

Light Triad as a Personal Resource for Employee Well-Being: Evidence from Prosocial Behavior and Reciprocity

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effects of the Light Triad on employee well-being in Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEIs) in the Multan and Bahawalpur regions of Pakistan. Specifically, the research examines how the Light Triad traits (Kantianism, Humanism and Faith in Humanity) influence teacher well-being through the mediation of prosocial behavior and reciprocity. This research draws on the Job Demands and Resources (JD-R) framework and Social Exchange Theory (SET). Data were collected using a cross-sectional approach from teachers in 32 institutions across the two regions. Out of 536 responses received, 514 usable questionnaires were retained for analysis. The data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in RStudio. Results reveal that Light Triad significantly predicts teacher well-being directly, with complex behavioral-relational pathways and context-sensitive patterns. Specifically, in the high-demand public school setting, prosocial behavior was found to have an unexpected negative relationship with generalized reciprocity and a positive relationship with negative reciprocity. It is suggested by these findings for benevolent teachers, "defensive reciprocity" serves as coping mechanism to prevent resource depletion. The study provides critical insights for HR practitioners by indicating benevolent traits are fundamentally dependent on the exchange climate in producing desired well-being.

Keywords: Light Triad, Prosocial Behavior, Generalized Reciprocity, Negative Reciprocity, Well-being, FGEIs

Introduction

Employment relationships are increasingly recognized as relational exchanges, wherein employee well-being is shaped through ongoing patterns of interaction, mutual support and perceived reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Zhu et al., 2023). Well-being (WB) is viewed as a strategic workforce outcome associated with productivity, interpersonal effectiveness and retention. Therefore, there is growing scholarly interest in dispositional and

situational antecedents to employee well-being in the context of escalating job demands (Bhoir and Sinha, 2024). The profession of teaching is shifting from traditional institutional faculty to knowledge workers within socially embedded environments, responsible for facilitating meaningful learning and collaborative engagement. However, job demands such as classroom challenges, emotional labor and extreme workload continue to affect teacher performance. These conditions underscore the need for internal psychological resources for sustainable well-being and exchange-based contexts (Zhou et al., 2024). In such contexts, the quality of exchanges becomes central to sustaining employee well-being (Dreer, 2023). Although employment relationship research has traditionally emphasized structural and contextual factors, relatively less attention has been paid to how interpersonal dispositions shape exchange processes within workplaces. Accordingly, understanding how benevolent interpersonal traits shape relational exchange experiences and employee well-being represents an important yet underexplored area.

Light Triad (LT) is a constellation of three benevolent interpersonal tendencies that are Kantianism, Humanism along with Faith in Humanity. Term was introduced by Kaufman et al. (2019), and is characterized by respect, fairness and trust in others. Maralov and Maralova (2024) argue that employees high in benevolent traits are more likely to approach workplace interactions with goodwill. Similarly, these tendencies promote cooperative behavior and mutual support in educational settings (Krok et al., 2025). Over time, such interactions encourage supportive reciprocity rather than defensive or retaliatory behavior. Therefore, Light Triad drawing on Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007), is conceptualized in this study as personal resource that may influence well-being indirectly through prosocial behavior (PB) and reciprocal exchange experiences. Classroom management, administrative workload and student behavioral challenges are such job demands in the teaching profession that require continuous maintenance of well-being as a personal resource (Zhou et al., 2024). The Light Triad may promote cooperative engagement and constructive reciprocity, thereby cushioning the strain related to relational demands (Krok et al., 2025; Orosova et al., 2026). However, while personal resources are explained by JD–R as supporting well-being under demanding conditions. Limited insight is provided into the relational mechanisms through which such resources operate necessitating integration with Social Exchange Theory to better understand how reciprocal workplace dynamics emerge from interpersonal dispositions. The SET argues that norms of reciprocity govern the ongoing relations in the workplace (Blau, 1964). Both employees and organizations interact with expectation of return for their contribution. Perception of trust and reciprocal support is central in these exchanges. When employees feel a positive return on their contribution, it strengthens their commitment and psychological well-being (Bhoir and Sinha, 2024). In contrast, negative reciprocal gain may undermine trust and further contribute to strain (Zhu et al., 2023). According to Social Exchange Theory the interpersonal dispositions are enacted in the workplace through prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior are voluntary activities to help others. In the teaching profession, these behaviors are supporting students and assisting colleagues even beyond formal requirements (Bălan et al., 2023).

Relational investment and voluntary assisting triggers the reciprocity norm (Blau, 1964). Employees often show this benevolent behavior in educational settings, that activate reciprocity norms and increase the likelihood of supportive reciprocal exchange. A positive return acts as relational resource that buffer demands and enhances well-being (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). If the behaviors are met with negative reciprocity it results in imbalance, eroding relational trust and depleting well-being (Zhu et al., 2023). Taken together, this reasoning suggests that benevolent interpersonal dispositions may influence employee well-being indirectly through prosocial engagement and the reinforcement of reciprocal exchange processes.

With growing scholarly interest in personality and employee well-being, employment relationship research has continued to emphasize structural, institutional and contextual determinants. Comparatively less attention has been paid to benevolent interpersonal dispositions that shape workplace interactions through relational exchange processes. Although the importance of personal resources in sustaining teacher well-being is acknowledged by recent studies, the mechanisms through which such dispositions give rise to exchange dynamics within schools remain insufficiently examined (Dreer, 2023; Zhou et al., 2024). Work of Kaufman et al., 2019 by coining the term Light Triad is expanding, however its application is limited and especially with regards to employment relationship in educational context. In empirical studies, reciprocity has rarely been seen as a mediator between personality traits and well-being in the teaching profession (Zhu et al., 2023). This study addresses the gap by integrating the Job Demands–Resources framework (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) to examine how the Light Triad operates as personal resource that enhances teacher well-being through prosocial engagement and multidimensional reciprocity within Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEIs) located in the Multan and Bahawalpur regions of Pakistan.

