Prasetyo, 2018; Russell, 2008; Wu, Luksyte, & Parker, 2015).

One of the concepts of SWB of life is pedagogical well-being. The sentiments of freedom, attachment, competence, and belonging that students and teachers experience in their daily interactions at educational institutions are known as pedagogical well-being (Pyhäältö, Soini, & Pietarinen, 2010). This concept is built on three main contexts, namely interaction with peers, interaction with teachers, and mastery in academics and extracurricular. Moreover, according to Ryan and Deci (2001) and Waterman (1993), positive well-being consists of two broad domains, namely emotional well-being and positive functioning. Happiness and satisfaction with life, as well as positive ideas about unfavourable aspects of life, are all part of emotional well-

being. The positive function, on the other hand, is made up of multidimensional notions of psychological and social well-being (Keyes, 1998; Keyes & Magyar-Moe, 2003; Ryff, 1989).

Concept of Stress

One of the leading causes of mental health issues in communities all over the world is stress. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) notion of stress emphasises the evaluation of interactions between persons and the environment that might produce unfavourable situations and lead to the feeling of stress. Stress is described as an individual's impression of an inconsistency between expectations and one's ability to meet those demands in life. According to Busari (2011), stress develops when a person is confronted with a difficult situation and feels helpless to deal with it. Selye (1950) through the General Adaptation Syndrome, explain that when a stressor exceeds the present adaptive resources, an alarm is activated. When a person is in this phase, they may experience chest pain, rapid heartbeat, palpitations, dysphagia, headache, or any combination of these symptoms (Rice, 2012).

Furthermore, stress can relate to occurrences that pose a threat to others and can result in undesirable psychological and behavioural responses (McEwen, 2000). According to Hawari (2011), stress is a type of biological response that occurs as a result of an excessive workload that is not well managed. Among the reactions that are often associated with prolonged stress are such as, poor appetite, sleep disturbances, depression and emotional exhaustion. Nonetheless, according to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Stress Transaction Model, if the burden is regarded as a challenge owing to the ability and sufficient resources to manage the burden, stress will be reduced. This demonstrates that people's views and appraisals of life's demands are essential factors in describing the level of stress they experience, which in turn determines their level of well-being. In this study, stress will act as a mediator in the relationship between humor style and well-being.

Humor Style and Well-Being

There haven't been many studies on humor and well-being to date. However, a study was conducted by Lazzaro et al., (2022) among college students to assess if particular humor styles (SEH and SDH) are linked with PWB and anxiety. The findings reveal that SEH is connected to reduced mental distress and consequently greater well-being, whereas no connection was found between SDH to be associated with either PWB nor anxiety (Lazzaro et al., 2022).

Next, a study was conducted to examine the humor styles and PWB of normal healthy adolescents and adolescents with orthopaedic disabilities (Yadava, et al., 2019). The results showed that healthy teenagers had higher levels of humor styles and PWB than adolescents with orthopaedic disabilities. Moreover, female adolescents outperformed male adolescents in terms of positive humor style (AFH and SEH), while male adolescents outperformed female adolescents in terms of negative humor (AGH and SDH). Besides, when compared to adolescents with disabilities, the data show that adolescents without disabilities had higher PWB (Yadava et al., 2019).

In addition, Hussain et al., (2021) conducted a study to investigate individual's PWB in the context of their humor style. The findings suggest that a person's sense of humor has an impact on their PWB. It is found that people with an adaptive/positive humor style (AFH and SEH) have a high-level of PWB. On the other hand, a maladaptive/negative humor style (AGH and SDH) results in lower PWB (Hussain et al., 2021).

The following hypotheses were explored in this study based on the findings of prior studies:

H1a There is significant effect of AFH on well-being.

H1b There is significant effect of SEH on well-being.

H1c There is significant effect of SDH on well-being.

H1d There is significant effect of AGH on well-being.

Stress and Well-Being

A number of studies related to the relationship of stress perception with well-being have been conducted by past researchers. Collins, Coffey, and Morris (2010) conducted a study to investigate stress and well-being among university students. The findings of the study indicate a negative correlation for both of these variables where individuals with lower stress scores have higher well-being (Collins et al., 2010). Next, Denovan and Macaskill (2017) conducted a six-month longitudinal study among first-year university students to evaluate the association between stress and SWB. Stress and SWB were found to have a substantial correlation in the study. The study discovered that the correlation remained consistent throughout a six-month timeframe. Not only that, in both time periods of the study, stress exposure was found to be negatively correlated with the aspect of life satisfaction (Denovan & Macaskill, 2017). Furthermore, an in-country study was carried out to investigate the association between stress and general well-being among civil officials in a Malaysian government workplace (Amran & Khairiah, 2014). According to the study's findings, there is a relationship between stress and overall well-being. Additionally, there were no significant differences in stress and general well-being based on gender or education level (Amran & Khairiah, 2014).

