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Students' Educational Well-being — Conditions and Forms of Support

Dobrostan edukacyjny uczniów — uwarunkowania i formy wsparcia

Słowa kluczowe: dobrostan, edukacja, nowoczesne technologie, wsparcie.

Streszczenie: Artykuł ma charakter teoretyczny. Ukazuje rozważania w kontekście współczesnych założeń edukacji oraz udziału nowoczesnych technologii w procesie kształcenia. Autorki podjęły próbę odpowiedzi na pytania badawcze: Jak w miarę upływu czasu zmienia się dobrostan uczniów? Jakie są współczesne uwarunkowania dobrostanu uczniów? Jakie formy wspierające można wiązać z procesem kształcenia i dbałością o dobrostan edukacyjny?

Zastosowano metodę analizy literatury naukowej oraz wewnątrzszkolnych przepisów, a także selekcję i rekonstrukcję treści. Artykuł otwiera wprowadzenie, ukazujące zmiany zachodzące w procesie edukacji. W dalszej kolejności omówiono funkcje i czynniki ryzyka dobrostanu edukacyjnego uczniów oraz tendencje zmian związane z zaangażowaniem nowoczesnych technologii w proces kształcenia. W części końcowej uwzględniono rekomendacje dla praktyki edukacyjnej.

Key words: well-being, education, modern technologies, support.

Abstract: This article is theoretical in nature. It explores contemporary educational paradigms and the role of modern technologies in the learning process. The authors seek to address the following research questions: How does students' well-being evolve over time? What are the key determinants of students' well-being today? What forms of support can be integrated into the learning process to enhance educational well-being?

The study employs an analysis of scientific literature and internal school regulations, alongside content selection and reconstruction. The article begins with an introduction outlining the transformations occurring in education. It then examines the functions and risk factors affecting students' educational well-being, as well as emerging trends associated with the integration of modern technologies in education. The final section presents recommendations for educational practice.

Introduction

Students' educational well-being is one of the key elements of effective education, as it influences their motivation, academic achievements, and overall development. In light of contemporary conditions and increasing challenges (Rembierz, 2024) – such as mental health issues (Majerek, 2013; Syrek, 2019; Syrek, Polok, 2023; Syrek, 2024), the growing number of students with specific educational needs, the dissemination of new educational paradigms (normalization, integration, and inclusion), and the integration of modern technologies into education (Symela, Kramek, Sławińska, 2012) – schools (as representatives of the education sector) should undertake measures to support students' well-being.

Students' educational well-being is ensured by engagement in the learning process, the degree of mastery of learning skills, productive communication with peers and teachers, confidence in one's abilities, and the ability to cope with difficulties. The fundamental pedagogical conditions that support students' educational well-being include:

- An individualized approach to students – diagnosing, supporting, and fostering the development of a child's individuality; stimulating perception, attention, imagination, memory, and thinking.
- Fostering a positive attitude toward school – encouraging a lasting interest in cognitive activities and developing learning motivation.
- Enhancing learning skills – including self-monitoring and self-evaluation of educational outcomes.
- Mastering interaction skills with teachers and peers – developing communication and collaboration abilities in the learning process.
- Cooperation between teachers and parents – ensuring a caring and patient approach to the child's education.

Caring for students' educational well-being is a key responsibility for all teachers as well as school specialists. It is worth noting that this issue has been explicitly highlighted in the third priority of *the Fundamental Directions for the Implementation of State Educational Policy* for the 2024/2025 school year (Ministry of National Education, 2024).

Educational Policy Directions

In the Polish education system, based on Article 60, Section 3, Point 1 of the Act of December 14, 2016 – Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 900, as amended), the following directions for the implementation of the state's educational policy for the 2024/2025 school year have been established:

1. Health education in schools – promoting health-conscious behaviors, developing physical fitness and the habit of physical activity, and teaching first aid skills.

