Positive Psychology in Slovak Schools: The Path to Wellbeing

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Abstract

The article focusses on implementing the principles of positive psychology in the educational environment of Slovak high schools to improve students' well-being and resilience. The key objective is to analyse the impact of targeted interventions based on positive psychology on students' mental health using the standardised tool "Pohodoměr" (Well-Being Metre). The research was carried out on a sample of 68 high school students in Slovakia. Quantitative methods were applied, using the Pohodoměr tool, which measures various dimensions of mental well-being, including psychological resilience, social interactions, and academic participation. Data were collected online between September and October 2024 and validated using internationally recognised methodologies, such as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS). The analysis revealed that students scored above average in areas such as goal orientation and family support. On the contrary, the lowest scores were observed in community involvement and problem-solving skills, indicating the need for targeted interventions aimed at developing social connections and stress management skills. The results also highlighted the critical role of teachers and school psychologists in fostering a supportive environment. The findings confirm the importance of applying positive psychology in the school setting and offer specific recommendations to improve student mental health and resilience. The introduction of programmes such as learnt optimism, the development of peer-to-peer support, and the expansion of extracurricular activities can contribute to the long-term improvement of school climate and students' psychological stability. The article provides a foundation for further research and the creation of methodologies that could be adopted by educational institutions not only in Slovakia but also internationally.

Keywords: *Positive Psychology, Student Well-being, Resilience, School Environment, Pohodoměr.*

Introduction

In recent years, mental health in schools has become one of the key topics in professional discussions in the field of education. The importance of mental well-being, or „well-being," has gained prominence, particularly in the context of the changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the lives of students, teachers, and other school staff. This situation revealed the vulnerabilities in the education system, not only in its ability to support educational goals but also in promoting the psychological health of all participants.

On the one hand, schools were forced to adapt quickly to remote learning formats. On the other hand, it became evident how essential the role schools play as places of social interaction, support, and the development of personal and community bonds. The pandemic led to intermittent isolation of students, especially those entering their first year of high school, significantly weakening classroom social ties. This state had a profound impact on social dynamics and individual student mental health, resulting in increased cases of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues.

In addition to the pandemic, other social factors, such as geopolitical conflicts, hybrid threats, and growing uncertainty and stress, have contributed to the decline in mental health. These events underscore the need for a systematic approach to mental health support that includes students, teachers, and other school staff.

Positive psychology, a modern psychological approach, offers specific tools and methods to support well-being in educational settings. This approach, which explores positive emotions, strengths, and factors that contribute to resilience, has proven to be highly effective in addressing the challenges schools face today.

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Martin Seligman, a leading figure in positive psychology, formulated the concept of "learnt optimism," a strategy that helps individuals overcome negative experiences and build resilience to handle difficult situations. Another key concept is "resilience," or psychological toughness, which enables individuals to effectively cope with stress and adversity. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi expanded on this field with his concept of "flow," a state of deep engagement in activities that promotes personal fulfilment and improved performance.

Well-being and positive psychology are closely interconnected and cover both individual and collective dimensions of mental health. In schools, this concept manifests itself in the personal satisfaction of students and teachers, as well as the overall school atmosphere. Positive psychology offers theoretical and practical tools to build an educational environment that fosters personal growth, collaboration, and social support. A school that prioritises wellbeing can improve academic results, improve social skills, emotional intelligence, and stress management skills.

In secondary education, there is a transition period between childhood and adulthood, which is why the promotion of well-being is particularly crucial. Students at this stage face academic demands, as well as challenges related to identity formation, social relationships, and career decision making. These factors often lead to feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and stress, which can hinder your ability to achieve academic and personal goals. Positive psychology provides strategies to enhance students' sense of control, self-confidence, and motivation.

One key tool of positive psychology that can be applied in schools is Seligman's PERMA model. This model emphasises five pillars of a happy and meaningful life. Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments. In schools, these principles can be implemented through targeted interventions, such as programmes to develop social skills, activities to strengthen relationships between students and teachers, and practical exercises to foster an optimistic approach to problem solving.

The purpose of this article is to present specific opportunities for applying the principles of positive psychology in the environment of Slovak secondary schools. Based on an analysis of the current state of mental health among students and teachers, the article proposes measures aimed at improving well-being in schools.

