

Mediating role of self-actualization in the relationship between light triad personality and healthy selfishness: Moderating effects of medium of instruction and teaching experience

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Abstract: Purpose: This paper analyzes the mediating effect of self-actualization on the relationship between light triad personality and healthy selfishness. It also examines whether the medium of instruction and teaching experience strengthen or weaken the relationship between the predictor variable (light triad personality) and the mediating variable (self-actualization).

Method: The Self-actualization Scale (Kaufman, 2018), the Light Triad Scale (Kaufman et al., 2019), and the Healthy Selfishness Scale (Kaufman & Jauk, 2020), with modifications for the research context, were administered to teacher trainees.

Findings: The analysis revealed a significant impact of light triad personality, medium of instruction, and teaching experience on self-actualization. Both light triad personality and self-actualization significantly influence healthy selfishness. Furthermore, self-actualization substantially mediates the relationship between light triad personality and healthy selfishness. Additionally, the medium of instruction also significantly moderates the relationship between light triad personality and self-actualization, highlighting its crucial role.

Practical Implications: The findings suggest that educators should help teacher trainees understand their personality type and how it influences self-actualization and healthy behaviors. Additionally, lessons should incorporate multilingual aspects to enhance teaching-learning experiences and support teacher trainees' self-actualization.

Keywords: *Healthy Selfishness, Light Triad Personality, Self-actualization.*

Introduction

Recent advances in personality psychology have foregrounded the Light Triad framework (Kaufman et al., 2019), which conceptualizes Kantianism, faith in humanity, and humanism as interrelated dimensions of prosocial personality. This marks a shift away from the traditionally studied Dark Triad, emphasizing traits that promote compassion, trust, and respect for others' intrinsic worth. In teacher education, nurturing these positive qualities is essential, as teacher trainees profoundly influence classroom environments and student well-being. Yet, the significance of these constructs for teacher trainees remains underexplored. Furthermore, healthy selfishness and self-actualization, key positive traits relevant to well-being and professional identity, have received limited empirical attention in educational contexts. This study seeks to fill these gaps by examining Light Triad traits, healthy selfishness, and self-actualization, advancing our understanding of how positive personality traits support teacher well-being and professional growth. While the philosophical roots of personality theory provide context, this research emphasizes contemporary evidence relevant to education.

The Light Triad framework, introduced by Kaufman et al. (2019), contrasts with the widely studied Dark Triad traits by shifting focus toward prosocial behaviors: an emphasis highly relevant in educational settings. Kantianism entails valuing individuals as ends in themselves, faith in humanity promotes trust in others' goodness, and humanism recognizes inherent worth. Empirical research demonstrates that Light Triad traits are inversely related to antisocial behaviors and are linked to healthy psychological functioning and positive interpersonal relationships (Kaufman et al., 2019).

Healthy selfishness (Kaufman & Jauk, 2020) refers to attending to one's needs and well-being without disregarding others: an adaptive quality distinct from self-centeredness. It promotes boundary-setting and self-care, essential skills for teachers. Research indicates that healthy selfishness is not associated with narcissism or unhealthy dominance but correlates positively with well-being, psychological flourishing, and self-actualization (Kaufman et al., 2020), supporting teacher resilience and sustained professional engagement.

Self-actualization, defined by Maslow (1943) and expanded by Kaufman (2018), involves realizing one's potential and pursuing meaningful goals. It is characterized by authenticity, purpose, and humanitarian values (Lewis et al., 2022), underpinning personal fulfillment and professional identity for teacher trainees. Kaufman's (2018) model outlines ten factors, including acceptance, equanimity, and creative spirit, that foster resilience and ethical decision-making. Empirical evidence links self-actualization to personal and professional well-being, underscoring its importance in teacher education (Ulfah et al., 2025; Kaufman, 2018).

Despite increased recognition of positive personality traits, a theoretical gap persists regarding the interplay among Light Triad traits, healthy selfishness, and self-actualization in shaping teacher trainees' well-being and professional identity. Teacher trainees are uniquely positioned to model prosocial values and resilience. Understanding these dynamics is essential for cultivating well-being, balanced professional practices, and supportive classroom environments. This study addresses these gaps by examining how positive personality traits prepare teacher trainees for their professional roles.

Accordingly, this research addresses the following questions.

Q1. Will self-actualization mediate the connection between the Light Triad personality and healthy selfishness among teacher trainees?

Q2. Does the medium of instruction and teaching experience moderate the strength or direction of the relationship between the Light Triad personality and self-actualization among teacher trainees?

To address the research questions, a moderated mediation analysis was conducted: self-actualization (SA) was tested as a mediator between the Light Triad personality (LTP) and healthy selfishness (HS), while the medium of instruction (MI) and teaching experience (TE) were examined as moderators in the LTP–SA relationship. The study draws on Kaufman et al.'s research on Light Triad personality (2019), healthy selfishness (2020), and self-actualization (2018), which provide empirical and theoretical foundations for these constructs.

This research advances the literature by testing self-actualization as a mediator between Light Triad personality and healthy selfishness, and by analyzing the moderating effects of the medium of instruction and teaching experience on the Light Triad–self-actualization relationship. While prior studies examined these constructs individually (Lukić & Živanović, 2021; Kaufman et al., 2019; Gerymski & Krok, 2019; Stavradi et al., 2022; Wills, 1974; Dahl et al., 1983; Kaufman, 2018; Troncoso, 1982; Clarke-Woolley, 1976), few explored their interconnections. Given the recent empirical introduction of healthy selfishness (Kaufman et al., 2020), a nuanced understanding of these interrelations offers significant theoretical and practical contributions.

The subsequent parts of the paper highlight the development of research hypotheses, the statistical model, the research methodology, data collection, measures, analysis, findings, discussion, and conclusion.

Literature Review

This section reviews the current literature underpinning the relationships between the Light Triad personality, self-actualization, healthy selfishness, and teacher development, with an emphasis on positive psychology in educational contexts. The review is organized into four subsections to provide a coherent synthesis and establish a strong theoretical foundation for the study's hypotheses.

