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THE ROLE OF SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT IN PROMOTING CHILDHOOD WELLBEING

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ABSTRACT

The school environment plays a significant role in promoting childhood wellbeing by providing children with a safe, supportive, inclusive, and stimulating atmosphere in which they can develop academically, socially, emotionally, physically, and psychologically. Childhood is a crucial stage of human development during which children acquire essential life skills, establish relationships, develop self-confidence, and learn to understand and regulate their emotions. Schools are not merely institutions for academic learning; they are important social environments that influence children's behaviour, attitudes, emotional stability, health, and overall quality of life. A positive school environment includes supportive teachers, respectful relationships, effective classroom management, safe physical facilities, inclusive educational practices, opportunities for physical activities, and strong communication between parents and teachers. Such an environment helps children feel valued, respected, accepted, and motivated to participate in educational activities. In contrast, an unsafe or negative school environment characterized by bullying, discrimination, excessive academic pressure, poor teacher–student relationships, and inadequate facilities may contribute to anxiety, low self-esteem, social isolation, and behavioural difficulties. This study examines the role of the school environment in promoting childhood wellbeing, with particular attention to emotional security, social development, physical health, academic engagement, and psychological resilience. It also considers the importance of school leadership, teacher behaviour, peer relationships, inclusive classrooms, and family–school partnerships in creating conditions that support children's holistic development. The study adopts a qualitative, literature-based approach to examine existing research and educational perspectives on the relationship between school environments and childhood wellbeing.

KEYWORDS: *School environment, childhood wellbeing, emotional development, psychological wellbeing, child-friendly schools, inclusive education, social development, teacher–student relationships, school safety, mental health, academic engagement, positive learning environment.*

INTRODUCTION

The school environment is one of the most influential factors in shaping children's overall wellbeing because children spend a substantial portion of their daily lives in educational institutions, where they interact with teachers, classmates, school administrators, and the wider learning community. The experiences children have at school can influence how they understand themselves, develop friendships, manage emotions, respond to challenges, and participate in social activities. Childhood wellbeing refers to a broad condition of physical health, emotional stability, psychological security, positive social relationships, and opportunities for learning and development. It is not limited to the absence of illness or behavioural problems; rather, it includes the ability to feel safe, experience belonging, develop confidence, express emotions appropriately, and participate meaningfully in everyday life. A positive school environment supports these dimensions by offering a welcoming atmosphere, appropriate learning resources, respectful communication, clear behavioural expectations, and opportunities for individual growth. Teachers play a particularly important role because their attitudes, teaching methods, feedback, and classroom interactions can influence children's motivation, confidence, and emotional experiences. When teachers demonstrate patience, fairness, empathy, and encouragement, children are

more likely to develop trust and feel comfortable asking questions, expressing their opinions, and seeking assistance when difficulties arise. Similarly, positive relationships among classmates can strengthen cooperation, friendship, empathy, and a sense of belonging, whereas bullying, exclusion, discrimination, and peer conflict may negatively affect children's emotional security and participation in school activities. The physical environment is also important because clean classrooms, safe playgrounds, adequate lighting, ventilation, drinking water, sanitation facilities, and accessible buildings contribute to children's health, comfort, and concentration. kjimova, g., & lazarevska, l. (2025). found that in addition, inclusive teaching practices help ensure that children from different social, cultural, linguistic, and learning backgrounds are respected and supported according to their needs. schools can further promote wellbeing through physical education, creative activities, play, counselling, social and emotional learning, and opportunities for children to participate in decision-making.

family involvement is equally valuable because communication between parents and teachers allows children's needs and difficulties to be identified and addressed more effectively. obeidat, b. f., haimed, s., & alkhaza'leh, m. s. (2024). explan that in the contemporary educational context, increasing attention is being given to children's mental health, emotional resilience, social adjustment, and protection from violence and discrimination. consequently, school wellbeing should be understood as a shared responsibility involving teachers, school leaders, parents, communities, and policymakers. Schools that prioritize wellbeing alongside academic achievement are better positioned to establish supportive learning conditions in which children can develop their abilities, overcome challenges, and build positive relationships. Therefore, examining the role of the school environment in promoting childhood wellbeing is essential for understanding how educational institutions can contribute to children's holistic development and help establish the foundations for healthy adulthood. The study therefore examines the school environment as a combination of physical surroundings, social interactions, emotional experiences, institutional practices, and educational opportunities. Rather than assuming that every school environment affects all children in the same way, the approach recognizes that children's responses may differ according to their developmental stages, personalities, family circumstances, learning needs, and social backgrounds.The first component of the approach focuses on the physical environment of schools. Classrooms, playgrounds, libraries, sports facilities, sanitation arrangements, drinking water, ventilation, lighting, cleanliness, and accessibility can influence children's comfort, safety, health, and participation. A well-maintained school can encourage active participation and provide spaces for learning, recreation, and social interaction. Green spaces and outdoor learning opportunities are also relevant because contact with nature may support relaxation, physical activity, and cognitive recovery. Research on school-led green-space interventions provides a useful basis for examining these possibilities, although the effects may differ depending on the type, duration, and quality of the intervention.