2. Schools as centers of civic education – fostering social and patriotic attitudes, instilling a sense of responsibility for the region and the homeland, as well as providing education on security and national defense.
3. Supporting the well-being and mental health of children and youth – developing students' empathy and sensitivity to the needs of others, improving the quality of inclusive education, and enhancing teachers' skills in working with diverse student groups.
4. Developing digital skills among students and teachers – with particular emphasis on safe online navigation and critical analysis of information available on the Internet. Promoting methodologically sound use of online tools and materials by teachers, especially those based on artificial intelligence, and utilizing resources from the Integrated Educational Platform.
5. Developing analytical thinking – through an interdisciplinary approach to teaching science and mathematics and by deepening mathematical skills in general education.
6. Enhancing vocational skills and lifelong learning competencies – strengthening cooperation between schools, employers, and regional institutions.
7. Supporting students with migration experience – including teaching Polish as a foreign language (Ministry of National Education, 2024).

Determinants of Students' Well-being

A review of source materials dedicated to the well-being of children and adolescents, as well as the factors that determine it, indicates that students currently face numerous challenges. These challenges range from those associated with the pandemic period (remote education, isolation) to those emerging in the present, ever-changing reality, including addiction, loss of close relationships, lack of time, and communication disorders within the fundamental social unit – the family.

As noted by E. Kasperek-Golimowska (2012, pp. 179–213), the term well-being, when specified as mental well-being, is understood as the result of a cognitive and emotional evaluation of one's life, encompassing a high level of fulfillment and life satisfaction. For the purposes of this discussion, educational well-being is defined as a state of balance characterized by a proper level of socialization in the student role, which includes school attendance, good academic performance, positive relationships with peers and school community members, and a sense of satisfaction with education.

It is worth noting that the literature identifies numerous factors influencing well-being. These include environmental determinants such as age, health status, and place of residence, as well as personal aspects like self-acceptance, personal development, life goals, environmental control, autonomy, and relationships with others. In the context of students, B. Woynarowska (2007) emphasizes that levels of anxiety, sadness, self-esteem, confidence in one's abilities, and feelings of exclusion are also significant.

The same author identifies several protective factors that support the well-being of young people, including:

- Individual resources – intellectual abilities, intelligence, learning skills, positive temperament, social skills, positive self-esteem, self-worth, and having life plans.
- Family-related resources – emotional support from parents, parental acceptance, mutual trust, parental involvement in school matters and other responsibilities, and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle.
- Support from significant adults – having a mentor who provides developmental support and guidance in difficult situations.
- Local environmental resources – a positive school climate, teacher support, and access to extracurricular activities within the student's living environment.

This comprehensive perspective highlights the multifaceted nature of students' well-being and the importance of various social, educational, and psychological factors in shaping their development.

Students' Well-being in the Light of Previous Research

The internal school environment and its impact on students' educational well-being changed significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes were primarily linked to the introduction of remote learning, which affected not only the quality of education but also students' psychological well-being. According to research by K. Sadowska (2021, pp. 97–110), during this period, children's psychological functioning and well-being were not at a high level. Parents reported that their children's low sense of well-being was associated with teachers' inconsistency in managing lesson time. Another significant factor was the level of teacher engagement in online teaching, which contributed to feelings of anxiety and confusion among children, who often felt isolated. These findings indicate that during the pandemic, children's mental well-being was not a priority for educators.

M. Stradomska (2022) highlighted that the pandemic affected not only children's school-related mental well-being but also their overall functioning. Similar conclusions were drawn by both theorists and practitioners in a study edited by M. Paluch (Paluch, 2022), which emphasized that the reduction of social interactions due to lockdowns, along with general fear and uncertainty, also impacted students' overall well-being, including their educational experience. Observed behavioral changes among children and adolescents during the pandemic included increased anxiety, feelings of fear, irritability, and difficulties with concentration and focus. A significant decrease in physical activity was also noted, with children spending more time online or watching television, which further negatively influenced their well-being (Liu, Zhou & al., 2021).

