

Original Article

Wellness and Quality of Life in School Student Counselling: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This literature review examines the integration of wellness and Quality of Life (QoL) into school counselling practices, highlighting their growing importance in contemporary education. The review reveals that student wellness—encompassing physical, emotional, social, and psychological dimensions is essential for academic success and holistic development. Evidence shows that emotional wellness and psychological QoL are particularly vulnerable due to academic stress, peer influence, and mental health challenges. While counselling services positively impact resilience, behaviour, and well-being, their effectiveness is limited by shortages of trained counsellors, stigma, inadequate infrastructure, and weak parental involvement. Emerging opportunities such as wellness-based curricula, digital counselling tools, mental health literacy for teachers, and evidence-based practices like mindfulness, yoga, and SEL offer promising directions for strengthening support systems. The review concludes that adopting holistic, wellness-oriented counselling models is crucial for enhancing student QoL and promoting long-term well-being.

Keywords: *Student Wellness, Quality of Life (QoL), School Counselling, Emotional Well-being, Mental Health Support, Wellness-Oriented Intervention.*

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INTRODUCTION:

Student wellness has increasingly become a central element of contemporary educational discourse, reflecting a broader paradigm shift from purely academic-focused schooling to a more holistic approach that recognises the multifaceted needs of learners (Seligman, 2011). Wellness in school-aged children encompasses a wide range of interrelated dimensions, including physical health, emotional stability, social competence, psychological resilience, and cognitive functioning. Each of these dimensions contributes significantly to students' overall development and capacity to participate meaningfully in the learning process. Rising academic demands, growing exposure to digital technology, changing family structures, and increased awareness of mental health concerns have further underscored the importance of prioritising student wellness within educational settings (UNICEF, 2021).

Alongside wellness, Quality of Life (QoL) has emerged as a critical construct in understanding student well-being. QoL frameworks provide a

comprehensive assessment of students' subjective perceptions of their physical, psychological, social, and environmental experiences (World Health Organization, 1998). These indicators serve as valuable tools for evaluating the extent to which educational environments support or hinder student well-being, thereby guiding the development of targeted interventions and policies. Schools that monitor QoL metrics are better positioned to identify stressors, enhance the learning climate, and implement strategies that foster healthy developmental outcomes.

In this context, school counselling has assumed a pivotal role as a structured support system aimed at promoting holistic student development. Counsellors contribute not only to academic guidance but also to emotional support, behavioural management, social adjustment, and life-skills enhancement (American School Counselor Association, 2019). With the increasing complexity of challenges faced by students, counselling services are expected to integrate wellness and QoL perspectives into their practice.

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However, the extent and quality of such integration vary considerably across institutions, often influenced by resource availability, professional training, cultural perceptions of counselling, and broader policy frameworks.

Methodology

The purpose of this literature review is to synthesise scholarly research on the integration of wellness and quality of life into school counselling practices. This review aims to identify current trends, highlight effective approaches, assess existing gaps, and examine opportunities for strengthening wellness-oriented counselling in schools. The paper is organised into key sections that include conceptual foundations, a review of empirical studies, challenges and opportunities, and implications for future research and practice. Through this analysis, the review seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how wellness and QoL frameworks can enhance counselling practices and support student well-being in educational environments.

Review of Empirical Studies

1. Global Research on Student Wellness

Global research consistently highlights that schools are critical environments for fostering student wellness, as children spend most of their developmental years within educational settings (Pulimeno et al., 2020). Internationally, a wide range of wellness interventions—such as mindfulness training, yoga-based activities, health promotion curricula, and social-emotional learning (SEL) programmes—have been implemented with demonstrated benefits. Studies show that these interventions significantly improve students' emotional regulation, reduce stress, enhance classroom behaviour, and promote resilience when integrated into the school timetable rather than delivered as optional modules. Evidence also indicates that wellness programmes strengthen physical health indicators, school engagement, and functional well-being, especially when they include both physical activity and psychoeducational components. Wellness-oriented school models have been associated with higher student engagement and reduced risk behaviours, underscoring the importance of embedding wellness promotion in school settings (Nelson, 2020).

