

## Influence of School Environment on the Well-being of Inclusive and Mainstream Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper digs into the relationship between the school environment and the overall well-being of adolescents in both inclusive and mainstream educational settings. The study aims to uncover how various aspects of the school environment interact with sociodemographic elements like age, gender, family structure and employment status impacts the holistic well-being of adolescents.

A mixed-methods approach is used in this research where, quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews are combined. Data were gathered from 340 adolescents who were aged 12-17 years. 161 males and 179 female adolescents were included in this study attending a public school, St. Mary's Sr. Sec. School in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India. The GWBS (General Well-being Scale) and SEI (School Environment Inventory) were completed by the participants and RPM (Raven's Progressive Matrices) assessed cognitive ability of these participants. After a descriptive analysis, the level of well-being and perceptions are elevated of a favourable school environment, The Pearson correlation test hardly showed a significance in the relationship between the SEI and GWBS scores ( $r=.042$ ,  $p=.439$ ,  $N=340$ ). Nonetheless, one way ANOVA indicated noteworthy connections between the Well being components and SEI dimensions. The data gathered from earlier research in a similar field uncovers the importance of creating a conducive school environment which fosters the well being of adolescents, a sense of belonging and acceptance too. The findings encourage the importance to create a supportive and inclusive environments for education. Through this research, informed decision making and interventions can be developed to serve the multifaceted needs of these adolescents.

**Keywords:** Adolescent well-being, school climate, inclusive education, mainstream education, sociodemographic factors, mixed methods research.

### Introduction

Adolescence, marking a crucial year for human development encompassing physical, emotional, cognitive and social changes, the school environment plays a pivotal role in curating the overall well being of an adolescent in this transitional change. The term well being is a multifarious concept encircling different aspects like the psychological, emotional and physical aspects is an essential concern with the people of the management of an environment where they spend most of their time other than their home, being the educators, policy makers and the people incharge. It is exceptionally relevant in an Inclusive education setting where children having special needs and diverse abilities need to go Dutch with their mainstream peers.

The research seeks to delve into the unexplored relationship between the school environment and the well being of both Inclusive and mainstream adolescents. The school environment holds the capacity to influence the overall quality of life, growth and development of the students in that environment consisting of the infrastructure, social and support groups, teaching practices and relationships.

Taking a step to understand whether the effects differ for the Inclusive adolescents from the mainstream adolescents.

An extensive inspection into the actual environment where the well-being of adolescents is influenced by the school. This study sheds light on the evaluative aspects of an inclusive environment and the holistic development of adolescents. With this study the varied experiences of both the Inclusive and mainstream adolescents will come under scrutiny to provide a more inclusive, empowering and supportive education that would prioritize the well being of students.

### School Environment

School climate sets the norms, values, rules, and structures of an educational institution as a whole (National School Climate Center, 2022). Studies suggest school climate is associated with healthy behaviors, academic self-esteem, and optimism (Taylor et al., 2017).

The PISA program found that negative relationships with their teachers had a significant impact on the students' sense of belonging to the school. Also, students with a higher sense of belonging to school reported higher rates of motivation and achievement (Home, n.d.). School climate reform as an evidence based school improvement strategy that supports students, parents/guardians, and school personnel learning and working together to create ever safer, more supportive and engaging K-12 schools (Thapa et al., 2013).

A positive and sustainable school environment promotes the development and learning necessary for the youth, encouraging them for a satisfying, contributive and productive life in a society that is democratic. The school environment engulfs the expectations, norms and values that make people feel socially, emotionally and physically safe. It is a three-way team of educators, students and families working together to have a good life, develop skills and contribute towards a shared vision for their education. Educators play a major role in modeling the attitudes that tend to emphasize the benefits of learning and also have a feeling of satisfaction through it. Each person has a role to play in the school environment for it to function and fulfill its purpose. In early adolescence, a positive school climate is predictive of better psychological well-being (Schweizer, 2010b).

