

WELL-BEING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS, APPLIED RESEARCH, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE VIETNAMESE CONTEXT

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Abstract. The cultivation of well-being in early childhood is increasingly recognized as an indispensable component of holistic development, forming the bedrock for lifelong learning, mental health, and social competence. Moving beyond simplistic notions of happiness, contemporary scholarship defines well-being as a robust, multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, social, cognitive, and physical health, representing an optimal state of functioning that draws from both hedonic and eudaimonic traditions. To synthesize the evidence on this topic, this paper provides a comprehensive systematic review of the theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, and practical applications of well-being education in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Guided by PRISMA principles, a systematic search of international (Scopus, PsycINFO, etc.) and Vietnamese (VNU-LIC) databases for literature from the last 15 years yielded 86 publications for thematic analysis. Our synthesis reveals that child well-being is determined by a dynamic interplay of factors across the child's ecological systems; that a strong evidence base supports intervention modalities like Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and play-based pedagogy, grounded in frameworks such as Attachment Theory and Positive Psychology; and that effective application necessitates a holistic model integrating the environment, curriculum, educators' role, and partnerships. A central contribution of this review is its analysis of the specific challenges and strategic opportunities for implementing well-being education within the Vietnamese ECE system, identifying critical gaps in policy-practice alignment, teacher capacity, and culturally-adapted resources. Ultimately, our findings provide a clear mandate that prioritizing early childhood well-being is not merely a pedagogical trend but a fundamental and strategic investment in human capital, yielding long-term benefits for individual resilience, academic success, and the sustainable development of society.

Keywords: Child Well-being, Early Childhood Education (ECE), Holistic Development, Positive Education, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Mental Health, Preschool Education, Vietnam.

1. Introduction

The global discourse on human development has increasingly emphasized mental health and holistic flourishing, a paradigm shift that directs significant attention to the foundational early years of life [1, 2]. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is no longer viewed solely as preparation for formal schooling but as a critical period for shaping character, competence, and overall well-

being [3, 4]. Within this context, well-being is conceptualized not as transient happiness but as a robust, multidimensional construct encompassing emotional, social, physical, and cognitive health. This state enables children to feel secure, connected, competent, and primed for learning, a definition substantiated by systematic reviews and major organizational reports [5, 6].

A substantial body of international evidence, including a landmark meta-analysis by Durlak et al. (2011), demonstrates a definitive link between high levels of early childhood well-being and improved academic achievement, enhanced resilience, superior social skills, and positive long-term mental health trajectories [7–9]. This has catalyzed the emergence of "well-being education" as a distinct field focused on intentionally equipping children with the skills, attitudes, and environmental supports necessary to thrive [10, 11].

Despite this progress, a significant gap persists in the literature. The majority of research originates from Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) societies, creating a critical need for scholarship that examines the translation and adaptation of well-being education within diverse socio-cultural contexts. Specifically, there is a dearth of systematic reviews that bridge global theory with context-specific practice in nations undergoing rapid socio-economic transformation, such as Vietnam [18, 19]. While Vietnam's ECE sector is officially pivoting toward holistic development goals, as mandated by its National Education Law and revised curriculum [14–17], the effective, measurable, and culturally resonant implementation of well-being education remains a formidable challenge.

This review aims to address this gap by providing a comprehensive synthesis of well-being education from both global and Vietnamese perspectives. The specific objectives are: (1) to delineate the conceptual framework of well-being in early childhood; (2) to synthesize empirical evidence regarding influencing factors, intervention efficacy, and theoretical underpinnings; (3) to examine practical implementation models for ECE settings; and (4) to analyze the unique challenges and propose future research and policy directions for advancing this field in Vietnam. This work seeks to provide a robust scientific foundation for researchers, policymakers, educators, and families dedicated to fostering optimal development in young children.

2. Content

2.1. Methodology

This study employed a systematic literature review methodology to synthesize and critically evaluate the existing body of knowledge on well-being in early childhood education (ECE). The review process was structured following the guiding principles of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to ensure transparency, rigor, and replicability.

