

Research Article

The Well-being of Vietnamese Adolescents: The Role of School-related Factors

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Abstract

The well-being of Vietnamese adolescents is an increasingly important topic, especially within the context of rapid educational and societal changes. Adolescent well-being includes multiple dimensions, such as mental health, emotional resilience, and quality of social relationships. This study aimed to assess the well-being of Vietnamese adolescents within the context of ongoing educational reform, focusing on the impact of school-related factors. Using a cross-sectional quantitative design, data were collected from 2150 high school students across Vietnam. In this study, adolescent well-being was measured using the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-being, while friend satisfaction, school satisfaction and perceived teacher support were measured as three key predictors. The findings revealed that, overall, students reported moderately high levels of well-being, with Optimism and Connectedness receiving the highest ratings, suggesting that Vietnamese adolescents tend to feel hopeful about the future and maintain strong social bonds. Regression analyses revealed that perceived teacher support was the most significant predictor of adolescents' well-being, followed by friend satisfaction and school satisfaction. These factors taken together explained 35.3% of the variation in adolescent well-being. The findings highlight the pivotal role of the school social environment—particularly teacher and peer relationships—in shaping adolescent well-being. As Vietnam continues to reform its education system, these findings point to the need for policies and practices that strengthen supportive relationships within schools to promote adolescent mental health and well-being.

Keywords

Well-being, School-related Factors, Vietnamese Adolescents

1. Introduction

Well-being is a multifaceted notion that encompasses several social, psychological dimensions, as well as individual activities associated with mental health and subjective happiness. In recent decades, interest in the study of well-being has grown significantly [1-6]. A key milestone in this movement was the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [7] which emphasized the importance of children's rights and spurred global efforts

to monitor and promote child and adolescent well-being. Consequently, this has prompted the development of well-being measures tailored specifically for children and adolescents [1, 2, 8, 9].

Adolescent well-being is acknowledged as a multifaceted construct that includes emotional, psychological, social, and physical dimensions [10, 11]. World Health Organization (2020) underscore that adolescent well-being includes

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positive functioning, life satisfaction, and resilience to adversity [12]. Adolescence is a pivotal developmental phase characterized by swift psychological, emotional, and social transformations; hence, the influence of environmental factors, particularly school environments, is significant. Schools serve as venues for children to gain academic knowledge and as social contexts for the development of life skills, self-esteem, interpersonal interactions, and exploration of future pathways [13]. Many studies highlight the need of school-related factors in enhancing student well-being, particularly including:

- 1) Teacher support: support from teachers has consistently been linked to improved well-being [14], academic motivation and achievement [15, 16], and a stronger sense of school connectedness [16-18]. Teacher support refers to both emotional and academic forms of support. Emotionally supportive teachers are those who express care, empathy, and respect toward students, take interest in their well-being, and are approachable when students need help or want to share concerns. Academically supportive teachers provide constructive feedback, encourage student effort, set high expectations, and guide students through challenges in learning. When students perceive their teachers as understanding, encouraging, and available, they are more likely to experience positive mental health and higher engagement in school.
- 2) Friend satisfaction: The quality of adolescents' friendships is crucial to their emotional and social development [19]. O'Rourke and Cooper (2010) found that children with more friends and frequent positive interactions tend to be happier and more resilient to stress [20]. Consequently, satisfaction with friendships is associated with happiness [21], well-being [22], reduced distress, enhanced life satisfaction, and increased school engagement [19, 23].
- 3) School satisfaction: School satisfaction broadly describes students' positive experiences and their preferences and interests associated with the school environment [24, 25]. A safe, inclusive, and respectful school climate is strongly associated with lower rates of distress, school disengagement, and behavioral problems [26, 27]. Thus, school satisfaction is a student's assessment of positive school experiences and is as a key predictor of overall well-being [24].

These factors interact synergistically, shaping not only academic performance but also emotional adjustment and identity development. During adolescence, when students are especially receptive to institutional support and social feedback, the value of fostering school environments is very clear.