There is extensive research that shows that school climate has a profound impact on students' mental and physical health. School climate has been shown to affect middle school students' self-esteem (Patton et al., 2016), mitigate the negative effects of self-criticism (Baumeister et al., 2001), and affect a wide range of emotional and mental health outcomes (Patel et al., 2016). Research has also revealed a positive correlation between school climate and student self-concept (Ginsburg et al., 2000b)

Enhancing school inclusivity involves addressing barriers at multiple levels. This includes teacher training to support diverse student needs, redesigning facilities for accessibility, combating community stigma, and enacting supportive state and national policies. The great news is that there are active steps school districts can take in the right direction (Myles, n.d.).

Inclusive language (Use language that includes everyone, avoiding alienating specific groups.), Extra materials (This may include video transcripts for students with hearing impairments, audio surveys for visually impaired students, or image-based flashcards for those with limited English proficiency. These resources can be shared with the entire class when appropriate to avoid singling anyone out.), Cooperative learning (Group work with diverse needs ensures all students can participate, improving their social skills and promoting natural inclusivity.) UNICEF. Inclusive Education. (Myles, n.d.)

### Well being in Adolescents

The term well being refers to a personal evaluation of a high quality of life across multiple dimensions. Varela et al. (2019). Adolescence is a critical stage of life characterized by rapid biological, emotional, and social development. It is during this time that every person develops the capabilities required for a productive, healthy, and satisfying life. In order to make a healthy transition into adulthood, adolescents need to have access to health, education and a supportive environment both at home and in communities and countries. (Home,

2023). Schools as a setting, children spend a whole lot of time there which shapes their personality and interpersonal relationships because of the overall exposure they get from schools. A school environment has proven to enhance or hinder various different aspects of the well being, their physical, mental and emotional health, social relationships and academics. (Allen et al., 2015) The physical health of adolescents has been linked to the environment of the school they spend most of their time in. the safety measures, physical education and the overall environment of the school. (Snyder, n.d.). Schools that have a well maintained and provide safety and promote physical activities tend to portray healthier students in their environment. These studies show that physical well being is much influenced by the environment of the school, same as mental and emotional well being. (Almedom, 2005).

Adolescent subjective well being is a vital aspect in a young individual's life development. This concept can be affected by a variety of factors such as cultural and developmental contexts, including schools (Casas, 2010). Negative experiences, experienced by young individuals at school can cause long term and short term adverse consequences, on the contrary, positive experiences, experienced by young individuals can increase their sense of support, individuality and responsibility (Barber, 1996). Young individuals spend a significant amount of time at school. Therefore, school context has been proposed as a predictor for youth well being (Roeser et al., 2000)

**Inclusive Adolescents Education**

Inclusive education allows students of all backgrounds to learn and grow side by side, to the benefit of all. (Frenk et al., 2010) (Inclusive Education, n.d.)

Why is the process of inclusion so difficult? Forming an idea about something new in people's minds has its own characteristics. On the one hand, what we are used to changing in public consciousness is difficult. The main problem in this process is the unpreparedness of people, society (teachers, school administration, parents, neuro typical children) to a value understanding of the essence of inclusion and integration. But, on the other hand, inclusion is a chance to cope with the problems that have accumulated in connection with outdated ideas and ways of organizing the education of the younger generation. (View of ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN, n.d.)

Inclusion is thus seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all children, youth and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (TVETipedia Glossary, n.d.). Inclusivity promotes learning for all children, for the ones with and without disabilities, both. In this environment there is reduced prejudice and increased understanding which in turn, strengthens social integration. Children with disabilities are equipped to work and are nurtured in a way that they contribute economically and socially to their communities.

"Inclusive education means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools. It means real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been excluded

- not only children with disabilities, but speakers of minority languages too. Inclusive systems value the unique contributions students of all backgrounds bring to the classroom and allow diverse groups to grow side by side, to the benefit of all." (Inclusive Education, n.d.) "the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school" and to "learn and develop the skills they need to thrive." (Breiman, 2001)

Co-education of children with different needs is a real way to instill tolerance in modern schoolchildren, to develop their moral values and knowledge about what feasible participation they can take in life and destiny those children who, due to their characteristics, have a more difficult life than others (Yusufova, 2023).