Literature review

Well-being literature is deeply rooted in employment relationship and seen as outcome of inner psychological resources and relational dynamics. The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model offers that well-being hinge on the equilibrium between job demands and existing resources, including individual characteristics that allow personals to accomplish stressors successfully (Zhou et al., 2024). On the other hand, Social Exchange Theory (SET) sees workplace outcomes coming from reciprocal connections and perceived mutual obligations in relational system (Zhu et al., 2023; Blau, 1964).

Profession of teaching is ideal to see convergence of both viewpoints. Teachers function within ongoing exchange networks connecting students, colleagues and leadership. Therefore, dispositional orientations that form how teachers vigorously involve in these exchanges may be vital to understanding their well-being. The Light Triad, comprising Kantianism, Humanism and Faith in Humanity represents such an orientation, branded by admiration, moral regard and trust in others (Kaufman et al., 2019; Maralov, 2024). Though, these dispositions do not work in isolation; they are obvious through prosocial behaviours, voluntary actions such as empathy and altruism that serve as social investments (Bălan et al., 2023; Krok and Tkaczyk, 2024). By endorsing these

behaviours, teachers with Light Triad traits likely promote a resource-rich atmosphere of generalized reciprocity (GR) and school connectedness (Orosova et al., 2026), which functions as a critical job resource to sustain well-being.

Light Triad and Well-Being

In the framework of the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model, individual characteristics that foster constructive appraisal and adaptive coping function as permanent “Personal Resources.” Kaufman et al., 2019 argued that the Light Triad imitates a compassionate interpersonal stance that augments relational trust and meaning-making and are dissimilar from dark personality traits associated with hatred and relational strain. Explicit to educational setting, Bălan et al. (2023) endorsed that these traits are significantly related with coping cognitive-emotional approaches that allow teachers to normalize stress more effectively.

Orosova et al. (2026) found that Faith in Humanity is positively linked to school connectedness and teaching efficacy amongst teachers. Likewise, Krok et al. (2025) linked positive relationships amid Light Triad traits and both job and life satisfaction, with meaning in life serving as significant cognitive path. Besides, Krok and Tkaczyk (2024) also identify that these traits promote “inner harmony,” a state of inner balance that is crucial for preserving well-being in high-stress situations. These conclusions show that teachers high in Light Triad traits are probable to understand demanding situations positively, thereby increasing psychological functioning.

A meta-analysis of teacher well-being supplementary underscore the significance of relational and motivational factors in nourishing occupational health (Zhou et al., 2024). Given that the Light Triad foster trust and dignity in interpersonal interactions, such traits may reduce the perceived strain of classroom and administrative demands.

H1: Light Triad is positively related to well-being.

Light Triad and Prosocial Behavior

Although personality affects how we think, it also shapes how we act. The Light Triad refers to show a benevolent and kind inclination towards others (Kaufman et al., 2019). Krok and Tkaczyk (2024) found inner state of harmony in Light Triad teachers which initiate compassion for others in fresh empirical work. Research by Feng et al. (2026) shows that people with Light Triad traits help others because they feel confident in their social skills. This proves that kind people aren't just 'nice', they actively participate in helping their society

In Schools also the teachers with Light Triads traits as seen by Constantin and Stanescu (2023), show helpful behavior leading to Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), which aren't in the job description. They help more by showing OCB, first to the individual colleagues (OCB-I, helping specific colleagues) next to school as a whole (OCB-O, civic virtue toward the organization) and avoid also negative behaviours. The Light Triad benevolence view was augmented by Erhan (2022) through constructive deviance. These extra actions are seen by teachers who value others (Humanism) and follow a moral code (Kantianism) as a natural part of their personal values.

H2: Light Triad is positively related to Prosocial behavior.

Prosocial Behavior and Reciprocity

According to Social Exchange Theory (SET), interpersonal helping behaviours initiate relational processes governed by the norms of reciprocity, creating a continuous cycle of giving and receiving. When individuals offer support without expecting an immediate return, they signal goodwill and long-term commitment, thereby solidifying exchange relationships. Within the context of employee relations, these dynamic shifts the agreement between teachers and their institutions from a transactional exchange to a deeper relational agreement, creating a "zone of reciprocity" where volunteer effort is willingly exchanged for organizational support. Research within the Pakistani context also reports that a positive culture of reciprocity inspires employees to voluntarily help others, such as by sharing knowledge (Matloob & Rizvi, 2021)

In educational settings, when teachers engage in voluntary helping behaviours, they demonstrate cooperative intent and a lack of "reciprocation wariness". Researchers distinguish between direct reciprocity and generalized reciprocity—an altruistic, open-ended exchange norm where support flows indirectly throughout the community rather than as a strict one-to-one trade. Recent studies highlight that in community-based environments like schools, this indirect or "pay-it-forward" style of helping is highly salient. Consequently, prosocial acts by teachers actively cultivate a climate of generalized reciprocity.

Conversely, it is crucial to consider the darker side of workplace exchanges. In environments where collaborative behaviours are absent or goodwill is exploited, negative reciprocity (NR) norms may develop, characterized by a retaliatory withholding of effort, self-serving behaviours, and perceived organizational obstruction. By actively engaging in prosocial behavior, teachers signal trust and cooperative intent, which actively dismantles these toxic, defensive exchange dynamics.

H3a: Prosocial behavior is positively related to generalized reciprocity.

H3b: Prosocial behavior is negatively related to negative reciprocity.

Reciprocity and Well-Being

Reciprocity norms represent relational environment circumstances that impact psychological outcomes. Within the framework of Social Exchange Theory, generalized reciprocity—branded as mutual support, fairness, and the provision of benefits without immediate expectation of return—functions as a contextual resource that increases well-being. Meta-analytic evidence finds relational support and teacher-student relationships as durable predictors of teacher well-being (Zhou et al., 2024).

Reciprocity norms are worked as important job resources (or demands) within the framework of Job Demand Resource. It was showed by Zhu et al. (2023) that employee well-being is improved by generalized reciprocity through the satisfaction of intrinsic motivation and the improvement of organizational trust. When a climate of generalized support is seen by teachers, their psychological requirements for affiliation and safety are met. On the other side, negative Reciprocity is not simply the absence of care but is considered a vigorous stressor. It was found by Zhu et al. (2023) that perceived organizational obstruction is significantly enhanced by negative reciprocity, leading to

the organization being viewed by employees as a burden or hindrance to their goals. Psychological energy is drained by this barrier, directly leading to a decline in well-being.