The article highlights the importance of an interdisciplinary approach that combines insights from psychology, pedagogy, and sociology to create a sustainable model of mental health support in schools. By addressing challenges and leveraging the tools of positive psychology, Slovakian schools can build environments that not only enhance educational results but also support the long-term mental health and resilience of students and staff.

This article focusses on identifying key factors that contribute to mental well-being in schools and implementing targeted interventions based on the theoretical foundations of positive psychology. In the context of Slovak education, this represents an exceptionally important challenge, as local schools face not only the consequences of the pandemic but also other societal pressures that increase demands on the psychological resilience of both students and teachers. Implementing positive psychology principles offers an innovative and comprehensive approach that can significantly improve the quality of education and the general environment of the school.

Literature Review

Definition and Emergence of Positive Psychology

Positive psychology emerged at the turn of the millennium as a response to the dominance of pathological psychology, which mainly concentrated on the treatment of psychological disorders. Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2000) defined their goal as helping people lead meaningful and fulfilling lives by focussing on the positive aspects of human experiences. This approach seeks to understand and support the factors that contribute to happiness, resilience, and overall mental health.

Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory highlights that positive emotions not only enhance immediate well-being, but also foster long-term resources for resilience, creativity, and social connections (Fredrickson, 2001). Theory emphasises that positive emotions, such as gratitude, optimism, and joy, broaden our thought-action repertoires, thereby promoting adaptability and effective stress management.

Martin Seligman, often referred to as the "father of positive psychology," developed the PERMA model, which outlines five key elements contributing to mental well-being. Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments (Seligman, 2014). This model provides a structured framework for improving individual and collective well-being, especially in educational settings. According to Waters et al. (2021a) and Tamášová and Zapletal (2022), implementing the PERMA model in educational programmes can enhance students and teachers, support positive relationships, and increase participation in the learning process. These studies confirm that the integration of positive psychological approaches into school settings provides long-term benefits, such as reduced stress, higher motivation for learning, and improved interpersonal relationships.

Another key figure in positive psychology is Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who introduced the concept of "flow." Flow is defined as a state of deep immersion and satisfaction during an activity, characterised by intense focus, a sense of timelessness, and fulfilment (Csikszentmihalyi, 2015). This state occurs when there is a balance between an individual's abilities and the challenges they face, making it a valuable concept in various areas, including education.

Research indicates that applying the principles of flow in educational settings fosters student engagement and motivation. For example, Waters et al. (2021b) found that educational activities designed with flow in mind lead to a deeper understanding of the subject matter and greater interest in the content. Furthermore, Fredrickson and Joiner (2023) and Porubčanová and Hanuliaková (2024) emphasize that shared experiences of flow within groups improve interpersonal relationships and strengthen team spirit.

Positive psychology also focusses on improving well-being, understood as a state in which people experience overall satisfaction and can realise their potential, manage stress, and contribute to society (WHO, 2023). This concept encompasses physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual dimensions, which collectively form the foundation for the development of mental health.

Positive psychology proves to be a crucial tool not only in education, but also in other areas such as the workplace and personal development. Huppert and So (2021) point out that the application of positive psychological approaches can improve the overall quality of life of individuals and communities. For example, building resilience and positive relationships improves interpersonal communication and reduces conflicts. Interventions aimed at promoting well-being led to better job performance and lower burnout rates, as evidenced by Kern and Adler (2022).

Positive psychology offers a wide range of tools to improve mental well-being, foster resilience, and support positive relationships. In the school environment, it becomes a key resource to enhance academic performance, social bonds, and the overall atmosphere of the school. With a growing body of research confirming its effectiveness, positive psychology has the potential to drive significant changes not only in education but also in other areas of human life.

The Concept of Wellbeing in the School Environment within the Context of Positive Psychology

The term "wellbeing" is often interchanged with other terms in academic literature, such as "quality of life", „flourishing", „happiness", „comfort", „health" and "prosperity." Martin Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology, defines wellbeing as a theoretical construct, distinguishing it from the term "happiness," which he describes as a measurable concept defined by a specific set of indicators (Seligman, 2014). Well-being encompasses a wide spectrum of dimensions, including physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and spiritual domains.