In Vietnam, rapid socioeconomic changes and ambitious educational reforms—most notably the General Education Curriculum 2018 (GEC-2018) [28] - have introduced new opportunities and challenges for students. The GEC-2018 is designed with a competency- and character-based orientation, as reflected in the learning outcomes specified for each sub-

ject and educational level. This reform is comprehensive and systematic, encompassing curriculum content, teaching methods, textbooks, and assessment practices. Additionally, it emphasizes decentralization and enhances autonomy for local authorities, educational institutions, and teaching staff. Teaching methods have been reformed toward a learner-centered approach, shifting from knowledge transmission to the development of students' competencies and character. This includes diverse learning activities, blended and open learning models, and the use of active methods such as project-based learning, experiential education, interdisciplinary integration, and STEM. These approaches aim to foster self-directed learning, problem-solving, and collaboration, contributing to a positive learning environment and the development of happy schools—where students feel safe, respected, and supported in their holistic growth. Teachers are redefined as facilitators who design flexible, contextually relevant lesson plans, encourage student engagement and creativity, and support social-emotional development. Students are empowered to shape their learning pathways through subject choices aligned with career interests, particularly in upper secondary education, and are provided opportunities to expand knowledge and life skills through experiential and real-world learning activities. These systemic transformations emphasize holistic development, including competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, and self-regulation. However, they also bring heightened academic pressures and evolving expectations that may impact students' mental health and overall well-being. Recent studies have pointed to rising levels of stress, anxiety, and emotional – behavioral difficulties among Vietnamese adolescents [29-33] signaling an urgent need to examine the environmental conditions that shape their experiences.

Vietnamese culture prioritises interdependence, familial piety, and social harmony [34, 35]. Within this cultural context, schools serve as principal venues for both cognitive education and the realisation of social expectations. The significant emphasis on education, combined with inflexible assessment procedures, may increase students' stress levels, particularly in the lack of sufficient assistance. Moreover, the role of teachers in Vietnam extends beyond instruction—they are viewed as moral guides and authority figures [35, 36]. This dynamic can be both a source of support and stress, depending on the quality of teacher-student relationships. Similarly, friendship satisfaction in Vietnamese schools is shaped by collectivist norms, which prioritize group harmony and relational interdependence. These cultural elements suggest that school-based factors affecting well-being may manifest differently in Vietnam than in Western contexts, highlighting the need for culturally grounded inquiry.

Although the concept of adolescent well-being is gaining recognition in Vietnamese policy and academic discourse, there remains a notable lack of empirical research that explores the psychosocial dimensions of schooling in Vietnam. Existing studies tend to focus on mental health and

related issues [29, 30, 37-39] or psychological and subjective well-being [40-42], often overlooking the nuanced role of teacher support, friend and school satisfaction in adolescent well-being. Furthermore, few studies adopt an integrative framework that considers the interplay between these school-related factors in shaping well-being outcomes.

Given the cultural, social, and educational transformations occurring in Vietnam, there is a critical need for context-sensitive research that addresses these gaps. Thus, this study aims to: (1) examine the status of well-being, perceived teacher support, peer relationships, and school satisfaction among Vietnamese adolescents; (2) determine the influence of school-related factors, including perceived teacher support, peer relationships, and school satisfaction, on the well-being of Vietnamese adolescents. By exploring how students' perceptions of their school environment relate to their well-being, the research seeks to contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting school-based interventions that promote student development in Vietnam.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Measures

The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being is designed to assess key dimensions of adolescent well-being based on Seligman's PERMA model [43]. The instrument consists of 20 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (almost never/not at all like me) to 5 (almost always/very much like me), and encompasses five dimensions: Engagement, Perseverance, Optimism, Connectedness, and Happiness. In this study, the EPOCH measure was translated into Vietnamese using the back-translation method. The instrument demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.928.

School and Friend Satisfaction subscales in the Vietnamese version of the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (V-MSLSS) [44], adapted from the original scale by Huebner [45] were used to assess students' satisfaction with school and their friends. The School Satisfaction subscale includes 7 items, while the Friend Satisfaction subscale consists of 8 items. All items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the School and Friend subscales were 0.840 and 0.824, respectively, indicating good internal reliability.

The Teacher Support Scale (TSS) proposed by Metheny, McWhirter, & O'Neil [46] was included to assess perceived teacher support as a social phenomenon. The scale comprises 21 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and focuses on perceptions of the teaching staff as a whole, rather than individual educators.

In this study, the TSS was translated into Vietnamese using the back-translation method to ensure conceptual and linguistic equivalence. The scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.955.

2.2. Study Design and Data Collection

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative design to investigate the well-being of Vietnamese adolescents, within the context of ongoing educational reforms. The primary objective was to examine the relationship between adolescents' well-being and school-related factors undergoing substantial change. In this study, student well-being served as the dependent variable, while school satisfaction, friend satisfaction, and perceived teacher support were treated as independent variables.

A convenience sampling method was employed to recruit participants from high schools across Vietnam, encompassing both public and private institutions located in urban and rural areas. The study included 2150 high school students (Age range: 15 – 18, Mage = 16.22, SDage = 0.87) from both public and private institutions in urban (57.30%) and rural (42.70%) regions of Vietnam. The sample showed gender parity (47.95% male and 52.05% female) and encompassed students from grades 10 to 12 (39.35% in grade 10, 35.16% in grade 11, and 25.49% in grade 12) with varying academic standings (pass: 21.44%; merit: 43.49%; distinction: 35.07%).