1. Light Triad Personality in Psychological Research

The emergence of positive psychology has shifted scholarly attention from maladaptive personality characteristics to strengths-based traits that promote psychological flourishing and prosocial behaviour. Within this perspective, Kaufman et al. (2019) introduced the Light Triad personality as a positive counterpart to the Dark Triad. The construct comprises three dimensions: faith in humanity, humanism, and Kantianism. Individuals high in these characteristics tend to perceive others as inherently valuable, demonstrate empathy and compassion, and treat people as ends in themselves rather than as means to personal gain (Kaufman et al., 2019).

Empirical evidence suggests that the Light Triad is associated with greater life satisfaction, psychological well-being, interpersonal trust, and prosocial behaviour (Kaufman et al., 2019). These characteristics are particularly relevant in educational settings, where teachers are expected to establish supportive relationships, demonstrate ethical conduct, and foster positive learning environments. Teachers exhibiting Light Triad characteristics are often more

empathetic, tolerant, altruistic, sincere, and organized, which can lead to constructive interactions with students, enhanced teaching efficacy, and positive classroom climates (Orosova et al., 2026; Răducu & Stănculescu, 2022).

Beyond interpersonal outcomes, Light Triad traits are associated with higher self-esteem, authenticity, and a stronger sense of self, which are important for personal growth, self-development, and fully self-actualizing (Adam-Bagley et al., 2023; Kaufman et al., 2019). Despite its growing relevance, research examining the role of Light Triad personality in educational contexts remains limited, particularly among teachers and teacher trainees (Bălan et al., 2023).

2. Self-actualization in Educational Contexts

Self-actualization occupies a central position in Maslow's theory of human motivation and refers to the realization of one's fullest potential through personal growth, authenticity, autonomy, and meaningful engagement with life (Maslow, 1943). More recent conceptualizations view self-actualization as an ongoing developmental process characterized by self-awareness, intrinsic motivation, and the pursuit of personally meaningful goals (Kaufman, 2018).

Within educational settings, self-actualization has been linked to positive professional outcomes among teachers, including greater job satisfaction, autonomy, professionalism, and commitment to professional development (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005; Suyatno et al., 2022; Ulfah et al., 2025). Self-actualized teachers are more likely to engage in reflective practice, embrace lifelong learning, and create environments that support students' intellectual and emotional growth (Chua & Welch, 2021; Tian, 2025; Ulfah et al., 2025). These characteristics contribute not only to teaching effectiveness but also to teachers' psychological well-being (Kaufman, 2018; Shao, 2023).

Theoretical perspectives suggest that positive personality traits facilitate self-actualization by fostering intrinsic motivation and psychological growth (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2014). Individuals who demonstrate empathy, authenticity, and concern for others are more likely to develop meaningful interpersonal relationships and pursue goals aligned with their values (Chen et al., 2024; Kono & Walker, 2020). Accordingly, Light Triad personality characteristics may provide the psychological foundation necessary for self-actualization (Kaufman et al., 2019). By encouraging personal growth, self-awareness, and authentic engagement with others, Light Triad traits may help teachers move toward realizing their professional and personal potential (Orosova et al., 2026).

3. Healthy Selfishness and Well-being

Healthy selfishness represents an adaptive form of self-interest that differs fundamentally from narcissism, egocentrism, or exploitative behaviour (Carlson et al., 2022; Kaufman & Jauk, 2020). Rather than prioritizing personal needs at the expense of others, healthy selfishness involves maintaining appropriate boundaries, engaging in self-care, and protecting one's psychological well-being while remaining considerate of others (Kaufman & Jauk, 2020; Soysal & Bakalim, 2023). Within positive psychology, healthy selfishness is increasingly recognized as an important contributor to psychological adjustment, resilience, and overall well-being (Kaufman & Jauk, 2020; Soysal & Bakalim, 2023).

For teachers, healthy selfishness is particularly important because educational professionals frequently encounter substantial emotional and professional demands. The ability to establish healthy boundaries, prioritize self-care, and maintain work-life balance can reduce burnout and promote long-term professional effectiveness (Brittain, 2025; Hogan & White, 2021). Consequently, healthy selfishness may enable teachers to meet both personal and professional responsibilities in a sustainable manner.

Self-actualization provides a theoretical basis for the development of healthy selfishness. Individuals who have achieved higher levels of self-actualization tend to possess greater self-awareness, autonomy, and psychological maturity (Robbins, 2021). These characteristics enable them to recognize their own needs, establish appropriate boundaries, and make decisions that promote both personal well-being and meaningful social relationships (O'Connor & Yballe, 2007). As a result, self-actualized individuals are more likely to engage in healthy selfishness. This suggests that self-actualization may function as an important psychological mechanism through which positive personality characteristics contribute to adaptive self-care and well-being.

4. Personality and Teacher Development

Teacher development is influenced by both individual and contextual factors. Personality characteristics play a crucial role in shaping teachers' professional growth, classroom effectiveness, and psychological well-being (Bardach et al., 2022). Previous research indicates that teachers who possess positive personality traits are more likely to demonstrate reflective practice, adaptability, resilience, and effective interpersonal relationships, all of which contribute to successful teaching outcomes (Heng & Chu, 2023). Similarly, self-actualized teachers tend to exhibit greater autonomy, professional commitment, and personal growth, which support both instructional effectiveness and career development.

Contextual factors may also influence how personality characteristics translate into developmental outcomes. Teaching experience, for example, contributes to professional competence, self-efficacy, and confidence (Rahmawati & Tusyanah, 2025). More experienced teachers may possess greater opportunities to apply and express positive personality characteristics within educational settings, thereby strengthening the relationship between personality and self-development. Conversely, less experienced teachers may still be developing the professional skills and confidence necessary to fully realize the benefits of positive personality traits.