The initial phase involved a comprehensive and systematic search for relevant literature. To achieve broad coverage of both global and regional scholarship, we conducted searches across a curated selection of prominent international databases: Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, and ERIC. To specifically address the Vietnamese context, a critical objective of this review, the Vietnam National University - Library and Information Center (VNU-LIC) database was also included, alongside Google Scholar for capturing grey literature. The search strategy utilized a Boolean combination of keywords in both English ("child well-being" OR "early childhood well-being" AND "well-being education" OR "positive education" OR "social-emotional learning" OR "preschool mental health") and their Vietnamese equivalents ("cảm nhận hạnh phúc," "hạnh phúc trẻ mầm non," "giáo dục hạnh phúc," "sức khỏe tinh thần trẻ em"). This bilingual approach was essential for identifying locally-conducted research and policy documents that are often absent from international databases.

The inclusion criteria were precisely defined prior to the screening process. We included peer-reviewed articles, academic books, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and substantive

reports from reputable organizations (e.g., OECD, WHO, VVOB) published within the last 15 years (2009–2024) to ensure the findings reflect the contemporary state of this rapidly evolving field. The focus was strictly on publications concerning children aged 0–6 years.

The initial search yielded 850 records. These were subjected to a two-stage screening process. First, titles and abstracts were screened for relevance, excluding studies focused on older age groups or those without a clear educational or developmental component. This resulted in 150 documents for full-text assessment. In the second stage, these full-text articles were rigorously evaluated against the inclusion criteria, leading to the exclusion of documents that did not directly address the conceptualization, influencing factors, or application of well-being in ECE. The final corpus for synthesis comprised 86 publications. Data from these sources were extracted and charted, followed by a thematic analysis to identify, categorize, and synthesize key findings related to the review's primary objectives. The entire selection process is visually detailed in the PRISMA flowchart (Figure 1)

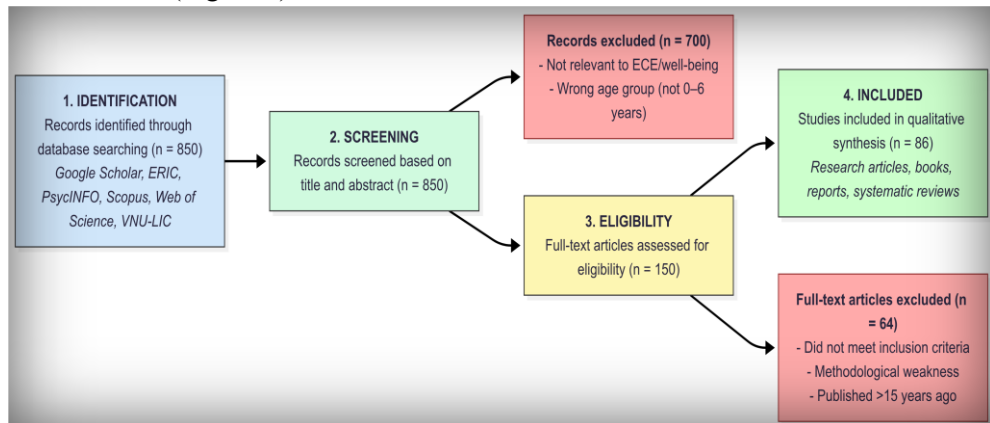


Figure 1. Study Selection Flowchart (PRISMA-style)

2.2. Discussion of Findings

2.2.1. Conceptualizing Well-being in Early Childhood: A Multidimensional Framework

The construct of well-being in early childhood is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that extends significantly beyond simplistic notions of transient happiness or the mere absence of negative states [5, 20, 21]. Contemporary scholarship defines it as an optimal state of functioning across interdependent physical, psychological, and social domains, which collectively enables a child to engage with the world positively, build foundational competencies, and realize their full developmental potential [6, 22]. This conceptualization is not of a static trait but of a developmental process, shaped continuously by the child's interactions within their ecological systems.

