

# Exploring College Students' Well-Being and Its Influencing Factors

Li Xu\*

Zhejiang Tourism and Health College, Zhoushan 316111, China

\*Corresponding author: Li Xu, [zlj\\_xl@163.com](mailto:zlj_xl@163.com)

**Copyright:** © 2025 Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), permitting distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is cited.

**Abstract:** This study investigated the major factors impacting college students' well-being. The findings demonstrated that while academic stress had a detrimental effect on well-being, peer support and student-teacher relationships significantly enhanced it. The effect of major satisfaction was not statistically significant. Future education administration should focus on helping students build healthy interpersonal networks to support their overall development.

**Keywords:** Academic stress; Major satisfaction; Student-teacher relationships; Peer support; Well-being

**Online publication:** April 3, 2025

## 1. Introduction

A common approach to evaluating the effectiveness of an educational system or institution is to analyze the impact of institutional interventions on students' academic achievement. However, recent research trends have expanded beyond the traditional focus on knowledge and skill acquisition to encompass broader aspects, such as students' well-being within the academic environment<sup>[1]</sup>. Given its extensive benefits, promoting students' well-being has become a critical priority for educational systems worldwide. Also, students' well-being is not only a key facilitator of effective learning but also a crucial outcome of 21st-century education<sup>[2]</sup>.

As students' well-being gains prominence in educational policy and practice, various initiatives aimed at assessing and monitoring this aspect have emerged<sup>[3]</sup>. However, mental health and well-being concerns remain prevalent in higher education, with many students experiencing high levels of stress, poor overall health, and psychological distress, including symptoms of depression and anxiety<sup>[4]</sup>. The growing prevalence of mental health challenges poses a significant issue for both students and higher education institutions, as poor mental health can negatively impact academic performance and overall well-being.

The well-being of vocational college students warrants particular attention. As future skilled professionals contributing to national development, their personal and academic growth is of great importance. In China, many vocational college students face academic pressure from parents, teachers, and peers due to their inability to gain

admission to academic university. This pressure can lead to decreased motivation for learning and an increased risk of mental health issues. Therefore, this study uses a higher vocational college in Zhejiang as a case study to examine the factors influencing students' well-being and to identify effective measures for enhancing their overall educational experience and satisfaction.

## **2. Literature review and proposed hypothesis**

### **2.1. Students' well-being**

Well-being is a multifaceted concept that has been explored across various disciplines, leading to multiple definitions. A common approach to defining well-being is through the lens of health, as reflected in the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." This perspective suggests that well-being extends beyond mere health and is not limited to specific contexts or roles, such as workplace or students' well-being, but rather represents a fundamental aspect of human life <sup>[5-6]</sup>. Emotion factors also play a crucial role in well-being, with positive emotions such as enjoyment, relief, and happiness, along with the absence of anxiety, being essential components <sup>[7]</sup>. Additionally, the multidimensional well-being framework provides a comprehensive approach, highlighting the importance of positive interpersonal relationships, personal development, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, and having a sense of purpose in life as key elements in sustaining well-being <sup>[8]</sup>.

### **2.2. Academic stress and students' well-being**

Academic stress refers to the adverse reactions students experience due to pressures in their academic environment <sup>[9]</sup>. Academic challenges are considered the primary source of stress among college students <sup>[10]</sup>. Academic stress is the demands related to academics that strain or exceed a student's perceived internal or external resources. She further explains that academic stress reflects an individual's perception of academic frustration, conflict, pressure, and anxiety <sup>[11]</sup>. Several factors have been identified in the literature as contributors to academic stress in college students, including academic workload, attending lectures, exams, school schedules, a lack of educational resources, and subject-related projects <sup>[12-13]</sup>. Students experiencing academic stress may exhibit symptoms such as sadness, anxiety, intolerance, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and even social withdrawal <sup>[14]</sup>. Moreover, a significant relationship between academic stress and mental health <sup>[15]</sup>. Similarly, a strong correlation between academic stress and both physical and mental health, further highlighting its broad impact on students' well-being <sup>[16]</sup>.

H1: Academic Stress has a significant impact on students' well-being in higher vocational colleges.

