

A current study of psychological well-being in educational institutions: A systematic literature review

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Article Info

Article history:

Received Jul 22, 2023
Revised Aug 24, 2023
Accepted Sep 6, 2023

Keywords:

College student
Psychological well-being
School
Student
Teacher

ABSTRACT

The issue of psychological well-being in education has emerged as an increasingly critical topic in recent years. This is due to the significance of psychological well-being in enhancing the performance of educational institutions, encompassing students, teachers, and the process of formulating school policies. This study sought to discover recent research on psychological well-being from an academic perspective. A total of 27 research articles were successfully gathered and reviewed based on the established criteria. This article review was conducted utilizing two databases (SCOPUS and WoS) and the following keywords: "psychological well-being" combined with "AND" and other search terms such as "school", "teacher", and "student". This systematic review offers a synthesis of results that can serve as the initial step in developing constructs of psychological well-being in educational institutions, thus implying the importance of psychological well-being for teachers and students. The results of the analysis from this systematic literature review have been discussed and concluded in this study.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The critical importance of education in promoting national development and sustainability is well-documented [1]. Its pivotal role extends beyond basic literacy and numeracy, contributing to social progress, economic growth, and technological innovation, which collectively determine a nation's prosperity [2]. Given this instrumental role, a resilient education system supported by all relevant stakeholders is essential.

Teachers and students, as central figures in this system, play an indispensable role in educational success [3], [4]. Their contribution, influenced by myriad factors, is particularly hinged on their psychological well-being. The psychological well-being of teachers and students is a construct that encapsulates subjective feelings about happiness, satisfaction, and overall life experiences [5]. It has been found to impact teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes respectively, thereby influencing the quality of education [6], [7].

Understanding its nuances, influences, and impact on the various stakeholders can provide critical insights that can help shape policies, interventions, and practices to foster an optimal educational environment [8]. Thus, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in this field. Psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct that encapsulates subjective experiences of happiness, satisfaction, and life experiences [9], [10]. Thus, it includes the absence of negative mental

conditions or psychological stress such as anxiety, frustration, emotional exhaustion, unhappiness, and dissatisfaction [11], [12]. Bornstein *et al.* [13] defined well-being as a state of success throughout the life course that integrates psychological, cognitive, and socio-emotional functions that result in activities such as social relationships and the ability to cope with psychosocial problems. Ryff *et al.* [14] added psychological well-being as a set of psychological characteristics that are implicated in positive human functions such as autonomy, adaptation to the environment, self-acceptance, life purpose, positive relationships with others, and personal growth.

Psychological well-being has a role in predicting the performance of teachers and students. Lyubomirsky *et al.* [15] stated that higher psychological well-being is associated with positive dimensions in professional career and personal life. This is because individuals with higher levels of psychological well-being will show resilience, have better psychological resources, and are able to overcome problems better [16]. With respect to teachers, psychological well-being can have an important role in influencing their mental health and performance [6], [17]. Teachers who have psychological well-being have a good mental health so they can work optimally. Psychological well-being for students is crucial because they can achieve optimal development as indicated by having a positive attitude towards themselves, being independent in learning, having good social relations with others, having a life purpose, and the ability to develop optimally [18].

While psychological well-being has been extensively studied within the context of various fields, such as industry/organizations [19]–[24], and health [25]–[30], there appears to be a paucity of such investigations within educational institutions. However, given the apparent impact of psychological well-being on educational outcomes, it is crucial to prioritize its study in these settings.

The development of this paper is crucial, considering the escalating demand in recent years to understand and bolster psychological well-being within educational environments. This surge is attributable to the increasing cases of mental health disorders among teachers and students. For instance, recent studies indicate that job-related stress among teachers has reached a climax [31], a situation potentially impacting their performance and diminishing the quality of education. Furthermore, the World Health Organization [32] reported an upward trajectory in the prevalence of mental health disorders among students.