The theoretical architecture of well-being is primarily built upon two complementary philosophical traditions. The hedonic perspective, rooted in the work of researchers like Diener (1984), emphasizes subjective well-being, defined by the presence of positive affect, the absence of negative affect, and an overall sense of life satisfaction [23, 24]. In the context of early childhood, this translates into observable indicators such as joy, curiosity, enthusiasm, and active engagement in learning and play [25]. In contrast, the eudaimonic perspective, advanced by scholars including Ryff (1989) and Deci & Ryan (2008), pertains to psychological flourishing and the actualization of one's potential. It encompasses core concepts such as autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relationships, personal growth, and purpose in life [26, 27]. For a young child, eudaimonia is expressed through developing self-confidence, the capacity to form and sustain friendships, a burgeoning sense of agency, and the resilience to navigate minor developmental challenges [28].

A holistic understanding necessitates an integration of both hedonic and eudaimonic viewpoints. Synthesizing these perspectives, the literature converges on a multidimensional model of early childhood well-being comprising several interdependent domains [5, 12, 29]:

- *Emotional Well-being*: The capacity to recognize, understand, express, and regulate a full range of emotions, coupled with a preponderance of positive emotional experiences. This domain is foundational for developing emotional literacy and empathy [30, 31].

- *Social Well-being*: The ability to initiate and maintain positive, reciprocal relationships with peers and adults. This involves critical skills such as cooperation, sharing, conflict resolution, and prosocial behavior [32, 33].

- *Physical Well-being*: Encompassing not only robust physical health and adequate nutrition but also physical safety, sensorimotor integration, and sufficient opportunities for both vigorous activity and restorative rest, which is vital for neurological development [34, 35].

- *Cognitive Well-being*: Characterized by curiosity, engagement, and the development of key executive functions such as sustained attention, working memory, and cognitive flexibility. It reflects a child's sense of competence and their disposition as a ready and eager learner [9, 36].

- *Existential Well-being*: A developing sense of belonging, purpose, and connection to one's family, classroom, and broader community. This domain establishes a child's sense of identity and security within their social world [37, 38].

The imperative to intentionally promote well-being during this foundational stage is profound. High levels of well-being function as a critical protective factor, initiating positive developmental cascades. Children who flourish demonstrate superior long-term physical and mental health outcomes [8, 39], exhibit deeper engagement in learning processes [9, 40], and develop robust social-emotional competencies. These competencies are the core of what Masten (2001) terms the "ordinary magic" of resilience, enabling children to form secure attachments and effectively cope with future stress and adversity [7, 41, 42]. Therefore, investing in early childhood well-being is not merely a social good but a strategic imperative for building resilient human capital and fostering sustainable societal development [2, 43].

2.2.2. Research Evidence on Early Childhood Well-being Education

Empirical research on early childhood well-being education has burgeoned, converging on three principal areas: the factors that influence well-being, the efficacy of intervention programs, and the theoretical frameworks that guide practice.

2.2.2.1. Determinants of Child Well-being: An Ecological Perspective

The well-being of a young child is not an isolated attribute but rather an emergent property shaped by a dynamic interplay of factors across multiple nested contexts. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) provides a robust framework for conceptualizing these determinants, illustrating how development unfolds through reciprocal interactions within and between various environmental levels [44].

At the core is the microsystem, encompassing the child's immediate environment. Here, individual-level factors, including biological predispositions, temperament (e.g., reactivity, adaptability), and nascent self-regulation skills, serve as the initial building blocks for emotional resilience and social engagement [45, 46]. Within this proximal context, the family environment is paramount. Grounded in Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1988), the quality of the primary caregiver-child relationship functions as a cornerstone for emotional security. A secure attachment provides a "safe haven" in times of distress and a "secure base" from which to explore the world, shaping the child's internal working models of self and others [47]. Beyond attachment, authoritative parenting styles, stimulating home learning environments, and favorable socioeconomic conditions are consistently correlated with higher child well-being [48–50].

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) setting constitutes another critical microsystem. The quality of educator-child interactions—characterized by emotional warmth, responsiveness, and

instructional support—is a powerful predictor of well-being. Research by Hamre and Pianta (2001) demonstrates that these relationships can serve a crucial protective function, mitigating risks for children facing adversity elsewhere [51–55]. The quality of the mesosystem, or the linkages between microsystems (e.g., the strength of the school-family partnership), further amplifies these effects. Finally, broader macrosystem factors, including cultural norms regarding emotional expression, social policies, and community-level resources, create the overarching context that either supports or constrains the functioning of the more immediate systems, thereby profoundly shaping developmental trajectories [5, 44].