Other terms such as flourishing, health, happiness, positive development, and personal well-being represent distinct dimensions of the larger, multi-layered phenomenon of well-being (Urban, 2016). Most experts in the field of mental health (Bočková et al., 2024; Sirotová et al., 2024; Zelina, 2018) now agree on the multidimensional and complex nature of the well-being construct.

In the school context, well-being is increasingly seen as a key factor influencing not only academic performance but also the emotional and social development of students. According to Waters et al. (2021b), schools play a crucial role in creating an environment that supports the mental well-being of all stakeholders, from students to teachers. Implementing the PERMA model in school programmes helps develop positive emotions, build meaningful relationships, and foster personal achievement, all of which directly improve the school environment.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines wellbeing as *"a state of wellbeing in which an individual can realise their abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and contribute to their community"* (Polgáryová et al., 2023). This definition is practical for developing school strategies aimed at improving students' mental health.

Research from abroad indicates that schools implementing wellbeing-focused programmes report improvements in the social climate, increased empathy, and reduced conflict among students (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2023). Waters et al. (2021c) and Kern et al. (2022) demonstrate that schools can play a pivotal role in fostering well-being through targeted programmes focused on developing emotional intelligence, positive relationships, and problem solving skills. Programmes such as mindfulness, gratitude journaling, and strengths workshops have been shown to positively impact students' mental well-being and reduce the incidence of psychological problems such as anxiety or depression.

Fredrickson and Joiner (2023) emphasise that interventions aimed at developing strengths and emotional intelligence not only improve academic outcomes, but also improve the overall school atmosphere. For example, programmes focused on fostering students' strengths boost their self-confidence and motivation, while teachers can use the concept of "flow" to create engaging and stimulating educational activities. Shared flow experiences among students also improve collaboration and build positive social bonds.

Physical well-being is closely related to physical activity, nutrition, and sleep habits. According to Kern et al. (2022), the introduction of regular sports and relaxation activities into school routine reduces stress and promotes better management of academic challenges. Problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and creativity are essential components of cognitive development. Schools that encourage students to actively solve complex problems contribute to higher engagement and motivation (Waters, 2021).

Emotional regulation and self-management are critical for coping with stress and negative situations. Research by Schutte and Malouff (2023b) shows that emotional intelligence programmes effectively build students' emotional resilience. Building strong interpersonal relationships and a sense of belonging to the school community is essential to foster a positive school environment. Fredrickson and Joiner (2023) highlight the importance of team activities and joint projects in improving school climate.

The meaning of life and values are vital to personal well-being. Diener et al. (2021) suggested that incorporating activities that encourage reflection on personal goals and values can improve students' satisfaction with school.

Positive psychology offers school leaders tools to implement wellbeing principles effectively. Research shows that positive interventions such as mindfulness, strength development, and relationship building significantly improve students' mental health and academic performance (Lyubomirsky, 2020).

The Concept of Resilience

Positive psychology and the concept of resilience are closely interconnected, as both approaches aim to understand and improve the ability to effectively cope with stressful situations and challenges. Resilience is defined as the ability to adapt to adverse conditions, stress, or trauma, and positive psychology that provides tools and strategies to develop this ability (Seligman, 2011). In modern research, resilience is often perceived as a dynamic process that develops through interactions between the individual and his environment, rather than as a fixed personality characteristic (Luthar & Brown, 2020).

Positive psychology focusses on improving positive emotions, identifying strengths and building a meaningful life, which are key elements for developing resilience. Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (2001) shows how positive emotions expand an individual's thought and action repertoires, thereby creating resources for long-term resilience. For example, optimism and gratitude mitigate the effects of stress and support coping with difficult situations (Fredrickson, 2001; Lyubomirsky, 2020). This model is crucial to understanding how resilience can be intentionally supported through positive interventions.

Seligman's PERMA model (2014) provides a structured framework to develop resilience through five key elements: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments. Each of these elements contributes to building an individual's psychological resilience, although none of them defines it independently. Positive relationships provide social support and a safe environment to manage stress, while meaningful goals and personal achievements improve motivation and self-confidence (Seligman, 2014a). These aspects play a significant role, especially in school settings, where students face a range of academic and social challenges. Research by Kern et al. (2022) emphasises that schools that implement positive approaches based on the PERMA model see increased student engagement and improved interpersonal relationships. Such programmes include activities aimed at developing strengths, supporting emotional intelligence, and creating meaningful relationships between students and teachers.