### **2.3. Student-teacher relationships and students' well-being**

Student-teacher relationships are a multifaceted concept shaped by various factors, both professional and interpersonal <sup>[17]</sup>. They categorize these aspects into two dimensions: "affective" and "supportive." The affective dimension refers to the interpersonal or emotional connection that develops between students and teachers, reflecting the level of affiliation (e.g., warm, caring, trusting relationships) <sup>[18]</sup>. In contrast, the supportive dimension represents the professional relationship, where students and teachers collaboratively contribute to a positive learning and teaching environment. Research on student-teacher relationships from the perspective of attachment theory suggests that such relationships play a crucial role in fostering student's academic success and well-being. Teachers who act as a "secure base", that is, being accessible, accommodating, and responsive to students' needs — enhance their student's competence, commitment, and motivation to learn <sup>[19-21]</sup>. When

considering various external factors, teachers' behavior has been found to affect students' well-being. For instance, supportive teacher behavior is linked to students' school well-being <sup>[22]</sup>.

H2: Student-teacher relationships have a significant impact on students' well-being in higher vocational colleges.

## **2.4. Peer Support and students' well-being**

Peer support plays a crucial role in adolescent life, particularly within the school environment. It involves trust and intimacy among friends and acquaintances, providing both social and academic motivation while fostering feelings of care and acceptance <sup>[23–24]</sup>. Acceptance, support, and consideration from peers contribute to increased self-confidence and greater school satisfaction among adolescents <sup>[25]</sup>. Peer support is a mutual process in which individuals with shared traits, experiences, or challenges offer one another empathy, assistance, and motivation <sup>[26]</sup>. Furthermore, research suggests that when parental social support is considered, perceived social support from friends plays an even more significant role in promoting healthy social, emotional, and overall adjustment to university <sup>[27]</sup>. In recent years, peer support has gained increasing attention in academic literature, with studies highlighting its function as a protective factor for mental health, well-being, and overall quality of life <sup>[28]</sup>.

H3: Peer support has a significant impact on students' well-being in higher vocational colleges.

## **2.5. Major choice and students' well-being**

Major satisfaction plays a crucial role in students' academic experiences and long-term career development. The process of career development is lifelong, involving various academic and professional transitions in pursuit of career goals. Among these transitions, selecting a college major is a key decision, as it shapes students' academic journeys and future career paths. A chosen major can influence numerous educational and post-educational outcomes, including academic achievements, challenges, job opportunities, study persistence, and overall academic satisfaction <sup>[29]</sup>. Additionally, major selection has broader implications for financial returns and social standing. However, dissatisfaction with one's major can have negative psychological consequences. Students who are unhappy with their major may experience decreased motivation and heightened anxiety related to college life <sup>[30]</sup>. Given its profound impact on students' academic engagement, emotional well-being, and future career prospects, major satisfaction is an essential factor influencing students' well-being.

H4: Major choice has a significant impact on students' well-being in higher vocational colleges.

## **3. Methodology**

The researchers clarified the purpose of the questionnaire and distributed it to the students. The researchers also informed them that the collected questionnaires would be used for research purposes and treated with confidentiality. Then a total of 143 students from six different majors volunteered for the survey. The data indicated that the participation rate among female students was significantly higher than that of male students, at 76.92%. Additionally, the participation rate of freshmen exceeded that of sophomores, reaching 62.94%.

The data were used to conduct appropriate quantitative research with the statistical tool Jamovi to confirm the validity of the four preceding hypotheses and identify the factors influencing students' well-being.

## 4. Research findings and discussion

Utilizing the findings of the linear regression analysis, the study elaborated on the connection between students' well-being and factors such as academic stress, the teacher-student relationship, major satisfaction, and peer support.

### 4.1. Overall model fit

The study indicated 73.6% of the variance in the college students' well-being, according to  $R^2 = 0.736$  and adjusted  $R^2 = 0.728$ . This indicated that the model had excellent explanatory power.

### 4.2. Variable regression coefficient analysis

The data in **Table 1** showed that academic stress had a negative and significant effect on well-being ( $P=0.044$ ), with a regression coefficient of -0.17373, meaning that students who experienced more academic stress were less likely to feel a sense of well-being. Therefore, H1 was supported.