Based on the findings of past studies, the hypothesis that was tested in this study is as follows:

H2 There is a significant negative effect of stress perceptions on well-being.

The Role of Stress as a Mediator

Perceived stress is a fitting variable to mediate the link between humor style and well-being outcomes. This is because, to our knowledge, no research has looked into the role of perceived stress in mediating the relationship between humor style and well-being. However, few studies examine the mediating effect of perceived stress on the correlation between different independent variables with well-being. To start with, a study has been conducted to examine the mediating effect of perceived stress on the relationship between emotional intelligence and well-being of graduates in a university in Spain (Urquijo, Extremera & Villa, 2016). The results suggest a fundamental process via which graduates' well-being is enhanced by strong emotional intelligence through stress reduction, where a partial relationship between both variables mediated by perceived stress was observed. In other words, graduates with better emotional intelligence had lower levels of perceived stress, which lead to higher PWB (Urquijo et al., 2016).

Next, Achterberg, Dobbelaar, Boer, & Crone (2021), conducted a study to investigate the role of perceived stress as a mediator during the COVID-19 lockdown's long-term impacts on both parent and child well-being. The findings indicate that children's externalising behaviour and shifts in parents' negative moods were influenced by perceived stress. Additionally, this outcome implies that higher pre-lockdown ratings were associated with higher levels of stress during the lockdown, which in turn were associated with higher levels of negative parental feelings and externalising behaviour in children. This led to a rise in parental bad sentiments during the COVID-19 lockdown, with parents who had more negative sentiments prior to the lockdown experiencing more stress during the lockdown (Achterberg et al., 2021).

In addition, a study was conducted by Malinauskas and Malinauskiene (2018) to investigate the function of perceived stress as a mediating factor in the link between emotional intelligence and PWB. The study discovered that emotional intelligence has a substantial relationship with perceived stress and PWB. According to the findings of structural equation modelling procedures, perceived stress mediated the relationship between emotional intelligence and PWB to some extent (Malinauskas & Malinauskiene, 2018).

Based on the outcomes of previous studies, the following hypotheses will be tested in this study:

H3a There is a significant effect of stress perception in the relationship between AFH and well-being.

H3b There is a significant effect of stress perception in the relationship between SEH and well-being.

H3c There is a significant effect of stress perception in the relationship between SDH and well-being.

H3d There is a significant effect of stress perception in the relationship between AGH and well-being.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative data approach was used to perform this cross-sectional investigation. The participants in this study were part-time students at a Malaysian public institution. Working students, according to Savescu et al., (2017), are more likely to suffer high stress as a result of difficulties balancing personal life, profession, and learning. Next, simple sampling was utilised because it is more appropriate in terms of taking into account the availability of respondents during the study. This study included 168 part-time students (those who work while studying). Male respondents made up the majority of respondents (64%) who were 20-30 years old (57%), had worked in the private sector (65%), and had worked for less than 10 years (74%).

The questionnaire used to measure stress was the Stress Perception Scale (SPS) constructed by Cohen (1994) with a total of ten (10) items, four (4) of which were coded in inverted order. It asks about how often an individual experiences stressful situations in life. Next, the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) by Martin et al., (2003) was used to measure four styles of humor, namely AFH, SEH, SDH, AGH. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO-5) is used to measure well-being using 5 items produced by the World Health Organization (Topp et. al., 2015). All of the questionnaires measured study variables using a 4-Likert scale starting from 1 “almost never”, 2 “sometimes”, 3 “often” and 4 “very often”. The reliability values for both questionnaires were high, with Cronbach’s Alpha values of 0.75 for SPS and 0.94 for WHO-5. Study data were analysed using frequency, mean and regression analysis.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to identify the level of perception of stress and well-being among the 168 study respondents. The results showed that the majority of part-time students had moderate levels of stress perception (74.4%) followed by low (22.6%) and high (3.0%) levels respectively. Furthermore, it was found that the majority of part-time students also have a moderate level of well-being (43.4%) followed by low (38.7%) and high (17.9%) levels respectively.