Likewise, the medium of instruction may shape teachers' professional experiences and developmental opportunities (Wang et al., 2025). Different instructional contexts often involve distinct linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical demands, which may influence how teachers utilize their personal strengths and engage in professional growth (Nigat-Tulod, 2025). Consequently, the extent to which Light Triad personality contributes to self-actualization may vary across instructional contexts.

Although previous studies have independently examined positive personality traits, self-actualization, and teacher development, the influence of Light Triad personality on healthy selfishness through self-actualization remains an area with limited dedicated research. Furthermore, the role of contextual factors such as teaching experience and medium of instruction in shaping these relationships has received limited attention. Addressing these gaps

may enhance understanding of the psychological processes that support teacher well-being and professional development.

The following section synthesizes these streams to develop the study's hypotheses, clarifying the mechanism by which Light Triad personality may influence healthy selfishness through self-actualization, and how contextual factors moderate these relationships.

Hypotheses Development

Building on the literature, we propose a conceptual pathway linking Light Triad personality to healthy selfishness via self-actualization. First, Light Triad personality is hypothesized to foster self-actualization by promoting intrinsic motivation, ethical values, and personal growth (Adam-Bagley et al., 2023; Kaufman et al., 2019). Second, self-actualization is theorized to enhance autonomy, which, in turn, supports healthy boundary-setting and healthy selfishness, enabling teachers to engage in self-care without compromising professional commitments (Kaplan, 2022; Kaplan & Madjar, 2017). Thus, the hypothesized mechanism is: Light Triad personality → self-actualization → healthy selfishness.

Additionally, contextual factors such as teaching experience and medium of instruction may moderate these relationships, influencing the extent to which Light Triad traits and self-actualization manifest in teachers' healthy behaviors (Alqarni, 2021; Veeran et al., 2025).

Hypotheses

H1: Light Triad personality is positively associated with healthy selfishness through the mediating effect of self-actualization.

H2a: The relationship between Light Triad personality and self-actualization is moderated by the medium of instruction, such that the association is stronger when instructional language aligns with teachers' values and identity.

H2b: Teaching experience moderates the relationship between Light Triad personality and self-actualization, with experienced teachers demonstrating a stronger association due to greater professional maturity.

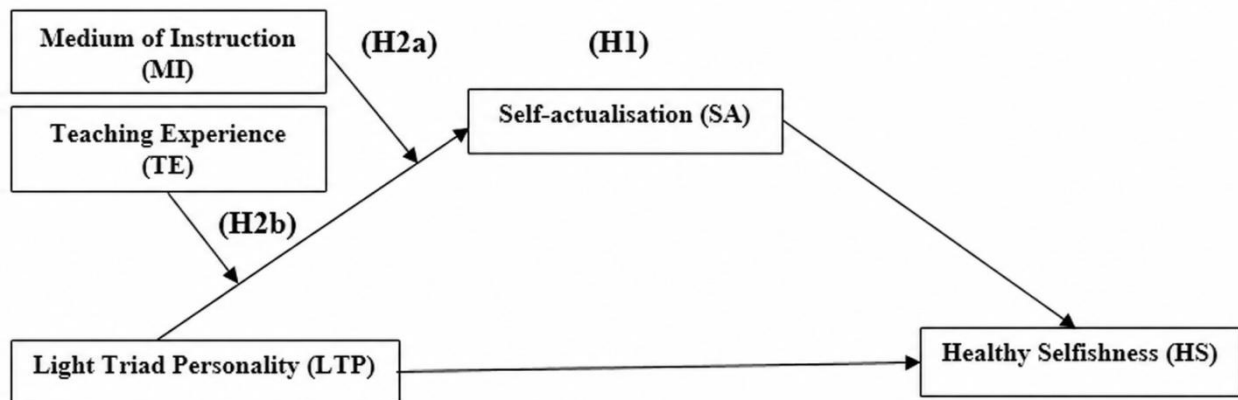
Statistical Model

Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized moderated mediation model, which integrates both individual and contextual influences on the development of healthy selfishness among teacher trainees. In this framework, self-actualization mediates the relationship between Light Triad personality (LTP) and healthy selfishness (HS), in line with prior research highlighting the capacity of positive personality traits to facilitate self-actualizing tendencies (Kaufman, 2018; Maslow, 1987). Crucially, the model reconceptualizes the role of the medium of instruction (MI) as a moderator of the LTP–self-actualization link, drawing on sociocultural and linguistic relativity theories (Vygotsky, 1978; Boroditsky, 2011). Language is not merely a passive conduit for thought, but an active shaper of cognitive and emotional processes; thus, the language of instruction can influence the extent to which personality traits are expressed and actualized within educational contexts. Specifically, when the medium of instruction aligns with an individual's linguistic proficiency and cultural background, it may enhance their ability to authentically express personality traits such as empathy, compassion, and altruism, thereby facilitating self-actualization (Dewaele, 2015). Conversely, a misalignment may inhibit these expressions by imposing cognitive or affective barriers. By embedding the moderation mechanism in established linguistic and psychological theory, this model provides a

theoretically robust explanation for the role of language in the personality–self-actualization dynamic.

Figure 1

Moderated Mediation Model



Source: Created by Siddiqui (2026)

Method

Data Collection

This study used primary data collected through a purposive sampling technique. Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) teacher trainees enrolled in regular two-year B.Ed. programs at institutions across Telangana state were targeted for participation. The list of institutions was sourced from the Telangana Council of Higher Education. After securing permission from the relevant authorities, a web-based survey was conducted across these institutions. Out of the invited trainees, 516 responded, yielding a high response rate of 99%. The online survey preserved participants' anonymity and addressed time and logistical constraints (Chang & Chen, 2008; Wang & Emurian, 2005). The instrument included three sections: instructions, confidentiality and informed consent, demographic information, and items pertaining to the study's variables. All participants provided informed consent prior to beginning the survey. Transparency was ensured throughout data collection by discussing and explaining the survey's purpose with the respective institutional authorities. Participation was entirely voluntary.