Therefore, generalized reciprocity can be regarded as a job resource (motivational) and negative reciprocity as a job demand (health-impairing).

H4a: Generalized reciprocity is positively related to well-being.

H4b: Negative reciprocity is negatively related to well-being.

Mediation through Prosocial Behavior

While Light Triad traits work as personal resources, its impact on well-being is expected to be transmitted through behavioral enactment. Looking at Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model, personal resources (like the Light Triad) do not happen in isolation; they trigger a motivational course that results in positive work behaviors, which then increase the employee’s psychological state. Explicitly, Light Triad traits—categorized by a loving and altruistic orientation toward others—serve as strong cause for prosocial behaviours and Organizational Citizenship Behaviours (OCB). Current empirical evidence supports this path. Feng et al. (2026) concluded that Light Triad traits directly forecast Prosocial behavioral tendencies through the lens of self-efficacy. Furthermore, Constantin and Stanescu (2023) established that employees high in Light Triad traits are significantly expected to engage in civic virtue and altruism (OCB) while refraining from counterproductive behaviors.

Critically, engaging in these prosocial acts is aided as a mechanism for well-being enrichment. It is noted by Hart (2024) that intrinsic rewards are produced by prosocial actions and a positive self-concept is strengthened. Within the teaching context, it was confirmed by Krok and Tkaczyk (2024) that compassion is brought through inner harmony by Light Triad traits, suggesting that an internal feedback loop that withstands psychological flourishing is created by the enactment of benevolent behavior. Therefore, Prosocial behavior is acted upon as a “resource-building” mechanism: the dispositional capacity to help is run by the Light Triad, and the psychological resources (meaning, harmony) required for well-being are generated by the actual behavior of helping.

H5: Prosocial behavior mediates the relationship between Light Triad and well-being.

Reciprocity as a Mediator

Other than the intrinsic rewards, personality also brings well-being by altering the quality of the relational environment. In the framework of employment relations, reciprocity is not merely a transaction but a persistent organizational norm that dictates the terms of social exchange. The Light Triad traits—specifically Faith in Humanity and Humanism—are acted upon as dispositional antecedents that determine how the exchange norms are perceived and enacted by teachers, which subsequently determines their well-being.

H6a: Generalized reciprocity mediates the relationship between Light Triad and well-being.

H6b: Negative reciprocity mediates the relationship between Light Triad and well-being.

Sequential Mediation: A Behavioural–Relational Pathway

Combining the JD–R and SET perspectives suggests a sequential process wherein personality traits do not affect well-being in a vacuum but through active engagement with the social environment. The Light Triad—working as a crucial personal resource—inclines teachers toward prosocial engagement. This behavior, in turn, strengthens reciprocal exchange norms within the school environment. These reciprocal dynamics then function as job resources that enhance teacher well-being.

A “resource accumulation” logic, or a “gain spiral” (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Bakker and Demerouti, 2018), is reflected by this pathway, in which inner dispositions are ratified behaviorally and transformed into relational resources that endure psychological health. While cognitive mediators such as meaning in life (Krok et al., 2025) have been observed by previous studies, the behavioral and exchange mechanisms remain reasonably underexplored. Accordingly, it is proposed by this study that well-being is influenced by Light Triad traits through a behavioral–relational sequence.

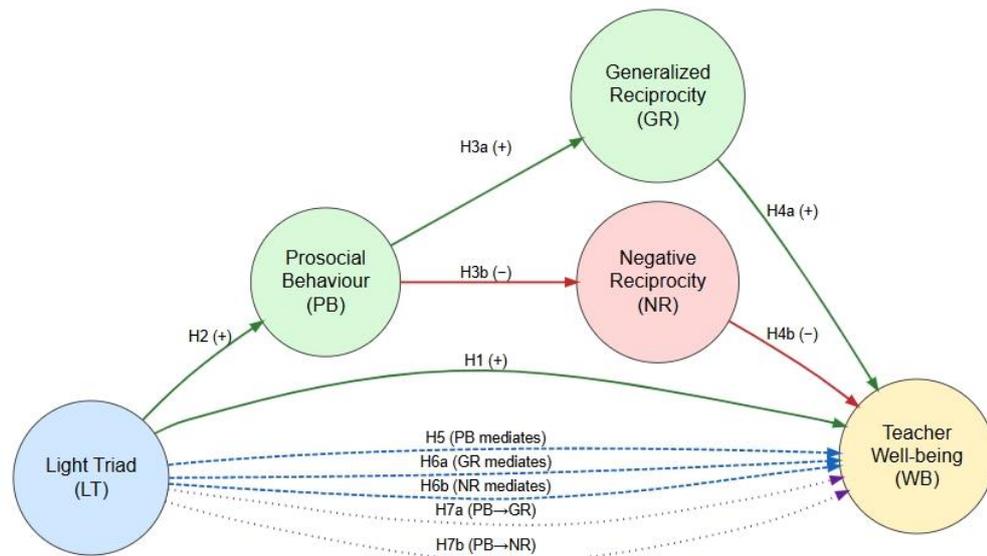
H7a: Light Triad positively influences well-being through the sequential mediation of Prosocial behavior and generalized reciprocity.

H7b: Light Triad positively influences well-being through the sequential mediation of Prosocial behavior and the reduction of negative reciprocity.

The Light Triad not only shapes positive resources but also defends against toxic interactions. Teachers high in Light Triad traits are less likely to distinguish ambiguous workplace interactions as intimidating or to engage in reciprocal behaviours (negative reciprocity). By reducing the frequency of negative reciprocity—and the related perceived organizational obstruction acknowledged by Zhu et al. (2023)—the Light Triad preserves the active resources essential for teacher well-being.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



Methodology

Research Context and Sampling Procedure

This study was conducted among teachers employed within Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEIs) located in the Multan and Bahawalpur regions of Pakistan. The study population consisted of 809 FGEI teachers (of which 637 teachers belonged to Multan and 172 to Bahawalpur) distributed across 32 institutions within two regions. Standardized procedures across schools due to centralized governance make this context appropriate for the study of employment relationships.