2. Research on Student Quality of Life (QoL)

Research examining Quality of Life (QoL) in school-aged populations frequently employs the WHOQOL framework to evaluate physical, psychological, social, and environmental well-being. Empirical studies consistently report that psychological QoL is particularly vulnerable during adolescence, with anxiety, academic pressure, peer comparison, and mental health difficulties emerging as strong predictors of lower QoL (World Health Organization, 1998). Several studies demonstrate that students with higher QoL tend to perform better academically, possess stronger emotional stability, and show fewer behavioural problems. Socioeconomic status, school climate, teacher–student relationships, and family support have been identified as major determinants of

QoL. Supportive school environments and positive social connections act as protective factors, whereas bullying, excessive academic pressure, and unsupportive climates contribute to reduced QoL and emotional distress. Overall, the literature shows that QoL is an essential outcome measure for evaluating student well-being and school effectiveness.

3. School Counselling Practices

Empirical research across countries underscores the central role of school counsellors in fostering academic success, emotional health, and behavioural adjustment among students. Comprehensive counselling programmes, as recommended by professional bodies such as the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), have demonstrated strong effectiveness when systematically implemented (ASCA, 2019). Studies reveal that structured individual and group counselling significantly improve outcomes in areas such as anxiety, depression, aggression, self-esteem, and peer relationships. Despite this evidence, there is substantial variation in the availability and quality of school counselling services across regions. Many schools operate with insufficient counsellors, high student–counsellor ratios, and limited time for preventive and developmental counselling. Counsellors are often required to prioritise academic or administrative duties over wellness-focused interventions. Nevertheless, research shows that when schools invest in well-structured counselling programmes, students exhibit measurable improvements in resilience, coping skills, behaviour regulation, and school engagement.

4. Integrating Wellness into Counselling Frameworks

A growing body of research highlights the value of integrating wellness principles directly into school counselling models. Wellness-based interventions have been shown to enhance students' psychological well-being, self-acceptance, and interpersonal relationships. Studies adopting wellness frameworks—such as the Indivisible Self Wellness Model and strengths-based approaches—indicate that programmes targeting emotional regulation, social connectedness, and life skills significantly improve student outcomes. Evidence also shows that integrating yoga, mindfulness, and SEL programmes within counselling improves emotional control, reduces stress, and enhances overall well-being. Furthermore, studies demonstrate a clear link between wellness-focused counselling and improved quality of life, with students reporting better psychological health, higher school satisfaction, and stronger peer support when wellness is central to counselling practice. Research also highlights that counsellors trained in wellness-based supervision are more effective in designing interventions that promote holistic student development.

Challenges in Integrating Wellness and Quality of Life (QoL) in School Counselling

Integrating wellness and Quality of Life (QoL) frameworks into school counselling presents several challenges that limit the effectiveness of

support provided to students. A primary concern is the shortage of trained school counsellors, which is widely documented across both developed and developing countries. High student–counsellor ratios significantly reduce the counsellor’s ability to deliver individualised attention, preventive services, and wellness-focused interventions (American School Counselor Association, 2019). This strain is intensified by the stigma surrounding mental health, which discourages students and families from seeking counselling support and contributes to delayed identification of emotional and behavioural difficulties (UNICEF, 2021). Another major challenge is limited parental involvement, as studies show that parents often lack awareness, time, or confidence to engage with school-based mental health initiatives, resulting in weak home–school collaboration in promoting wellness (Pulimeno et al., 2020).

Structural limitations within schools further constrain wellness integration. Many institutions lack structured wellness programmes in their curriculum, prioritising academic performance over socio-emotional development, despite evidence that wellness education improves resilience, behaviour, and academic outcomes (Nelson, 2020). In addition, inadequate infrastructure, such as the absence of private counselling spaces, insufficient funding, and lack of digital platforms for tele-counselling, restricts the continuity and accessibility of support services. Socio-economic and cultural factors also play a significant role. Communities with limited resources or strong cultural reservations about mental health often show resistance to counselling practices, making it challenging for schools to implement wellness-oriented frameworks effectively (World Health Organization, 1998). Collectively, these challenges highlight the systemic and cultural barriers that must be addressed to ensure that wellness and QoL are meaningfully integrated into school counselling practices.

