The Influence of Emotional Wellness on Student Success Pre-Pandemic

Paris Saruna, M.A.

Doctoral Student, University of Windsor

401 Sunset Ave., Windsor, ON, N9B 3P4 – Canada

Abstract: **Educational psychology has always directed research toward improving student learning and development while needing to take student individuality into account. This study explores the influence that emotional wellness has on student success. Student success in the context of this study was considered to be a combination of academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior. Emotional wellness was categorized as a combination of self-esteem and stress-resistance. There were two research questions: (1) is there a relationship between student emotional wellness and student success?; and (2) can emotional wellness predict student success? A sample of 343 first-year university students (72% female) completed a demographic survey (age, gender, ethnicity, and GPA) and four self-report measures: self-esteem, stress, sociability, and self-care and safety. Correlation and linear regression analyses indicated that emotional wellness had a significant relationship with student success. Results supported the hypotheses, which suggested that individuals with higher emotional wellness were more likely to have higher student success. The discussion section presented implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research.**

Keywords: **academic achievement; behavior; emotional wellness; self-esteem; stress; student success.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1992, The New York Times has brought national attention to the need for emotional development awareness in schools. They specifically noted that American youth were emotionally illiterate and that pioneering schools benefitted from teaching emotional education (Goleman, 1992). In 2016, emotional skills in schools are still being brought to national attention through The New York Times, showing its continued prominence in educational research and lack of presence in the classroom (Goleman, 2015; Schulten, 2016; Zernike, 2016; Schulten & Proulx, 2019). Currently, "mental health issues are on the rise on college campuses for all students;" thus, this research is imperative for educational awareness and solutions (Koo, Kim, Lee, & Nyunt, 2021).

According to the American Psychological Association's Stress in America survey (2019), most Americans still don't understand how stress can undermine their health; thus, there is an evident reason for further research and public knowledge and conversations on the implications of stress and emotional wellness in educational institutions. Fitness, often interchanged with well-being, is commonly referred to as life satisfaction, positive mental health, happiness, optimal experience, and functioning, including physically, psychologically and socially (Oguz-Duran & Tezer, 2009, p. 33). The concept of teaching to the whole child is parallel with the wellness wheel philosophy (intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and social health) and was initially known as the Aboriginal medicine wheel. "There is a baseline holistic understanding that all components of the wellness wheel are connected and inter-reliant," and educators should strive to develop curricular lessons consistent with the idea of educating and aiding the development of the whole student (Silva, John, & Beenen, 2008, p.1).

Norman Garmezy, a developmental psychologist, identified resilience as an essential factor in whether youth would 'make it' in school, especially if they were troubled, distressed, or from difficult backgrounds (Konnikova, 2016). Furthermore, schools nationwide are now pressured to begin teaching and testing emotional skills because "federal education law requires states to include at least one nonacademic measure in judging school performance" (Zernike, 2016). As the discourse evolves in the classroom, deliberate time should be placed on teaching these emotional skills to students (Proulx & Schulten, 2019). Therefore, exploring emotional wellness as a school performance predictor is meaningful and relevant.

"Stress and other mental health challenges pose a major problem for many undergraduate and graduate college students, and both their health and academic performance are negatively affected" (Wyatt & Oswalt, 2013, p.96). Other studies have also found that when students finally enter university, generally without emotional development education throughout their youth, perceived stress significantly correlates with lowered academic achievement (Field, Diego, Pelaez, Deeds, & Delgado, 2012; Talib & Zia-ur-Rehman, 2012; Stelnicki, Nordstokke, & Saklofske, 2015). In addition to stress, college students' self-esteem and self-efficacy are significant positive correlations with academic performance (Yip, 2012; Gebka, 2014; Arshad, Zaidi, & Mahmood, 2015; Busalim, Masrom, & Zakaria, 2019). Thus, college students' stress and self-esteem influence their academic success.