We sought formal approval from FGEIs Directorate for conducting the study, access therefore was facilitated within selected FGEIs. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by us. We collected data using online questionnaire administered through Google Forms. We disseminated the survey link was through a multi-stage administrative process: the link was shared by the Directorate with regional headquarters; it was forwarded by regional directors to school principals; and it was circulated among teachers by principals through official communication groups. In this way institutional coverage across the Multan and Bahawalpur regions of Pakistan was ensured.

We initially collected 536 responses. After following rigorous screening process including exclusion of incomplete submission, missing values and removal of outliers, only 514 responses were retained. The final sample represented a substantial proportion (63.53%) of the teacher workforce across both FGEIs regions. This sample size affords substantial statistical power for complex structural equation modeling (Kline, 2015). Broad geographic representation was ensured across the both administrative regions of

the FGEI system, participants were recruited using a purposive cluster sampling technique administered through formal institutional channels.

Sample Characteristics

Composition of respondents showed more male comprising 56.8% whereas 43.2% were female teachers as per Table I. Workforce composed of predominantly young to middle-aged adults, with maximum (67.7%) falling between the ages of 25 and 45. 67.5% hold either a Bachelor's or Master's degree as educational qualification. Most of the teachers were employed at in secondary schools (61.9 %). Most of the respondent (81.5%) were from Multan Region having 24 institutions as compared to Bahawalpur with 8 institutions.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 514)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	292	56.8
	Female	222	43.2
Age	Below 25	19	3.7
	25–35	163	31.7
	36–45	185	36.0
	46–55	128	24.9
	Above 55	19	3.7
Qualification	Bachelor/Masters	347	67.5
	MS/MPhil	150	29.2
	PhD	8	1.6
	Other	9	1.8
Institution Type	Higher Secondary	78	15.2
	Secondary	318	61.9
	Middle	64	12.5
	Primary	54	10.5
FGEIs Region	Multan	419	81.5
	Bahawalpur	95	18.5

Measures

Variables were assessed using established measure. Light Triad, Prosocial behavior, reciprocity was assessed using five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), whereas Well-being was measured using five-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (Negatively) to 5 (Positively).

Light Triad

Kaufman et al. (2019) scale of Light Triad (LT) was utilized to measure the facets of Kantianism, Humanism, and Faith in Humanity. It showed Cronbach's alpha of .87, showing stronger benevolent interpersonal orientation.

Prosocial Behavior

An 18-item scale adapted from Gouveia et al. (2021) was used to measure prosocial traits. The reliability coefficient for this sample was .78.

Reciprocity

Workplace reciprocity norms were measured using a 16-item instrument adapted from Wu et al. (2006) covering generalized and negative dimensions. The original instrument measures generalized, balanced, and negative reciprocity. However, the initial confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) revealed that the balanced reciprocity items showed indistinct loadings and significant cross-loadings. Balanced reciprocity was excluded from the structural model following recommended psychometric trimming practices. After refinement, the two-factor reciprocity model demonstrated greater conceptual clarity and improved model fit. Cronbach's alpha was .85 for generalized reciprocity and .78 for negative reciprocity.

Well-Being:

Well-being was assessed using a 16-item scale adopted from Collie et al. (2015). The scale displayed excellent Cronbach Alpha of .90.

Analytical Strategy

We used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test our hypothesis because it easily handles the complex step-by-step sequential mediation pathways proposed in our model and suitable for our study. All statistical analyses were conducted using R as the primary programming language within the RStudio integrated development environment. We followed the classic two-step approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) by first running CFA check, that our survey items accurately measured the intended concepts and that the measurement model fit the data well.

Once we were satisfied with the measurement model, we followed checking the structural model. We used Maximum Likelihood estimation to test the actual directions and strength of our hypothesized relationships. To get a closer look at the indirect (mediation) effects, we used a bootstrapping procedure with 2,000 resamples to generate 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (Hayes, 2018). We considered mediation effect to be statistically significant if its confidence interval did not include zero. Before starting SEM procedures, necessary to check/test of demographics, descriptive statistics, reliability, correlation and multicollinearity were done. All tests were done using R studio.

Results

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlations

Statistical reliability and relationships between key constructs are shown in Table 2. All variables showed acceptable to strong internal consistency, with Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .78 to .90, confirming the reliability of measurement items. The bivariate correlations expose initial links, as the Light Triad shared significant positive relationships with Prosocial behavior ($r = .433, p < .01$), generalized reciprocity ($r = .291, p < .01$), and Well-being ($r = .303, p < .01$). Prosocial behavior was positively linked to negative reciprocity ($r = .131, p < .01$) while its association with generalized reciprocity remained weak. On the other hand, all intercorrelations remained well below the .70 threshold, which indicates absence of serious multicollinearity concerns and ensures that each construct is discrete enough for structural equation modeling.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability, and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5
1. LT	3.87	0.67	.87	—				
2. PB	3.87	0.61	.78	.433**	—			
3. GR	3.29	0.75	.85	.291**	0.083	—		
4. NR	3.01	0.78	.78	-0.06	.131**	-0.047	—	
5. WB	3.98	0.62	.90	.303**	.242**	.232**	.106*	—