The Effect of Humor Style on Well-Being

This section describes the findings of the study on the effect of Humor Style on the well-being of part-time students, specifically hypotheses H1a, H1b, H1c and H1d.

Table 1 displays a summary of the regression model on the effect of Humor Style on well-being. This study found that AFH ($\beta=0.216$, $p<0.05$) and SEH ($\beta=0.265$, $p<0.05$) styles were significantly positive in influencing the welfare of life among part-time students. Meanwhile, AGH and SDH are not significant in affecting the well-being of life. The findings of this study indicate that positive humor (AFH and SEH) is significant in improving well-being among part-time students. These findings are in line with previous studies that explain that adaptive humor is a source of positive social support and promotes well-being among employees (Wang et al., 2018; Maiolino & Kuiper, 2016). Even so, negative humor (AGH and SDH) was found to have an insignificant effect on the welfare of life.

Table 1. The effect of Humor Style on Well-being

		R	R ²	R ² Δ	β
DV -	Well-being	0.385	0.148	0.148	
	AFH				0.216**
	SEH				0.265**
	SDH				0.015
	AGH				- 0.101
Note: **Significant level at $p < 0.05$; DV = Dependant Variable, AFH = Affiliative Humor, SEH = Self-Enhancing Humor, SDH = Self-Defeating Humor, AGH = Aggressive Humor					

Overall, the findings for the effect of Humor Style on Well-being of this study supported hypotheses H1a and H1b but rejected hypotheses H1c and H1d.

The Effect of Stress on Well-Being

This study expects that the perception of stress affects the well-being of students while working negatively (H2). To prove the expectation, a simple linear regression analysis is carried out, and the results are shown in Table 2. This study found that the perception of stress had a significant negative impact on well-being ($R^2=0.37$, $F=96.71$, $p<0.01$). It is where the perception of stress predicts a change in the variance of well-being by 37%. Specifically, this study found that an increase of 1 unit score for stress perception predicted a decrease in well-being of 0.61 units ($\beta= -0.61$, $p<0.01$).

Table 2. The Effect of Stress on Well-being

Variables	Well-being			
		β	t	p -Value
Stress Perception		-0.61	- 9.83	0.000**
	R	0.61		
	R ²	0.37**		
	F	96.71		
Note: **Significant level at $p < 0.05$				

Overall, this study suggests that there is a significant negative effect of stress perceptions on well-being among part-time students. These findings supported hypothesis H2.

Role of Stress as a Mediator in the Relationship Between Humor Style and Well-Being

This section describes the findings of the study on the role of mediators for stress. This study expects that stress plays a mediating role in the relationship between humor and well-being, specifically to test the hypotheses H3a, H3b, H3c and H3d.

Table 3 presents a summary of the regression model for the role of stress as a mediator in the relationship between humor style and well-being. Studies have found that stress plays a significant partial mediator in the relationship between AFH, SEH and well-being ($R^2=0.116$, $\beta=0.186$, $F(5, 293)=58.354$, $p<0.05$). Meanwhile, AGH and SDH were insignificant in affecting well-being, and stress did not play a significant role as a mediator in the relationship between these variables.

The findings of this study indicate that positive humor (AFH and SEH) is significant in improving well-being among part-time students. In fact, stress serves as a significant mediator in such relationships. This means that employees who often think funny things to entertain themselves or constantly share funny ideas to entertain others at work, will tend to build a positive social environment with a harmonious atmosphere at work. This situation, in turn, can provide enthusiasm, cheerfulness and serenity to the part-time students.

These findings are consistent with earlier research that shows adaptive humour is a source of positive social support and increases employee well-being (Wang et al., 2018; Maiolino & Kuiper, 2016). Even so, maladaptive humor (AGH and SDH) was found not to have a significant effect on the welfare of life. This may be driven by the nature of this style of humor, which tends to increase stress, which in turn has a negative effect on well-being. In general, AGH refers to the act of laughing at others or making others the subject of jokes, while SDH refers to the act of laughing at oneself or making one's weaknesses the subject of jokes. Both of these actions can not only cause conflict with others but can also reduce life satisfaction for the individual.