Study Overview

This study explores the influence of emotional wellness on student success for adolescents enrolled in their first year of university. In context, student success was considered a combination of academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior. Emotional wellness was categorized as a combination of self-esteem and stress-resistance. There were two research questions: (1) is there a relationship between student emotional wellness and student success?; and (2) can emotional wellness predict student success? It was hypothesized that (1) youth with higher levels of positive emotional wellness would also have higher levels of student success; and (2) a youth's level of emotional wellness could predict student success.

Student Success

According to David Card in *The Causal Effect of Education on Earnings* (1999), "Hundreds of studies have confirmed that better-educated individuals earn higher wages, experience less unemployment, and work in more prestigious occupations than their less-educated counterparts" (p. 1802). Receiving an education not only has positive implications for future work and socio-economic status but on the general population's health. "Education has an enduring, consistent, and growing effect on health" (Mirowsky & Ross, 2003, p. 6). Regarding further public health benefits, "Numerous reports of consistent and significant associations between formal educational attainment and individual health outcomes conclude that more highly educated individuals are healthier and live longer" (Baker, Leon, Smith Greenway, Collins, & Movit, 2011, p. 307). Therefore, knowing that education has positive life outcomes allows students to aim for educational success. As educational researchers began the quest to study student success, methods of measurement had to be explored.

Academic Achievement

The most frequent method of measurement for student success is academic achievement, such as test scores, because they are generally significant predictors for classroom success (Howard, 2006). In addition, teachers commonly use achievement testing as the sole predictor of scholastic achievement because educators had initially always emphasized intellectual growth with academic achievement (Paterson, Schneidler, & Williamson, 1938). Therefore, the norm of teachers using test scores for achievement predictions started decades ago. Research began to show that using grade-point averages and standardized test scores would not be enough for accurate predictions of achievement (Grigorenko, Jarvin, Diffley, Goodyear, Shanahan, & Sternberg, 2009). Instead, this research found that self-regulated learning also needed to be considered for educational success, such as academic self-efficacy and academic motivation. Therefore, looking solely at student grades is insufficient to measure student success.

Social Wellness

As student success means more than just academics, it is crucial to look at other aspects of school. Social wellness refers to one's ability to interact with those around them, using social competence and social skills. According to Klein (2005), "Social skills are those behaviors that are necessary for competent social performance; whereas, social competence is an

evaluative term judging whether social interactions and tasks were adequately performed" (p. 6). Student socializing is a huge part of everyday student success, as cooperation and teamwork are learned and used. A Harvard University study concluded that positive social skills have resulted in children's higher achievement (Bub, 2008). For college students, social activities have shown to reduce students' anxiety levels (Aly, 2020). Furthermore, friendship quality has been found to have a significantly positive relationship with engagement in college and intent to persist to the second year (Mauk, 2011). A study about motivation by Becker (2002) concluded that programs designed to promote academic competence should be more effective in addressing social deviance and academic disengagement. Therefore, positive social experiences will generally promote greater academic motivation and engagement.

Behavior

It should be noted that "many US students lack the strategies, skills, and or support systems to manage stress or change pre-existing behaviors, resulting in unhealthy behaviors and and poor overall wellness" (Franzidis & Zinder, 2019). Self-care behaviors have been studied to see if there is a link between the presence or absence of healthy choices and student achievement. Findings have shown that significant predictors of academic performance were: mental and physical health, substance use, physical health factors, and stressors (Larson, 2008; Furnham, Monsen, & Ahmetoglu, 2009). Further studies found that alcohol and substance use negatively affects student GPA (Lall & Schandler, 1991; Musgrave-Marquart, Bromley, & Dalley, 1997; Godley, 2006). Nutrition can also be impactful as students who eat breakfast have shown improved immediate recall and spatial memory (Benton & Sargent, 1992). Findings have also suggested that healthy sleeping patterns promote higher academic performance (Trockel, Barnes, & Egget, 2000; Gomes, Tavares, & de Azevedo, 2011). Therefore, healthy behavior choices can also promote higher student success.

