

# Developing a Child-Centered Instrument to Measure School Well-Being in Early Childhood: A Mixed-Methods Approach

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## Poster

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## Abstract

The measurement of school well-being in early childhood presents unique methodological challenges, given the scarcity of self-reported instruments tailored for young children. The present study addresses this gap by developing a new instrument inspired by the Maryland Safe and Supportive Schools Climate Survey (Bradshaw et al., 2014), specifically designed for children aged three to twelve. The questionnaire consists of 22 items crafted in a child-friendly format, integrating visual cues and simplified language suitable for early developmental stages.

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to enhance the robustness of the instrument. An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) revealed a five-factor structure: enjoyment of school, relational climate, sense of belonging, perception of aggression, and outdoor school space. The “sense of belonging” emerged as a central factor, showing strong correlations with other dimensions, emphasizing the critical role of teacher-student relationships.

Complementing the quantitative analysis, qualitative data were collected through open-ended questions and thematic mapping of children’s narratives. An inductive approach guided the qualitative analysis, allowing themes to emerge organically from the data. This facilitated a deeper understanding of children’s perceptions of school well-being and provided a richer context to the quantitative findings.

Furthermore, the process of crafting items suitable for young children is discussed, focusing on the cognitive and linguistic considerations essential for ensuring validity and reliability in early childhood assessments. The study underscores the importance of methodological innovation in educational research and highlights the value of integrating qualitative insights to enhance the psychometric properties of child-focused instruments.

## Keywords

School well-being, mixed-methods, child-friendly interview

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