Table 3. Stress as a Mediator between Humor Style and Well-Being

		R	R²	R²Δ	β
DV -	Well-being	0.404	0.163	0.015	
	AFH				0.202*
	SEH				0.251*
	SDH				0.023
	AGH				- 0.102
	Stress				- 0.186*
Note: **Significant level at $p < 0.05$; DV = Dependant Variable, AFH = Affiliative Humor, SEH = Self-Enhancing Humor, SDH = Self-Defeating Humor, AGH = Aggressive Humor					

Overall, the findings of this study support the H3a and H3b hypotheses but reject the H3c and H3d hypotheses. The results of the Sobel test conducted showed that stress perception further strengthened the model of the indirect relationship between AFH and well-being ($p < 0.05$). Stress also strengthened the model of the indirect relationship between SEH and well-being ($p < 0.05$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The goal of the current study is to look at the role of perceived stress in mediating the link between humor style and well-being of part-time students at a Malaysian public institution. Although earlier research has looked at how perceived stress influences the connection between several independent variables and PWB (Lombas et al. 2014; Ruiz-Aranda et al. 2014; Yadava et al., 2019; Hussain et al., 2021; Lazzaro et al., 2022), this study has focused on the effect of humor style on well-being and the mediating effect of perceived stress on that relationship.

The findings of the current study found positive humor style (AFH and SEH) humor to be positively significant with well-being while there is no significant effect of negative humor style (AGH and SDH) on well-being. The first hypotheses (H1) of this research were answered by these findings. The result is line with a study by Hussain et al., (2021) which stated that both AFH and SEH is associated with high PWB among youth. Not only that, a study has shown that SEH is associated to lower levels of mental distress and, as a result, higher levels of well-being (Lazzaro et al., 2022) of students. One possibility from these findings is that humor allows people to respond to threats that may occur in a more positive way than the other way around (Kuiper, Martin, & Olinger, 1993; Kuiper, McKenzie, & Belanger, 1995). Moreover, past studies suggested that people from Eastern cultures are more likely to employ AFH and SEH, whereas Westerners are more likely to use SDH and AGH (Abe, 1994; Nevo et al., 2001; Chen and Martin, 2007; Liao and Chang, 2006; Yue, 2011). This could be why the part-time students well-beings' at a Malaysian public institution was affected by the positive humor style.

The study also found that the perception of stress had a negative impact on well-being among individuals working while studying, which response to the 2nd hypothesis (H2) that suggests that there is a significant negative effect of stress perceptions on well-being among part-time students. In other words, the higher the level of stress, the lower the well-being of life. These findings are in line with a study by Bono, Reil, and Hescocx (2020) who found that stress in life is negatively related to well-being among individuals. It is consistent with the results of previous studies that found that an individual's ability to manage stress can affect the satisfaction or well-being of the individual (Islam, Baker, Huxley, Russell, & Dennis, 2017; Ryan, Kutob, Suther, Hansen, & Sandel, 2012; von der Embse & Mankin, 2021). The negative effects of stress on well-being were evident in this study when many respondents who gave high scores on items measuring stress perception tended to give low scores on items measuring well-being. For example, respondents who often feel anxious and depressed and unable to manage all the things they have to do in life, tend to almost never feel calm, cheerful or relaxed in the past month. This suggests that when an individual perceives that his life is full of stress, the individual is less motivated and feels tired of the responsibilities that need to be borne on a daily basis. On the other hand, feeling

confident in one's ability to manage personal problems will increase morale and happiness even in the face of stressful situations.

Another finding from the current study shows that perceived stress worked as a partial mediator of the association between positive humor styles (AFH and SEH) and well-being among part-time students. In other words, part-time students with greater adaptive humor styles had lower perceived stress, resulting in higher levels of well-being. This result is in line with a study conducted by Urquijo et al., (2016) which revealed that perceived stress served as a partial mediator of the link between emotional intelligence and well-being. On the other hands, negative humor styles (AGH and SDH) had no effect on well-being, and stress did not appear to be a significant mediator in the link between these factors. These findings support the 3rd hypothesis (H3) of this study.

Overall, this study suggests that positive humor styles (AFH and SEH) affect well-being among individuals working while studying. The findings of this study have expanded the concept of the relationship between the two variables in previous research models on stress and well-being, especially in the context of part-time students in public universities in Malaysia. In addition, this study provides an impression that effective stress management is important for the population of a country consisting of working students. It is in order to maintain good well-being and eventually build a happy family. This, in turn, can contribute to the maintenance of mental health in society. This finding is an important added value in scientific research because it provides empirical evidence on the role of stress perception as a major predictor of well-being. Nevertheless, there are some limitations identified in this study, including time and cost constraints, which caused this study to only involve part-time students in a public university. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies be conducted with a larger population involving public universities in Malaysia. This will allow the study's findings to be applied to a larger group of people.