Overall, based on the information and research findings, student success depends not only on academic achievement of grades but also on their social competence/wellness and behavior.

Emotional Wellness

Wellness is more than just the absence of illness, as it is a positive state of complete well-being (Roscoe, 2009). According to Roscoe (2009), there is a Wheel of Wellness that has twelve elements: sense of worth, sense of control, realistic beliefs, emotional awareness and coping, problem-solving and creativity, sense of humor, nutrition, exercise, self-care, stress management, gender identity, and cultural identity. Thus, wellness is comprised of many components. Roscoe (2009) also referred to wellness as the "optimal state of being that an individual can achieve in relation to his or her life circumstances" (p. 218).

Emotionally well individuals are thought to be optimistic towards life, have awareness and acceptance of feelings, have healthy coping mechanisms for stress, and have feelings of self-worth (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000). According to the American Psychological Association's (2012) psychology topics on emotional health:

Emotional health can lead to success in work, relationships, and health. In the past, researchers believed that success made people happy. However, newer research reveals that it's the other way around. Happy people are more likely to work toward goals, find the resources they need and attract others with their energy and optimism – key building blocks of success.

Emotional wellness and health are important to one's happiness and success. To more thoroughly understand emotional wellness, the major components of self-esteem and stress were explored.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is the concept of an individual having value in themselves, as it is an emotional evaluation of self-worth. Self-esteem is a personality trait developed as a child and continues to evolve throughout life. In a study by Adams, Bezner, and Steinhardt (1997), the primary focus for the definition of emotional wellness was an individual's self-esteem or self-concept, particularly a positive sense of self. Therefore, emotional wellness is commonly studied by looking at the variables of self-esteem and self-concept (Ciarrochi, Chan, & Bajgar, 2001; Carmeli, Yitzhak-Halevy, & Weisberg, 2009; Trainor, Delfabbro, Anderson, & Winefield, 2010; Tsang, Wong, & Lo, 2012; Kipp & Weiss, 2013). Overall, the concept of self-esteem is an accurate and common predictor of emotional wellness in research.

Stress Resistance

Stress can be defined as how individuals find their lives unpredictable, overloading, and uncontrollable (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983). Stress can come from personal events, academic matters, workplace conflicts, or other life situations. Stress can influence one's emotional wellness because it generally leads to more severe issues, such as anxiety and depression (Panayiotou & Karekla, 2013). Stress, anxiety and depression are known adverse effects (Bernstein-Bercovitz, 2003; Klainin, 2009; Panayiotou & Karekla, 2013). According to a study by Renger et al. (2002), emotional wellness was defined based on one's level of anxiety, depression, well-being, self-control, and optimism. Thus, individuals must be able to cope with their difficulties and stressors to become stress-resistant and maintain emotional wellness (Roscoe, 2009).

Emotions Affecting Success

As student success and emotional wellness prove to be two critically essential concepts independently, it is necessary to see how and if these concepts are connected. For generations, studies have demonstrated that persons with high self-esteem were more likely to be responsive to success, while persons with low self-esteem were more likely to be responsive to failure (Silverman, 1964; Wood, Heimpel, Newby-Clark, & Ross, 2005; Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Piccolo, 2008; Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012). Thus, students with higher self-esteem are more likely to achieve success than those with lower self-esteem. Studies show that self-esteem is a significant predictor of academic achievement and performance (Hall, 2007; Pullmann & Allik, 2008). Studies on adolescents have shown that self-esteem also positively correlates with happiness, satisfaction with life, and self-fulfillment (Meleddu, Guicciardi, Scalas, & Fadda, 2012). In a study published by the American Psychological Association, happiness is a positive effect that leads to success and precedes numerous successful outcomes and other behaviors that parallel success (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005).