**Table1.** The multiple linear regression results on students' well-being ( $n=143$ )

Variables	Estimate	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>	Stand. estimate
Academic stress	-0.17373	0.0854	-2.03	0.044	-0.0938
Student-teacher relationships	0.36523	0.0610	5.99	<.001	0.3307
Major satisfaction	0.09178	0.0873	1.05	0.295	0.0524
Peer support	0.69372	0.0602	11.53	<.001	0.6128

With a regression coefficient of 0.36523 and a standardized regression coefficient of 0.3307, the student-teacher relationships had a positive and highly significant ( $P<.001$ ) impact on well-being. This suggested that the more positive the relationship between a teacher and a student, the higher the students' well-being. Moreover, this variable had a relatively strong effect on well-being. Therefore, H2 was supported.

Major satisfaction did not appear to be a primary factor influencing college students' well-being, as evidenced by the lack of a significant relationship between major satisfaction and well-being ( $P=0.295$ ). Therefore, H3 was not supported.

The impact of peer support on well-being was positive and highly significant ( $P<.001$ ), with a regression coefficient of 0.69372 and a standardized regression coefficient of 0.6128, indicating that peer support had the greatest impact on well-being. In other words, students who received more peer support were more likely to experience a higher level of well-being. Therefore, H4 was supported.

## 5. Implications

This study demonstrates that while a variety of factors affect college students' well-being, peer support and student-teacher interaction are particularly important. Regression analysis results demonstrate that student-teacher relationships significantly improve students' well-being ( $P<.001$ ), suggesting that students who interact well with their teachers are more likely to experience higher well-being. Likewise, peer support had the greatest regression coefficient ( $\beta= 0.6128$ ,  $P<.001$ ), suggesting that the most important factor in fostering students' well-being is support among peers.



On the other hand, the influence of academic pressure on well-being is negative and significant ( $P=0.044$ ), indicating that students experiencing greater pressure are likely to have lower well-being. Therefore, in the process of boosting students' well-being, colleges should focus on mental health support, optimization of student-teacher interactions, and the establishment of peer mutual help systems.

Even though this study found no significant relationship between major satisfaction and well-being ( $P=0.295$ ), this does not imply that major choice is unimportant; rather, it may indicate that interpersonal relationships have a greater influence on well-being than major choice. Thus, in addition to focusing on the quality of instruction, the college should consider how to foster a more positive environment for interpersonal interactions in course design and management. Some strategies include enhancing student-teacher communication, planning team projects, and offering psychological counseling resources to maximize the student experience.

## 6. Conclusions

This study examined the effects of peer support, major satisfaction, student-teacher relationships, and academic stress on college students' well-being through empirical analysis. The findings suggest that colleges and educators should place greater emphasis on interpersonal factors, particularly fostering positive student-teacher relationships and peer support, to enhance students' well-being.

Beyond providing mental health care, improving the learning environment, and reducing unnecessary academic stress, future education management and policymaking should focus on helping students build strong interpersonal networks to further support their well-being.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

## References

- [1] Joing I, Vors O, Potdevin F, 2020, The Subjective Well-being of Students in Different Parts of the School Premises in French Middle Schools. *Child Indicators Research*, 13(4): 1469–1487.
- [2] Govorova E, Benitez I, Muniz J, 2020, How Schools Affect Student Well-Being: A Cross-Cultural Approach in 35 OECD Countries. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2020(11): 431.
- [3] Svane D, Evans N, Carter MA, 2019, Wicked Wellbeing: Examining the Disconnect between the Rhetoric and Reality of Wellbeing Interventions in Schools. *Australian Journal of Education*, 63(2): 209–231.
- [4] Linden B, Stuart H, 2020, Post-secondary Stress and Mental Well-being: A Scoping Review of the Academic Literature. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 39(1): 1–32.
- [5] Galvin K, Todres L, 2011, Kinds of Well-being: A Conceptual Framework that Provides Direction for Caring. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 6(4): 10362.
- [6] Todres L, Galvin K, 2010, “Dwelling-mobility”: An Existential Theory of Well-being. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being*, 5(3): 5444.
- [7] Hascher T, 2012, Well-Being and Learning in School, in *Encyclopedia of the Sciences of Learning*. Springer, Boston, 3453–3456.
- [8] Ryff CD, 1989, Happiness is Everything, or is it? Explorations on the Meaning of Psychological Well-being. *Journal*

of Personality and Social Psychology, 57(6): 1069–1081.