In conclusion, all the objectives of this study have been achieved, and all the research questions have been answered as a result of the research findings obtained. This study accepted some of the study hypotheses while others were rejected based on statistically insignificant values. This study found that AFH and SEH styles were significant in influencing well-being. In addition, the perception of stress is also significant in influencing the well-being of part-time students. Furthermore, this study successfully demonstrated a significant mediating role for stress perception in the relationship between AFH and SEH with well-being. In essence, this study supports the positive impact of both of these adaptive humor styles on the dependent variables studied. However, this study could not prove a significant impact of negative (AGH and SDH) humor styles on well-being. Therefore, it is suggested that future researchers explore the influence of these two maladaptive humor styles on part-time students' behavior in more depth, using longitudinal research methods with a mixed research data approach between qualitative and quantitative. It is to ensure that the influence of humor can be seen more clearly from various aspects of time changes and different study settings. However, this study, to some extent, has provided useful information and added value in scientific research, especially in building stress management models using humorous behavioral styles. This study can also assist in developing workplace interventions in the public sector with the aim of increasing work engagement and well-being among employees.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) for the encouragement of this project under a grant from Potential Academic Staff (Vot. No.Q.J130000.2753.03K95).

REFERENCES

1. Abdelmoteleb, S. A. (2019). A new look at the relationship between job stress and organizational commitment: A three-wave longitudinal study. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 34(3), 321-336.
2. Abe, G. (1994). "The perception of humor in Japan and the US," in Paper delivered at the International Society of Humor Study Conference (Ithaca, NY).
3. Achterberg, M., Dobbelaar, S., Boer, O. D., & Crone, E. A. (2021). Perceived stress as mediator for longitudinal effects of the COVID-19 lockdown on wellbeing of parents and children. *Scientific reports*, 11(1), 1-14.

4. Amran, H., & Khairiah, K. (2014). Hubungan tekanan terhadap kesejahteraan umum dalam kalangan penjawat awam di pejabat setiausaha kerajaan negeri Pahang. *Jurnal Psikologi and Kaunseling Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia*, 9, 87-104.
5. Besser, A., Luyten, P., & Mayes, L. C. (2012). Adult attachment and distress: The mediating role of humor styles. *Individual Differences Research*, 10(3).
6. Besser, A., & Zeigler-Hill, V. (2011). Pathological forms of narcissism and perceived stress during the transition to the university: The mediating role of humor styles. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 18(3), 197.
7. Biggs, A., Brough, P., & Drummond, S. (2017). Lazarus and Folkman's psychological stress and coping theory. *The handbook of stress and health: A guide to research and practice*, 351-364.
8. Bono, G., Reil, K., & Hescox, J. (2020). Stress and wellbeing in urban college students in the US during the COVID-19 pandemic: Can grit and gratitude help? *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 10(3).
9. Chambel, M. J., & Curral, L. (2005). Stress in academic life: work characteristics as predictors of student well-being and performance. *Applied psychology*, 54(1), 135-147.
10. Chen, G., and Martin, R. A. (2007). A comparison of humor styles, coping humor, and mental health between Chinese and Canadian university students. *Humor Int. J. Humor Res.* 20, 215–234. doi: 10.1515/HUMOR.2007.011.
11. Cohen, S., Kamarck, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1994). Perceived stress scale. *Measuring stress: A guide for health and social scientists*, 10(2), 1-2.
12. Collins, S., Coffey, M., & Morris, L. (2010). Social work students: Stress, support and well-being. *British Journal of Social Work*, 40(3), 963-982.
13. Cruthirds, K. W. (2006). The Impact of Humor on Mediation. *Dispute Resolution Journal*, 61(3), 32-41.
14. Denovan, A., & Macaskill, A. (2017). Stress and subjective well-being among first year UK undergraduate students. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 18(2), 505-525.
15. Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *American psychologist*, 55(1), 34.
16. Diener, E. (2009). Subjective well-being. *The science of well-being*, 11-58.
17. Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Lucas, R. E. (2003). Personality, culture, and subjective well-being: Emotional and cognitive evaluations of life. *Annual review of psychology*, 54(1), 403-425.
18. Di Fabio, A., & Kenny, M. E. (2016). Promoting well-being: The contribution of emotional intelligence. *Frontiers in psychology*, 1182.
19. Duncan, W. J., Smeltzer, I. R., & Leap, T. I. (1990). Humor and work: application of joking behavior to management. *Journal of Management*, 16, 255-278.
20. Gaol, N. T. L. (2016). Teori stres: stimulus, respons, dan transaksional. *Buletin psikologi*, 24(1), 1-11.
21. Garg, N., & Singh, P. (2019). Work engagement as a mediator between subjective well-being and work-and-health outcomes. *Management Research Review*.
22. Hamaideh, S. H. (2011). Stressors and reactions to stressors among university students. *International journal of social psychiatry*, 57(1), 69-80.
23. Hawkins, D. A. (2008). Comparing the Use of Humor to Other Coping Mechanism in Relation to Maslach's Theory of Burnout (Doctoral Dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertation and Theses. (UMI No. 3322923). Access date: 12 April 2022.
24. Heintz, S., & Ruch, W. (2018). Can self-defeating humor make you happy? Cognitive interviews reveal the adaptive side of the self-defeating humor style. *Humor*, 31(3), 451-472.
25. Hish, A. J., Nagy, G. A., Fang, C. M., Kelley, L., Nicchitta, C. V., Dzirasa, K., & Rosenthal, M. Z. (2019). Applying the stress process model to stress–burnout and stress–depression relationships in biomedical doctoral students: A cross-sectional pilot study. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, 18(4), ar51.
26. Hussain, M. M., Khalily, M. T., Bhuttah, T. M., & Ghaffari, A. S. (2021). Impact of Core Self-Evaluation and Humor Style on Psychological Well-Being of Individuals. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 18(1), 4960-4971.
27. Islam, M. S., Baker, C., Huxley, P., Russell, I. T., & Dennis, M. S. (2017). The nature, characteristics and associations of care home staff stress and wellbeing: a national survey. *BMC nursing*, 16(1), 1-10.