Student perceptions of their wellbeing and academics are also critical. According to the American College Health Association (2017), the most significant factors students reported as impacting their academic achievement were: anxiety, depression, sleep difficulties, and stress. Research has shown that traumatic stress is a significant negative predictor of academic achievement for students (Goodman, 2012). Traumatic stress for students presumably makes school a lower priority, as emotional well-being is lacking. Likewise, a study on academic stress negatively correlated with academic achievement (Shokri, Kadivar, & Daneshvarpour, 2007). Here, stress being caused by the school also shows a negative impact on achievement. Furthermore, various studies have found that perceived stress has a negative effect on academic achievement (Kennedy, 2010; Jyoti & Devi, 2008; Liu & Lu, 2010). Thus, regardless of the stress source, achievement is negatively impacted.

Research in education has commonly studied the aspects of test anxiety and how this has affected student achievement. Specifically, research has long shown that individual differences in anxiety have affected academic achievement performance (Alpert & Haber, 1960). The perceived stress connected with taking academic tests elicits an anxiety response, thus, affecting student performance. More specifically, a study found that test emotions can alter students' achievement goals and performance (Putwain & Deveney, 2009).

Various studies have also found that emotional intelligence has been positively correlated with academic achievement for students, including enhanced cognitive abilities and student satisfaction (Barchard, 2003; Holt, 2007; Samples, 2010). Emotional intelligence is one's ability to identify and manage emotions in positive ways; thus, a form of emotional wellness. Similarly, emotional management has been associated with higher student academic achievement (Howell, 2010). Furthermore, a current study explored the concept of social-emotional and character development (SECD) for youth success and improved behavior (Snyder, 2012). Results showed that youths involved in SECD programs were indicators of higher school quality, including significantly better academic behavior, safety and well-being, involvement, and satisfaction. Overall, results from these studies show evidence that a relationship can be found between emotional wellness and student success.

Purpose of Study

The study explores the influence that emotional wellness has on student success. For this paper, student success was categorized as a total for academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior. Teachers, parents, and administrators are

always looking to improve education while only building on cognitive and physical development. Unfortunately, emotional and mental wellness development is lacking in schools, which may affect students throughout their life. Can positive emotional wellness development improve education? There were two research questions: (1) is there a relationship between student emotional wellness and student success?; and (2) can emotional wellness predict student success? It was hypothesized that (1) youth with higher levels of positive emotional wellness would also have higher levels of student success, and (2) a youth's level of emotional wellness could predict their student success.

2. METHOD

Participants

There were 453 participants voluntarily recruited through a mass email message sent to first-year students at a comprehensive Midwestern university. Due to incomplete data, the final sample was 343 first-year students, 72% female. Participants' age varied, with 83% between the ages of 18 – 20. Most of the participants, 82%, had graduated from high school in the last 12 months. The participants' ethnicity varied, with 75% Caucasian, 14% African-American, 2% Latino, 2% Asian, 2% Middle Eastern, and 5% Other. The majority of participants, 92%, were full-time students. Almost all participants, 90%, never reported or rarely missed school in the last 60 days, while the remaining 10% reported missing class sometimes.

Measures

An online self-report questionnaire was designed using four separate, peer-reviewed measures. The survey was organized into five components: demographics, emotional wellness, academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior. Emotional wellness was defined as the total of the self-esteem and stress-resistance measures. Student success was defined as the total of the academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior measures.

Demographics

This included subject gender, age, and ethnicity. The demographical section determined when the subject graduated from high school and the number of years enrolled in university. In addition, participants had to indicate whether they attended as full-time or part-time students and the frequency of school absences.

Survey

The self-report questionnaire was based on four main variables: emotional wellness, academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior.

1. *Emotional Wellness:* A series of two small scales were integrated to give a total score for each individual's emotional well-being: (1) The 1965 Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used to measure each individual's level of self-worth and self-acceptance. (2) A Global Measure of Perceived Stress (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983), commonly known as the PSS, was used to measure an individual's level of perceived stress.

