

Tiegan Dickeson
2107308
ECEY5009/C

Early childhood is a crucial time that sets the foundation for lifetime learning, health and general wellbeing and experiences throughout the first five years of life have an important influence on children's physical, emotional, social and their cognitive development, according to Shonkoff and Phillips (2000). Therefore, well-being is a comprehensive condition that includes all aspects of a child's development rather than only the absence of an illness. Children are more inclined to flourish in later life when their well-being is understood and supported in their early years.



Emotional Well-Being

Emotional well-being is a child's capacity to express and control emotions in appropriate ways. A secure connection with carers is critical in early life because it promotes resilience and emotional stability (Bowlby 1988). When children feel protected and understood, they are better equipped to handle stress and develop empathy. Children benefit from supportive surroundings that affirm their feelings and teach them healthy coping methods. Without such assistance, children may suffer from anxiety, low self-esteem, or difficulty in building connections later throughout their lives (Denham, Bassett, & Wyatt, 2012).

Cognitive Well-Being

Cognitive well-being refers to the development of thinking, learning and their communication skills. During the early years, children's brains are highly receptive to stimulation. Engaging in rich learning experiences such as storytelling, problem-solving activities and imaginative play. Vygotsky (1978) states that this supports cognitive growth to which strong cognitive foundations improve school readiness and academic achievement later in life. Furthermore, environments that promote curiosity and language development contribute significantly to lifelong learning potential (Heckman, 2006).

What is Well-Being?

Well-being refers to a holistic state of health that includes emotional, physical, mental and social aspects (OECD, 2021). For children, well-being is deeply interconnected with the environments in which they grow, such as their families, communities and early education settings. Positive well-being enables children to explore, learn and build the skills needed to navigate the challenges of life.

Physical Well-Being

Physical well-being is healthy growth, nutrition and physical activity. A good nights sleep, a balanced diet, and opportunities for active play are essential for children's physical development. The World Health Organisation (2020) emphasises that early childhood nutrition significantly impacts brain development and long-term health outcomes. Additionally, physical play not only strengthens muscles and coordination but also contributes to mental health, as active children often experience reduced stress and improved mood. Supporting physical well-being in the early years also promotes both immediate vitality and long-term health resilience.

Foundation for Lifelong Development

The early years is a time of fast brain development, indicating that nearly 90% of brain growth happens before the age of five. This suggests that positive experiences like nurturing care, play and some stimulation help to create brain connections that are necessary for future academic achievement, behaviour and health. Although Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) would suggest that negative experiences such as neglect or persistent stress, can alter the child's brain structure and impede long-term development. As a result, investing in children's well-being at this stage sets down the foundation for long-term development.

Physical Health

Early childhood has been especially critical for developing good behaviours that impact long-term physical health. Children will need an appropriate diet, sleep, and physical exercise which is essential during this time because they help promote growth and cognitive development. According to the World Health Organisation (2019), supporting good meals and regular physical activity in childhood decreases the risk of obesity and chronic illnesses later in life. Furthermore, physical activity promotes motor skill development, improves mood, and supports the immune system. Therefore physical health and well-being is closely linked to overall child development.

Social Skills Development

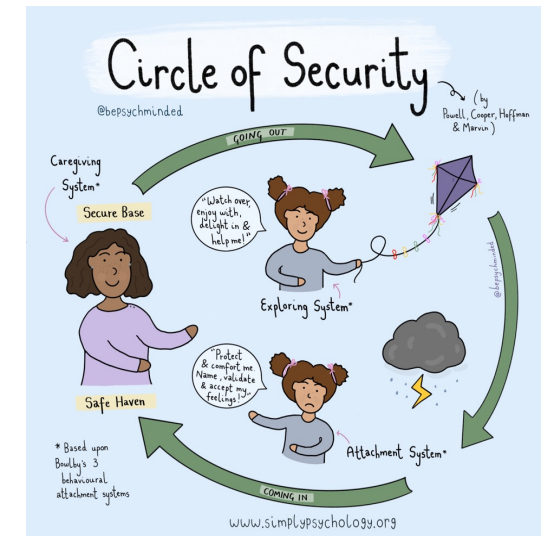
Early childhood well-being has a direct influence children's social development and communication skills. Through play and interaction with peers and adults, children acquire empathy, collaboration, sharing and conflict resolution skills. N family hub (2025) suggests that the experiences children have today will influence how they interact with others as they grow older. The choices, such as how to interact with them, the status of the home, or the nursery that children will get sent them to, will have a significant impact on their childhood and even the rest of their lives.

Emotional Resilience

Emotional well-being in early childhood helps children build resilience, enabling children to cope with stress and adversity more effectively. Strong emotional regulation is closely tied to early attachment relationships, where secure bonds with carers and parents with a sense of safety and trust (Bowlby, 1969). Children who experience sensitive and responsive caregiving are more likely to develop confidence, empathy and adaptive coping skills, this is what Bowlby's theory implies. Furthermore, these abilities not only support mental health but also prepare children to face challenges in school and face challenges in life (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015).

Academic Success

Children's well-being has a substantial effect on educational outcomes. According to research, children with higher social and emotional well-being perform better academically and exhibit more pleasant classroom behaviour (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger, 2011). It also states that emotional regulation, concentration and social competence all contribute to a healthy learning environment by keeping children interested and motivated to learn. Schools that focus children's overall well-being establish the environment for both immediate academic success and long-term performance.



Family Environment

The family environment is where children begin to develop which would make it one of the most significant influences on well-being. Warm, supportive and nurturing family environments begin to create children's emotional security, resilience and their social competence. Simply Psychology (April, 2025) uses Bowlby's theories to support this. Responsive parenting helps children learn to regulate emotions, develop trust and help to build strong self-esteem. Although, Bronfenbrenner (1976) would state that exposure to conflict, neglect or exposure to inconsistent caregiving can undermine children's well-being, leading to difficulties in emotional and behavioural adjustment.