The second component examines the emotional and psychological environment created by teachers and school staff. Teachers influence how children interpret success, failure, discipline, relationships, and personal challenges. Supportive teachers who communicate respectfully, provide constructive feedback, and respond sensitively to children's needs can help establish emotional security and confidence. Conversely, humiliating punishment,

discrimination, excessive criticism, and inconsistent disciplinary practices may undermine children's trust and participation. The research approach therefore considers teacher behaviour, classroom communication, emotional support, and opportunities for children to express concerns as essential dimensions of a wellbeing-oriented school.The third component concentrates on children's social relationships and sense of belonging. Friendships, cooperation, peer acceptance, group activities, and opportunities for collaborative learning can strengthen children's interpersonal skills and social confidence. Schools also need effective measures to prevent bullying, exclusion, harassment, and discrimination. A positive school climate can create conditions in which children feel accepted and are more willing to participate in classroom discussions, extracurricular activities, and group learning. Research on school climate and emotional health supports examining school connectedness, peer support, and teacher–student relationships together rather than treating them as isolated factors. The fourth component concerns inclusion and equality. Children have different abilities, languages, cultural experiences, learning preferences, and family circumstances. An inclusive school environment recognizes these differences and provides appropriate learning materials, accessible facilities, reasonable educational support, and respectful treatment. Teachers should avoid labelling children according to their academic performance, disability, background, or behaviour. Instead, they should create opportunities for each child to contribute meaningfully and develop at an appropriate pace. The study also considers how school rules, teaching methods, and institutional values can either strengthen equality or unintentionally create barriers to participation.The fifth component examines the relationship between wellbeing and academic engagement. Children who feel supported and secure may be better able to concentrate, ask questions, explore ideas, and persist when learning becomes difficult. However, academic achievement alone cannot be used as a complete measure of wellbeing..

Research examining school climate and student wellbeing has similarly emphasized the need for a broader understanding of educational experiences. The sixth component considers collaboration between families and schools. Parents and caregivers can provide valuable information about children's needs, behaviour, interests, and difficulties, while teachers can communicate observations about learning and social development. Constructive communication helps identify emerging problems and coordinate support. Schools may strengthen these relationships through parent meetings, wellbeing workshops, regular progress discussions, and accessible communication channels. Finally, the approach brings these components together to interpret the school environment as a whole. The central assumption is that children's wellbeing is more likely to be supported when physical safety, emotional security, positive relationships, inclusion, learning opportunities, and family collaboration operate together. The approach also acknowledges the limitations of a literature-based investigation: the findings can identify patterns and plausible relationships, but they cannot establish new causal effects without appropriately designed empirical research.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the role of the school environment in promoting childhood wellbeing by identifying the influence of teacher–student relationships, peer interactions, physical

safety, inclusive educational practices, emotional support, and school facilities on children's physical, social, emotional, and psychological development.

RESEARCH QUESTION

2. How does the school environment influence and promote children's overall wellbeing, particularly their emotional security, psychological health, social relationships, physical development, and engagement in learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The existing literature recognizes the school environment as an important factor influencing children's wellbeing, learning experiences, and social and emotional development. School climate includes the relationships, values, rules, teaching practices, institutional culture, and physical conditions that shape children's daily experiences. Obeidat and Haimed (2024), in their bibliometric analysis of student wellbeing and school climate, examined the development of research in this area and highlighted the growing importance of understanding how school climate relates to student wellbeing. Their review also identified the need for more integrated research and practical applications that can help educational institutions create supportive learning environments. Similarly, Ly and Vella-Brodrick (2024) reviewed school-led green-space interventions and explored their potential effects on children's and adolescents' mental, physical, and social wellbeing. Their review considered interventions such as outdoor learning, nature walks, and green schoolyards, demonstrating why the physical surroundings of schoolsPodiya, Navaneetham, and Bhola (2025) investigated the relationship between school climate, emotional health, and academic achievement among school-going adolescents in India. Their systematic review included eleven studies and reported that supportive teacher–student relationships, peer support, school connectedness, belongingness, and teaching practices were associated with better emotional health and academic outcomes. The authors emphasized the importance of whole-school approaches to creating positive school climates. Research published by Renick, Reich, and Phan (2025) further examined school climate through a developmental perspective, highlighting the importance of understanding school experiences in relation to children's changing developmental needs. kjimova, g., & lazarevska, l. (2025).