2. *Academic Achievement*: A score for current university GPA was used as the only measure of academic achievement.

3. *Social Wellness*: The International Personality Item Pool adapted the NEO – E1: Friendliness scale from the revised version of the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI-R: Costa & McCrae, 1992). This scale was designed and used to measure an individual's friendless level to others.

4. *Behavior*: The TestWell: Wellness Inventory – College Version (1993) measure by the National Wellness Institute was designed to address lifestyle choices for college students. There are 11 separate scores, and the one used was: Self-Care and Safety.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study was an online self-reported questionnaire that required the participants to fill out a multiple-choice survey. The study used a correlational design, with a regression as its main component. Once all the responses were coded into numerical values, the variables (emotional wellness, self-esteem, stress-resistance, student success, academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior) were continuous variables. The emotional wellness variable was computed as the sum total of self-esteem and stress resistance. The student success variable was calculated as the sum total of

academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior. The correlations between the continuous variables were analyzed using Pearson's r. Four sets of regressions were run to see if there were valid predictions from the variables. Student emotional wellness, self-esteem, and stress resistance were the predictor variables, while academic achievement, social wellness, behavior, and student success were imputed as separate outcome variables. Each set of regressions used emotional wellness as a single predictor variable. Each set of regressions then used self-esteem and stress-resistance as predictors with the hierarchal method of multiple regressions. Therefore, there were a total of 12 regressions analyzed. All data was run using SPSS to ensure all information had been properly analyzed.

3. RESULTS

The descriptive statistics (see Table 1) show that most participants had relatively high self-esteem and high stress-resistance scores, together with computing overall high emotional wellness scores. On average, participants reported extremely high academic achievement, with 52% having a GPA of 3.5 or higher and an additional 26% having a GPA of at least 3.0. The majority of participants also reported relatively high social wellness and behavior levels. Thus, student success scores, the sum of academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior, were high. The table also shows that 110 of the 453 participants were lost during analyses because of incomplete survey data (n = 343).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics: All Study Variables (N= 453; n= 343)

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Self Esteem	20.93	5.144	3	30
Stress-Resistant	29.86	6.985	12	47
Emotional Wellness	50.80	11.106	17	77
Academic Achievement	33.42	6.330	0.9	40
Social Wellness	36.78	7.465	17	50
Behavior	33.56	6.160	16	50
Student Success	103.76	13.044	56	132

Note. High scores mean a high degree of the variable.

Correlations

The variables were analyzed with Pearson Correlation (see Table 2). The majority of correlations were significant. Separately, as expected, the self-esteem and stress-resistance variables had significantly large positive correlations with emotional wellness. The self-esteem and stress-resistance variables had significant medium positive correlations with social wellness and student success. Both self-esteem and stress-resistance variables had small but significant positive correlations with academic achievement and behavior.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation: Correlations Between Variables

	Self Esteem	Stress Resistance	Emotional Wellness	Academic Achievement	Social Wellness	Behavior	Student Success
Self Esteem	1.000						
Stress	0.669***	1.000					
Emotional	0.884***	0.939***	1.000				
Academic	0.130*	0.207***	0.190***	1.000			
Social	0.459***	0.412***	0.472***	0.069	1.000		
Behavior	0.196***	0.171**	0.198***	0.233***	0.128*	1.000	
Success	0.418***	0.417***	0.456***	0.635***	0.666***	0.658***	1.000

Note. ***$p < 0.001$. **$p < 0.01$. *$p < 0.05$.