Opportunities and Emerging Directions

Despite the challenges associated with integrating wellness and Quality of Life (QoL) into school counselling, several promising opportunities and emerging directions offer pathways for strengthening student support systems. One major opportunity is the integration of wellness and life-skills education into the curriculum, which has been shown to enhance students’ emotional regulation, resilience, and interpersonal competence when embedded within everyday learning (Seligman, 2011). Technology-assisted counselling, including mobile applications, virtual counselling platforms, and digital wellness tools, is increasingly recognised as an effective means for improving access to mental health support, particularly in resource-limited or remote settings (UNICEF, 2021). Strengthening teacher training and mental health literacy also represents a significant opportunity, as teachers who are equipped with socio-emotional competencies and early identification skills contribute to healthier school environments and more responsive support systems (Pulimeno et al., 2020).

Collaboration between parents, teachers, counsellors, and mental health professionals is another emerging direction, with research showing that multi-stakeholder partnerships enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of wellness-oriented interventions in schools (Nelson, 2020). Governments and educational authorities are increasingly recognising the importance of school mental health, with several national and international policies calling for integrated counselling services, mental health education, and preventive wellness programmes (World Health Organization, 1998). Additionally, the incorporation of evidence-based practices such as mindfulness training, yoga, and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programmes has demonstrated measurable improvements in students’ stress levels, behavioural functioning, and overall well-being, making them highly suitable for integration into school counselling frameworks (American School Counselor Association, 2019). Collectively, these opportunities highlight a growing global momentum toward holistic, wellness-oriented school environments that support both academic success and student well-being.

Implications for School Counselling Practice

The integration of wellness and Quality of Life (QoL) frameworks into school counselling has important implications for strengthening student support systems and improving overall well-being. First, the literature highlights the importance of adopting holistic, wellness-oriented counselling models that address students’ emotional, social, physical, and psychological needs rather than focusing solely on academic performance (Seligman, 2011). Wellness-based counselling allows counsellors to work preventively, helping students develop coping skills, positive self-concepts, and healthier relationships, ultimately contributing to improved school engagement and life satisfaction.

A second major implication is the need for early screening and regular monitoring of students’ mental health and wellness indicators. Research shows that early identification of emotional or behavioural challenges significantly reduces long-term risks and enhances student outcomes when appropriate interventions are implemented (UNICEF, 2021). Schools that integrate wellness assessment tools or routine mental health screenings are better equipped to provide timely support and prevent escalation of psychological difficulties.

At the policy level, the findings underscore the importance of developing institutional policies that standardise counselling services, allocate sufficient resources, and mandate training for school personnel. Policies that support structured counselling programmes, lower student–counsellor ratios and incorporate wellness education into the curriculum can greatly enhance the capacity of schools to address students’ socio-emotional needs (American School Counselor Association, 2019). Furthermore, investing in counsellor training and mental health literacy for teachers strengthens the school’s ability to create a

supportive environment that promotes student well-being.

Finally, the review emphasises the importance of building emotional resilience in students, as resilience is a protective factor linked to enhanced coping, reduced stress, and improved QoL (Nelson, 2020). Programmes that integrate mindfulness, SEL competencies, life-skills training, and supportive peer environments contribute to the development of resilient learners who are better prepared to navigate academic challenges and social pressures. By prioritising resilience-building activities, schools contribute not only to immediate well-being but also to long-term mental health development. Overall, these implications highlight the critical need for systemic, policy-driven, and wellness-oriented approaches in school counselling to effectively support the holistic development of students.

Conclusion

The overall review clearly demonstrates that student wellness and Quality of Life (QoL) are central to academic success, emotional stability, and healthy social functioning in school environments. Evidence consistently shows that emotional and psychological dimensions of wellness are the most at risk, largely due to academic stress, peer pressures, and insufficient mental health support systems in schools. Despite the progress made in understanding student well-being, many institutions continue to face barriers such as a shortage of trained counsellors, high student–counsellor ratios, stigma surrounding mental health, inadequate infrastructure, and limited parental engagement. At the same time, the literature highlights several emerging opportunities that can strengthen school counselling practices. These include integrating wellness and life-skills education into the curriculum, adopting technology-based counselling tools, improving teacher training in mental health literacy, fostering strong collaboration among families and mental health professionals, and implementing evidence-based interventions such as mindfulness, yoga, and social-emotional learning (SEL). Collectively, these directions suggest that adopting holistic, wellness-oriented counselling frameworks can significantly improve students' QoL and long-term well-being. Therefore, schools must prioritise supportive policies, preventive mental health strategies, and whole-school wellness approaches to ensure the emotional resilience and overall development of all learners.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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