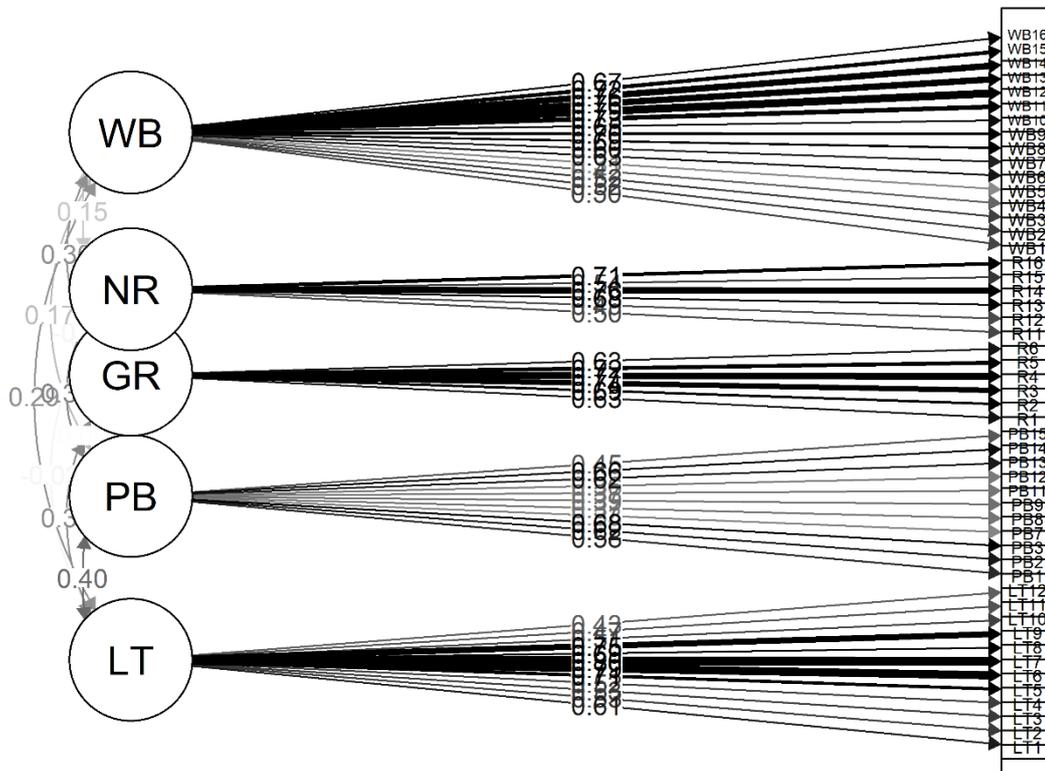
Note. LT = Light Triad; PB = Prosocial behavior; GR = Generalized reciprocity; NR = Negative reciprocity; WB = Well-being. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Measurement Model

A five-factor Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted including five latent constructs: Light Triad, prosocial behavior, generalized reciprocity, negative reciprocity, and teacher well-being for evaluating the adequacy and construct validity of the hypothesized measurement model. The analysis yielded absolute fit indices within recommended thresholds, demonstrating satisfactory model fit (RMSEA = .056; SRMR = .071). The incremental fit indices (CFI = .907; TLI = .898) were acceptable to near-acceptable, which is considered reasonable in highly complex un-parceled item-level models with substantial numbers of indicators and moderate sample sizes (N = 514) (Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004). All standardized factor loadings were found substantial and statistically significant ($p < .001$).

Figure 2

Measurement Model (CFA)



Structural Model

After establishing the adequacy of the measurement model, structural model was subsequently estimated using Maximum Likelihood to test the hypothesized sequential relationships among the latent constructs. The structural model yielded global fit indices that were directly comparable to the measurement model (RMSEA = .056, SRMR = .071, CFI = .907, TLI = .895). Furthermore, the minimal change in the chi-square statistic between the measurement and structural models ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1.18, \Delta df = 1$) indicates that constraining the model to specify the hypothesized structural paths did not materially degrade or alter the overall model fit. This suggests that specifying the hypothesized directional paths did not materially worsen model fit and supports the plausibility of the proposed structural relationships.

Table 3
 Structural Model Fit Indices

Fit Index	Estimated Value	Interpretation
CFI	.907	Acceptable
TLI	.895	Near acceptable given model complexity

RMSEA	.056	Good fit
SRMR	.071	Acceptable fit (< .08)

Direct Effects

In Table 4 the LT significantly predicted PB ($\beta = .40, p < .001$) and also WB ($\beta = .21, p < .001$). It also significantly predicted both dimensions of reciprocity, positively influencing GR and negatively influencing NR, whereas GR positively predicted WB ($\beta = .24, p < .001$). As shown in Table 4, Light Triad significantly predicted Prosocial Behavior and Well-being directly. It also significantly predicted both dimensions of reciprocity, positively influencing generalized reciprocity and negatively influencing negative reciprocity. Generalized reciprocity positively predicted well-being, whereas negative reciprocity also showed a positive association with well-being. Prosocial behavior did not significantly predict well-being directly.

Table 4
Structural Path Estimates

Path	β	SE	p	95% CI
LT → PB	.40	.064	<.001	[.33, .58]
PB → GR	-.14	.039	<.001	[-.21, -.05]
LT → GR	.36	.047	<.001	[.29, .47]
PB → NR	.40	.046	<.001	[.30, .48]
LT → NR	-.18	.042	<.001	[-.28, -.12]
PB → WB	.04	.039	.264	[-.03, .12]
GR → WB	.24	.033	<.001	[.18, .31]
NR → WB	.14	.035	<.001	[.08, .21]
LT → WB	.21	.048	<.001	[.13, .32]