Additional studies suggest that supportive factors such as social backing and a positive school climate play an instrumental role in enhancing psychological well-being among students [7]. Consequently, there's an urgent need to delve deeper into how psychological well-being can be comprehended and enhanced within educational settings. Therefore, this paper aims to elucidate and explore psychological well-being in an educational context. The ultimate goal is to provide a better understanding of this phenomenon and outline how it can be improved. This paper attempted to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of the data (country, study objectives, and population) that become the focus of research on psychological well-being in the educational institutions?

RQ2: What is the empirical evidence related to the correlation and predictors of psychological well-being in educational institutions?

RQ3: What methods are used to research psychological well-being in the educational institutions?

RQ4: What are the gaps related to research on psychological well-being in the educational institutions?

2. METHOD

2.1. Searching strategy

A systematic search was conducted to identify studies on psychological well-being. A comprehensive search was carried out on two reputable databases, namely SCOPUS and WoS on the core science citation index expanded (SCI-EXPANDED), social sciences citation index (SSCI), Arts & humanities citation index (A&HCI), and emerging sources citation index (ESCI). The searching for article references from all research was conducted in the last five years (2018–2022). All record/searching results were exported to EndNote reference management software version 20. The duplicates were removed by “Find Duplicate” feature and manual filtering. The used searching term is “psychological well-being” combined with “AND” and the other searching terms such as “school” and “teacher” and “student”. The searching was conducted in English, and only original research articles were included in this study.

2.2. Selection criteria

The selection process in the literature was examined based on inclusion and exclusion criteria [33]–[35]. The topics in the research articles following this review article were examined based on the following selection criteria: i) the research had been published in a reputable international journal; ii) the research covered studies regarding psychological well-being in the educational institutions; iii) the research explored the relationship between psychological well-being and other relevant variables; and iv) a full-text version of the research is available in English. Articles that are not following the topic of this review will be

excluded by considering the following criteria: i) the articles are incomplete; ii) the articles are not research articles; and iii) the articles do not have sufficient data and are not relevant to the research question.

The article selection process involves screening the titles and abstracts identified during the search. The researchers reviewed the full-texts of potentially relevant research articles. Initially, the researchers checked titles and abstracts for appropriateness before discussing the results and resolving differences. After independently assessing the suitability of the full texts, the researchers met to discuss the results of this screening process, resolved differences and agreed on the reasons for the exclusion of studies. After removing duplicates and excluding records based on abstract and title, a total of 28 articles were retrieved.

The search results on the SCOPUS database found 182 documents with the following search screening: TITLE (TITLE (psychological AND well-being) AND TITLE ('psychological' AND 'wellbeing') OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (school) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (teacher) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (student)). On the WoS (Web of Science) database, 301 literature search results were obtained from three core sources, namely science citation index expanded (SCI-EXPANDED), social sciences citation index (SSCI), and Arts & humanities citation index (A&HCI). The searching queries are accessible on the WoS website.

2.3. Data extraction and synthesis

The data was extracted from the reviewed research articles into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Content analyses on the research articles were also carried out. Furthermore, the data was analyzed and confirmed by the researchers. The researchers arrange several categories: researcher/year/country, article title, variable, method, instrument, sample size, research result, and research gap. The literature-quality assessment aims to ensure the accuracy of the information, the accuracy of the interpretation of the synthesis results and the strength of the conclusions by running the preset steps [36]. The article references from reputable journals become a parameter of the quality of the selected articles. This literature review published selected articles on at least SCOPUS-indexed international journals and the Web of Science. The articles were also selected qualitatively by examining the appropriateness of the literature with the topic and research questions and involving peer review. The main data extracted from the article included quantitative and qualitative data and mixed methods. The important data or information extraction was done using the SPIDER matrix guide with the narrative synthesis method. Once extracted, the data was then classified, assessed, compared, analyzed, combined, and concluded as a whole.

The criteria for assessing the quality of included studies were adapted from the PRISMA Statement [37]. The selected articles were analyzed using statistical techniques and online-based search engines. The searching was not based on the manual reading of all published articles in the journal. This might have allowed several important articles on psychological well-being in several journals to be missed. However, repeated searching processes and rigorous selections involving various supporting applications and peer reviews can reduce invalidity.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. RQ1: What are the characteristics of the data (country, study objectives, and population) that become the focus of research on psychological well-being in the educational institutions?