2.2.2.2. Efficacy of Evidence-Based Intervention Programs

A substantial body of empirical research has validated the efficacy of various intervention modalities designed to intentionally cultivate well-being in early childhood. These programs, while diverse in their approach, share a common goal of building children's internal psychological resources and competencies.

Foremost among these are Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs. Curricula such as PATHS and Second Step provide explicit, scaffolded instruction in core competencies, including emotional literacy, self-regulation, empathy, and interpersonal problem-solving. Landmark meta-analyses by Durlak et al. (2011) and follow-up studies by Taylor et al. (2017) provide conclusive evidence that high-quality, universal SEL interventions yield significant improvements in social-emotional skills, attitudes, and positive social behaviors, while simultaneously reducing conduct problems and emotional distress. Crucially, these benefits are often linked to enhanced academic performance and demonstrate long-term positive effects, underscoring their value as a foundational educational investment [7, 56–58].

A second modality involves mindfulness and contemplative practices. Interventions incorporating age-appropriate mindfulness and yoga are designed to enhance interoceptive awareness and attentional control, core components of executive function. By training children to focus on the present moment with non-judgmental awareness, these practices have demonstrated efficacy in improving emotional regulation, reducing symptoms of anxiety and stress, and fostering cognitive flexibility [60–62].

Third, Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) represent a paradigm shift from a deficit-focused to a strengths-based approach. These programs, often adapted from Seligman's (2011) PERMA framework, focus on actively cultivating character strengths, gratitude, optimism, and a sense of meaning. Research indicates that these interventions effectively boost subjective well-being and build psychological resources that promote resilience [1, 11, 63].

Finally, play-based pedagogy is recognized not merely as an activity but as a fundamental and powerful vehicle for holistic development. As endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, child-led play, particularly socio-dramatic play, provides a natural context for children to negotiate social roles, practice conflict resolution, develop symbolic thinking, and co-regulate emotions, thereby fostering creativity, social competence, and overall well-being [65, 66].

2.2.2.3. Guiding Theoretical Frameworks

The design and implementation of effective well-being education are not atheoretical but are deeply rooted in several influential developmental and psychological theories that, when integrated, provide a comprehensive scientific foundation. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1988) provides the foundational rationale, emphasizing the primacy of secure, responsive adult-child relationships as the essential context for developing emotional security and a confident exploratory stance toward the world [47, 67]. Complementing this focus on proximal relationships, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) offers a broader lens, underscoring the necessity of multi-systemic approaches that align efforts across the interconnected systems of family, school, and community to create a cohesive ecosystem of support for the child [44, 68].

The mechanisms through which well-being is learned are illuminated by social learning paradigms. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, particularly its application in programs like "Tools of the Mind," highlights how higher-order cognitive and self-regulatory skills are co-constructed through social interaction and guided play. It posits that educators and peers act as crucial agents in scaffolding a child's development from co-regulation to self-regulation [64, 70]. Similarly, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986) emphasizes the profound impact of observational learning and modeling, positioning adults as critical role models whose own emotional regulation and prosocial behaviors are internalized by children [69].

Finally, Positive Psychology (Seligman, 2011) provides a contemporary, strengths-based framework that defines the ultimate goals of these efforts. Moving beyond a deficit-reduction model, it provides the conceptual tools, such as the PERMA model, to actively cultivate human flourishing by focusing on positive emotions, engagement, meaning, and character strengths [1, 71]. Collectively, these theories offer a robust blueprint for designing interventions that are developmentally appropriate, contextually sensitive, and holistic in their aim to foster thriving in early childhood.

2.2.3. Practical Applications in Early Childhood Education

The translation of theory and evidence into practice requires a multi-pronged, integrated approach. To visualize this, Figure 2 presents a holistic, integrated model for applying well-being education in ECE settings, illustrating the synergistic relationships between its core components.