Measures

Light Triad Personality

The Light Triad Personality was measured using the Light Triad Scale (Kaufman et al., 2019). It has 12 items and three subscales: faith in humanity, humanism, and Kantianism, each comprising four items. The entire scale is positively scored, considering a 5-point Likert scale: "Always = 5", "Often = 4", "Sometimes = 3", "Rarely = 2", and "Never = 1".

Healthy Selfishness

Healthy Selfishness was assessed using the Healthy Selfishness Scale (Kaufman & Jauk, 2020). This scale consists of 20 items across two dimensions, one of which is Healthy Selfishness, comprising 10 items, scored on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Always = 5", "Often = 4", "Sometimes = 3", "Rarely = 2", and "Never = 1".

Self-actualization

Finally, self-actualization was estimated using the 30-item Characteristics of Self-actualization Scale (Kaufman et al., 2018). This scale assesses ten characteristics of self-actualization:

continued freshness of appreciation, acceptance, authenticity, equanimity, purpose, efficient perception of reality, humanitarianism, peak experiences, good moral intuition, and creative spirit. It is scored on a five-point Likert scale: “Strongly Agree = 5”, “Agree = 4”, “Undecided = 3”, “Disagree = 2”, and “Strongly Disagree = 1”.

Data Analysis

First, the descriptive statistics of all three constructs were calculated. Second, the participants’ demographics were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 26v for Windows. Third, the Measurement Model was tested to analyze the tools’ psychometric properties. Lastly, the moderated mediation model was estimated using the Hayes PROCESS macro (Model 7).

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the constructs. The teacher trainees scores ranged from a minimum of 2.67 to a maximum of 5.00. The average score among them was 4.252, with a standard deviation of .402. For the light triad personality, scores ranged from 1.17 to 5.00. The mean score for the light triad personality among teacher trainees was 4.305, with a standard deviation of .537. Regarding healthy selfishness, the minimum score was 1.30, the maximum was 5.00, the mean was 4.197, and the standard deviation was .612. Notably, the consistently high means (all above 4) across variables suggest that participants tended to endorse positive self-perceptions, which may indicate a social desirability bias or a ceiling effect; such concentration of high scores can limit the interpretability of the results and raises questions about the extent to which these measures capture genuine psychological tendencies versus the influence of response biases. While some variability is reflected in the standard deviations, the clustering of scores near the upper end of the scale warrants caution when drawing strong conclusions about the psychological characteristics of the sample. The reported ranges show some diversity in responses; however, the elevated means and potential bias should be explicitly considered when interpreting the findings.

Table 1

Descriptive Analysis of the Model Variables

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
SA	2.67	5.00	4.252	0.402
LTP	1.17	5.00	4.305	0.537
HS	1.30	5.00	4.197	0.612

Note. n = 516; SA: Self-actualization; LTP: Light Triad Personality; HS: Healthy Selfishness; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation

Demographic Analysis

Table 2 illustrates the demographic analysis of the participants. The study’s sample comprised 516 teacher trainees, exhibiting a heterogeneous demographic profile. The age distribution, ranging from 18 to 48 years (M = 26.75, SD = 5.72), suggested a cohort with varied life experiences. A pronounced gender disparity was evident, with females constituting a substantial majority (77.4%), reflecting potential trends in teacher training demographics. The sample demonstrated a balanced distribution across semesters, indicating a cross-sectional

representation of the training program. Regarding the medium of instruction, English predominated (61.6%), though the presence of Urdu-medium trainees (18.9%) highlighted linguistic diversity within the sample. Geographic concentration was evident, with nearly half of the participants residing in Hyderabad (47.3%), potentially reflecting the regional dominance of certain educational institutions. Urban residency was highly prevalent (86.1%), suggesting possible sampling bias or demographic differences in the trainee population. A substantial proportion of trainees (69.7%) had completed B.Ed. internships, indicating adherence to practical training requirements. University enrollment varied, with Osmania University representing the largest cohort (38.2%), potentially reflecting its regional prominence. Regarding teaching experience, a significant majority (59.3%) reported having less than 1 year of teaching experience, suggesting a novice group entering the teaching profession, with implications for pedagogical preparedness and professional development needs.

While the demographic spread appears diverse, several demographic skews, such as the overrepresentation of females, urban residents, and students from specific universities, may limit the generalizability of the findings. These factors, along with the geographic clustering, warrant consideration when interpreting the broader applicability of the results. It is important to recognize that such imbalances may reflect both the realities of teacher training in the region and potential sampling biases that could influence study outcomes.

Table 2

Demographic Profile of the Participants

Demographic Variables	N	%	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Age			18	48	26.75	5.72
Gender						
Female	400	77.4				
Male	117	22.6				
Semester						
I	105	20.3				
II	100	19.3				
III	155	29.9				
IV	157	30.3				
Medium of Instruction						
English	319	61.6				
Hindi	62	12				
Telugu	38	7.3				
Urdu	98	18.9				
District of the Institution						

Hyderabad	245	47.3
Jangoan	54	10.4
MedchalMalkajgiri	99	19.1
Nalgonda	16	3.1
Wanaparthi	56	10.8
Warangal-U	18	3.5
Others	29	5.6
Area of the Institution		
Rural	27	5.2
Suburb	44	8.5
Urban	446	86.1
B.Ed. Internship		
No	156	30.1
Yes	361	69.7
Affiliated University		
DBHPS	61	11.8
KU	81	15.6
MGU	16	3.1
MANUU	97	18.7
OU	198	38.2
PU	64	12.4
Teaching Experience		
< 1 Year	307	59.3
1-10 Years	198	38.2
>10 Years	12	2.3

Note. n = 516; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; DBHPS: Dakshin Bharat Hindi Prachar Sabha; KU: Kakatiya University; MGU: Mahatma Gandhi University; MANUU: Maulana Azad National Urdu University; OU: Osmania University; PU: Palamuru University

Measurement Model

The measurement model was assessed to evaluate the quality of the study's constructs. The initial step involved testing factor loadings, followed by establishing construct validity and reliability.