Educational Well-being and Family Situation

The family environment, including family structure, parental education, and the overall family atmosphere, significantly influences students' well-being. In

academic literature, particularly within the field of family studies, the family – being the primary environment in which an individual develops – is considered one of the most crucial factors affecting life satisfaction (Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976). The connection between family and the well-being of all its members is evident in the works of M. Plopa (2005) and P. Forma (2013). The family is perceived as a complex structure consisting of interdependent members who share similar memories of the past, maintain emotional bonds, and engage in interactions both as individuals and as a collective unit. Therefore, the well-being of each family member is closely linked to the well-being of others within the family system.

Among Polish researchers, M. Wróbel and M. Stawska (2007) have drawn interesting conclusions, emphasizing the importance of the early stages of a child's life in shaping their well-being. Referring to Ainsworth's research based on Bowlby's attachment theory, they identified three attachment styles that emerge from the earliest moments of a child's life and influence their future:

- Secure attachment – characterized by a sense of security and trust, initially in the parent-child relationship and later in other interpersonal connections. This is the only desirable attachment style.
- Anxious-ambivalent attachment – results from uncertainty about whether the parent will respond to the child's needs, leading to anxiety.
- Avoidant attachment – occurs when a child suppresses the need for close relationships because the parent is frequently unavailable.

The last two attachment styles develop due to the lack of fulfillment of a child's fundamental emotional and caregiving needs. A proper parent-child relationship fosters secure attachment, which provides the foundation for significantly higher psychological well-being in the future.

Studies conducted by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) in the United States have shown that early parent-child relationships have a significant impact on the development of social competencies, which are closely related to children's well-being later in life. Therefore, healthy family relationships, particularly during the early years of a child's life, play a crucial role in shaping their overall well-being (Krok, 2011).

Forms of Support for Educational Well-being

Supporting the well-being and mental health of children and adolescents is a crucial aspect of educational practice (*Wspieranie dobrostanu dzieci i młodzieży, ich zdrowia psychicznego*, 2024). The concern for students' well-being encompasses various aspects, operating both at the school level (e.g., mental health promotion workshops conducted within the institution) and at the individual level (the ability to recognize one's own well-being and the factors that influence it).

For students, the role of parents, guardians, and institutions is particularly significant. Proper education and the promotion of mental health should focus on equipping

Table 1. Determinants of Students' Educational Well-being and Forms of Support

NO.	DETERMINING FACTOR	FACTOR CHARACTERISTICS	FORMS OF SUPPORT
1.	Relationships and Social Environment	Interpersonal relationships in school significantly impact students' well-being. Supportive teachers, an open approach to students, and positive peer interactions contribute to a sense of security and comfort in school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Building relationships based on mutual respect and trust. – Preventing peer violence and bullying. – Creating a culture of collaboration and mutual support among students.
2.	Teaching Methods and Work Organization	Traditional teaching methods do not always meet the needs of modern students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Project – based learning to engage students and develop practical skills. – Individualized learning, adjusting the pace to the student's abilities. – Balancing theory with practice by integrating academic knowledge with real – world experience.
3.	Mental and Physical Health	Educational well-being is closely linked to mental and physical health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Providing psychological and pedagogical support in schools. – Promoting physical activity and healthy eating habits. – Enabling students to rest and reduce stress.
4.	Autonomy and Sense of Agency	Students who have control over their educational process feel more motivated and engaged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Allowing students to participate in decision – making regarding learning methods. – Appreciating effort rather than just outcomes. – Developing soft skills such as psychological resilience and stress management.
5.	Balance Between School and Personal Life	Excessive academic pressure and workload can lead to student burnout.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Educating students on time management and work organization. – Ensuring a reasonable amount of homework to avoid overload. – Encouraging extracurricular activities and hobbies.

Source: own elaboration.

children with essential skills, such as coping with difficulties, recognizing and naming emotions, managing emotions effectively, developing social-emotional

skills, improving interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and adapting to new situations, including the school environment.