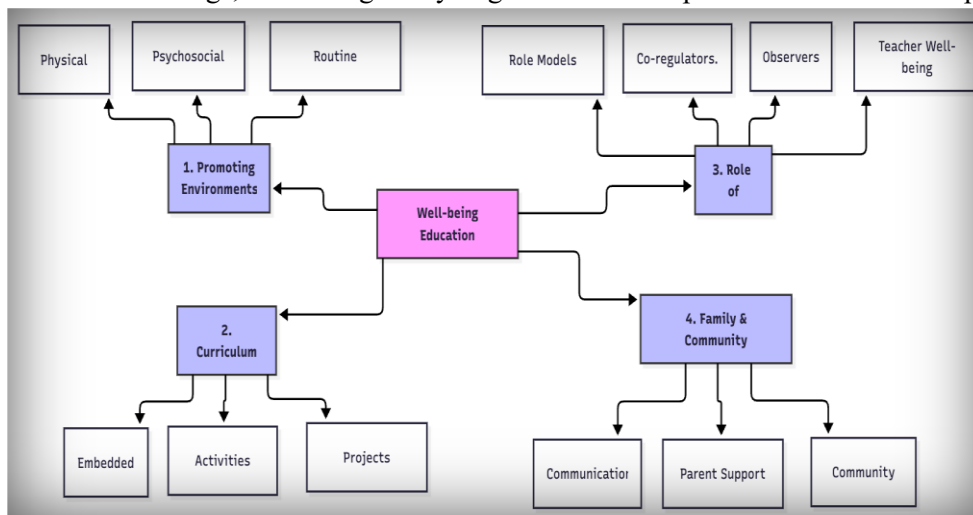


Figure 2. A Holistic Model for Applying Well-being Education in ECE

2.2.3.1. The Well-being Promoting Environment

The learning environment, often conceptualized as the "third teacher," is not a passive backdrop but an active and influential agent in co-constructing children's well-being. Its design requires the intentional orchestration of its physical, psychosocial, and temporal dimensions to create a holistic ecosystem of support.

The physical environment must be engineered to be both physically and emotionally safe, providing a setting that is aesthetically pleasing and rich with open-ended, developmentally appropriate materials that invite inquiry, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving. A critical design principle is the balance between spaces for vigorous gross motor activity and cozy, quiet nooks for solitary reflection and rest. This allows children to learn to self-regulate their arousal levels by choosing experiences that match their internal states. Furthermore, the integration of natural elements and outdoor learning spaces is consistently linked to reduced stress and enhanced engagement [51, 72, 73].

Equally vital is the psychosocial environment, which is cultivated through consistent, warm, and respectful interactions. This climate fosters a profound sense of belonging and psychological safety, where every child feels seen, valued, and included. It is characterized by a shift away from punitive discipline towards proactive, positive behavioral guidance and empathetic conflict resolution, which treats social challenges as learning opportunities [52, 54, 74, 75].

Finally, the temporal environment, structured through predictable yet flexible daily routines, provides an essential scaffold for emotional security. Predictability reduces anxiety and cognitive load, freeing children's mental resources for higher-level learning and social interaction, while flexibility within these routines honors their burgeoning need for autonomy and agency [5, 76].

2.2.3.2. Curriculum Integration: From Implicit to Explicit Practices

For well-being education to be effective, it must be conceptualized not as an isolated, add-on subject but as a pervasive philosophy that is woven into the very fabric of the curriculum. This requires a multi-tiered approach that moves seamlessly from implicit, embedded practices to explicit, targeted instruction.

At the most fundamental level are embedded practices, where the "hidden curriculum" of daily routines and interactions is intentionally leveraged for learning. Moments such as morning greetings, shared mealtimes, and classroom transitions are transformed into high-impact opportunities to model, practice, and reinforce key dispositions like empathy, gratitude, emotional literacy, and prosocial behavior. This approach ensures that social-emotional learning is continuous and contextualized within the authentic flow of classroom life [32, 77].