3.1.1. Countries

The review identifies 29 countries across 27 articles, with Australia and Italy most frequently studied for psychological well-being in education. Better education systems correspond with higher levels of well-being for both teachers and students [38]–[42]. Notably, Greenier *et al.* [39] revealed that English teachers' well-being was significantly better than that of their Iranian counterparts due to Iran's challenging socio-economic and geopolitical conditions. These conditions also influence students' well-being, as those from lower socioeconomic statuses often attend underfunded schools with subpar teaching and mental health support [43].

3.1.2. Objectives

Out of 27 articles reviewed, eight focus on teachers and 19 on students' psychological well-being. The first category explores the impact of teachers' well-being on their professionalism. High levels of well-being are associated with greater job satisfaction, lower stress, and increased teaching effectiveness [39], [40], [44]. The second category examines students' well-being, particularly during school transitions. These periods can be stressful, causing reduced academic performance and increased worry [45], [42]. However, students with higher well-being view transitions more positively and experience less school-related stress [45], [46].

3.2. RQ2: What is the empirical evidence related to the correlation and predictors of psychological well-being in educational institutions?

3.2.1. Variables related to general information

Research indicates that psychological well-being is influenced by variables like gender and place of residence. Most studies find no correlation between gender and psychological well-being [47], [48], although one study notes gender's significant impact on certain dimensions like life satisfaction and optimism [49]. As for place of residence, Greenier *et al.* [39] show that Iranian teachers have lower psychological well-being than their UK counterparts, attributed to socio-economic and geopolitical challenges in Iran. For students, low socioeconomic status is significantly linked to reduced psychological well-being [39], [38].

3.2.2. Variables related to work (teacher)

Teacher work conditions significantly influence their psychological well-being. Variables such as work attitudes [50], work involvement [39], enjoyment of teaching [40] and job satisfaction [44] are closely linked to psychological well-being. High psychological well-being correlates with teacher professionalism, engagement, and competence. It enhances good student interactions, sense of purpose, and work autonomy [51], [50]. Additionally, empowered teachers are more committed and produce high-quality work, thereby boosting their psychological well-being [52]. This state of well-being also equips teachers to support students with mental health or academic issues, consequently boosting student self-esteem [41], [48].

3.2.3. Variables related to school/university life (students)

Psychological well-being is important for students because having high psychological well-being can help students achieve optimal development [53]. In relation to school life, psychological well-being is correlated with experience with the education system [54], school transition readiness [45], [42], academic experience [38], academic role conflict [55], and academic stress [56]. Students who have a high level of psychological well-being can adapt well during the school transition between elementary school and high school, which is associated with good academic performance and motivation [42]. Psychologically prosperous students view the school transition as a positive opportunity in their life, thus helping them adjust. Negative experiences related to learning include experiencing academic stress [56] and academic role conflict [55] correlated with low psychological well-being., school transition readiness [45], [42], academic experience [38], academic role conflict [55], and academic stress [56]. Students who have a high level of psychological well-being can adapt well during the school transition between elementary school and high school, which is associated with good academic performance and motivation [42]. Psychologically prosperous students view the school transition as a positive opportunity in their life, thus helping them adjust. Negative experiences related to learning include experiencing academic stress [56] and academic role conflict [55] correlated with low psychological well-being.

3.2.4. Variables related to general individual (students)

Student psychological well-being is influenced by factors such as social support, life satisfaction, and emotional regulation [57]–[59], adaptation [58], life satisfaction [60], gratitude [47], self-construction [49], self-humility [61], social engagement [62], emotion regulation [59], and sincere feelings [17]. Adaptability significantly contributes to well-being and is linked to better social skills and personal growth [63], [64]. Emotional regulation serves as a coping strategy to mitigate negative emotions [59]. Positive feelings like gratitude and life satisfaction also elevate well-being [47], [65], [61], [60], [57]. Low psychological well-being correlates with unhappiness and low self-esteem, affecting academic performance [48].