Providing children with these skills is crucial for their proper functioning and mental well-being in later stages of life. Low educational well-being is a significant risk factor not only for students' overall school experience but also for their long-term health and life outcomes. Ensuring students' well-being is essential and should take place both at home and within the school environment.

Family relationships appear to have the greatest impact — the family serves as the foundational source of psychological well-being and a protective factor against adverse experiences (Krok, 2010). A strong relationship with family members helps children cope with external challenges. However, it is equally important that educational institutions actively support students' well-being and recognize any signs indicating a decline in their well-being. This is particularly crucial for children experiencing family difficulties.

The table 1 presents a structured overview of educational well-being determinants and corresponding support strategies.

Conclusions

Students' educational well-being is the result of the interplay of multiple factors, ranging from social relationships to the organization of the learning process. Schools, families, and teachers play a crucial role in creating an environment conducive to healthy and effective learning. The implementation of modern teaching methods, attention to mental health, and the support of students' autonomy are fundamental elements that can contribute to their success both in school and later in life.

B. Majerek (2013) emphasizes that the most significant existential sources of uncertainty include fragility, transience, and the finiteness of human life, which are directly linked to the randomness of fate. The future also generates a sense of uncertainty, referring to P. Sztompka's position that the future is always associated with „otherness,” the unknown, and often the dangerous. Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the social and educational well-being of the younger generation, studies conducted at the end of 2020 showed that as many as 36% of girls and 23% of boys experienced a decline in mental health, with many students reporting a lack of energy and difficulties in concentration. Given these findings, further exploration of students' well-being is fully justified. There is an urgent need to implement comprehensive measures to support the mental health of children and adolescents, both at the systemic and individual levels.

An analysis of source materials in response to the research questions indicates that, over time, students' well-being has deteriorated due to both external factors (such as the pandemic and changes in family structures) and internal factors (such as deteriorating health, increased suicidal and anxiety-related behaviors). Additionally,

new determinants of students' well-being have emerged, including the growing role of information and communication technologies in education. Forms of support for educational well-being should not be limited to institutional actions (such as psychological counseling services) but should also include grassroots initiatives aimed at strengthening families and enhancing their potential.

Recommendations for Educational Practice

Given that students' well-being is significantly influenced by their relationships with teachers, educators should consider the following aspects:

- Creating a positive classroom atmosphere – A student who feels comfortable in class is more motivated to learn. Teachers who prioritize their students' well-being should practice self-reflection and assess their behavior toward students. It is also crucial to remain attentive to the classroom environment and respond appropriately when necessary. Students appreciate teachers who are passionate about their subject and conduct engaging lessons that spark interest.
- Ensuring effective communication – Students pay close attention to how teachers communicate with them. Communication should be respectful and empathetic. Small gestures, such as greeting students warmly, expressing gratitude, and knowing how to apologize, contribute to a positive learning environment. Feedback also plays a vital role – teachers should deliver messages in a way that encourages students to reflect and learn from their experiences rather than inducing feelings of shame, fear, or lowered self-esteem.
- Recognizing and praising achievements – Success is important in everyone's life, and young people are particularly sensitive to how their accomplishments are acknowledged. To support students' well-being, teachers should recognize even minor achievements. Not every student will experience a remarkable success, but even small victories should be sources of pride and appreciation. It is also crucial to avoid comparing students to each other, as each individual has different abilities and potential.
- Implementing preventive measures – Special attention should be given to mental health education and promotion. Students should be equipped with skills to cope with stress and difficulties, resolve conflicts, and develop emotional and social competencies. These include recognizing and naming emotions (both their own and others'), managing emotions effectively, and building and maintaining relationships. Self-awareness and self-esteem are also essential components of well-being. Additionally, one of the major threats to students' well-being today is the misuse of modern technology, particularly excessive internet use.

The tasks mentioned above can be carried out in schools through preventive lessons conducted by school counselors or psychologists, as well as during psychological and pedagogical support sessions, such as activities designed to develop emotional and social competencies. Equipping young people with skills related to maintaining their mental well-being is essential for their proper functioning both now and in later stages of life.

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