Regressions

Regression equations were calculated to examine the power of the independent variables' ability to predict the outcome variables. The three independent predictor variables used in the regression were self-esteem, stress resistance, and emotional wellness. Emotional wellness was measured as the sum total score of self-esteem and stress-resistance. The

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four dependent outcome variables were academic achievement, social wellness, behavior, and student success. Student success was measured as the sum total score of academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior. First, three regressions were computed, with emotional wellness as the first predictor for each outcome variable. Then, two more regressions were run using the hierarchal method with self-esteem and stress-resistance as the predictor variables. Finally, the hierarchal method was used to see how each independent variable (self-esteem and stress-resistance) supported the prediction.

Predicting Student Success

For the regression findings predicting student success (see Table 3), the predictors were accountable for 20.8% of the total variance in the student success score *($R^2 = .208, p = .000$)*. In the second regression, Block 1 inputs self-esteem first, as it accounts for 17.5% of the total variance in the student success scale, *$R^2 = .175, p = .000$*. Block 2 incorporates stress resistance, as the variables together account for 20.9%, *$R^2 = .209, p = .000$*. The R^2 Change shows that stress resistance contributes for 3.4% of the total variance, *$R^2 = .034, p = .000$*. For the third set of regressions, variables were entered in reverse using the hierarchal method (see Table 3).

Table 3: Summary of Regression Results for Predicting Student Success

Variable	R^2	R^2 Change	β	*p*
Emotional Wellness	.208	.208		.000
Variable	R^2	R^2 Change	β	*p*
Block 1				
Self Esteem	.175	.175	.418	.000
Block 2				
Stress Resistance	.209	.034	.249	.000
Variable	R^2	R^2 Change	β	*p*
Block 1				
Stress Resistance	.174	.174	.417	.000
Block 2				
Self Esteem	.209	.035	.251	.000

Note. β Represents standardized regression coefficient.

Predicting Academic Achievement

For the regression findings predicting academic achievement (see Table 4), the predictors were accountable for 3.6% of the total variance in the student success score, *$R^2 = .036, p = .000$*. In the second regression, Block 1 inputs self-esteem first and Block 2 incorporates stress resistance, as the variables together account for 4.3%, *$R^2 = .043, p = .003$*. For the third set of regressions, variables were entered in reverse using the hierarchal method (see Table 4).

Table 4: Summary of Regression Results for Predicting Academic Achievement

Variable	R^2	R^2 Change	β	*p*
Emotional Wellness	.036	.036		.000
Variable	R^2	R^2 Change	β	*p*
Block 1				
Self Esteem	.017	.017	.130	.016
Block 2				
Stress Resistance	.043	.026	.217	.003
Variable	R^2	R^2 Change	β	*p*
Block 1				
Stress Resistance	.043	.043	.207	.000
Block 2				
Self Esteem	.043	.000	-.016	.827

Note. β represents standardized regression coefficient.

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Predicting Social Wellness

For the regression findings predicting social wellness (see Table 5), the predictors were accountable for 22.3% of the total variance in the social wellness score, $R^2 = .223$, $p = .000$. In the second regression, Block 1 inputs self-esteem first and Block 2 incorporates stress resistance, as the variables together account for 23.1%, $R^2 = .231$, $p = .003$. For the third set of regressions, variables were entered in reverse using the hierarchal method (see Table 5).

Table 5: Summary of Regression Results for Predicting Social Wellness

Variable	R²	R² Change	β	*p*
Emotional Wellness	.223	.223		.000
Variable	R²	R² Change	β	*p*
Block 1				
Self Esteem	.210	.210	.459	.000
Block 2				
Stress Resistance	.231	.010	.191	.003
Variable	R²	R² Change	β	*p*
Block 1				
Stress Resistance	.170	.170	.412	.000
Block 2				
Self Esteem	.231	.060	.331	.000

Note. β represents standardized regression coefficient.

Predicting Behavior

For the regression findings predicting behavior (see Table 6), the predictors were accountable for 3.9% of the total variance in the behavior score, $R^2 = .039$, $p = .000$. In the second regression, Block 1 inputs self-esteem first, as Block 2 incorporates stress resistance. For the third set of regressions, variables were entered in reverse using the hierarchal method (see Table 6).