28. Jarinto, K. (2010). Eustress: a key to improving job satisfaction and health among Thai managers comparing US, Japanese, and Thai companies using SEM analysis. *Japanese, and Thai Companies Using SEM Analysis* (December 29, 2010).
29. Jayanthi, P., Thirunavukarasu, M., & Rajkumar, R. (2015). Academic stress and depression among adolescents: A cross-sectional study. *Indian pediatrics*, 52(3), 217-219.
30. Kalliny, M., Cruthirds, K. W., & Minor, M. S. (2006). Differences between American, Egyptian and Lebanese humor styles: Implications for international management. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 6(1), 121-134.
31. Keyes. (1998). Social well-being. *Social psychology quarterly*, 121-140.
32. Keyes, & Magyar-Moe, J. L. (2003). The measurement and utility of adult subjective well-being.
33. Khir, S. M., Yunus, W. M. A. W. M., Mahmud, N., & Arif, L. S. M. (2020). Relationship between sleep deprivation and mental health problems among management university students. *Jurnal Kemanusiaan*, 18(2).
34. Kuiper, N. A., Martin, R. A., & Olinger, L. J. (1993). Coping humour, stress, and cognitive appraisals. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, 25, 81-96.
35. Kuiper, N. A., McKenzie, S. D., & Belanger, K. A. (1995). Cognitive appraisals and individual differences in sense of humor: Motivational and affective implications. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 19, 359-372.
36. Lang, J. C., & Lee, C. H. (2010). Workplace humor and organizational creativity. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21(1), 46-60.
37. Lazzaro, A., Bolton, M. J., & Kieffer, K. (2022). A Brief Report on Amusement in College Students: The Positive Effects of Affiliative and Self-Enhancing Humor Styles on Romantic Relationship Satisfaction and Psychological Wellbeing.
38. Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*: Springer publishing company.
39. Lefcourt, H. (2014). *Humor: The psychology of living buoyantly*. New York: Plenum.
40. Lemma, S., Gelaye, B., Berhane, Y., Worku, A., & Williams, M. A. (2012). Sleep quality and its psychological correlates among university students in Ethiopia: a cross-sectional study. *BMC psychiatry*, 12(1), 1-7.
41. Li, Y., Huang, L., Naseem, S., & Qu, S. (2025). How emotional intelligence affects college teachers' wellbeing in china? the mediating role of work-family support. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1517842>.
42. Liao, C. C., and Chang, T. C. (2006). "Sense of humor: Americans vs. Taiwanese," in Paper Presented at the 18th International Society for Humor Studies Conference (Copenhagen).
43. Lombas, A. S., Martin-Albo, J., Valdivia-Salas, S., & Jiménez, T. I. (2014). The relationship between perceived emotional intelligence and depressive symptomatology: the mediating role of perceived stress. *Journal of Adolescence*, 37(7), 1069-1076. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2014.07.016.
44. Mak, B. C. N., Liu, Y., & Deneen, C. C. (2012). Humor in the workplace: A regulating and coping mechanism in socialization. *Discourse and Communication*, 6, 163-179.
45. Malinauskas, D. R., & Malinauskiene, V. (2018). The mediation effect of perceived social support and perceived stress on the relationship between emotional intelligence and psychological wellbeing in male athletes. *Journal of human kinetics*, 65, 291.
46. Martin, R. A., Dorris, P. P., Larsen, G., Gray, J., & Weir, K. (2003). Individual differences in uses of humor and their relation to psychological well-being: Development of the Humor Styles Questionnaire. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37, 48-75.
47. Martin, R. A. (2006). *The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach*. Boston, MA: Elsevier Academy Press.
48. Maiolino, N., & Kuiper, N. (2016). Examining the impact of a brief humor exercise on psychological well-being. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, 2(1), 4.
49. McEwen, B. S. (2000). The neurobiology of stress: from serendipity to clinical relevance. *Brain research*, 886(1-2), 172-189.
50. Mesmer. (2000). Use of humor as a stress coping strategy by para-professional youth care workers employed in residential group care facilities (Doctoral Dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertation and Theses. (UMI No. 3001960).