Complementing this implicit layer are purposeful activities that provide explicit instruction on specific well-being competencies. This includes the use of bibliotherapy (storytelling) to explore complex social scenarios, expressive arts to provide non-verbal channels for emotional expression, and socio-dramatic play (role-playing) where children can safely rehearse conflict resolution and perspective-taking skills. Such activities provide a dedicated space for children to build a vocabulary for their emotions and practice strategies for regulation [56, 64, 78].

Finally, project-based learning offers a powerful platform for applying and consolidating these skills in a meaningful context. By engaging in long-term, collaborative investigations—whether caring for a classroom garden or organizing a community service initiative—children cultivate a profound sense of agency, competence, and purpose. These authentic experiences allow them to live out the core components of eudaimonic well-being, such as positive relationships, engagement, and accomplishment, thereby internalizing the value of contributing to a larger whole [79].

2.2.3.3. The Pivotal Role of the Educator as a Lynchpin for Well-being

Within the ECE ecosystem, the educator serves as the lynchpin, the central agent through whom well-being philosophy is translated into practice. This role is profoundly multifaceted. Educators act as emotional guides and models, demonstrating prosocial behaviors and regulated emotional responses that children internalize through social learning [54, 55]. They function as crucial co-regulators, providing the external scaffolding necessary to help children navigate moments of distress, thereby building their capacity for eventual self-regulation [80]. Furthermore, they are sensitive observers, tasked with the formative assessment of well-being to identify children who may require more targeted support [81].

Critically, this role cannot be effectively performed if the educator's own well-being is compromised. A robust body of research, notably by Jennings and Greenberg (2009), establishes a direct and predictive link between educator well-being and the quality of the classroom's emotional climate and subsequent child outcomes. Therefore, supporting educators' mental health through professional development, reflective supervision, and systemic institutional policies is not merely beneficial—it is a non-negotiable prerequisite for the successful implementation of any well-being initiative [82, 83].

2.2.3.4. Fostering an Ecosystem of Support through School-Family-Community Partnerships

The impact of well-being education is significantly amplified when it extends beyond the classroom walls to create a cohesive and aligned ecosystem of support. This necessitates the cultivation of authentic school-family partnerships, moving beyond unidirectional communication to a model built on mutual respect, bidirectional dialogue, and shared goals for child development [5, 84]. In this synergistic relationship, educational settings not only welcome family involvement but actively empower parents by providing accessible resources, workshops, and strategies to reinforce well-being practices within the home environment, thereby ensuring developmental continuity [48, 85].

Furthermore, this partnership must extend outward to leverage community resources. Following Bronfenbrenner's ecological model, schools should function as hubs that connect families to a broader network of care. This involves establishing formal and informal linkages with community assets such as primary health services, mental health professionals, libraries, and cultural institutions. By doing so, schools help to weave a comprehensive safety net that envelops the child and family, ensuring that well-being is a shared responsibility and a consistent message across all facets of a child's life [44, 75].

2.2.4. Application in the Vietnamese Context: Challenges and Future Directions

While Vietnam has made policy commitments to holistic ECE, the on-the-ground implementation of well-being education confronts significant, context-specific barriers.

2.2.4.1. Prevailing Challenges in the Vietnamese Context

Despite growing policy recognition, the effective integration of well-being education into the Vietnamese ECE landscape is impeded by a confluence of conceptual, methodological, and systemic challenges. At a foundational level, a persistent pedagogical orientation towards academic readiness often relegates well-being to a secondary or ancillary status within the curriculum, hindering its prioritization in practice. This orientation may be deeply rooted in Confucian-heritage cultural values that emphasize academic achievement, as well as systemic pressures from a highly competitive educational system.

This conceptual challenge is compounded by significant deficits in human resource capacity. Many educators lack adequate pre-service and in-service training in core competencies such as social-emotional pedagogy, the early identification of mental health concerns, and, critically, strategies for managing their own professional well-being [82]. Furthermore, there is a pronounced scarcity of evidence-based, culturally validated resources. The field is constrained by the lack of curricula and teaching materials developed specifically for the Vietnamese context [18]. This methodological gap is particularly acute in the domain of assessment. The inherent complexity of measuring well-being in young children is exacerbated by the absence of reliable and psychometrically sound instruments adapted to Vietnamese cultural norms, posing a risk of inaccurate evaluation [12, 13, 86].