- [9] Lee M, Larson R, 2000, The Korean “Examination Hell”: Long Hours of Studying, Distress, and Depression. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 29(2): 249–271.
- [10] Chawla K, Sachdeva V, 2018, Domains of Stress and Coping Strategies used by 1st year Medical Students. *National Journal of Physiology Pharmacy and Pharmacology*, 2018(8): 366–369.
- [11] Bisht AR, 1980, A Study of Stress in Relation to School Climate and Academic Achievement (Age Group 13–17), thesis, Kumaon University.
- [12] Agolla JE, Ongori H, 2009, An Assessment of Academic Stress among Undergraduate Students: The Case of University of Botswana. *Educational Research and Review*, 4(2): 63–70.
- [13] Conner J, Pope D, Galloway M, 2010, Success with Less Stress. *Health and Learning*, 67(4): 54–58.
- [14] Beiter R, Nash R, McCrady M, et al., 2015, The Prevalence and Correlates of Depression, Anxiety, and Stress in a Sample of College Students. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 2015(173): 90–96.
- [15] Subramani C, Kadiravan S, 2017, Academic Stress and Mental Health among High School Students. *Indian Journal of Applied Research*, 7(5): 404–406.
- [16] Travis J, Kaszycki A, Geden M, et al., 2020, Some Stress is Good Stress: The Challenge-Hindrance Framework, Academic Self-efficacy, and Academic Outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(8): 1632–1643.
- [17] Hagenauer G, Volet SE, 2014, Teacher-Student Relationship at University: An Important yet Under-researched Field. *Oxford Review of Education*, 40(3): 370–388.
- [18] Newberry M, Davis HA, 2008, The Role of Elementary Teachers’ Conceptions of Closeness to Students on their Differential Behavior in the Classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 2008(24): 1965–1985.
- [19] Baker JA, 2006, Contributions of Teacher-child Relationships to Positive School Adjustment during Elementary School. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44(3): 211–229.
- [20] Gastaldi FGM, Longobardi C, Quaglia R, et al., 2015, Parent-teacher Meetings as a Unit of Analysis for Parent-teacher Interactions. *Culture & Psychology*, 21(1): 95–110.
- [21] Quaglia R, Gastaldi FGM, Prino LE, et al., 2013, The Pupil-teacher Relationship and Gender Differences in Primary School. *The Open Psychology Journal*, 6(1): 69–75.
- [22] Suldo SM, Friedrich T, White J, et al., 2009, Teacher Support and Adolescents’ Subjective Well-Being: A Mixed-Methods Investigation. *School Psychology Review* 38(1): 67–85.
- [23] Hamm JV, Faircloth BS, 2005, The Role of Friendship in Adolescents’ Sense of School Belonging. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2005(107): 61–78.
- [24] Reschly AL, Huebner ES, Appleton JJ, et al., 2008, Engagement as Flourishing: the Contribution of Positive Emotions and Coping to Adolescents’ Engagement at School and with Learning. *Psychology in the Schools*, 45(5): 419–431.
- [25] Deci EL, Ryan RM, 2000, The “What” and “Why” of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4): 227–268.
- [26] Penney D, 2018, Defining “Peer Support”: Implications for Policy, Practice, and Research, accessed August 19, 2021. [www.ahpnet.com/AHPNet/media/AHPNetMediaLibrary/White%20Papers/DPenney\\_Defining\\_peer\\_support\\_2018\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ahpnet.com/AHPNet/media/AHPNetMediaLibrary/White%20Papers/DPenney_Defining_peer_support_2018_Final.pdf)
- [27] Alsubaie MM, Stain HJ, Webster LAD, et al., 2019, “The Role of Sources of Social Support on Depression and Quality of Life for University Students. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 24(4): 484–496.
- [28] Brunsting NC, Zachry C, Liu J, et al., 2021, Sources of Perceived Social Support, Social-emotional Experiences, and

Psychological Well-being of International Student. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 89(1): 95–111.

- [29] Al-Rfou AN, 2013, Factors that Influence the Choice of Business Major Evidence from Jordan. *Journal of Business and Management*, 8(2): 104–108.
- [30] Kim J, Cho E, 2018, Analysis of Factors Affecting Major Satisfaction. *International Journal of Advanced Culture Technology*, 6(2): 72–79.

**Publisher's note**

Bio-Byword Scientific Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.