

SCHOOL WELL-BEING IN SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND ITS CONDITIONING FACTORS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Giusy Sturiale

State Comprehensive Institute 'Campanella/Sturzo' of Catania

Viale Bummacaro, 8, 95121 Catania, Italy

E-mail address: giusy.sturiale@scuola.istruzione.it

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2951-2141>

Luis Espino-Diaz

Faculty of Educational Sciences and Psychology, Department of Education

University of Cordoba

San Alberto Magno, s/n, 14071 Cordoba, Spain

E-mail address: luis.espino@uco.es

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9929-6889>

ABSTRACT

Thesis. This systematic review article argues that school well-being is closely linked to various factors, such as academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and self-concept. It posits that promoting school well-being can significantly enhance academic motivation, reduce absenteeism, and foster a more positive learning environment.

Concept. School well-being is intricately linked to various factors including academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and self-concept. This study critically evaluates these factors, organising and assessing previous research to inform future studies and pedagogical strategies.

Results and conclusion. The review reveals that school well-being is significantly connected to academic performance, quality of interpersonal relationships, and self-concept. Additionally, factors such as anxiety are identified as major contributors to student distress, impacting their overall school well-being and academic outcomes. The findings suggest that promoting school well-being can effectively enhance academic motivation, reduce absenteeism, and foster a more positive learning environment. Promoting school well-being emerges as a key strategy to optimise the educational experience and academic outcomes. The study highlights the importance of tailored pedagogical approaches that address individual differences and foster a supportive and

inclusive classroom environment. Integrating socio-emotional learning and continuous monitoring of student well-being are recommended for sustainable educational success.

Originality. This article provides a novel synthesis of existing research on school well-being, linking it to academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and self-concept. It offers practical pedagogical guidelines based on a comprehensive literature review, highlighting the importance of socio-emotional learning and continuous monitoring of student well-being to enhance educational outcomes.

Keywords: school well-being, academic performance, anxiety, interpersonal relationships, learning process

INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental aspects for an individual relates to their overall well-being; in this sense, the importance of the influence of context and its affective, emotional, and rational dimensions on this well-being is recognised, a fact that is even more pronounced during adolescence. Consequently, psychosocial well-being results from the interaction of factors such as brain maturity, decision-making, family and friendship relationships, prosocial behaviour, bullying, and the social context to which the adolescent belongs (Albiero, 2021). In this regard, social health is defined as that dimension of an individual's well-being concerning their relationships with others, how others react to them, and how they interact with social institutions and societal norms (McDowell & Newell, 1987).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) (2024) already defined the concept of health in 1946 as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being,” and not merely the absence of ailments or diseases, highlighting its importance for the individual and how it contributes to their growth, development, and overall healthy lifestyle. This consideration underlies the adolescent's journey of self-affirmation, experienced amidst conflicts and contrasts in relation to peers, adults, society, and especially the school (Borman et al., 2018).

The purpose of this review, therefore, focuses on analysing possible behaviour and risk signals that predict the qualitative well-being of adolescents in relation to learning and the effectiveness of the educational system. Given its importance, the existing literature has considered the analysis of school well-being for evaluating the educational system (Beverina & Capone, 2018), the variable of subjective well-being for its efficacy on quality of life and emotional balance (OECD, 2015a), and self-efficacy and motivation (Bandura, 2006).

Additionally, a section of pedagogical guidelines to be developed in the classroom through teaching programmes is included. These guidelines are based on the findings revealed in the literature review that has been carried out.

The process followed in this review adheres to the strict protocol described below. First, the research topic was established based on relevance and significance criteria, specifically school well-being. Secondly, a comprehensive search of literature related to the topic under study was conducted. Academic databases such as Scopus, SciELO, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were used to find relevant studies published in specialised journals, books, conference proceedings, and institutional reports. Keywords related to the research topic of school well-being were used, such as academic performance, anxiety, interpersonal relationships, school performance, self-perception, and family, among others. The criterion was that these keywords were broad enough yet specific enough to ensure the discovery of a wide range of relevant studies. Subsequently, the search was filtered to obtain more refined results, following criteria such as the type of publication, the date of publication, and the language. Additionally, the bibliography of the found references was reviewed to try to locate relevant studies and find additional relevant studies. Finally, Mendeley was used as a reference management tool.

