

POSITIVE TEACHING AND SCHOOL WELLBEING AMONG STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the role of positive teaching practices in promoting school wellbeing among students using a qualitative research approach. Guided by principles of positive psychology, the study aimed to understand students' lived experiences of supportive teaching behaviors and their influence on emotional, social, and psychological wellbeing within the school environment. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with purposively selected students and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that positive teaching contributes to school wellbeing through supportive teacher–student relationships, encouragement and constructive feedback, safe and inclusive classroom environments, enhanced student engagement, and reduced academic stress. Students reported greater feelings of belonging, motivation, emotional security, and enjoyment of learning when teachers demonstrated empathy, fairness, and positive reinforcement. Overall, the study highlights positive teaching as a critical factor in fostering holistic school wellbeing and underscores the importance of integrating wellbeing-focused practices into everyday educational settings to support students' psychological flourishing alongside academic development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Positive teaching has emerged as a central construct within educational psychology, emphasizing instructional practices that foster students' strengths, engagement, motivation, and overall wellbeing. Rooted in positive psychology, positive teaching focuses on supportive teacher–student relationships, constructive feedback, encouragement, and autonomy-supportive classroom environments (Seligman et al., 2009). Research suggests that when teachers adopt positive pedagogical approaches—such as showing care, empathy, fairness, and optimism—students are more likely to experience positive emotions, higher academic engagement, and a stronger sense of belonging at school (Wentzel, 2012; Quin et al., 2017). These practices not only enhance learning outcomes but also contribute to students' emotional and social development.

School wellbeing refers to students' overall psychological, emotional, social, and academic functioning within the school context. It encompasses feelings of safety, connectedness, satisfaction with school life, and the absence of distress such as anxiety or disengagement (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002). Empirical evidence indicates that school wellbeing is strongly influenced by the quality of the school climate, particularly teacher support and positive interpersonal interactions (Suldo et al., 2009). Students who perceive their teachers as supportive and respectful report higher levels of life satisfaction, self-esteem, and resilience, while negative or punitive teaching styles are associated with stress, burnout, and poor mental health outcomes (Aldrup et al., 2018).

The relationship between positive teaching and school wellbeing among students is increasingly recognized as reciprocal and mutually reinforcing. Positive teaching practices create emotionally safe learning environments that promote wellbeing, while students with higher wellbeing are more engaged, motivated, and receptive to learning (OECD, 2017). Studies grounded in positive education frameworks demonstrate that integrating wellbeing-promoting strategies into everyday teaching can lead to sustained improvements in students' mental health, academic performance, and social functioning (Waters, 2011; Kern et al., 2015). Consequently, understanding the role of positive teaching in enhancing school wellbeing is critical for developing holistic educational approaches that support both academic success and students' psychological flourishing.

II. METHOD

Participants

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the role of positive teaching practices in promoting school wellbeing among students. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of students' lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings attached to positive teaching behaviors and their influence on emotional, social, and psychological wellbeing within the school environment. The study is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, emphasizing how students construct meaning from their interactions with teachers and the broader school context. Participants would be selected using purposive sampling, targeting students from secondary schools or higher education institutions who have regular exposure to classroom teaching. Efforts would be made to ensure diversity in terms of gender, age, academic level, and school type to capture a wide range of experiences. Sampling would continue until data saturation is achieved, that is, when no new themes emerge from the data. Participation would be voluntary, and informed consent would be obtained prior to data collection.

Measures

Data would be collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and, where appropriate, focus group discussions. These methods enable students to freely express their views on teaching behaviors such as encouragement, empathy, fairness, supportive feedback, and teacher–student relationships. Interview questions would explore students' perceptions of positive teaching, their emotional and psychological experiences in school, and how teacher behaviors contribute to feelings of safety, belonging, motivation, and overall wellbeing. All interviews would be audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim.

Procedure

Data analysis would be conducted using thematic analysis, following an iterative process of familiarization, coding, theme development, and refinement. Initial open coding would identify meaningful units related to positive teaching practices and aspects of school wellbeing. These codes would then be grouped into broader themes, such as emotional support, positive classroom climate, student engagement, and sense of belonging. Reflexivity would be maintained throughout the analysis to acknowledge the researcher's influence on interpretation. To ensure trustworthiness, the study would employ strategies such as member checking, peer debriefing, and maintaining an audit trail. Credibility would be enhanced by validating interpretations with participants, while dependability and confirmability would be ensured through transparent documentation of the research process. Ethical considerations would be strictly observed, including confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to withdraw at any stage. Overall, this qualitative approach provides a rich and contextualized understanding of how positive teaching fosters school wellbeing among students.