Factor Loadings

Pett et al. (2003) defined factor loadings as the degree to which each item correlates with its principal component, ranging from -1.0 to +1.0. Items with higher absolute loadings indicate

stronger associations with underlying factors. Following Hair et al. (2016), items with loadings below .50 were excluded, resulting in 36 retained items out of 52. Table 3 presents the factor loadings of the retained items.

Table 3

Factor Loadings of Items

	CFA	Acpt	Auth	Equa	Purpose	EPR	Hum	PE	GMI	CS	FH	Humn	Kant	HS
CFA2	0.826													
CFA3	0.810													
Acpt5		0.794												
Acpt6		0.825												
Auth7			0.813											
Auth8			0.848											
Equa10				0.702										
Equa11				0.814										
Equa12				0.787										
Purpose13					0.786									
Purpose14					0.800									
Purpose15					0.817									
EPR16						0.779								
EPR17						0.802								
EPR18						0.767								
Hum19							0.756							
Hum20							0.776							
Hum21							0.793							
PE22								0.760						
PE23								0.738						
PE24								0.812						
GMI26									0.831					
GMI27									0.870					
CS28										0.77				
CS29										0.818				
CS30										0.805				
FH2											0.763			
FH3											0.820			
Humn5												0.734		
Humn6												0.786		
Humn7												0.835		
Kant9													0.786	
Kant11													0.812	
HS4														0.787
HS6														0.706
HS9														0.706

Note: CFA: Continuous Freshness of Appreciation; Acpt: Acceptance; Auth: Authenticity; Equa: Equanimity; EPR: Efficient Perception of Reality; Hum: Humanitarianism; PE: Peak Experiences; GMI: Good Moral Intuition; CS: Creative Spirit; FH: Faith in Humanity; Humn: Humanism; Kant: Kantianism; HS: Healthy Selfishness.

Indicators Multicollinearity

Indicator multicollinearity was assessed using variance inflation factors (VIFs) (Hair et al., 2021). Hair et al. (2016) recommended a VIF threshold of 4 or lower to indicate no significant multicollinearity. All study indicators met this criterion (see Table 4).

Table 4

Multicollinearity Statistics (VIF) for Indicators

	VIF
CFA2	1.128
CFA3	1.128
Acceptance5	1.108
Acceptance6	1.108
Authenticity7	1.171
Authenticity8	1.171
Equanimity10	1.222
Equanimity11	1.417
Equanimity12	1.287
Purpose13	1.398
Purpose14	1.431
Purpose15	1.418
EPR16	1.308
EPR17	1.368
EPR18	1.321
Humanitarianism19	1.271
Humanitarianism20	1.388
Humanitarianism21	1.286
PE22	1.263
PE23	1.256
PE24	1.354
GMI26	1.252
GMI27	1.252
CS28	1.373
CS29	1.494
CS30	1.368
FH2	1.070
FH3	1.070
Humanism5	1.267

Humanism6	1.365
Humanism7	1.510
Kantianism9	1.084
Kantianism11	1.084
HS4	1.193
HS6	1.163
HS9	1.162

Note. CFA: Continued Freshness of Appreciation; EPR: Efficient Perception of Reality; PE: Peak Experiences; GMI: Good Moral Intuition; CS: Creative Spirit; FH: Faith in Humanity; HS: Healthy Selfishness

Reliability Analysis

Reliability is the stability and consistency of a measurement instrument (Souza et al., 2018). Both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were used to assess construct reliability, as summarized in Table 5.

Composite reliability (CR) ranged from .771 to .843, surpassing the recommended .70 threshold (Hair et al., 2011). Cronbach's alpha ranged from .435 to .721, with some values below .70 (see Table 5). Despite some lower alpha values, the measurements are considered reliable for several reasons:

Alpha is a lower bound for reliability, so true reliability may be higher than reported (Guttman, 1945; Sijtsma & Pfadt, 2021; Cho & Kim, 2014).

Alpha can be negative if the average inter-item covariance is negative, but most reliability estimators, like SEM-based CR, are always non-negative. Alpha can also be less than 1 even without measurement error. Positively correlated item errors may inflate alpha, overestimating reliability (Lucke, 2005), and high alpha does not always reflect greater internal consistency (Cho & Kim, 2014).

Although internal consistency is often equated with homogeneity or unidimensionality among items (Cronbach, 1951), research has shown that alpha does not necessarily represent these qualities (Green et al., 1977; McDonald, 1981).

Increasing reliability by deleting items with low inter-item correlations can inflate alpha (Kopalle & Lehmann, 1997), but alpha does not always increase with more items, and item deletion may not genuinely improve reliability (Peterson, 1994).

Alpha thresholds of .70 or .80 are often used to judge reliability (Nunnally, 1994), but these cutoffs are not empirically derived (Taber, 2017). For exploratory research, thresholds of .50 or .60 are acceptable (Nunnally, 1967; Straub & Gefen, 2004). Artificially increasing alpha by deleting items can reduce criterion and content validity, causing the attenuation paradox (Humphreys, 1956; Loevinger, 1954).

High internal consistency may sometimes conflict with validity (Kline, 1986) and may reflect item redundancy rather than true scale quality (Boyle, 1991). Greater reliability is also needed when making finer distinctions (Cortina, 1993).

Coefficient alpha is not always suitable as a reliability measure (McDonald, 1981). To address its limitations, researchers use alternatives such as those in structural equation modeling (SEM). Composite Reliability (CR), a common SEM estimator, assesses the consistency of

items loading onto a latent variable and is often considered more robust than Cronbach's alpha, especially for multidimensional constructs.

SEM reliability estimators that do not require the assumptions of alpha are recommended (Cho & Kim, 2014). Thus, even though most Cronbach's alpha values were below .70, construct reliability is established because all CR values exceeded the recommended threshold (see Table 5).