Collected data were entered and analyzed using JASP 0.19.3 [47]. Prior to analysis, data were screened for missing values, normality, and outliers. Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize participants' demographic information and main variable distributions. Additionally, Pearson correlation coefficients and Multiple Linear Regression analysis were used to assess bivariate relationships and determine the unique and combined contributions of the independent variables to the prediction of student well-being.

2.3. Ethical Consideration

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical research standards and was approved by the Research Committee of Ho Chi Minh City University of Education under the code B2023-SPS-03. Prior to data collection, all participants were fully informed about the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses, and they retained the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

3. Results

3.1. Status of Well-being, School Satisfaction, Friend Satisfaction and Perceived Teachers' Support

Descriptive statistics were computed to assess the status of students' well-being, school satisfaction, friend satisfaction, and perceived teacher support. Table 1 presents the means (M) and standard deviations (SD) for each variable.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for each variable.

Variable	M	SD
Well-being (EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being)		
- Engagement	3.599	0.839
- Perseverance	3.391	0.799
- Optimism	3.751	0.829
- Connectedness	3.762	0.844
- Happiness	3.726	0.939
The overall average of Well-being	3.646	0.683
School satisfaction (subscale in V-MSLSS)	3.869	0.753
Friend satisfaction (subscale in V-MSLSS)	4.021	0.698
Perceived teacher support (TSS)	3.833	0.784

Among the five dimensions of well-being, Connectedness ($M = 3.762$, $SD = 0.844$) and Optimism ($M = 3.751$, $SD = 0.829$) recorded the highest mean scores, suggesting strong social bonds and positive future outlooks among Vietnamese adolescents. Happiness also received a relatively high rating ($M = 3.726$, $SD = 0.939$), reflecting a generally positive emotional state. Engagement had a moderate mean score ($M = 3.599$, $SD = 0.839$), while Perseverance had the lowest average ($M = 3.391$, $SD = 0.799$), indicating a potential area of concern regarding students' sustained effort and motivation. The overall well-being score across the sample was moderately high ($M = 3.646$, $SD = 0.683$).

In terms of the school-related factors, participants reported relatively high levels of friend satisfaction ($M = 4.021$, $SD = 0.698$), indicating strong perceived peer relationships. This

was followed by school satisfaction ($M = 3.869$, $SD = 0.753$), suggesting generally positive evaluations of the school context. Perceived teacher support produced a mean score of 3.833 ($SD = 0.784$), reflecting a moderately high perception of support received from teachers. Collectively, these results demonstrate that students experience relatively favorable levels of satisfaction and support within their school environments.

3.2. Results of the Correlation Matrix

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships ($p < 0.001$) among all variables, including the five well-being dimensions, overall well-being, and school-related factors (see Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation matrix between well-being dimensions, overall well-being, and school-related factors.

Var.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. E.	-								
2. P.	0.520*	-							
3. O.	0.528*	0.563*	-						
4. C.	0.466*	0.484*	0.646*	-					

Var.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5. H.	0.502*	0.519*	0.681*	0.639*	-				
6. WB.	0.749*	0.761*	0.851*	0.807*	0.843*	-			
7. SS.	0.299*	0.370*	0.348*	0.299*	0.374*	0.421*	-		
8. FS.	0.287*	0.300*	0.359*	0.458*	0.402*	0.452*	0.457*	-	
9. PTS	0.360*	0.459*	0.429*	0.399*	0.413*	0.512*	0.474*	0.376*	-

Note: n = 2150; *: p < 0.001 (sig. 2 tailed)

E.: engagement; P.: perseverance; O.: optimism; C.: connectedness; H.: happiness; WB.: well-being; SS.: school satisfaction; FS.: friend satisfaction; PTS.: perceived teacher support.

Among the well-being dimensions, Optimism showed strong correlations with Happiness ($r = 0.681$), Connectedness ($r = 0.646$), and Perseverance ($r = 0.563$), while Engagement was positively associated with Perseverance ($r = 0.520$), Optimism ($r = 0.528$), and Happiness ($r = 0.502$). The overall well-being score was strongly linked to all components, especially Optimism ($r = 0.851$), Happiness ($r = 0.843$), and Connectedness ($r = 0.807$), confirming their role in the well-being construct.