STUDY OF SCHOOL WELL-BEING AND ITS IMPACT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

In this context, the research conducted by Maria Beverina and Laura Capone (2018) concluded that promoting school well-being is the most advantageous strategy to prevent school absenteeism and student demotivation. Conversely, the sense of well-being in the educational environment corresponds to high levels of desire to learn and also greater responsibility regarding aspects related to one's own learning. The study was conducted on a sample of Italian secondary school students to identify those factors that have predictive capacity for adolescents' well-being. Thus, the aim of this study focused on school well-being factors for their potential implications in learning practices and the effectiveness of the educational system. The current state of this research is described below, starting with the link between school well-being and the evaluation of the educational system. Likewise, the role that individual resources and capacities play in improving a person's overall well-being is considered fundamental, and the subjective well-being related to life satisfaction, emotions, and self-efficacy in relation to school well-being and its influence is analysed.

On this construct of subjective well-being, an instrument has been validated (Stockinger, 2023), whose factor analysis suggests that general school well-being is significantly related to a range of academic variables including emotional aspects linked to achievement or success, adaptability or resilience as the students' ability to cope with the inherent challenges of school life (such as low grades or exam pressure), parental assessment of school well-being and their children's academic performance, as well as the classroom and school climate through perceptions of the environment

with the aim of understanding the variation in psychological well-being at school and educational well-being in its broader sense.

Consequently, school well-being plays a fundamental role in students' academic performance, positively impacting the reduction of absenteeism and demotivation, and fostering greater interest and responsibility towards learning. The analysed research underscores the importance of considering school well-being factors and how they influence learning practices and the effectiveness of the educational system. Additionally, the relevance of individual resources and capacities of students, as well as the influence of subjective well-being, in improving overall well-being and its direct impact on various academic variables, including emotional aspects, adaptability, and the school climate, is highlighted. Thus, promoting school well-being emerges as a key strategy to optimise the educational experience and academic outcomes.

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND EVALUATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Regarding the sociodemographic variables of age and gender, studies report significantly higher scores obtained by girls. Specifically, the study reports significant gender differences in the Satisfaction and Recognition subscales and Teacher Relationship, both with higher scores for girls. Concerning the age variable, there is a trend towards decreased well-being during the transition from primary to secondary education (Tobia & Marzocchi, 2015).

For evaluating the educational system, it is essential to detect the degree of students' satisfaction with their educational achievements and their perception of recognition of these achievements by parents and teachers. In this regard, in secondary school, students' overall satisfaction tends to decrease significantly with the transition to the next grade (Beverina & Capone, 2018).

Regarding the degree of recognition of academic achievements, families show a double-edged attitude towards their children, adopting a more protective attitude at school and towards teachers, contrasted with a more performance-based and critical attitude at home. For the teacher, the situation changes, as the same study shows how the teacher's consideration towards the student contributes to a more positive self-representation, so the ability to see the student "beyond" their academic results, being more receptive to their needs and sensitive to their emotional aspects, contributes to school well-being and the improvement of the educational system.

These findings underscore the complexity of sociodemographic influences on the educational system and school well-being, suggesting the need for multidisciplinary and personalised approaches to address these issues. Recognising how age and gender can influence the educational experience is crucial for developing effective strategies that promote an inclusive and supportive educational environment for all students. This effect

is highlighted in a study that evaluated how a specific workshop impacts self-esteem, manifestations of depression, and family dynamics in students with learning difficulties, emphasising the importance of considering the socioeconomic and emotional context of students in their well-being and academic performance (Capurro et al., 2011).

Furthermore, concerning gender differences, a study on the influence of sociodemographic variables in adolescents revealed that gender, age, and the type of educational institution affect aspects such as coping styles and social stress, showing significant differences in how male and female students perceive and manage stress, which can influence their adaptation and academic performance (Bermúdez et al., 2009).

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Another aspect to consider in relation to school well-being is the degree of students' satisfaction with their educational achievements and their perception of recognition of these achievements by their peers, teachers, and family (Beverina & Capone, 2018).

Concerning the consequences on learning or academic performance, the research conducted by Joel Omar González-Cantero et al. (2020) concludes that students' perception of being capable of achieving or attaining success through their own efforts, the support or help from various social agents, and individual well-being significantly correlate with academic achievement, and a lower probability of attaining better grades was found when there is a medium-low level of self-confidence. Academic self-efficacy, which refers to a student's confidence in their ability to complete academic tasks, is an important predictor of academic performance.

Moreover, social support, especially related to academic aspects, provides an environment where students can develop and maintain their self-efficacy. Consequently, research suggests that without an adequate level of academic self-efficacy, it is less likely that students will achieve satisfactory levels of academic performance. Specifically, females achieve higher levels of academic performance and school performance and school well-being than males, highlighting the importance of considering individual and gender differences when analysing interpersonal relationships and their impact on academic performance.