One of the key aspects of resilience is the ability to cope with stress and adverse life situations. Fredrickson (2001) demonstrated that positive emotions not only alleviate the immediate effects of stress, but also promote long-term adaptability by expanding individuals' cognitive and behavioural resources. This approach proves to be extraordinarily beneficial in school environments where children and adolescents are often exposed to high academic demands and social pressures.

Research confirms that resilience is not a fixed trait, but a dynamic process that changes depending on life circumstances and interactions between the individual and his environment (Luthar & Brown, 2020; Procházka, 2020). This perspective is especially important in the context of school environments, where resilience can be nurtured through programmes focused on positive relationships and collective activities. Fredrickson and Joiner (2023) highlight the importance of positive emotions and their sharing within school communities. Collective activities aimed at developing resilience, such as team games, collaborative projects, or strengths-focused workshops, can improve interpersonal relationships and improve the cohesion of the school community.

Character strengths such as forgiveness, perseverance, and self-regulation play a significant role in building resilience (Peterson & Seligman, 2022). These strengths can be identified and developed through positive psychological interventions that focus on supporting personal growth and building internal resources.

According to research by Lomas et al. (2020a) or Procházka (2019), activities focused on developing strengths in schools can help students better understand their capabilities and use them when facing challenges. These interventions also contribute to greater self-confidence and motivation to achieve personal goals.

Positive psychology provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and supporting resilience. This concept emphasises the importance of positive emotions, character strengths, and meaningful relationships to cope with stress and adverse situations. In the school environment, resilience becomes a key factor in promoting mental health for both students and educators, with positive psychology-based programmes that demonstrate significant benefits in terms of improved school climate, reduced stress, and support for personal growth.

Literature Gap

Positive psychology represents a discipline focused on identifying and improving positive aspects of human life, with wellbeing and resilience as its key concepts. Various sources emphasise the importance of applying these concepts in educational settings but simultaneously highlight a gap in their implementation in Slovakia, particularly in the context of secondary education.

Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory (2001) demonstrates that positive emotions enhance wellbeing and resilience by expanding cognitive and behavioural resources. Waters et al. (2021a) underscore the practical application of this theory in educational environments, where positive interventions, such as gratitude journals or mindfulness exercises, have been shown to increase engagement among students and teachers.

Seligman's PERMA model serves as a foundational framework to promote well-being. According to Kern and Adler (2022), its implementation improves the social environment and interpersonal relationships in schools, as corroborated by Schutte and Malouff (2023b). These authors highlight the importance of emotional intelligence as a tool for strengthening resilience.

Research conducted in Slovakia, such as the work of Polgáryová et al. (2023), points to limited applications of positive psychology concepts, particularly in secondary education. Programmes focused on well-being often adopt generic educational strategies without addressing the specific needs of secondary school students, who face a critical transition between childhood and adulthood (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2023).

The Luthar and Brown (2020) research emphasises that resilience is a dynamic process influenced by environmental factors. This perspective is supported by Waters et al. (2021b), who demonstrated that collective activities, such as team games or workshops, can enhance school cohesion. However, longitudinal studies that analyse the effects of these activities on the mental health of students and teachers are lacking in Slovakia.

Huppert and So (2021) conceptualise well-being as a state encompassing physical, emotional, and social dimensions, highlighting the importance of targeted programmes to support mental health. Despite this theoretical foundation, Slovakia continues to experience a gap in the implementation of comprehensive programmes aimed at wellbeing and resilience in secondary schools.

The literature provides extensive theoretical insights into the importance of positive psychology for well-being and resilience, but its practical application, particularly in the context of Slovak secondary education, remains underexplored. The main gaps include the following:

1. Although international studies (e.g. Waters et al., 2021a, 2021b, 2021c; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2023) demonstrate the success of long-term interventions, Slovakian schools lack data from longitudinal evaluations on the effects of positive psychological programmes on well-being and resilience.