Table 5

Construct Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability)

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
CFA	0.504	0.801
Acceptance	0.477	0.792
Authenticity	0.553	0.817
Equanimity	0.654	0.812
Purpose	0.721	0.843
EPR	0.684	0.826
Humanitarianism	0.670	0.819
PE	0.658	0.814
GMI	0.620	0.840
CS	0.715	0.840
FH	0.408	0.771
Humanism	0.689	0.829
Kantianism	0.435	0.779
HS	0.573	0.777

Note. CFA: Continued Freshness of Appreciation; EPR: Efficient Perception of Reality; PE: Peak Experiences; GMI: Good Moral Intuition; CS: Creative Spirit; FH: Faith in Humanity; HS: Healthy Selfishness

Construct Validity

Construct validity was assessed using PLS-SEM to evaluate convergent and discriminant validity.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity refers to the agreement among multiple measures of the same construct (Bagozzi et al., 1991). It is established when items converge on the underlying construct, indicated by an average variance extracted (AVE) of .50 or higher (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). All constructs in this study exhibited AVE values above .50, confirming convergent validity (see Table 6).

Table 6

Constructs Convergent Validity (AVE)

Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

CFA	.669
Acceptance	.656
Authenticity	.691
Equanimity	.592
Purpose	.624
EPR	.613
Humanitarianism	.601
PE	.594
GMI	.724
CS	.637
FH	.628
Humanism	.618
Kantianism	.639
HS	.539

Note. CFA: Continued Freshness of Appreciation; EPR: Efficient Perception of Reality; PE: Peak Experiences; GMI: Good Moral Intuition; CS: Creative Spirit; FH: Faith in Humanity; HS: Healthy Selfishness

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is the extent to which measures of different concepts are distinct (Bagozzi et al., 1991). This study used the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) and the Fornell-Larcker criterion to assess discriminant validity.

Fornell and Larcker Criterion

According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is established when a construct's square root of AVE exceeds its correlations with other constructs (Abikari et al., 2022). This criterion was satisfied in the present study (see Table 7).

Table 7

Constructs Discriminant Validity—Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Acpt	Auth	CFA	CS	EPR	Equa	FH	GMI	HS	Humn	Hum	Kant	PE	Purpose
Acpt	0.810													
Auth	0.415	0.831												
CFA	0.377	0.453	0.818											
CS	0.378	0.418	0.384	0.798										
EPR	0.358	0.432	0.400	0.498	0.783									
Equa	0.423	0.403	0.366	0.469	0.510	0.769								
FH	0.233	0.172	0.134	0.272	0.281	0.288	0.792							
GMI	0.396	0.252	0.230	0.417	0.439	0.425	0.264	0.851						
HS	0.246	0.224	0.204	0.336	0.338	0.281	0.382	0.224	0.734					
Humn	0.250	0.160	0.206	0.27	0.334	0.208	0.356	0.238	0.415	0.786				
Hum	0.392	0.456	0.410	0.52	0.538	0.411	0.307	0.398	0.298	0.356	0.775			
Kant	0.344	0.243	0.252	0.354	0.301	0.33	0.328	0.349	0.365	0.449	0.373	0.799		
PE	0.501	0.353	0.353	0.479	0.555	0.563	0.338	0.499	0.338	0.318	0.539	0.371	0.771	
Purpose	0.345	0.404	0.400	0.479	0.545	0.336	0.194	0.307	0.283	0.285	0.475	0.264	0.357	0.801

Note. Acpt: Acceptance; Auth: Authenticity; CFA: Continuous Freshness of Appreciation; CS: Creative Spirit; EPR: Efficient Perception of Reality; Equa: Equanimity; FH: Faith in Humanity; GMI: Good Moral Intuition; HS: Healthy Selfishness; Humn: Humanitarianism; Kant: Kantianism; PE: Peak Experiences. **Bold and italic** represent the square-root of AVE.

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

The HTMT ratio estimates the correlation between constructs to assess discriminant validity. Literature suggests thresholds of .90 (Teo et al., 2008) and .85 (Kline, 2011). In this study, all HTMT ratios were below .90, supporting discriminant validity (see Table 8).

Table 8

Constructs Discriminant Validity—HTMT Ratio

	Acpt	Auth	CFA	CS	EPR	Equa	FH	GMI	HS	Humn	Hum	Kant	PE	Purpose
Acpt														
Auth	0.803													
CFA	0.774	0.857												
CS	0.649	0.665	0.645											
EPR	0.632	0.693	0.678	0.717										
Equa	0.761	0.662	0.63	0.679	0.758									
FH	0.519	0.354	0.292	0.496	0.528	0.569								
GMI	0.732	0.423	0.414	0.631	0.674	0.666	0.523							
HS	0.473	0.401	0.375	0.517	0.538	0.456	0.794	0.378						
Humn	0.44	0.257	0.346	0.382	0.483	0.305	0.672	0.363	0.653					
Hum	0.694	0.745	0.697	0.762	0.79	0.618	0.587	0.616	0.477	0.509				
Kant	0.756	0.49	0.54	0.636	0.556	0.606	0.776	0.668	0.727	0.816	0.688			
PE	0.899	0.578	0.608	0.697	0.821	0.862	0.658	0.78	0.55	0.468	0.807	0.693		
Purpose	0.59	0.637	0.665	0.669	0.774	0.478	0.352	0.459	0.441	0.403	0.671	0.472	0.512	

Note: Acpt: Acceptance; Auth: Authenticity; CFA: Continuous Freshness of Appreciation; CS: Creative Spirit; EPR: Efficient Perception of Reality; Equa: Equanimity; FH: Faith in Humanity; GMI: Good Moral Intuition; HS: Healthy Selfishness; Humn: Humanism; Hum: Humanitarianism; Kant: Kantianism; PE: Peak Experiences

Validating Higher Order Constructs (Reflective-formative)

The higher-order constructs of self-actualization and the light triad personality consist of 10 and 3 lower-order constructs, respectively. Validity was established by significant outer weights (Hair et al., 2014), outer loadings above 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019), and VIF values below 5 for all lower-order constructs (Hair et al., 2021). These results confirm the validity of the higher-order constructs (see Table 9).