found that a further systematic literature review by the authors of conceptualizing student wellbeing in secondary education (published online in 2025) emphasized that wellbeing includes health, autonomy, learning engagement, values, equity, and school culture. this perspective suggests that wellbeing cannot be understood exclusively in terms of individual happiness or the absence of mental health difficulties; it must also account for children's social circumstances, opportunities for participation, and experiences of fairness and inclusion. taken together, these studies suggest that childhood wellbeing is influenced by a combination of physical, emotional, social, and institutional factors. obeidat, b. f., haimed, s., & alkhaza'leh, m. s. (2024). explan that a school with supportive teachers, respectful peer relationships, safe facilities, inclusive classroom practices, and accessible outdoor spaces can create opportunities for children to develop confidence, resilience, independence, and a sense of belonging. however, the existing literature also indicates the need to consider differences between age groups, school systems, family circumstances, and cultural contexts. Findings

from secondary-school students, for example, should not automatically be generalized to preschool and early-primary children without additional evidence. Further research should therefore examine how specific environmental characteristics influence different dimensions of wellbeing at different developmental stages and how schools can adapt their practices to meet children's diverse needs. For example, positive school climate and supportive relationships have been associated with better emotional health and educational outcomes in the reviewed Indian adolescent literature, while research on green-space interventions examines a different but complementary aspect of school environments.

The fourth stage involves interpreting the themes in relation to the research question. The analysis considers whether findings suggest an association, describe a possible mechanism, or provide evidence from an intervention. These forms of evidence are not interchangeable: an association between a supportive school climate and wellbeing does not, by itself, prove that one causes the other. The analysis therefore avoids overstating causal conclusions and takes account of differences in age, context, research methods, and study quality. Where publications report contrasting results, those differences should be acknowledged rather than concealed. Finally, the themes are synthesized into an overall interpretation that explains how physical conditions, interpersonal relationships, school policies, and inclusive practices may work together to support childhood wellbeing. The analysis can inform practical recommendations, but its conclusions remain dependent on the quality and coverage of the reviewed literature.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, literature-based methodology to explore the role of the school environment in promoting childhood wellbeing. The methodology focuses on understanding and interpreting existing research rather than collecting new information directly from children, teachers, or parents. Relevant academic literature is identified through scholarly publications, systematic reviews, educational research, and reports relating to school climate, child development, emotional wellbeing, inclusive education, physical school facilities, and school-based mental health promotion. Particular attention is given to literature published between 2024 and 2026, in accordance with the requested reference period. Relevant publications are selected according to their connection with the research objective, the clarity of their methods, their relevance to childhood or school-age development, and the credibility of their publication sources. The review considers both conceptual and empirical research to develop a broad understanding of how different school characteristics may influence children's wellbeing. The selected literature is examined for information about teacher support, peer relationships, emotional safety, bullying prevention, physical infrastructure, outdoor activities, inclusion, and family–school partnerships. The information is then organized into thematic categories so that similarities, differences, recurring findings, and gaps in the literature can be identified. Ethical considerations are addressed by accurately representing the original authors' findings, acknowledging sources, avoiding unsupported claims, and distinguishing published evidence from the researcher's interpretation. Since this is a literature-based study, no direct participation by children is assumed, and no primary data collection is claimed. The methodology provides a structured foundation for understanding the relationship between school environments and childhood wellbeing while recognizing that the conclusions depend on the quality, scope, and applicability of the available