Inclusive education ensures that every child, regardless of their individual characteristics or circumstances, receives equitable access to education, with a focus on fairness and providing equal opportunities for all students. (Myles, n.d.) Inclusivity in education is crucial because it ensures that every student, regardless of their background, abilities, or circumstances, has equal access to quality learning opportunities, fostering a more equitable society. It also promotes diversity, leading to a richer and more well-rounded educational experience that prepares students to thrive in a globalized world. (Callon & Rabeharisoa, 2003)

Factors for Inclusion at schools:

1. Race and ethnic diversity
2. Individuals with English as a non-primary language
3. Socioeconomic backgrounds
4. Disabilities and students in Special Education programs

Family circumstances, including those in foster care or with incarcerated relatives (Callon & Rabeharisoa, 2003) Inclusive education is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. Inclusive systems value the unique contributions students of all backgrounds bring to the classroom and allow diverse groups to grow side by side, to the benefit of all. ("PISA 2018 Results (Volume I)," 2019) (Inclusive Education, n.d.)

The concept defines the tasks of improving the quality of educational services provided to children with special educational needs, and general education schools where children with special educational needs are educated are provided with the necessary literature, teaching aids, equipment and supplies for teaching. (View of ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN UZBEKISTAN, n.d.)

#### **Objectives of Proposed Study**

1. To examine the relationship between the overall school environment and the well being of inclusive and mainstream adolescents.
2. To investigate differences in well being and perceptions of school environment dimensions between male and female adolescents.
3. To compare the well being and school environment experiences of inclusive versus mainstream adolescents.
4. To explore associations between specific dimensions of the school environment and components of adolescent well being.

#### **Hypothesis of the Study**

Ho: There will be no significant relationship between the overall school environment and well being of inclusive and mainstream adolescents.

Ho: There will be no significant difference in well being scores between inclusive and mainstream adolescents.

Ho: There will be no significant relationship between dimensions of the school environment and specific components of adolescent well being.

Ho: there will be no significant gender differences in well being and perceptions of the school environment among inclusive and mainstream adolescents.

#### **Methodology**

Sample: A total of 416 participants from a public school in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh participated in the study. The age range of the participants is 12-17 years. 200 are males and 216 are females. The participants are divided into two categories, being Mainstream and Inclusive adolescents.

Mainstream adolescents having 100 Males and 105 Females, Inclusive adolescents consisting of 100 males and 111 females. Measures: General Well-Being Scale (GWBS) developed by Dr. Ashok K. Kalia and Ms Anita Deswal. It consists of 69 items for General Well-Being in four sub scales namely physical well-being; social well-being; emotional well-being and school well-being. The operation of a particular response set was avoided by including both positive and negative items. The scale is in a likert type format with each statement rated on a five-point scale ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’, ‘Disagree’, ‘Undecided’, ‘Agree’, ‘Strongly Agree’.

School Environment Inventory (SEI) developed by Dr. Karuna Shankar Misra. SEI contains 70 items related to the six dimensions of school environment- Creative Stimulation (CRS); Cognitive Encouragement (COE); Acceptance(ACC); Permissiveness(PER), Rejection(REJ) and Control(CON). Twenty items belong to the Creative Stimulation dimension while each of the remaining five dimensions has ten items belonging to it. The pupils are required to answer according to the frequency with which a teacher pupil interaction behaviour takes place in their school. The scale is in a likert type format with each statement rated on a five-point scale ranging from ‘Always’, ‘Often’, ‘Sometimes’, ‘Rarely’ and ‘Never’.

A Screening Test, Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM) is a scale designed to assess a person’s ability to recall acquired information. It is a practical means of assessing a person’s intellectual development, train ability or mental impairment. The scale consists of 60 problems divided into five sets of 12. In each set the first problem is as nearly as possible self-evident. The problems which follow become progressively more difficult. The scale is intended to cover the whole range of intellectual development from the time a child is able to grasp the idea of finding a missing piece to complete a pattern, and to be sufficiently long to assess a person's-maximum capacity to form comparisons and reason and has been used on all the students which is a non-verbal test typically used to measure general human intelligence and abstract reasoning.

**Procedure**

A public school in Bhopal is approached for participation, and informed consent will be obtained from both students and their guardians. Participants will be assured of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of their involvement. Surveys will be administered during school hours, and interviews will be scheduled at mutually convenient times.

Data collection sessions will be spread over a six-month period to minimize disruptions and chance of errors, including cross checking with teachers.