51. Mohd Alwi, b. M. M. (2018). Hubungan antara Kesejahteraan Subjektif dan Kesehatan Mental dalam Kalangan Penjawat Awan yang akan Bersara. *Human Sustainability Procedia*.
52. Naseem, K. (2018). Job stress, happiness and life satisfaction: The moderating role of emotional intelligence empirical study in telecommunication sector Pakistan. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 4(1), 7-14.
53. Nevo, O., Nevo, B., and Yin, J. L. S. (2001). Singaporean humor: a cross-cultural, cross-gender comparison. *J. Gen. Psychol.* 128, 143–156. doi: 10.1080/00221300109598904.
54. Pearlin, L. I. (1999). The stress process revisited *Handbook of the sociology of mental health* (pp. 395-415): Springer.
55. Pearlin, L. I., Menaghan, E. G., Lieberman, M. A., & Mullan, J. T. (1981). The stress process. *Journal of Health and Social behavior*, 337-356.
56. Permanawati, Y., & Hertinjung, W. S. (2016). Kesejahteraan subjektif pada penyandang kanker payudara. *Indigenous: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi*, 13(1).
57. Prasetyo, R. A. B. (2018). Persepsi iklim sekolah dan kesejahteraan subjektif siswa di sekolah. *Jurnal Psikologi Teori Dan Terapan*, 8(2), 133-144.
58. Pyhältö, K., Soini, T., & Pietarinen, J. (2010). Pupils' pedagogical well-being in comprehensive school—significant positive and negative school experiences of Finnish ninth graders. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 25(2), 207-221.
59. Rafidah, K., Azizah, A., Norzaidi, M. D., Chong, S. C., Salwani, M. I., & Noraini, I. (2009). Stress and academic performance: Empirical evidence from university students. *Academy of Educational Leadership Journal*, 13(1), 37.
60. Ramli, A. H. (2019). Manage of job stress and measure employee performance in health services. *Business and Entrepreneurial Review*, 18(1), 53-64.
61. Rice, V. H. (2012). *Theories of Stress and its Relationship to Health Handbook of stress, coping, and health: Implications for nursing research, theory, and practice*, 2nd ed (pp. 22-42). Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications, Inc.
62. Ruiz-Aranda, D., Extremera, N., & Pineda-Galán, C. (2014). Emotional intelligence, life satisfaction and subjective happiness in female student health professionals: the mediating effect of perceived stress. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 21(1), 106–113. doi:10.1111/jpm.12052.
63. Russell, J. E. (2008). Promoting subjective well-being at work. *Journal of career assessment*, 16(1), 117-131.
64. Ryan, Kutob, R. M., Suther, E., Hansen, M., & Sandel, M. (2012). Pilot study of impact of medical-legal partnership services on patients' perceived stress and wellbeing. *Journal of health care for the poor and underserved*, 23(4), 1536-1546.
65. Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual review of psychology*, 52(1), 141-166.
66. Ryff, C. D. (1989). Beyond Ponce de Leon and life satisfaction: new directions in quest of successful ageing. *International journal of behavioral development*, 12(1), 35-55.
67. Ryff, C. D., & Keyes, C. L. M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 69(4), 719.
68. Sari, N., & Widiasavitri, P. N. (2017). Gambaran kesejahteraan subjektif pada wanita yang mengalami involuntary childlessness. *Jurnal Psikologi Udayana*, 4(2), 357-366.
69. Săvescu, R., Rotaru, M., & Stoe, A. M. (2017). Stress among working college students Case Study: Faculty of Engineering Sibiu, Romania. In *Balkan Region Conference on Engineering and Business Education* (Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 399-404). Sciendo.
70. Schwabe, L., & Wolf, O. T. (2012). Stress modulates the engagement of multiple memory systems in classification learning. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 32(32), 11042-11049.
71. Selye. (1950). Stress and the General Adaptation Syndrome. *British Medical Journal*, 1(4667), 1383-1392.
72. Selye. (1956). *The Stress of Life*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
73. Selye. (1976). The stress Concept. *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 115(8), 718.
74. Shirley, J. D. (2013). Effect of humor on teacher stress, affect and job satisfaction (Doctoral Dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertation and Theses. (UMI NO. 3565886).