Table 6: Summary of Regression Results for Predicting Behavior

Variable	R²	R² Change	β	*p*
Emotional Wellness	.039	.039		.000
Variable	R²	R² Change	β	*p*
Block 1				
Self Esteem	.038	.038	.196	.000
Block 2				
Stress Resistance	.041	.003	.073	.309
Variable	R²	R² Change	β	*p*
Block 1				
Stress Resistance	.029	.029	.171	.001
Block 2				
Self Esteem	.041	.012	.147	.041

Note. β represents standardized regression coefficient.

4. DISCUSSION

Knowing that learning and development are important, educational psychology aims to research methods of improvement for student success. This study aimed to examine individual emotional wellness and its effects on student success. Emotional wellness was measured as the independent variable, using measures of self-esteem and stress-resistance for predictor variables. Student success was measured as the dependent variable, using measures of academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior for the outcome variables. It was hypothesized that an individual's level of emotional wellness would have a positive relationship with student success. It was also hypothesized that an individual's level of emotional wellness could predict their student success. Results did support the hypotheses with significant findings.

Major Findings

To summarize the statistical results, emotional wellness was significantly correlated with student success and each of its components (academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior). In other words, levels of student success increased with higher levels of emotional wellness. Furthermore, emotional wellness was also a significant predictor of student success and each of its components (academic achievement, social wellness, and behavior). Thus, one's level of emotional wellness could predict one's level of student success. Thus, both hypotheses were proven to be significant.

It was hypothesized that emotional wellness would have a more significant impact on the prediction of student success. Since many studies have demonstrated that individuals with high self-esteem are more responsive to success, it was assumed that self-esteem and emotional wellness would have strong relationships with student success (Silverman, 1964; Wood, Heimpel, Newby-Clark, & Ross, 2005; Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Piccolo, 2008; Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012). Surprisingly, emotional wellness, self-esteem, and stress resistance had relatively small correlations with academic achievement and behavior.

In two previous studies, self-esteem was a significant predictor of academic achievement and academic performance (Hall, 2007; Pullmann & Allik, 2008). However, although this study had statistical significant findings for self-esteem's relationship with academic achievement, this relationship was relatively weak. In addition, stress resistance was a better predictor for academic achievement than self-esteem.

Numerous studies have found that perceived stress negatively impacts academic achievement (Shokri, Kadivar, & Daneshvarpour, 2007; Kennedy, 2010; Jyoti & Devi, 2008; Liu & Lu 2010; Goodman, 2012). Thus, it was assumed that stress resistance would positively correlate with academic achievement. However, the current study indicated a significant but relatively weak relationship between stress resistance and academic achievement.

A study by Larson (2008) found that predictors of academic performance were: mental and physical health, substance use, physical health factors, and stressors. In the current study, academic achievement had a relatively weak yet significant relationship to behavior. The behavior measure was based on self-care and safety, so it conflicts with the findings by Larson (2008). According to Roscoe (2009), wellness includes nutrition, exercise, and self-care. With the current study, the self-care behavior variable shows significant yet weak relationships to self-esteem, stress resistance, and emotional wellness.

Overall, the most significant findings from the study were the positive relationship and predictions between emotional wellness and student success. However, although emotional wellness affects student success, many other factors still need to be considered. For example, emotional wellness can only account for 20% of the variance in student success scores; thus, there is still 80% contributing from other factors.

Implications

The results of this study indicate that students with higher levels of emotional wellness are more likely do better with educational success. Emotional wellness was significantly correlated with higher student success. Additionally, emotional wellness was a significant contributor in predicting higher student success. These perceptions suggest that improving students' emotional wellness levels will increase individual student success. Thus, one way that educators can improve student success is by developing increased levels of emotional wellness. Since receiving an education has been considered important for life development and outcomes, action must be taken to improve the likelihood of student success (Card, 1999). Therefore, this is a significant finding because it presents educators and policymakers with vital information, knowledge, and research on initiating new methods of educational improvement.