These results are supported by research conducted with 12-year-olds (Kiuru et al., 2020) which confirms that academic performance is affected by school well-being. Furthermore, it is concluded that interpersonal relationships also constitute a conditioning element for the degree of learning of students, and thus a positive school climate, characterised by supportive relationships, can improve school well-being and, in turn, academic performance.

In this sense, the results indicate that parental support is essential during the transition period from one educational stage to another, even more so than the support

from teachers and peers (Castro et al., 2015) because the relationship with parents enjoys more continuity than with other types of interpersonal relationships. Likewise, the continuity and constant support from parents is more critical than the support from teachers or peers, suggesting that stable family relationships are fundamental for academic performance and school well-being.

Regarding academic performance, when interpersonal relationships act as indirect variables on school well-being, a satisfactory school climate positively influences academic performance through these relationships. Conversely, when the school climate is characterised by stress and dissatisfaction, relationships with teachers hinder academic performance. In other words, a satisfactory school climate, where interpersonal relationships are generally positive, can enhance academic performance, whereas a negative school climate, marked by stress and dissatisfaction, can make interactions with teachers detrimental to academic performance.

EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND LEARNING

Another perspective for analysing individual well-being is based on criteria such as life satisfaction and the balance between positive and negative emotions, which are related not only to behaviour but also to learning. A state of emotional well-being enables students to face academic challenges with greater resilience and adaptability.

The analysis of this variable aims to highlight the possible discomfort related to the school environment. This arises from research conducted (OECD, 2015a) on well-being at school, which showed that the level of school-related anxiety among Italian students appears much higher than in other countries. Specifically, the studied sample presents levels of anxiety related to schoolwork in 56% of students; 70% present levels of anxiety during the examination process, despite being well-prepared for the exam.

The results indicate that schoolwork-related anxiety is one of the main predictors of low life satisfaction among students. Therefore, the literature review suggests that preventive and corrective strategies for anxiety need to be established to achieve acceptable levels of school well-being and the consequent benefit to academic performance (Colunga-Rodríguez et al., 2021). Thus, anxiety not only negatively affects students' life satisfaction but also emerges as a detrimental factor for learning and academic performance.

Hence, subjective emotional well-being and the classroom climate correlate with learning behaviour because they are important indices of educational quality and teaching. Moreover, the emotional well-being created in the classroom is a good starting point for the social skills necessary in a good society (Polito, 2020). Therefore, a positive classroom environment, where emotional well-being is a priority, promotes effective learning and the acquisition of essential social skills.

Simultaneously, it can be said that the teacher plays an important role in shaping a positive classroom climate, reflecting both the character of the teacher-student relationship

and the students' relationships. In fact, the learning environment and instructors' training can create a conducive learning environment, positively impacting emotional well-being and, consequently, students' academic performance (Manahan & Bonotan, 2024). In line with this, the work led by S. Sekar (2024) analyses how ethical professional practices of teachers in higher education can nurture not only academic achievement but also students' emotional well-being, highlighting the crucial role of teachers as authoritative figures in the educational environment.

IMPLICATIONS OF SCHOOL WELL-BEING ON THE LEARNING PROCESS

To combine learning, teaching, and education rubrics with those of subjective well-being and quality of life, this research aims to compare the results. Therefore, since this research aims to identify school well-being, there is an intention to understand the factors that truly act and determine the perceived habitability of the school by students.

Comparison with the data disclosed by Mario Polito (2020) shows that well-being is more related to learning than disciplinary grades and that learning and grades are not equivalent. Thus, there is a positive correlation between cooperative learning approaches and the level of well-being in the classroom. Therefore, the study of school well-being by searching for internal and external causes to highlight the emergence of this issue produced results showing that among middle school students, well-being tends to be "positively influenced by grades and negatively by behaviour problems" (Tobia & Marzocchi, 2015, p. 229). Thus, considering the perception of well-being as an interaction of subjective and objective components with reference to the school context, the results analysed so far are significant, showing how students' perceptions of their academic performance subsequently influence their well-being.

In this vein, other authors suggest that self-perception is a strong predictor of well-being (Schneider et al., 2022). Indeed, students who perceive themselves as not doing well in school ultimately show lower levels of well-being. Embracing the socio-cognitive theoretical line, the analysis also relied on social learning and the individual's trajectory characterised precisely by the reciprocity of influences.