Finally, these issues are situated within broader systemic constraints, including high student-teacher ratios and curriculum overload, which limit educators' capacity for implementation. Insufficient school-family collaboration, often remaining at a superficial level, further fragments the ecosystem of support required for holistic child development.

2.2.4.2. Recommendations and Future Prospects for Advancing Well-being Education

To translate the potential of well-being education into tangible outcomes within Vietnam, a concerted, multi-pronged strategy targeting research, policy, and practice is imperative.

First, strengthening the indigenous research base is a foundational prerequisite. This necessitates a shift towards more robust methodologies, including longitudinal studies to map the unique developmental trajectories of Vietnamese children's well-being and rigorous intervention research to test and refine culturally-adapted pedagogical models, building upon preliminary work

[16, 17]. A critical priority within this agenda is the psychometric development and validation of culturally sensitive assessment instruments to ensure accurate and meaningful evaluation [18, 86].

Second, systemic policy and curriculum reform is essential to move well-being from the periphery to the core of ECE. National education policy must explicitly embed well-being as a key competency within the official curriculum framework, ensuring coherent alignment between educational standards, pedagogical guidelines, and quality assurance mechanisms [15].

Third, this policy shift must be supported by a significant investment in educator capacity. Both pre-service and in-service teacher professional development programs require comprehensive reform to include mandatory, in-depth modules on developmental psychology, social-emotional learning, positive psychology, and, critically, strategies for promoting educator self-care.

Finally, these efforts must be underpinned by the development and dissemination of high-quality, evidence-based resources in Vietnamese and the fostering of a cohesive ecosystem of support, scaling up successful collaborative models [18] and implementing policies that incentivize deep, authentic partnerships between schools, families, and community health and social service organizations.

2.3. Limitations of the Study

It is important to acknowledge the inherent limitations of this review. First, like all systematic reviews, this study is susceptible to publication bias, wherein studies reporting statistically significant or positive findings are more likely to be published, potentially overestimating the efficacy of certain interventions. Second, while the search strategy was comprehensive across major databases, it may not have captured all relevant grey literature, such as unpublished local reports or institutional documents, particularly within the Vietnamese context. Finally, the synthesis and thematic analysis, by their nature, involve a degree of scholarly interpretation. While rigorously conducted, the framing of themes and connections reflects the authors' analytical perspective. Acknowledging these limitations provides a more nuanced context for interpreting the findings.

3. Conclusion

This systematic review affirms that well-being is a complex, multidimensional construct that serves as the essential bedrock for holistic development in early childhood. Our synthesis of the international evidence is unequivocal: a child's capacity to flourish is not predetermined but emerges from the dynamic interplay of factors across their ecological systems. Well-being can be effectively nurtured through evidence-based interventions, such as Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and play-based pedagogies, which are themselves grounded in robust theoretical frameworks including Attachment Theory, Sociocultural Theory, and Positive Psychology. The practical application of this knowledge, as we have argued, hinges on a systemic, multi-pronged approach that intentionally orchestrates the learning environment, integrates well-being across the curriculum, empowers educators as central agents, and forges strong school-family-community partnerships.

A central contribution of this review is the application of this global evidence base to the specific context of Vietnam. Our analysis reveals that while policy momentum is growing, the effective implementation of well-being education is impeded by significant challenges related to pedagogical priorities, educator capacity, and the scarcity of culturally-attuned resources and assessment tools. To address these gaps, we have proposed a strategic roadmap centered on investing in indigenous research, enacting systemic policy reform, and building human capital through comprehensive professional development.

Ultimately, this review provides a clear, evidence-based mandate: well-being education should not be considered an ancillary program or a pedagogical trend, but rather a core strategic imperative for cultivating the human capital of the next generation. By intentionally nurturing well-being from the earliest years, we make a profound investment in building a future society of resilient, compassionate, and productive citizens capable of navigating the complexities of the 21st century.

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