Quantitative data will be analyzed using comparative analysis in which ANOVA will be used to compare means across various conditions and groups facilitating the identification of any variance. Qualitative data from interviews will be analyzed manually, by scoring keys, enhancing the depth of understanding.

There is informed consent from the participants and they are assured that the confidentiality of results will be strictly maintained. Before the collection of data, debriefing is done and support services are provided.

Quantitative data will be analyzed using SPSS 25, and qualitative data will be scored manually using scoring keys provided.

Potential limitations can include self bias in filling out the scales and the generalizability of findings to cultural or regional contexts. Mitigation strategies include careful survey design and a diverse sample selection.

**Results**

A total of 340 adolescent students participated in the study.

Descriptive statistics for the variables of interest are presented in Table 1. The sample was approximately balanced in terms of gender and employment status (47%). The mean General well-being score (GWBS) was 162.00 (SD=12), and the mean school environment score (SE) was 169.57 (SD=22.49), indicating high perceptions of well-being and positive school environment.

Table no. 1 Descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
CATEGORY	340	0	1	.52	.500
GENDER	340	0	1	.47	.500
EMP STATUS	340	0	1	.47	.500
GEN WB	340	118	191	162.00	12.806
SCHOOL ENV	340	109	239	169.57	22.494

A Pearson correlation was calculated to examine the relationship between overall school environment and general well-being. The correlation was weak and non- significant, suggesting no meaningful overall association between these variables (see Table 2).

Table no. 2 Correlation (GWBS, SCE)

	GEN WB	SCHOOL ENV
GEN WB	Pearson Correlation 1	.042
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.439
	N	340
SCHOOL ENV	Pearson Correlation .042	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.439
	N	340

Pearson Correlations Between General Well-being and School Environment (N = 340)

ANOVA analyses were conducted to examine associations between specific dimensions of the school environment and components of well-being. Significant effects were found for psychological well-being in relation to creative stimulation,  $F(1,338)=1.53, p=.018$ , and permissiveness,  $F(1,338)=2.40, p<.001$ . Emotional and school well-being were also significantly associated with permissiveness,  $F(1,338)=1.94, p=.003$ , and  $F(1,338)=1.61, p=.027$ , respectively. These results are summarized in Table no. 3

Table no. 3 ANOVA results for school environment dimensions and well being variables

	Mean Square	F	Sig.
GEN WB * SCHOOL ENV	195.910	1.290	.063
EMO WB * SCHOOL ENV	32.022	1.293	.061
PSY WB * CREATIVE STIM	52.338	1.533	.018
PSY WB * PERMISSIVENESS	78.750	2.402	.000
EMO WB * PERMISSIVENESS	48.012	1.939	.003
SCHOOL WB * PERMISSIVENESS	89.030	1.610	.027

Independent samples t-tests compared general well-being and its sub components between inclusive (n = 164) and mainstream adolescents (n = 176). No significant differences were found in overall general well-being scores between groups, with inclusive adolescents reporting  $M = 161.46 (SD = 12.15)$  and mainstream adolescents reporting  $M = 162.49 (SD = 13.40)$ . Detailed results for well-being sub scales are

presented in Table no. 4  
 Table no. 4 t-tests

		GWB	SCE
GWB	Pearson Correlation	1	-.022
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.780
	N	164	164
SCE	Pearson Correlation	-.022	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.780	
	N	164	164

Gender differences in well being were examined using t-tests (see Table 5,6). Females (n = 179) reported slightly higher general well being scores (M = 162.79, SD = 11.68) compared to males (n = 161; M = 161.12, SD = 13.94), though these differences were small and did not reach statistical significance.

Table no. 5

	GENDER	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
GEN WB	FEMALE	179	162.79	11.681
	MALE	161	161.12	13.935
PSY WB	FEMALE	179	34.68	6.187
	MALE	161	35.16	5.924
EMO WB	FEMALE	179	40.36	4.901
	MALE	161	40.16	5.471
SOCIAL WB	FEMALE	179	52.35	6.278
	MALE	161	52.21	6.308
SCHOOL WB	FEMALE	179	36.60	7.561
	MALE	161	35.80	7.701

**Discussion**

The aim of this study is to explore the relation between the school environment and the well-being of adolescents of both Inclusive and Mainstream adolescents in an educational setting. Considering the results, the overall correlation between school environment and the well-being of adolescents was non-significant over the entire sample, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.042. This implies that the school environment as a whole may not have such a huge or direct impact on the well-being among adolescent students.