Considering the importance of the influence of motivation on an individual's ability to achieve a certain goal, it can undoubtedly be said that from this perspective, perceived self-efficacy arises (Bandura, 1997), which represents the mechanism through which the self operates and corresponds to the personal conviction that one is up to certain situations and has the necessary capabilities to achieve specific goals. This means that an individual can feel effective in some situations and ineffective in others, depending on their perception of their own abilities. In the school context, self-efficacy also plays an essential role in learning, leading to greater motivation and consequently better learning.

Therefore, to assess beliefs of personal efficacy specific to certain situations such as school and interpersonal self-efficacy, this research referenced studies aimed at measuring self-efficacy (Sorio & Vaccari, 2017), opting to consider perceived emotional, interpersonal, and social self-efficacy, highlighting the influence of gender differences. The research demonstrated that girls have more difficulty dealing with unpleasant emotions and, instead, are more sensitive to understanding and interacting with others. Boys, on the other hand, are more effective in peer relationships and overcoming frustrations but have more difficulty understanding the effect of their own actions; regarding empathetic self-efficacy, boys perceive themselves as having more difficulties in identifying others' feelings, while girls, in contrast, perceive themselves as more sensitive to interpreting others' moods.

Lastly, regarding social self-efficacy, while girls perceive themselves as more critical in competitions, boys, on the contrary, experience a high sense of self-efficacy when they can experience such competitiveness, for example, in sports.

Thus, the analysis of the relationships between the different variables conducted through the appropriate bibliographic references allowed focusing on the quality of school well-being between learning efficacy and the dimension of the educational system.

PEDAGOGICAL GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN THE CLASSROOM

To enrich the literature review conducted, aspects to be considered based on the findings and analyses carried out on subjective and school well-being, gender differences in academic and emotional satisfaction, and the importance of interpersonal relationships in the educational environment are presented as pedagogical guidelines. These are a series of proposals for teachers to implement in the classroom.

Given the importance of the classroom environment, a guideline to develop from the teaching programme could be to foster positive classroom environments. Teachers should strive to create a classroom climate that promotes emotional well-being and the inclusion of all students. This includes recognising the achievements of all students, implementing strategies to manage stress and anxiety, and creating a supportive environment that allows students to express their emotions and concerns.

A second guideline in this programme, given the importance of individual differences highlighted by the consulted research, would be to develop differentiated support strategies. Recognise and address individual differences, including gender differences, in the experience of school well-being. This could involve implementing mentoring programmes, support groups, and specific resources to help those experiencing higher levels of anxiety or dissatisfaction.

Self-efficacy has proven to be an essential factor in school well-being. Therefore, promoting self-efficacy and resilience from the classroom, that is, developing self-efficacy and resilience skills in students through activities and projects that foster autonomy, decision-making, and problem-solving. This could help improve their personal satisfaction and perception of academic competence.

Regarding the importance of the emotional aspect, it would be interesting to integrate socio-emotional education, including socio-emotional education programmes in the school curriculum that teach students to manage their emotions, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. These skills are crucial for their overall well-being and academic success.

Social relationships have proven to be a determining factor in school well-being, therefore, strengthening interpersonal relationships could enhance positive interpersonal relationships among students and between students and teachers. This can be achieved through collaborative group activities, service-learning projects, and fostering a culture of respect and mutual support.

The role of the family has been another of the findings highlighted by the literature review. Active family and community participation and involvement in the educational process and support for adolescent school well-being would be factors to enhance from the classroom. Open communication between school and home can improve the recognition of academic achievements and foster a broader support environment for students.

Another guideline to propose is the adaptation of teaching strategies to meet the emotional and cognitive needs of adolescents. This may include using teaching methods that encourage exploration, creativity, and critical thinking, and offer students opportunities to reflect on their learning and well-being.

Anxiety has proven to be a factor that negatively affects students' well-being. Therefore, preventing and managing anxiety is proposed, developing programmes and workshops focused on preventing and managing school-related anxiety. These programmes can teach students relaxation techniques, mindfulness, and effective coping strategies to manage stress related to academic performance and assessments.

Given the importance that school well-being plays in educational contexts, continuous monitoring of school well-being could be essential. Establishing of mechanisms for continuous monitoring and evaluation to regularly assess students' well-being and adapt interventions as necessary. This can include regular well-being surveys, open feedback spaces, and the creation of student well-being committees.

Incorporating these pedagogical guidelines into the educational strategy can significantly contribute to developing a school environment that not only focuses on academic performance but also on the emotional and social well-being of students, which is essential for their long-term educational and personal success.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the results reported on the correlation between subjective well-being and school well-being (Bandura, 2000) provides a fairly comprehensive picture of the level of school well-being among secondary school students.