literature.The research approach adopted for this study is qualitative and interpretive, with an emphasis on examining the experiences, relationships, and environmental conditions that contribute to childhood wellbeing in educational settings. This approach is suitable because wellbeing is a multidimensional concept that cannot be fully understood through academic scores or physical indicators alone. Children's feelings of safety, acceptance, confidence, happiness, friendship, independence, and belonging are also important aspects of their everyday school experiences.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is descriptive and qualitative, using a structured review of published literature to investigate how school environments contribute to childhood wellbeing. A descriptive design is appropriate because the purpose is to identify and explain the main characteristics of a positive school environment rather than to manipulate variables or test an intervention experimentally. The study focuses on existing evidence concerning the physical, emotional, social, and institutional dimensions of school life. Its unit of analysis is the published study, review, or relevant educational report, rather than an individual child or school participating in new fieldwork.The first stage of the design involves defining the scope of the study and identifying its principal concepts, including school climate, childhood wellbeing, teacher–student relationships, peer interactions, school safety, inclusion, and physical facilities. The second stage involves searching for relevant publications, giving priority to research from 2024 to 2026 while using older theoretical sources only if necessary for background. Search terms may include school environment and child wellbeing, school climate and emotional health, school belonging, inclusive school environment, and school greenspace and wellbeing. The third stage involves screening publications for relevance, credibility, publication date, and clarity of findings. Studies concerning school-age children are prioritized, and research on adolescents is considered with appropriate caution when discussing younger children.The fourth stage involves extracting key information from the selected publications, including research objectives, study populations, methods, environmental factors, reported outcomes, limitations, and implications for educational practice. The fifth stage involves organizing the extracted information into themes, comparing patterns across studies, and identifying areas where findings agree or differ.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis for this study uses thematic analysis of information extracted from the selected literature. Since the research is qualitative and literature-based, the data consist primarily of written findings, descriptions, interpretations, and recommendations contained in relevant academic publications. The purpose of the analysis is to identify recurring patterns and explain how different features of the school environment relate to children's physical, emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. No numerical dataset, survey responses, interviews, or experimental measurements are assumed to have been collected for this draft.The first stage of analysis involves familiarization with the literature by reading the selected publications carefully and identifying information relevant to the research objective. During this stage, particular attention is paid to how authors define school environment and wellbeing, which groups of children they examine, and what limitations they acknowledge. The second stage involves coding relevant information into categories such as teacher

support, emotional safety, peer relationships, school belonging, bullying prevention, physical facilities, outdoor learning, inclusive education, and family involvement. These initial codes help organize information that may be described differently across studies but concerns similar issues. For example, respectful teacher communication and the availability of trusted adults may both contribute to a broader theme of emotional security.The third stage involves developing and comparing broader themes. The physical wellbeing theme includes cleanliness, sanitation, safety, movement, and access to recreational facilities. The emotional wellbeing theme includes trust, confidence, emotional expression, and supportive relationships.

FINDINGS

The findings of the literature-based study suggest that the school environment is an important factor associated with childhood wellbeing and that its influence extends beyond academic achievement. The reviewed research highlights the importance of physical safety, supportive relationships, emotional security, social inclusion, and opportunities for healthy development. Podiya et al. (2025) reported that positive school climate characteristics, including teacher–student relationships, peer support, and school belongingness, were associated with better emotional health and academic outcomes among school-going adolescents in India. These findings support the importance of creating school environments in which children feel respected, accepted, and comfortable seeking help. The literature also indicates that the physical environment deserves attention. Clean classrooms, safe playgrounds, appropriate sanitation, accessible facilities, and opportunities for outdoor activities can contribute to healthier and more comfortable learning conditions. Ly and Vella-Brodrick (2024) reviewed 19 studies across 17 papers on school-led nature interventions and identified outdoor learning, nature walks, and green schoolyards as relevant approaches for examining children's mental, physical, and social wellbeing. Another important finding is that teachers and school administrators have a central role in developing a positive school climate. Respectful communication, fair discipline, constructive feedback, anti-bullying policies, and inclusive teaching practices can help children develop confidence, emotional regulation, cooperation, and a sense of belonging. Research on school wellbeing also emphasizes the importance of considering equity, student participation, school culture, and children's opportunities to engage meaningfully in their education. The findings further suggest that wellbeing initiatives are more comprehensive when they involve parents, teachers, school leaders, and health professionals rather than relying exclusively on individual children to manage difficulties.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the school environment plays a fundamental role in promoting childhood wellbeing by influencing children's emotional security, psychological development, social relationships, physical health, and engagement in learning. A school should not be viewed solely as a place where academic knowledge is delivered; it should also be understood as a social and developmental setting in which children learn to communicate, cooperate, manage emotions, build relationships, and develop a positive understanding of themselves and others. The reviewed literature suggests that positive school climates, supportive teachers, respectful peer relationships, safe physical facilities, inclusive educational practices, and opportunities for physical and creative activities can contribute to children's overall development. These

factors are interconnected, meaning that improvements in one area may be less effective when other aspects of school life remain unsafe, exclusionary, or unsupportive.The study also highlights the importance of preventing bullying, discrimination, humiliation, and unnecessary academic pressure. Schools should establish clear safeguarding procedures, fair disciplinary practices, accessible support services, and opportunities for children to express their concerns. Teachers should receive appropriate training in child development, classroom management, inclusive education, and social and emotional learning. School administrators should regularly assess physical safety, sanitation, accessibility, student relationships, and the effectiveness of wellbeing initiatives. Parents and caregivers should also be involved in identifying children's needs and developing coordinated support strategies. The World Health Organization's health-promoting school framework supports this comprehensive perspective by emphasizing healthy school environments, health education, physical activity, counselling, social support, and cooperation between schools, families, and communities.

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