75. Spruill, T. E. (1992). Sense of humor as a mediator of the effects of stress on physical health and psychological well-being. Western Michigan University.
76. Talib, N., & Zia-ur-Rehman, M. (2012). Academic performance and perceived stress among university students. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 7(5), 127-132.
77. Topp, C. W., Østergaard, S. D., Søndergaard, S., & Bech, P. (2015). The WHO-5 Well-Being Index: a systematic review of the literature. *Psychotherapy and psychosomatics*, 84(3), 167-176.
78. Urquijo, I., Extremera, N., & Villa, A. (2016). Emotional intelligence, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being in graduates: The mediating effect of perceived stress. *Applied research in quality of life*, 11(4), 1241-1252.
79. Von der Embse, N., & Mankin, A. (2021). Changes in teacher stress and wellbeing throughout the academic year. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 37(2), 165-184.
80. Wang, K., Li, Y., Zhang, T., & Luo, J. (2022). The relationship among college students' physical exercise, self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and subjective well-being. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(18), 11596. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191811596>.
81. Wang, R., Chan, D. K. S., Goh, Y. W., Penfold, M., Harper, T., & Weltewitz, T. (2018). Humor and workplace stress: a longitudinal comparison between Australian and Chinese employees. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 56(2), 175-195.
82. Waqas, A., Khan, S., Sharif, W., Khalid, U., & Ali, A. (2015). Association of academic stress with sleeping difficulties in medical students of a Pakistani medical school: a cross sectional survey. *PeerJ*, 3, e840.
83. Waterman, A. S. (1993). Two conceptions of happiness: Contrasts of personal expressiveness (eudaimonia) and hedonic enjoyment. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 64(4), 678.
84. Wu, C.-H., Luksyte, A., & Parker, S. K. (2015). Overqualification and subjective well-being at work: The moderating role of job autonomy and culture. *Social Indicators Research*, 121(3), 917-937.
85. Yadava, V., Awasthi, P., & Saxena, S. (2019). Humor Styles and Psychological Wellbeing of Adolescents with and without Orthopedic Disability. *PURUSHARTHA-A journal of Management, Ethics and Spirituality*, 12(2), 45-60.
86. Yue, X. D. (2011). The Chinese ambivalence to humor: views from undergraduates in Hong Kong and China. *Humor Int. J. Humor Res.* 24, 463–480. doi: 10.1515/humr.2011.026.
87. Zawawi, N. I. M., & Sham, F. M. (2019). Stres Menurut Sarjana Barat dan Islam. *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 16, 85-97.
88. Zhang, S., Deng, X., Xin, Z., Xuebin, C., & Hou, J. (2022). The relationship between postgraduates' emotional intelligence and well-being: the chain mediating effect of social support and psychological resilience. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.865025>.