Table 9

Higher Order Construct Validity

HOC	LOC	Outer Weights	t	p	Outer Loadings	VIF
SA	CFA	.103	5.359	0.000	.598	1.470
	Acceptance	.137	10.516	0.000	.653	1.573
	Authenticity	.105	7.481	0.000	.631	1.588
	Equanimity	.144	12.435	0.000	.710	1.760
	Purpose	.133	6.987	0.000	.662	1.673
	EPR	.162	14.821	0.000	.772	2.073
	Humanitarianism	.168	15.214	0.000	.754	1.879
	PE	.175	15.293	0.000	.772	2.119
	GMI	.136	12.332	0.000	.635	1.512
	CS	.161	12.148	0.000	.737	1.762

LTP	FH	.420	6.633	0.000	.722	1.193
	Humanism	.403	5.561	0.000	.770	1.334
	Kantianism	.482	6.581	0.000	.801	1.306

Note. HOC: Higher Order Constructs; LOC: Lower Order Constructs; SA: Self-actualization; LTP: Light Triad Personality; VIF: Variance Inflation Factor

The Goodness of Fit (Model's Predictive Capabilities)

Goodness-of-fit was evaluated using the predictive relevance measure (Q²), the effect size (F²), and the coefficient of determination (R²).

R-square (R²)

The R² values were 0.282 for both self-actualization and healthy selfishness, indicating that 28.2% of the variance in these constructs is explained by the predictors. This result suggests a strong association between light triad personality traits and self-actualization, as well as their combined influence on healthy selfishness.

Additionally, 28% of the variability in healthy selfishness was explained by the combined effect of light triad personality and self-actualization, indicating that a balanced approach to personal development within an ethical framework may promote healthy self-interest.

The model's R² values for self-actualization and healthy selfishness exceeded the 0.10 cutoff, indicating acceptable explanatory power (Falk & Miller, 1992).

F-square (F²)

F² effect size quantifies the impact of removing an independent variable on the dependent variable, with values of 0.35 (high), 0.15 (medium), and 0.02 (small) (Jacob, 1990). In this study, F² ranged from 0.162 (medium) for LTP on HS, 0.393 (high) for LTP on SA, to 0.037 (small) for SA on HS.

Q-square (Q²)

The Q² effect size for healthy selfishness was 0.248, indicating moderate predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2014). Table 10 summarizes the model fit results.

Table 10

Effect Size for Independent Variables

	R ²	SD	t	p
SA	.282	.048	5.817	0.000
HS	.282	.045	6.234	0.000
	F ²			
LTP→HS	.162	.049	3.309	.001
LTP→SA	.393	.097	4.032	.000
SA→HS	.037	.017	2.16	.031
	Q ²			
SA	.272			
HS	.248			

Note. SA: Self-actualization; HS: Healthy Selfishness, LTP: Light Triad Personality

Standard Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)

In addition to the mentioned statistics, the standard root mean square residual (SRMR) can also be used to measure model fit. A value of less than 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) is considered a good fit. The present research SRMR value was 0.07, indicating a good model fit.

Hypotheses Testing

Testing for Mediation Effect

First, the results were examined to explore whether self-actualization mediates the relationship between the light triad personality and healthy selfishness (H1). The analysis indicates that the direct effect of the light triad personality (LTP) on healthy selfishness (HS), when accounting for self-actualization (SA), is statistically significant ($b = .593$, $t = 12.142$, $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect through self-actualization also reaches significance ($b = 0.0834$, $t = 2.9469$). These findings suggest that self-actualization may mediate the relationship between the light triad personality and healthy selfishness, providing empirical support for H1. The summary of H1 is presented in Table 11.

Testing for Moderated Mediation

It was hypothesized that the medium of instruction (H2a) and teaching experience (H2b) might moderate the relationship between the light triad personality and self-actualization. The results indicate that the light triad personality (LTP) is associated with self-actualization (SA) ($b = .407$, $t = 14.845$, $p < 0.001$), and that the medium of instruction also demonstrates a significant effect ($b = -.035$, $t = -2.819$, $p = 0.005$). Teaching experience yielded a statistically significant coefficient ($b = .073$, $t = 2.643$, $p = 0.008$), though its interpretive strength may be limited. Notably, the interaction between LTP and medium of instruction (LTP*MI) significantly predicted self-actualization ($b = -.069$, $t = -3.102$, $p = 0.002$), whereas the interaction between LTP and teaching experience (LTP*TE) was not significant ($b = .030$, $t = .574$, $p = 0.566$). The observed R-square change for LTP*MI suggests an incremental contribution to the model, while the change for LTP*TE does not reach significance. Collectively, these results lend support to H2a but not H2b, and should be interpreted in light of the complexity and limitations inherent in the moderating effects. Further details are provided in Tables 11 and 12.

However, the reported findings from the moderated mediation analyses should be interpreted in light of possible methodological constraints. While significant interaction effects were observed for the medium of instruction moderating the relationship between the Light Triad Personality and self-actualization, the lack of effect for teaching experience also merits careful consideration. The presence of significant effects does not necessarily indicate strong or practically meaningful moderation, especially given the earlier-noted issues of high means and possible ceiling effects. Moreover, the reliance on self-reported data, combined with sample characteristics, raises the possibility that some effects may be attenuated or inflated by response biases. Thus, while the statistical results support some hypotheses, claims regarding their substantive psychological impact should remain measured and acknowledge these interpretive caveats.