Perceived teacher support correlated moderately with overall well-being ($r = 0.512$) and key dimensions like Perseverance ($r = 0.459$) and Optimism ($r = 0.429$), underscoring its influence. Friend satisfaction was positively related to Connectedness ($r = 0.458$), Happiness ($r = 0.402$),

and overall well-being ($r = 0.452$), highlighting peer support's importance. School satisfaction showed modest but significant associations, strongest with Happiness ($r = 0.374$), Perseverance ($r = 0.370$), and overall well-being ($r = 0.421$), suggesting its role in students' psychological outcomes.

3.3. Regression Analysis Results for Predicting the Well-being

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which perceived teacher support, friend satisfaction, and school satisfaction predicted students' overall well-being (Tables 3, 4, 5). Three models were tested sequentially.

Table 3. Model summary for predicting the overall well-being.

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
Model 1 (included perceived teacher support)	0.512	0.262	0.262
Model 2 (included perceived teacher support; friend satisfaction)	0.584	0.340	0.340
Model 3 (included perceived teacher support; friend satisfaction; school satisfaction)	0.595	0.353	0.353

Note: Dependent variable is overall average of Well-being

Table 4. Anova.

Model	F	df	p.
Model 1	764.022	1, 2148	< 0.001
Model 2	554.190	2, 2147	< 0.001
Model 3	391.083	3, 2146	< 0.001

Table 5. Coefficients.

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
		B	Std. error	β				
1	(Constant)	1.936	0.063		30.661	<0.001	1.812	2.060
	PTS.	0.446	0.016	0.512	27.641	<0.001	0.414	0.478
2	(Constant)	1.128	0.078		14.405	<0.001	0.975	1.282
	PTS.	0.347	0.016	0.399	21.089	<0.001	0.315	0.380
	FS.	0.295	0.019	0.302	15.946	<0.001	0.259	0.331
3	(Constant)	0.982	0.081		12.177	<0.001	0.824	1.141
	PTS.	0.305	0.018	0.350	17.394	<0.001	0.271	0.339
	FS.	0.251	0.019	0.257	12.897	<0.001	0.213	0.290
	SS.	0.125	0.019	0.138	6.567	<0.001	0.088	0.162

Note: SS.: school satisfaction; FS.: friend satisfaction; PTS.: perceived teacher support; Dependent variable is overall average of Well-being.

Model 1, which included only perceived teacher support, significantly explained 26.2% of the variance in well-being, $R = 0.512$, $R^2 = 0.262$, $F(1, 2148) = 764.022$, $p < 0.001$. Teacher support was a strong positive predictor ($\beta = 0.512$, $t = 27.641$, $p < 0.001$).

Model 2 added friend satisfaction, increasing explained variance to 34.0%, $R^2 = 0.340$, $F(2, 2147) = 554.190$, $p < 0.001$. Both teacher support ($\beta = 0.399$) and friend satisfaction ($\beta = 0.302$) were significant predictors, $p < 0.001$.

Model 3 included school satisfaction, raising explained variance to 35.3%, $R^2 = 0.353$, $F(3, 2146) = 391.083$, $p < 0.001$. All predictors remained significant: teacher support ($\beta = 0.350$), friend satisfaction ($\beta = 0.257$), and school satisfaction ($\beta = 0.138$), all $p < 0.001$.

Collinearity diagnostics confirmed no multicollinearity concerns (tolerance = 0.685–1.000; VIF < 2).5. Discussion.

In this section, authors are advised to provide a thorough analysis of the results and make comparisons with relevant literature, not a short summary or conclusion. Any future research directions could also be stated in the discussion.

4. Discussion

4.1. Status of Vietnamese Adolescents'

Well-being and School-related Experiences

The current study reveals an overall favorable assessment of well-being among Vietnamese high school students. The greatest scores were recorded in Connectedness, Optimism, and Happiness—dimensions indicative of robust social interactions and an optimistic perspective on the future. The results align with prior studies in Vietnam that highlight the

significance of familial cohesion, peer relationships, and cultural prioritization of collective welfare in influencing adolescent development [42, 48-50].

Nonetheless, the comparatively diminished levels of Engagement and particularly Perseverance indicate potential issues about students' enduring academic enthusiasm and effort. These findings corroborate previous research indicating that Vietnamese children may encounter substantial academic pressure, adversely affecting their persistence and involvement in school activities [50, 51].

Moreover, the elevated levels of friends and school satisfaction, alongside perceived teacher support, underscore the critical role of interpersonal relationships within the Vietnamese educational context as confirmed in many previous Vietnamese research [44, 48, 50].