Indirect and sequential effects

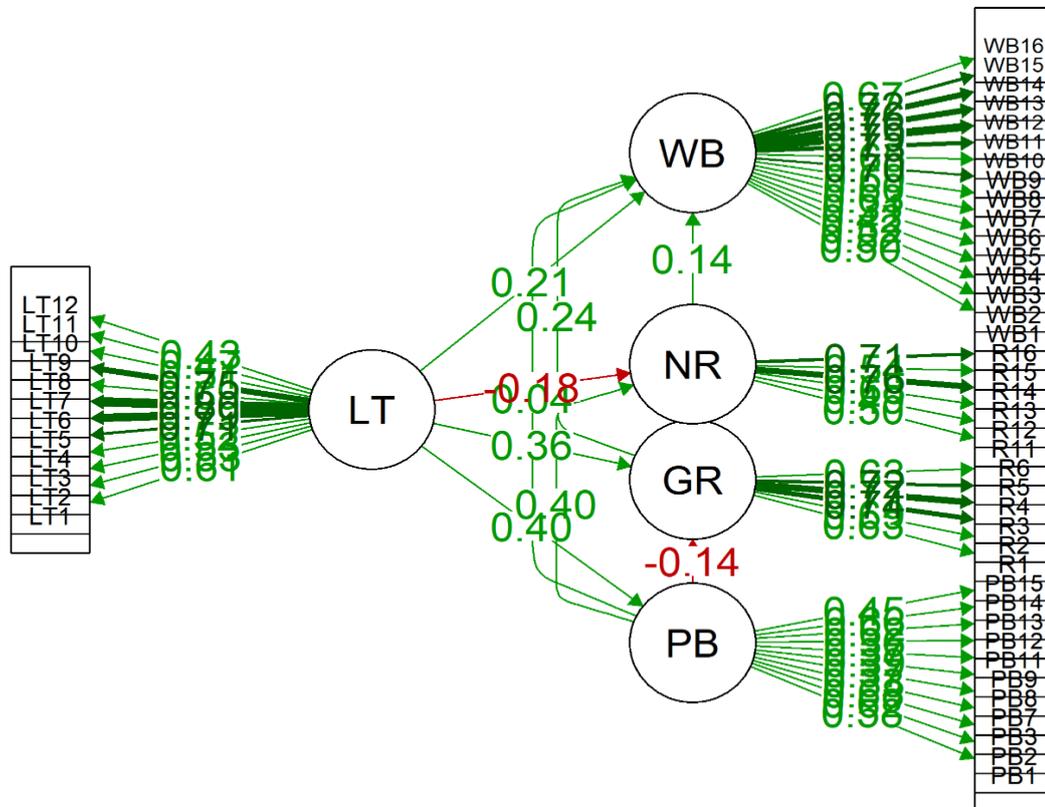
As per Table 5 and figure 3, GR is revealed as strongest mediator between Light Triad and well-being during bootstrapped mediation analysis done in RStudio. Notably, although the zero-order association between prosocial behavior and generalized reciprocity was weak, the structural model revealed a significant negative indirect sequence after accounting for the broader network of relations. Similarly, the route through generalized reciprocity among the indirect pathways demonstrated the largest effect size. Notably, although the zero-order association between prosocial behavior and generalized reciprocity was weak, the structural model revealed a significant negative path after accounting for Light Triad and the broader network of relationships, suggesting that the effect is conditional rather than purely bivariate.

Table 5
 Indirect and Serial Mediation Effects (Bootstrapped 2,000 Resamples)

Indirect Path	β	SE	p	95% CI
LT → PB → WB	.018	.019	.301	[-.01, .06]
LT → PB → GR → WB	-.013	.004	.001	[-.02, -.01]
LT → PB → NR → WB	.023	.007	<.001	[.01, .04]
LT → GR → WB	.086	.017	<.001	[.06, .13]
LT → NR → WB	-.027	.009	.001	[-.05, -.01]
Total Indirect	.087	.024	<.001	[.05, .14]
Total Effect	.29	.042	<.001	[.24, .40]

Note: LT = Light Triad; PB = Prosocial Behavior; GR = Generalized Reciprocity; NR = Negative Reciprocity; WB = Well-Being.

Figure 3
 Final Structural Model with Standardized Coefficients



Discussion

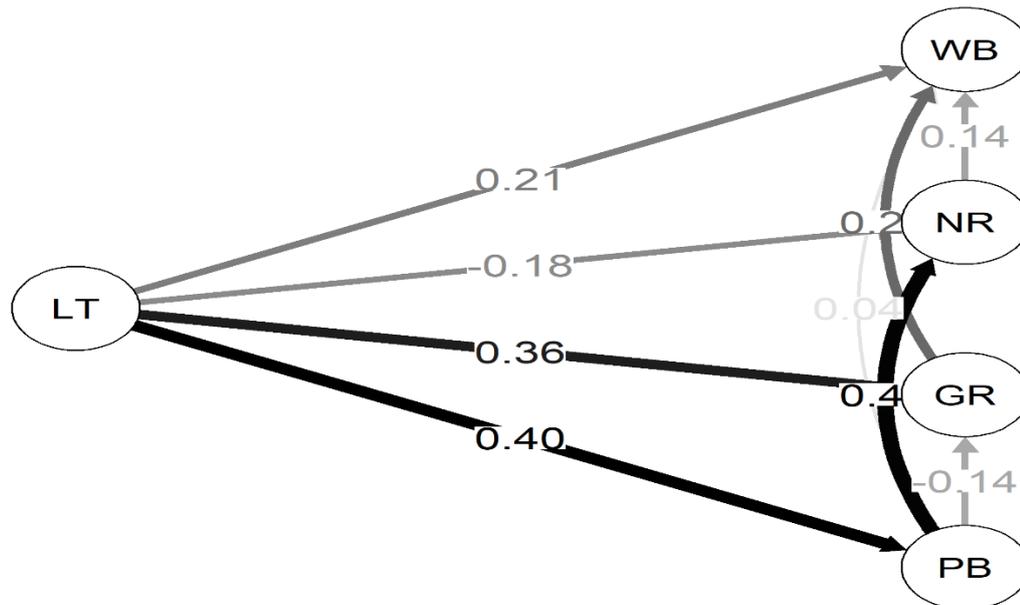
The study is about examining the role of Light Triad traits as personal resource (JD-R) in improving the well-being of teachers through their Prosocial behavior and reciprocity norms using social exchange view. The findings have provided consistent support of the core argument that interpersonal dispositions have major role for well-being in profession of teaching using a sample of FGEIs teachers. Final summary of the proposed hypothesis is in Table 6.