Socioeconomic Status

According to Bradley and Corwyn (2002), socioeconomic status (SES) has a significant impact on the well-being of children. They would emphasise that families with a better socioeconomic status, often have more access to resources such as healthy food, healthcare, and secure housing which helps promote positive development. Furthermore, children growing up in poverty are more likely to experience stresses such as food insecurity, overcrowding and restricted access to educational opportunities, which can have a negative influence on cognitive development, emotional health and academic success as the pressures for these children and families contribute to a negative. According to the OECD (2021), policies that decrease inequality and help disadvantaged families are critical to improving early well-being.

Positive Parenting Practices

NCT (no date) shows that good parenting is one of the most significant aspects on a child's development. Positive parenting involves providing children love, encouragement and give regular support while also establishing appropriate boundaries. Honest communication between parents and children helps promote trust, emotional stability and social competence. Warm and responsive parenting practices help children develop resilience and strong emotional regulation abilities, which are essential for stress management and successful relationships. Baumrind (1991) states that Inconsistent or harsh parenting may damage children's confidence and contribute to behavioural or emotional problems. Therefore, programmes for parenting, such as the Triple P (Positive Parenting Program), have been demonstrated to improve parent-child interactions, decrease the behavioural challenges and improve the child's overall well-being (Sanders, Kirby, Tellegen, & Day, 2014). By encouraging healthy parenting techniques, families making environments in which children will thrive emotionally and socially.

Early Childhood Education

High-quality early childhood education is essential for promoting health and happiness and effective early childhood education programs take a whole-person approach that helps kids grow socially, emotionally, cognitively and also physically. (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, & Taggart, 2010) would state that research, including the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education project, has shown that children who attend high-quality early education programs do better in school, have better social skills and are better at controlling their behaviour and importantly, early childhood education settings give children a chance to play in a structured way, learn together and also to build safe relationships with their teachers. These experiences help children feel good about their abilities and get them prepared to learn for the future. Heckman (2006) also states that quality early childhood education (ECE) can help level levels of opportunity for children from poor families by giving them support, stimulation and care that they might not get at home. Therefore, putting money into early education is one of the best ways to improve the health of both individuals and society overall.

Education

Access to high-quality early childhood education (ECE) is a further significant factor in children's well-being. High-quality early childhood education programs promote social, emotional, and cognitive development with structured learning, peer interaction, and healthy adult-child connections. The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) study found that children who attended excellent early education settings perform better in literacy, numeracy and have better social behaviour (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, and Taggart, 2010). Importantly, these advantages were shown to be especially significant for children from low-income families, emphasising the significance of education for establishing equality in education..

Healthy Lifestyle Promotion

The World Health Organisation (2019) would state that children's physical health is closely connected to their overall well-being meaning that promoting healthy behaviours at a young age sets up the foundation and appropriate diet, regular physical exercise and adequate sleep are critical for brain development, growth, and emotional stability. Pellegrini and Smith (1998) would also state that nutritious meals promotes cognitive performance but, daily physical activity improves motor skills and decreases stress. This would suggest that children need parents and educators help to model and reinforce healthy lifestyle practices, such as providing chances for outdoor play, good meals and limiting sedentary screen time can encourage lifetime habits that would help protect children against obesity, chronic illness and mental health issues. Public health programs are also important in ensuring that families have access to nutritious diets and safe environments for active play.

Conclusion

Well-being is important to a child's development as it is something that supports the child's future. Well-rounded children become resilient, empathetic adults, while neglect harms health, education and social outcomes. Early well-being underpins lifelong growth, shaped by family, finances, education and community, and can be improved through emotional security, healthy lifestyles and holistic learning which will benefit individuals and society alike.

Baumrind, D. (1991). The influence of parenting style on adolescent competence and substance use. Journal of Early Adolescence

Bowlby, J. (1969). Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. attachment basic books

Bradley, R. H., & Corwyn, R. F. (2002). Socioeconomic status and child development

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design.

Denham, S. A., Bassett, H. H., & Wyatt, T. (2012). The socialization of emotional competence. In J. E. Grusec & P. D. Hastings (Eds.),

J Durlak, A Dymnicki, R Taylor, R Weissberg, and K Schellinger Child Development, (January 2011) cited Mark Allan (November, 2017) <https://www.cypnow.co.uk/content/research/the-impact-of-enhancing-students-social-and-emotional-learning-a-meta-analysis-of-school-based-universal-interventions/>

Heckman, J. J. (2006). Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children

NCT (no date) <https://www.nct.org.uk/information/life-parent/support-change/what-positive-parenting-and-how-it-done>

N family Hub (2025) <https://nfamilyclub.com/the-family-hub/parenting/social-development-in-childhood-importance-key-influences/>

OECD. (2021). Measuring what matters for child well-being and policies. OECD Report https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2021/07/measuring-what-matters-for-child-well-being-and-policies_2704ffad/e82fded1-en.pdf

Sanders, M. R., Kirby, J. N., Tellegen, C. L., & Day, J. J. (2014). The Triple P–Positive Parenting Program

Shonkoff, J. P., & Phillips, D. A. (2000). From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development. Simply Psychology (April, 2025) <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bowlby.html>

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2010). Early childhood matters: Evidence from the effective pre-school and primary education project https://api.pageplace.de/preview/DT0400.9781135189860_A25775897/preview-9781135189860_A25775897.pdf

University Of Minnesota (no date) <https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/wellbeing> (picture)