Table 11

Direct Relationships between Variables

Direct Relationships	Unstandardised Coefficient	t value
LTP → SA	.407	14.845
LTP → HS	.593	12.142

SA → HS	.204	3.118
LTP*MI → SA	-.069	-3.102
LTP*TE → SA	.030	.574

Note. LTP: Light Triad Personality; SA: Self-actualization; HS: Healthy Selfishness; MI: Medium of Instruction; TE: Teaching Experience

Table 12

Indirect Relationship between Variables

Indirect Relationship	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect (SE)	Confidence Interval Low/High	t value
LTP → SA → HS	.5931	.0834 (.0283)	.0298/.1425	2.9469
Probing Moderated Indirect Relationships (Index of Moderated Mediation)	Effect	SE	Confidence Interval Low/High	t value
MI – (LTP → SA → HS)	-.0143	.0073	-.0307/-.0024	-1.9589
TE – (LTP → SA → HS)	.0062	.0147	-.0216/.0384	.4217

Note. LTP: Light Triad Personality; SA: Self-actualization; HS: Healthy Selfishness; MI: Medium of Instruction; TE: Teaching Experience

Discussion:

The present research set out to explore two central questions: (Q1) whether self-actualization mediates the relationship between Light Triad personality and healthy selfishness among teacher trainees, and (Q2) whether the medium of instruction and teaching experience moderate this relationship. Based on these aims, we hypothesized that Light Triad personality would be positively associated with healthy selfishness, with self-actualization mediating this association (H1). We further posited that this relationship would be moderated by the medium of instruction (H2a), being stronger when instructional language aligns with teachers' values and identity, and by teaching experience (H2b), with more experienced teachers showing a stronger association due to greater professional maturity.

The findings revealed that Light Triad traits: humanism, Kantianism, and faith in humanity are not merely statistically associated with healthy selfishness, but that this relationship is primarily channeled through self-actualization. Rather than simply presenting numerical results, these outcomes encourage a broader, more interpretative understanding of positive personality as dynamic and context-dependent. Light Triad traits appear to serve as catalysts for self-actualization, equipping teacher trainees with crucial psychological resources to balance self-care and professional responsibilities. In this context, the mediating role of self-actualization highlights positive personality as generative: not only fostering personal well-being but also sustaining prosocial engagement in the demanding sphere of teaching. However, the persistence of a direct effect alongside partial mediation underscores the complexity of positive personality. Its influence on well-being and ethical self-interest is apparent, yet it may also be shaped by other contextual and dispositional factors that warrant further exploration.

Building on this, it is important to revisit the theoretical gap identified at the outset regarding the interplay among Light Triad traits, healthy selfishness, and self-actualization in shaping teacher trainees' well-being and professional identity. The present findings directly address this

gap by illuminating how these dimensions operate together to influence both personal and professional growth. Rather than viewing positive personality traits as fixed or solely statistically significant, the results suggest that cultivating such qualities has a dynamic, synergistic effect on teacher development. Identifying self-actualization as a mediating mechanism helps clarify how teacher trainees are uniquely positioned to model prosocial values, resilience, and balanced professional practices: qualities essential for fostering supportive classroom environments. This perspective invites a shift from traditional risk-and-deficit models to a more strengths-based approach in teacher preparation. When Light Triad traits are intentionally nurtured, teacher trainees appear better equipped to set boundaries, sustain their well-being, and fulfill their roles as both educators and role models. The practical implications for teacher education programs, therefore, include prioritizing personality development interventions that not only enhance teacher retention and classroom climate but also address the nuanced interplay of positive personality traits crucial for professional identity formation.

Besides this, the study's findings regarding the medium of instruction revealed the crucial role of language as a contextual moderator in the development of positive personality traits. The negative moderation effect suggests that when teacher trainees learn in a language that is misaligned with their linguistic or cultural identity, self-actualization is hindered, and the benefits of Light Triad traits are less fully realized. This insight advances both personality theory and teacher education research by highlighting the interplay between sociocultural context and psychological development. It underscores that the expression of positive personality is not merely an individual trait but is shaped by linguistic and cultural affordances. For teacher education, this means that attention to the medium of instruction is not a peripheral concern but a core component of nurturing teacher well-being and professional growth. Programs that support linguistic alignment or provide scaffolding for learners of a non-native language may better enable the actualization of positive personality traits, ultimately benefiting both prospective teachers and their future students.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study offers valuable insights, several key limitations must be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference, as data were collected at a single point in time. Second, reliance on self-report measures introduces the possibility of response bias, as participants may portray themselves in a more favorable light. Relatedly, the use of a single survey instrument for all constructs raises concerns about common method variance, which could artificially inflate observed relationships. Third, the convenience sampling approach, particularly through a web-based survey, limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the current sample. Additionally, a ceiling effect observed in some Likert-scale responses suggests that participants tended to select higher ratings, thereby reducing variability and masking more nuanced differences. These methodological constraints collectively impact the robustness and generalizability of the study's conclusions.

Future research should address these limitations by adopting longitudinal or experimental designs to better establish causality, incorporating multi-method assessment strategies to mitigate self-report and common-method biases, and employing probabilistic sampling techniques to improve generalizability. Further, attention to scale construction and response

patterns can help minimize ceiling effects. Finally, as healthy selfishness and Light Triad traits remain relatively unexplored among teacher trainees, future studies would benefit from both quantitative and qualitative approaches to deepen understanding of these constructs.

Conclusion

To conclude, this study highlights the pivotal role of light triad personality traits and self-actualization in fostering healthy selfishness among teacher trainees. The results demonstrate that self-actualization significantly mediates the relationship between positive personality traits and adaptive self-care. Notably, the medium of instruction moderates this relationship, with alignment to trainees' linguistic and cultural backgrounds supporting greater self-actualization. While teaching experience offered some positive effects, its moderating role was less pronounced. These findings underscore the importance of cultivating positive personality traits and self-actualization in teacher education, as well as the need to consider contextual factors such as language of instruction. Collectively, this research provides valuable insights for designing interventions that enhance teacher well-being and professional growth, and it lays a foundation for future inquiry in this area.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no foreseeable conflict of interest regarding this manuscript.

Informed Consent Statement

The participants were well informed about the purpose of the survey. They voluntarily participated in the survey.

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Author Contributions Statement

HWS conducted the survey and drafted the manuscript. MS assisted in data analysis and reviewed the manuscript.

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