Table 6
Summary of Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Path / Relationship	Standardized Estimate (β)	P-value	Decision
H1	Light Triad (LT) → Well-being (WB)	0.205	<.001	Supported
H2	LT → Prosocial behavior (PB)	0.403	<.001	Supported
H3a	PB → Generalized Reciprocity (GR)	-0.137	<.001	Not Supported
H3b	PB → Negative Reciprocity (NR)	0.399	<.001	Not Supported
H4a	GR → Well-being (WB)	0.239	<.001	Supported
H4b	NR → Well-being (WB)	0.144	<.001	Not Supported
H5	LT → PB → WB (Mediation)	0.018	0.301	Not Supported
H6a	LT → GR → WB (Mediation)	0.086	<.001	Supported
H6b	LT → NR → WB (Mediation)	-0.027	0.001	Partially supported
H7a	LT → PB → GR → WB (Serial)	-0.013	0.001	Not Supported
H7b	LT → PB → NR → WB (Serial)	0.023	<.001	Not Supported

A positive direct association is seen between the Light Triad and well-being and a substantial indirect association functioning largely through generalized reciprocity, that supports the main premise that personality-linked relational orientations shape workplace exchange dynamics are consequential for well-being (Blau, 1964; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007; Zhu et al., 2023) as seen in figure 4

Figure 4
 Structural Path Model of Light Triad, prosocial behavior, reciprocity and Teacher well-being



On the other side findings revealed unexpected pattern in teachers work environment regarding reciprocity and Prosocial behavior. 1st is that Prosocial behavior was negatively related to Generalized reciprocity and Prosocial behavior was found positively related to negative reciprocity also negative reciprocity showing a positive association with well-being. These patterns show complex and deep-rooted role of reciprocity and Prosocial behavior in teacher environment.

Light Triad as a personal resource for well-being

Consistent with JD–R theory, Light Triad traits predicted teacher well-being directly. In a profession characterized by emotional labor, workload, and relational demands (Zhou et al., 2024; Dreer, 2023), Light Triad tendencies—respect for persons, human dignity, and faith in humanity—may shape teachers’ appraisals of interpersonal events and reduce the perceived threat of everyday hassles. It is consistent with the view of personal resource promoting motivational pathways and protecting the psychological functioning under strain (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). So, study converges with emerging evidence linking Light Triad traits to positive working among teachers including satisfaction-related outcomes, connectedness and mostly efficacy (Orosova et al., 2026; Krok et al., 2025; Krok and Tkaczyk, 2024).

Light Triad and Prosocial Behavior: benevolence endorsed through behavior

Light Triad strongly predicted Prosocial behavior. Kaufman et al., 2019 conceptualized Light Triad traits as benevolent interpersonal orientation and they should render into

helping and cooperation (Constantin and Stanescu, 2023; Gouveia et al., 2021). So, in Job Demand and Resource terms Light Triad may motivate constructive engagement and discretionary effort, particularly in relational occupations (like teaching) where interpersonal interactions are frequent and meaningful (Zhou et al., 2024).

Prosocial Behavior and Reciprocity in teaching context

Although it was hypothesized that Prosocial behavior (PB) highlight a climate of generalized reciprocity (GR), the data revealed an unexpected negative association. This counter-intuitive finding can be understood through the Job Demands-Resources framework in context to FGEIs environment. Prosocial acts, such as assisting colleagues and supporting students beyond formal requirements, require considerable time investment, emotional energy and intellectual effort. In the high-demand environment of public education, frequent helping behaviours can rapidly exhaust a teacher's personal resources, shifting their psychological perception of these acts from a mutually beneficial 'community exchange' to a state of severe role overload.

The highly centralized administrative structure of Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEIs) further complicates these dynamics. In such environments, helping behaviours can become unreasonably concentrated among a few benevolent individuals, while reciprocal returns remain consistently unequal. Viewed through the lens of Social Exchange Theory, when kind actions are repeatedly offered by teachers without a visible, equitable return being observed, a profound relational disparity in everyday workplace interactions begins to be perceived by them. Consequently, this persistent lack of reciprocation essentially erodes their trust in the system, explaining why their continued prosocial investments fail to translate into a stronger expectation that support will eventually circulate back to them.

Additionally, Prosocial behavior is often framed by the cultural and institutional context of FGEIs not as a voluntary, discretionary contribution but rather as an expected professional obligation. When helping colleagues becomes an implicit mandate, it loses its power to signal genuine goodwill or initiate a freely chosen "pay-it-forward" exchange. Instead, these supportive actions simply reflect agreement with demanding workplace expectations, thereby fading the perceived norm of generalized reciprocity. Ultimately, in a system already categorized by heavy workloads, this obligatory helping is demonstrated as additional role strain rather than mutually reinforcing support, leaving teachers doubtful that their efforts will ever be indirectly rewarded by the broader organizational community. Our result also suggests that teachers who involve in more helping may also endorse stronger negative reciprocity inclinations.

Reciprocity and Well-Being

The findings related to reciprocity and well-being reveal two contrasting but informative patterns in the present context. It may be enclosed as defensive Reciprocity: Under SET, repeated disparity can activate protective norms: teachers become more likely to "respond firmly" when they perceive unfairness, exploitation or obstruction (Blau, 1964; Zhu et al., 2023).

It can be interpreted differently in real school dynamics where teachers who are frequently approached for help may develop “if I am treated unfairly, I will not cooperate / I will respond strongly” attitudes as a coping mechanism. Prosocial teachers may be both generous and vigilant and willing to help, but also more sensitive to unfair exchange.

Generalized Reciprocity and well-being (H4a)

Generalized Reciprocity had a strong positive relationship with well-being. This is consistent with SET: climates of mutual support and indirect reciprocity create relational safety, trust, and social resources, which are well-established predictors of teacher well-being (Blau, 1964; Zhu et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2024).

Negative Reciprocity and Well-Being (H4b)

The results of H4b were contrary to the expectations. A positive relationship was found between negative reciprocity and well-being. Usually, negative reciprocity is seen as harmful in workplace dynamics that depletes well-being and enhance workplace stress (Zhu et al., 2023). This pattern may reflect a defensive or boundary-protective form of reciprocity in resource-constrained educational settings (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In the present context, teachers may adopt firmer reciprocal responses not purely as retaliation, but as a way of protecting their time, emotional energy, and psychological resources from overuse or unfair demands. From a conservation of resources perspective, such boundary-setting may help prevent further depletion and thereby sustain well-being.

