


Chapter 3


Exploring University Students' Well-Being Through the PERMA Framework in Language Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the application of Seligman's PERMA framework in university language education to support learner well-being. Grounded in positive psychology, it explores the emotional, cognitive, and psychological outcomes of a classroom-based intervention. Qualitative findings from an English language class revealed four key themes (mindfulness, autonomous self-regulation, well-being, and self-confidence), aligned with the PERMA model. The results underscore the value of fostering a supportive, inclusive environment where students build resilience, confidence, and a sense of belonging. When well-being is integrated into pedagogy, learners are more motivated and better equipped to overcome challenges throughout the language learning process.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing and well-substantiated concern about the mental health crisis affecting university and secondary school students. This issue has intensified in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, which not only led to a notable increase in the prevalence of mental health challenges but also prompted a surge in the demand for campus mental health services (Oswalt et al., 2020). Across multiple disciplines, the pandemic catalyzed an unprecedented surge in research on well-being, as it exposed and amplified vulnerabilities in individuals' psychological and emotional health (Wong et al., 2023). Within the education sector, the impact has been particularly profound, underscoring the urgent need for holistic and preventive approaches that promote student well-being as a core component of educational practice.

One such approach has emerged from the field of positive psychology, which has increasingly influenced pedagogical practices in recent decades. Grounded in the scientific study of human development, positive psychology shifts attention from pathology to strengths, emphasizing well-being, resilience, and optimal functioning (Seligman, 2002). Its integration into language education represents a significant shift from viewing language learning purely as a cognitive or academic task, toward recognizing its potential to nurture emotional, social, and psychological well-being. In particular, research has highlighted the role of positive emotions, social connectedness, and a supportive classroom climate in enhancing students' engagement, motivation, and overall mental health.

From a positive psychology perspective, well-being is not simply the absence of distress or dysfunction, but the active presence of psychological resources such as happiness, intrinsic motivation, meaningful relationships, and a sense of purpose (Martela & Ryan, 2023). The World Health Organization (2005) further reinforces this positive orientation by defining mental health as “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (p. 2). This holistic definition reflects three essential components: (1) subjective well-being, or the experience of feeling well; (2) effective individual functioning; and (3) meaningful contribution to society. Embedded within this framework are the dual philosophical traditions of hedonia (pleasure, happiness, and emotional satisfaction) and eudaimonia (meaning, self-realization, and personal growth), which together provide a robust theoretical foundation for understanding student well-being in educational contexts (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In higher education, student well-being is a multidimensional construct that encompasses psychological, emotional, intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual domains (Adams et al., 2000). While some models adopt a unidimensional approach focused

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