However, more circumstantial analysis stipulates meticulous relations between specific dimensions of the school environment and characteristics of well being. For example, The ANOVA results show notable significance between creative stimulation and psychological well-being and permissiveness dimensions of the school environment, also between emotional well-being, school well-being and permissiveness. Creativity encouragement and appropriate levels of permissiveness the characteristics of the school climate have shown to differentially impact psychological and emotional well being fields in adolescence.

Results revealed no significant difference in the comparison between inclusive and mainstream groups in general well being scores, even though a thorough comparison could provide greater comprehension. Likewise, the gender sub scale differences too were minimal, where males showed lower general well being scores, however the differences were not very obvious and would need cautious interpretation.

The insignificant correlation between school environment and the well being of Inclusive and mainstream adolescents dis multitude somewhat with prior research highlighting positive school climates as critical for adolescent well being and motivation (Taylor et al., 2017; Thapa et al., 2013).This inconsistency could have been because of various factors including regional cultural influences, measurement approaches or sample characteristics. Besides, it is likely that the interconnections between the sociodemographic variables mediate the link between school environment and the overall well-being, which couldn't be fully captured in the analysis of this study.

The facts that came out about specific school environment aspects, put forward practical inference for educational policy and interventions in school climate. To improve the psychological and emotional well-being in adolescent students the creative stimulation could be strengthened and calibrate permissiveness to maximum levels. To sustain diverse learners' holistic development, inclusive pedagogy should also include and pay attention to these factors in their continuing efforts.

Restraints of the study would be the dependence on self report measures which may initiate response biases. The design used in this study is cross-sectional design, which could also limit causal inference and possible cultural particularities of the sample which is drawn from a single demographic locale. Future research should take on longitudinal designs, diverse samples and larger samples. A mixed method approach could be more beneficial to snowball the understanding of the impacts on school environment. In addition, evaluating potential interveners such as peer relationships, family support, and teachers support could illuminate processes associating environment to well-being. In conclusion, while the school environment altogether showed a satisfactory alliance with the well-being of adolescents, permissiveness and creative stimulation, these two variables have some specific factors which appear as important contributors in the study findings. These findings emphasize the targeted school climate enhancements to foster the emotional and psychological well being within both, the inclusive and mainstream educational contexts.

**Conclusion**

This study scrutinizes the influence school environment has on the well being of adolescents of both inclusive and mainstream adolescents in an educational setting. After looking into it the school environment did not directly correlate with the general well being of these adolescents. However, distinct dimensions of the school environment, notably creative stimulation and permissiveness, showed significant effect on psychological and emotional well being components.

Insignificant differences were seen between Inclusive and mainstream adolescents under well being, gender differences also weren't very meaningful. After looking into the results, it is clear that the broad measures of school climate may not fully capture the fine distinctions that could be affecting adolescent well being.

The results underline the importance of promoting such factors to support the school environment, specifically uplifting creativity and to establish a balanced level of permissiveness so that the well being of these students is enhanced across diverse educational contexts.

The results underscore the importance of fostering specific supportive school environment factors, such as encouraging creativity and establishing balanced permissiveness, to enhance adolescent well being across diverse educational contexts. For future research purposes, the longitudinal designs could be incorporated, underlying mechanisms could also be explored furthermore and a broader range of

sociodemographic variables should be considered.

Altogether, the contribution of this research exhibits valuable insights with regards to creating an all inclusive, supportive and enriching psychological educational environment that emphasizes holistic development of all adolescents.

### Recommendation and future research

1. The policies of the school should be enhanced for encouraging creativity content in adolescents and the level of permissiveness should be balanced.
2. Implementation of regular teacher training should be implemented having focus upon providing emotional support and inclusivity within the school environment.
3. Regular research should be conducted with diverse samples in different reasons.
4. Proper mediation between peer, family and teacher relationship should be explored.
5. Cultural variation is an important variable in the well being and school environment dynamics which should be researched upon.

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