Why Prosocial Behavior Alone Did Not Mediate Well-Being

The results of H5 showed a non-significant mediation pathway from the Light Triad to teacher well-being via Prosocial behavior. It offers a considerable logic for employment relations that benevolence alone is not enough for psychological health in demanding environment. Drawing on SET, good deeds can temporarily make employees happy and satisfied but in longer run or demanding profession it's not enough for well-being. For continuous helping behavior the fair and mutual support from workplace is essential. When employees go beyond, in helping and assisting other they are investing their emotional energy. It requires support in return. The act of helping fails to build the relational trust needed to improve well-being, if investment isn't met. Therefore, helping leads to well-being or depletion, it all depends on whether the social environment is supportive or one-sided. Prosocial behavior consumes an employee's finite personal resources, including their time, emotional energy and mental focus as per JD-R. A resource constrained environment, like public sector educational profession, frequently helping others stops being a rewarding, energizing activity. Instead, it transforms into an additional, draining job demand (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Simply possessing benevolent traits (the Light Triad) is not enough to guarantee employee well-being. For the act of helping to actually improve well-being, rather than just exhausting the employee so it must take place within a supportive, reciprocal work environment where the employee also receives help in return.

Reciprocity as the Main Relational Mechanism

Conversely, the data reveals that generalized reciprocity serves as the primary transmission mechanism in the model, showcasing the strongest mediation effect between the Light Triad and teacher well-being. It empirically validates that the true psychological dividend of benevolent traits is fundamentally relational. Rather than merely acting as an internal coping mechanism, the Light Triad functions as a vital personal resource that actively shapes and cultivates a climate of mutual support, fairness, and trust—the core tenets of generalized reciprocity within SET.

By successfully generating this positive exchange norm, teachers effectively build a robust job resource within the JD-R framework. When a climate of generalized support is perceived, teachers' psychological requirements for affiliation and safety are met, directly buffering the structural demands of the educational environment and significantly enhancing their occupational health. This confirms the conceptual integration of your study: interpersonal dispositions (the Light Triad) do not operate in a vacuum, but rather influence well-being by dictating the terms of social exchange, which subsequently function as protective and motivational job resources.

Sequential Mediation and Contextual Interpretation

The serial mediation pathways present mixed but theoretically interpretable directions that highlight the complex realities of workplace altruism. The pathway linking the Light Triad to well-being sequentially through Prosocial behavior and generalized reciprocity was significant but negative. In the resource-constrained context of FGEIs, continuous prosocial investments may inadvertently weaken a teacher's perception of generalized reciprocity, as frequent helping shifts from being viewed as a mutually beneficial "community exchange" to a state of role overload or being taken for granted. Thus, high levels of discretionary helping can expose benevolent teachers to imbalanced exchanges, diminishing their belief that support freely circulates within the institutional system.

Interestingly, the sequential pathway through negative reciprocity yielded a significant and positive effect on well-being. While negative reciprocity is typically viewed as detrimental and linked to perceived organizational obstruction, in an environment where prosocial teachers face high demands and potential misuse, it may function as a necessary boundary-protective mechanism. Teachers who engage heavily in helping behaviours may also endorse stronger defensive Reciprocity to protect their remaining energetic resources when they perceive unfairness or a lack of return. These serial paths indicate that Prosocial behavior does not uniformly promote favorable reciprocity; its downstream effect on well-being depends heavily on how teachers negotiate exchange fairness and resource constraints in demanding environments.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

The study contributes to JD-R and SET literature by integrating both frameworks in employment relations proving that personal resources (Light Triad) do not operate in a vacuum; rather, they dynamically shape the work environment (reciprocity) through observable behavioral investments (Prosocial behavior). Light Triad can be understood

as personal source in public sector environment linking it with well-being. generalized reciprocity proved as the strongest mediating mechanism between the LT and WB, establishing psychological dividend of benevolent traits is fundamentally relational and dependent on the exchange climate.

By recognizing Light Triad trait, a vital indicator of employee resilience and interpersonal effectiveness within two FGEI regions in Pakistan, this study provided HR practitioners and comparable public-sector school systems a guideline for hiring. Through questionnaire the school organizational leadership can check the well-being of teachers. The findings also refine the existing assumptions about Prosocial Behavior, by showing that helping does not always produce positive exchange under pressure, it may also create perceptions of imbalance or defensive exchange.

Limitations and Future directions

This study is cross-sectional and therefore does not permit causal inference. Reverse causality remains possible (e.g., well-being influencing reciprocity perceptions). By using SEM, the measurement error has been reduced however, common method bias may inflate associations. Longitudinal may bring better results in future studies. Similarly multi-source data (e.g., peer-rated PB) is preferred. Although RMSEA and SRMR indicated satisfactory fit, TLI remained slightly below the conventional .90 threshold, which should be interpreted in light of the complexity of the item-level model. Since FGEIs represent a distinctive public-sector educational system, the generalizability of the findings to private schools or other national contexts may be limited.

Future research could add contrast of light and Dark triad in the study. Similarly, multi dimensions each of Light Triad should be tested with PB, NR, GR and WB. Same mode can be empirically test in private school for more generalizability. The study is in HRM domain, can be done in psychological domain for effects of Light Triad. Longitudinal study can be done to see both long-term trends and short-term patterns. Data is collected from only two FGEI regions, therefore cannot be generalized to entire FGEIs system without further empirical validation.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Light Triad functions as an important personal resource for employee well-being within the selected FGEI regions of Multan and Bahawalpur. Drawing on the Job Demands–Resources model and Social Exchange Theory, the findings show that benevolent traits not only relate directly to higher well-being but also operate through relational exchange processes, especially generalized reciprocity. At the same time, the results indicate that prosocial behavior does not always translate into positive exchange outcomes in a straightforward manner. In a demanding and centralized public-sector environment, helping may become burdensome, unevenly reciprocated, or interpreted as obligation rather than voluntary goodwill. Overall, the study highlights that the psychological value of benevolent personality is fundamentally relational: teacher well-being is strengthened not only by kind dispositions themselves,

but by the extent to which these dispositions are supported by fair, trusting and reciprocated workplace exchanges.

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