3.2.5. Moderator/mediator

Two studies explore the roles of moderator and mediator variables in psychological well-being. Poudel *et al.* [48] demonstrated that affective conditions mediate the link between gratitude and psychological well-being, but cannot act as a moderator between gratitude traits and well-being. Harlianty *et al.* [17] found that gratitude moderates the relationship between feelings of sincerity (Narimo Ing Pandum) and well-being, suggesting that high levels of both can improve students' adaptability and psychological health.

3.3. RQ3: What methods are used to research psychological well-being in the educational institutions?

In the comprehensive review of literature on psychological well-being within educational settings, a total of 27 studies were meticulously analyzed. The majority, comprising 23 studies, predominantly favored quantitative research methodologies. These studies employed a variety of designs to explore the intricate relationship between psychological well-being and its impact on teachers and students. Among these designs were cross-sectional approaches, which provided snapshots of well-being at a single point in time across

different populations. Cross-cultural designs were also utilized, offering valuable insights into how different cultural contexts may influence psychological well-being. Experimental designs were implemented to establish cause-and-effect relationships, while longitudinal studies tracked changes in well-being over time, allowing for the observation of trends and long-term effects.

A smaller subset of three studies recognized the value of a mixed-methods approach. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, these studies aimed to paint a more nuanced picture of psychological well-being in educational environments. This approach enabled researchers to not only gather numerical data on well-being but also to capture the subtleties and complexities that such figures alone could not fully convey.

Lastly, one study took a purely qualitative route to delve into the lived experiences of individuals within schools. Through methods such as in-depth interviews, meticulous observation, and thorough document analysis, this study sought to uncover the rich, descriptive narratives that define the essence of psychological well-being in the educational sphere. This qualitative exploration provided a vital counterbalance to the empirical data, highlighting the personal stories and subjective experiences that lie behind the statistics. Together, these varied methodologies contributed to a more holistic understanding of psychological well-being among teachers and students, underscoring the multifaceted nature of research in this field.

3.4. RQ4: What are the gaps related to research on psychological well-being in the educational institution?

Research gaps in the study of psychological well-being in educational settings can be categorized into seven main areas. First, evidence gaps exist in specific topics such as self-concept in teachers [50], and emotion regulation in language education [39]. Second, methodological gaps are noted, like the limited use of mixed-methods in studying refugee students [54]. Third, knowledge gaps need filling, particularly concerning the impact of COVID-19 on school-aged children's psychological well-being [66].

Fourth, population gaps pertain to the range of participants; for instance, studies often focus on specific regions or age groups [41], [67], [51]. Fifth, theoretical gaps highlight shortcomings in current theories, necessitating research to provide more nuanced data, as in emotion regulation studies [59], [68], [57]. Sixth, empirical gaps point to inconsistencies in current research findings, requiring further verification, such as the link between leadership empowerment and psychological well-being [45], [52]. Finally, the seventh gap is the practical knowledge gap, focusing on the need for research that can inform practical interventions and policies [45], [69], [38].

4. CONCLUSION

Findings indicate a strong correlation between a country's educational system and socioeconomic status and psychological well-being. Students in underfunded schools, often in low socioeconomic areas, face challenges like poor teaching quality and inadequate mental health services, affecting their psychological well-being. In contrast, advanced educational systems prioritize teachers' well-being and high-quality curricula, positively impacting psychological health.

The study identifies various variables correlated with psychological well-being. These include general factors like gender and social status, job-related factors such as work attitude and job satisfaction for teachers, and academic factors like academic stress and school transition readiness for students. Psychological well-being in students is also influenced by individual attributes like social support, emotional regulation, and self-esteem.

The majority of existing research utilizes quantitative methods, suggesting a need for future studies to employ qualitative approaches to explore psychological well-being in educational settings comprehensively. The review highlights that most studies focus on evidence gaps. Future research should expand to address practical, empirical, and theoretical gaps, thereby enriching the construct of psychological well-being in educational institutions for practical implementation.

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