The first aspect aimed at investigating gender differences according to the study by Valentina Antonia Tobia and Gian Marco Marzocchi (2015) showed results indicating that females are more satisfied with their academic performance, which aligns with literature suggesting that females are generally more competent in school (Berchiolla et al., 2011). However, they exhibit more negative emotions than their male counterparts, to the extent of developing higher levels of anxiety, as shown by the survey conducted by Luciana Castelli et al. (2017). In cases of high anxiety, adolescent girls must rely on support figures such as family and friends (Nawi et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the analysis of subjective well-being (OECD, 2015b) indicated that secondary school students have lower valuations of personal satisfaction, self-efficacy, and emotions experienced at school. In fact, data on anxiety levels related to school performance according to the survey reported that the level of school-related anxiety among Italian students is much higher than in other countries. This result, according to Tobia & Marzocchi (2015), could be linked to the developmental period experienced by children, which strains aspects related to adolescence such as self-experimentation and verification of relational and cognitive abilities.

Regarding the factors that determine and influence the success of an educational community, it was first observed that relational character influences the quality of the didactic-educational learning of adolescents. Therefore, learning cannot be an end in itself or a sterile acquisition of notions but an accompaniment towards the awareness of one's existence, in terms of fostering knowledge (where knowledge means the ability to think, establish relationships, and thus transform oneself), which precisely involves the freedom to be. In this sense, it was observed how this relational aspect loses interest, especially among adolescents, because they are the first subjects affected by a difficult relationship with adults who have the responsibility (each according to their specific competencies) to jointly conduct the educational discourse (Argentin et al., 2007).

The relational character is complemented by the participation component, which generates interaction among individuals and has been shown to be influenced by various factors. Specifically, in adolescents, it is linked to motivation. Both characteristics, however, the relational and the participation-related, represent aspects of an increasingly dominant reading of the current reality, according to which we can talk about a real crisis in education and education in general. However, the crisis can represent an opportunity to reconsider the value of education. Indeed, a crisis forces us to return to questions, demands new or old answers, and only becomes a catastrophe when we try to face it with preconceived judgments.

In conclusion, the results of this analysis provide, on the one hand, several cues for continuing to design interventions on school well-being that also consider the involvement

of reference adults such as teachers and parents, and, on the other hand, can represent a model of reflection and work for managing challenging classes from a relational and motivational perspective.

The literature review on school well-being and its impact on academic performance highlights the importance of considering multiple factors that influence adolescents' educational experience. It is recognised that students' psychosocial well-being results from a complex interaction of various elements such as brain maturation, interpersonal relationships, social and family context, and perception of the school environment. Regarding interpersonal relationships and their connection to school well-being and academic performance, the importance of enhancing adolescents' interpersonal relationships as an intervention tool to help them face various academic challenges is highlighted.

The conclusions indicate that promoting school well-being is not only crucial for preventing absenteeism and student demotivation but is also closely related to a greater desire to learn and increased responsibility in the educational process. The importance of social support, academic and emotional self-efficacy, and the quality of interpersonal relationships as predictors of school well-being is highlighted. Additionally, it is shown that emotional well-being and the affective climate in the classroom play a fundamental role in academic performance and students' life satisfaction. School-related anxiety and stress can significantly affect well-being and academic performance. In this regard, the results indicate the need for preventive measures to minimise anxiety and help maintain the necessary levels of well-being during this phase of academic development.

Lastly, the importance of considering gender and age differences, as well as the perception of recognition of educational achievements by parents and teachers, in evaluating school well-being and its impact on the learning process is highlighted. In summary, this review highlights the need to adopt comprehensive approaches that promote a healthy school environment and support the emotional and social well-being of students, as this not only improves their personal satisfaction but also positively contributes to their academic performance and overall development.

In conclusion, the comprehensive analysis conducted reveals significant findings on school well-being and its impact on adolescents' academic performance. The complexity of this phenomenon is evident, influenced by multiple factors ranging from brain maturation to interpersonal relationships and the affective climate in the classroom. The relevance of social support, academic and emotional self-efficacy, and the quality of interpersonal relationships as determinants of school well-being is highlighted. Moreover, the necessity to address school-related anxiety and stress through preventive measures that promote a healthy school environment is underscored. Additionally, the importance of considering gender, age, and the perception of recognition of educational achievements for a comprehensive evaluation of school well-being is emphasised. Ultimately, the need to adopt holistic approaches that foster students' emotional and social well-being is evident, aiming to enhance their personal satisfaction and improve their academic performance and overall development.

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