4.2. Correlational Insights

The present findings underscore the multifaceted nature of adolescent well-being, indicating that each dimension - Optimism, Happiness, Connectedness, and Perseverance - is significantly and positively correlated. Optimism emerged as a pivotal component, closely linked to other facets of well-being. This pattern aligns with global research indicating that optimism serves as a fundamental component of teenage resilience and life satisfaction [52]. Teenagers with an optimistic perspective on the future have enhanced emotional stability and more robust social connections, highlighting the psychological advantages of fostering optimism and forward-thinking attitudes during this developmental stage.

Equally significant are the correlations identified between school-related social factors and adolescents' well-being. Perceived teacher support had strong relationships with all

dimensions of well-being, especially Perseverance and Happiness. The findings corroborate previous Vietnamese research indicating that warm, polite, and supportive teacher-student connections are vital for improving academic motivation and reducing distress [50, 51].

Peer interactions were intricately linked to adolescents' emotional and social adaptation. Friendship satisfaction shown a substantial correlation with overall well-being, particularly in the aspects of Connectedness and Happiness. This corroborates established developmental theories emphasising the significance of peer belonging in adolescent adaptation and identity development [53]. Furthermore, school satisfaction was positively associated with many well-being dimensions, highlighting the significance of a supportive and engaging school environment in fostering students' psychological flourishing [18].

4.3. The Roles of School Related Factors

The regression analyses revealed that perceived teacher support was the most influential single predictor of overall well-being, explaining over 26% of the variance in Model 1. This finding corroborates previous studies [16, 17] highlighting the emotional and motivational importance of positive teacher-student connections. Teacher assistance is crucial in influencing students' daily experiences at school and enhancing their overall well-being. A helpful teacher-student relationship can bolster students' emotional security, drive to learn, and positive involvement with the educational environment, all of which are crucial for their comprehensive development.

The inclusion of friend satisfaction in Model 2 significantly improved explanatory power, accounting for an additional 7.8% of the variance. This further highlights the role of peer relationships in promoting adolescent psychological health, particularly in collectivist cultures like Vietnam, where interpersonal harmony is highly valued [35].

The final model demonstrated that school satisfaction increased predictive accuracy, affirming that students' impressions of their educational environment substantially influence their overall well-being. The combined influence of teacher support, peer satisfaction, and school satisfaction accounted for 35.3% of the variance in student well-being, highlighting the significant effect of the school-based social environment. These findings correspond with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory [54], which asserts that adolescent development is profoundly shaped by interactions within immediate settings, including educational institutions and peer networks. The absence of multicollinearity reinforces the distinct and independent impact of each component, suggesting that a comprehensive approach is essential for effectively promoting student well-being.

4.4. Limitations

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design precludes any causal inferences between school-related factors and student well-being. Longitudinal studies would be more effective in capturing the dynamic nature of adolescent development and the long-term impact of educational context. Second, the reliance on self-report measures may introduce biases such as social desirability or inaccurate self-assessment, particularly in a collectivist culture like Vietnam where students may feel pressure to respond in socially acceptable ways. Future research may benefit from incorporating multiple data sources, including teacher or parent reports and qualitative interviews, to triangulate findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding. Lastly, although the study examined three key school-related variables—perceived teacher support, peer satisfaction, and school satisfaction—other potentially influential factors such as parental involvement, socioeconomic status, and academic pressure were not included in the analysis. Including these variables could offer a more nuanced and holistic view of adolescent well-being.

5. Conclusions

This study provides important insights into adolescent well-being during a period of educational reform in Vietnam. Overall, Vietnamese adolescents reported high levels of well-being, with Optimism and Connectedness rated highest. Perceived teacher support emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by friend and school satisfaction. These findings highlight the vital role of supportive relationships and a positive school environment in fostering student well-being. As Vietnam implements its competency-based curriculum, integrating well-being into educational policy and school practices is essential. Prioritizing teacher training, peer support, and a caring school climate will be key to promoting students' well-being and long-term development.

Abbreviations

GEC-2018	General Education Curriculum 2018
M	Mean
SD	standard deviation

Author Contributions

Tra Thi Thanh Kieu is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data is available from the corresponding author upon

reasonable request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Biography



Tra Thi Thanh Kieu was born and educated in Vietnam. She completed her PhD in Psychology from Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam in 2017. She is currently a senior lecturer, Head of Educational Psychology Section, Psychology Department at HCMC University of Education. As an academician, she has been offering many years of well-honed teaching, research & practicing experience, and having knowledge across the domain of Psychology (major in Personality, Educational Psychology, and Psychological Assessment), guiding undergraduate and postgraduate students in their research project works and publications.

Research Field

Tra Thi Thanh Kieu: well-being, mental health literacy, individual differences, personality development, psychological assessment.