


## Chapter 8

# Social and Emotional Well-Being of Adolescents From Disadvantaged Backgrounds

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### ABSTRACT

*Well-being is an amorphous amalgamation of positive health, socioemotional competencies, and ethical sensibilities. The well-being of a child is influenced by social settings (family, peers, and community) as well as the supportive relationships experienced in educational settings. Therefore, the present study examines the social and emotional well-being (SEW) of adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds. This study is quantitative in nature and employs a cross-sectional survey design. A self-administered SEW tool was used to assess the student's wellbeing. The findings of the study reveal that more than 45% of the adolescents had low or emerging wellbeing scores in all five dimensions measured. The study results emphasise the need for SEW interventions among adolescents from disadvantaged backgrounds. Responses from adolescents also suggest an urgent need to empower teachers and educate parents on the importance of non-academic skills in education, who can serve as social and emotional role models over time, empowering students to overcome adversity and thrive.*

### INTRODUCTION

Well-being is about feeling good and functioning effectively. The concept of “feeling good” involves the experience of positive emotions, trusting relationships, the development of one’s potential and a sense of purpose in life (Huppert, 2009,). It is a condition that allows young people to progress and thrive. Well-being is crucial for positive development in adolescents, which enables them to achieve positive outcomes

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in school, work, and life (Durlak et al., 2015; Srikala & Kishore, 2010). The concept of “well-being” has grown and extended to many different areas. The term “well-being” is often used interchangeably with words such as happiness, satisfaction, wellness, welfare, etc. A systematic review by Pollard and Lee (2003) found that well-being is not consistently defined, and the key dimensions commonly used were physical, psychological, cognitive, social and economic well-being. In the past few decades, scientific research literature has seen a shift in emphasis from health and disorders to well-being and positive mental health. This shift has led to a broadened definition of health, referred to as a “state of physical, social and mental well-being” (WHO, 1986). Since then, various initiatives have recommended that schools take responsibility for promoting adolescents’ social and emotional well-being.

Research studies have shown that the definitions of “well-being” vary in the literature and that the multidimensional nature of well-being is very well accepted. Of all the varying dimensions, the social and emotional dimensions of well-being are found to be the most widely studied, included and accepted. (CYPSC: Social and Emotional Learning, 2016; Kulkarni et al 2021). Social and Emotional Well-being (SEW) is considered the heart of “true well-being.” In general, it is the child’s ability to comprehend and control their emotions and behaviours, as well as their capacity to get along well with their peers. In simple terms, SEW is the ability to adapt to and deal with daily challenges while leading a fulfilling life. It also covers various aspects like better mental health, life satisfaction and social emotional skills, which are key to children’s development and play an important role in shaping a range of well-being outcomes (Kautz et al., 2014). Studies have shown an increase in social, emotional well-being and mental health problems among children and young people (Collishaw et al., 2004; Sunitha and Gururaj, 2014). Adolescents with low SEW are more likely to struggle at home, with peer groups, and at school, and are less likely to have positive social and emotional well-being (Noonan & Fairclough, 2018). Evidences demonstrate that relationships and experiences in the community in which adolescents reside have a substantial impact on their development, self-esteem, social adjustment and well-being (Barth et al. 2004; Singhal & Prakash, 2021).

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds have limited opportunities for growth and learning. They do not enjoy their childhood or have the same benefits as children from advantaged neighbourhoods. They may not always be as successful as the children from privileged communities, who have more avenues for learning and transform into productive and responsible citizens. Many of them drop out of school, leaving them with less knowledge, fewer skills, and lower life satisfaction (Inchley et al., 2018). This can reduce their chances of becoming productive members of society.

Numerous research studies have found that children from low-income families lag behind in many areas of well-being (Saith & Wazir, 2010). The root causes of this disadvantage are the challenges that adolescents face in their families, at school, and in the community. The parents of these children are not able to support them academically, nor are they able to provide the nourishment required for their cognitive, social and personal growth (Helms et al., 2021; Ratra D., Singh K. 2022). Growing up at the end of the socioeconomic ladder, these children lack any positive role models to enhance their self-worth, interpersonal skills, and future perspectives. These children are more likely to face stress and challenges in their homes, schools, and communities, which may have an impact on their overall well-being (Fraizer et al., 2015; Ray et al., 2022).

Gender differences do exist among adolescents based on their biological and psychological differences. Research on differences between males and females well-being has not yielded consistent outcomes (Matud et al., 2019; Verma et al., 2011). Some research studies demonstrated differences in well-being, although females reported experiencing positive and negative emotions with greater frequency and in-

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