III. RESULTS

The qualitative analysis revealed several interrelated themes that illustrate how positive teaching practices contribute to students' school wellbeing. Participants consistently described positive teaching as a multidimensional experience encompassing supportive teacher–student relationships, inclusive classroom practices, and emotionally safe learning environments. These experiences were perceived as central to students' emotional comfort, engagement, and overall satisfaction with school life.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis: Positive Teaching and School Wellbeing

Theme	Illustrative Findings
Theme 1: Supportive Teacher–Student Relationships	Students emphasized that positive teaching is characterized by warmth, empathy, and approachability from teachers. Teachers who listened attentively, showed concern for students’ personal and academic challenges, and treated students with respect were perceived as fostering a sense of belonging and emotional security. Such relationships enhanced students’ confidence and reduced anxiety, contributing significantly to their psychological wellbeing within the school setting.
Theme 2: Encouragement and Positive Feedback	Another prominent theme was the role of encouragement and constructive feedback in promoting school wellbeing. Students reported that teachers who recognized effort rather than only academic outcomes motivated them to persist despite difficulties. Positive reinforcement helped students develop a growth mindset, increased self-esteem, and reduced fear of failure, thereby enhancing emotional resilience and engagement in learning activities.
Theme 3: Safe and Inclusive Classroom Environment	Participants highlighted that positive teaching practices create classrooms where students feel safe to express ideas, ask questions, and make mistakes without fear of ridicule or punishment. Inclusive teaching approaches that respected diversity in abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles promoted mutual respect among peers. This sense of safety and inclusion was closely linked to students’ emotional comfort and overall wellbeing at school.
Theme 4: Student Engagement and Enjoyment of Learning	Positive teaching was also associated with increased student engagement and enjoyment of academic activities. Interactive teaching methods, encouragement of participation, and meaningful teacher enthusiasm were reported to make learning more enjoyable and less stressful. Students described feeling more motivated to attend school and participate actively when teaching practices were positive and supportive.
Theme 5: Emotional Wellbeing and Stress Reduction	Many students reported that positive teaching helped them manage academic stress more effectively. Teachers who demonstrated understanding, flexibility, and emotional support were perceived as buffering the negative effects of academic pressure. This support contributed to reduced feelings of stress, frustration, and burnout, thereby promoting emotional balance and wellbeing.

Overall, the findings suggest that positive teaching plays a crucial role in enhancing students’ school wellbeing by nurturing supportive relationships, fostering emotional safety, encouraging engagement, and reducing stress. Positive teaching practices were not only seen as beneficial for academic learning but also as essential for promoting students’ emotional and psychological health within the school environment.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present qualitative study underscore the pivotal role of positive teaching practices in enhancing students’ school wellbeing. Consistent with positive psychology and positive education frameworks, students’ experiences revealed that supportive teacher–student relationships form the foundation of emotional security, belongingness, and psychological comfort within the school environment. Teachers who demonstrated empathy, fairness, and genuine concern were perceived as key contributors to students’ sense of safety and acceptance. These findings align with Wentzel (2012) and Quin et al. (2017), who emphasized that positive interpersonal relationships with teachers are among the strongest predictors of students’ emotional adjustment, engagement, and wellbeing at school. Encouragement and constructive feedback emerged as another central factor influencing students’ wellbeing. Participants reported that recognition of effort and positive reinforcement enhanced motivation, reduced fear of failure, and strengthened self-esteem. Such practices foster a growth-oriented learning climate where students feel valued beyond academic outcomes. These results support Seligman et al. (2009) and Kern et al. (2015), who highlighted that positive teaching strategies—such as strengths-based feedback

and encouragement—promote resilience, optimism, and sustained engagement, thereby contributing to overall school wellbeing.

The findings also highlight the importance of emotionally safe and inclusive classroom environments in promoting wellbeing. Students described positive teaching as creating spaces where mistakes were viewed as part of learning and diversity was respected. This sense of inclusion reduced anxiety, facilitated peer cooperation, and enhanced emotional comfort. These results are consistent with Konu and Rimpelä's (2002) conceptual model of school wellbeing, which emphasizes safety, social relationships, and supportive learning environments as core dimensions of wellbeing. Similarly, Aldrup et al. (2018) noted that positive classroom climates mitigate stress and protect both student and teacher wellbeing. Finally, the study revealed that positive teaching practices play a significant role in reducing academic stress and enhancing enjoyment of learning. Teachers' flexibility, emotional support, and engaging instructional methods were perceived as buffering the negative effects of academic pressure. This finding aligns with Suldo et al. (2009) and OECD (2017), who reported that students' wellbeing is closely linked to supportive teaching practices and positive school climates. Overall, the findings suggest that positive teaching is not only an instructional approach but also a critical mechanism for fostering students' psychological flourishing, engagement, and long-term wellbeing within educational settings.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this qualitative study indicate that positive teaching practices play a vital role in enhancing students' school wellbeing. Supportive teacher–student relationships, encouragement, inclusive classroom environments, and positive feedback were consistently perceived as fostering emotional safety, engagement, and reduced academic stress among students. Overall, positive teaching not only supports academic participation but also promotes students' emotional and psychological wellbeing, highlighting the importance of adopting wellbeing-oriented teaching practices within educational settings.

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