It is suggested that educators and policymakers can improve students' likelihood of success by increasing self-esteem and decreasing levels of stress. "Universities are encouraged to focus their attention beyond the individual academic performance and focus on improving and promoting students' social, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing" (Parker & Dickson, 2020). Therefore, it would be beneficial for schools to begin working on these emotional aspects of student well-being. Today's education systems focus primarily on cognitive development, while physical development is considered through curriculum physical education classes. Surprisingly, emotional development lacks priority, or any

attention, through the curriculum. This research indicates that if education established emotional development for students, their success rate would increase. Likewise, a recent study concluded that college wellness courses are mentioned in literature, but there's a huge lack in implementation, course options, support, and research (Beauchemin, Gibbs, & Granello, 2018). It becomes questionable as to why any educator or policymaker would refuse to begin prioritizing a mandatory emotional wellness curriculum. Maintaining emotional wellness is about obtaining an individual's optimal state of being. Why would educators not want that for every student? Emotional wellness needs to be integrated into student development to promote higher success and an optimal state of being.

Limitations and Further Research

Limitations for this study involve the sample of participants and their ability to accurately generalize first-year students. In this sample, students had reported extremely high grade-point averages, which is not likely to represent the majority of first-year university students. Having a self-reported survey is also a research limitation because it is unclear if participants were truthful throughout their responses. In addition, social desirability may influence responses across all measures because students may feel pressured to answer based on expectations to fulfill social roles. Another potential limitation for accurate academic achievement is that most students had only completed their first semester in university; thus, this depiction would likely differ from a cumulative GPA of numerous semesters. Furthermore, solely testing university students will not generalize academic achievement for the general population. These individuals have already successfully graduated high school with grades approved for the university setting.

It is suggested that studies on emotional wellness and student success use random samples. This study used a convenience sample; a randomly selected sample would provide more accurate generalizations. It would be ideal to study an entire high school graduating class because you will have a wider range of students going to university, those individuals going to community college, and those entering the workforce. Therefore, studying high school students may indicate more accurate generalizations of society.

Another limitation caused by the results was that two predictor variables (self-esteem and stress-resistance) were highly correlated. One of the assumptions of regression equations is that the predictor variables are relatively independent. This causes a limitation in the results because it is hard to separate the independent contributions in meaningful ways. However, the emotional wellness variable (the sum total of self-esteem and stress-resistance) is a significant predictor for all other variables.

Further studies on emotional wellness should also attempt to investigate emotional wellness more thoroughly. Measures of emotional wellness should include more than just the self-esteem and stress variables, such as optimism, life satisfaction, sense of control, and stress management or coping strategies. A more thorough measure of emotional wellness will likely represent increased accuracy. Additional studies should also aim to have teachers disclose academic achievement for students because it will also increase the accuracy of scores. It is also suggested that future research should examine the effects of integrating emotional development in the mandatory curriculum for students, especially regarding student success. Wellness programs for students are still very new and need more research and implementation improvements. "College wellness education may benefit from incorporating student-identified health priorities and values into curricula" (Cass, et al., 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, emotional wellness and student success prove to be important issues independently and together. Student success remains vital for individuals because of the likelihood it will develop into later life success. Emotional wellness is crucial to one's health, as it represents an individual's optimal state of being. This study aimed to examine individual emotional wellness and its effects on student success. Results indicated that emotional wellness does influence student success. It is suggested that increasing students' level of self-esteem will increase their levels of success. Therefore, this information seems pivotal for education and school systems, which do not prioritize emotional development within the curriculum. Further research on emotional wellness and its effects is still needed. Overall, it is clear that education needs to be modified to include emotional development for students.

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