2. Most studies focus on primary schools, neglecting the needs of secondary school students, who face significant social and academic pressures (Polgáryová et al., 2023).

3. Although international research (Kern & Adler, 2022) highlights the benefits of programmes targeting teachers' well-being, Slovak studies primarily focus on students.

4. Although resilience is a critical factor in stress management, interventions aimed at strengthening it remain marginal in Slovakia.

Future research should include longitudinal studies examining the impact of positive psychology on wellbeing and resilience in secondary schools. These studies should integrate theoretical models, such as PERMA and broaden-and-build, with practical applications tailored to the specific needs of the Slovak educational environment.

The present contribution offers a foundation for future research that could support the development of a sustainable model for the promotion of mental health in secondary education, thus addressing the existing gap in the literature.

Material and Methods

The foundation for implementing positive psychology in secondary school settings to improve mental health, well-being, and academic outcomes is built on targeted interventions and longitudinal monitoring of their effects. Concepts such as learnt optimism, learnt helplessness, resilience, and the principles of positive psychology as defined by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi provide a basis for developing a methodology that schools can use to improve the mental health of both students and teachers. This approach begins with a comprehensive assessment of the current mental health status of secondary school students and teachers.

A standardised tool, the "Pohodoměr" questionnaire, was used for this analysis. The Pohodoměr represents a standardised instrument developed by the League for Mental Health of the Slovak Republic, aimed at measuring and analysing the mental well-being of students and teachers. This questionnaire was created as part of the "Coalition of Schools for Mental Health" project and is based on internationally recognised methodologies adapted to Slovak conditions (Polgáryová et al., 2023). The Pohodoměr was inspired by tools used by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families in the United Kingdom, a renowned institution in the field of research and support for children's and adolescents' mental health (Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, 2021). Its adaptation to the Slovak context included modifications of linguistic expressions, cultural specifics, and educational settings, ensuring its relevance to local conditions.

The questionnaire evaluates the following dimensions:

1. **Psychological well-being:** Examines emotions, moods, and overall mental health (Polgáryová et al., 2023).

2. **Social interactions:** Assesses the quality of relationships between students, teachers, and the school community (Waters et al., 2021b).

3. **Safety and inclusion:** Measures the sense of safety and belonging within the school environment (Kern et al., 2022).

4. **Academic engagement:** Evaluates motivation, interest in learning, and connection to educational activities (Schutte & Malouff, 2023).

The *Pohodoměr* has been used in a number of Slovak schools as part of a pilot programme since its introduction. Initially, the project served as a data collection tool to identify key areas that needed improvement (Polgáryová et al., 2023). The first implementation took place in 2021 and involved 50 primary and secondary schools, ensuring a sufficiently representative coverage of various regions in Slovakia. The results of the pilot testing demonstrated that the *Pohodoměr* effectively maps the mental well-being of both

students and teachers, efficiently identifying areas requiring intervention, such as high levels of stress associated with academic demands or interpersonal relationships. Key findings included:

- High levels of stress related to academic demands and interpersonal relationships (Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, 2021).

- Insufficient mental health support in some schools, particularly in less developed regions (Polgáryová et al., 2023).

- Positive results from interventions based on *Pohodoměr* results, such as improvements in school atmosphere or the introduction of peer-to-peer support programmes (Polgáryová et al., 2023).

The *Pohodoměr* was validated through feedback from educators and school psychologists. The Slovak Republic Mental Health League also collaborated with experts in psychology and education to create standardised methods for interpreting results (Polgáryová et al., 2023). The validation process included the following.

1. **Reliability:** Repeated measurements showed high consistency of results.

2. **Criterion validity:** The results of the *Pohodoměr* were correlated with other recognised tools for measuring mental health, such as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, 2021).

3. **Content validity:** The questionnaire was approved by a team of experts who confirmed its ability to cover key dimensions of well-being.

Although the *Pohodoměr* has brought significant benefits, certain challenges related to its implementation remain:

- **Cultural differences:** Despite being adapted to Slovak conditions, some schools reported difficulties with its full acceptance, particularly in regions where mental health is a lower priority (Polgáryová et al., 2023c).

- **Staff training:** Teachers and school psychologists require sufficient training to interpret the results and design data-driven interventions (Polgáryová et al., 2023c).

- **Lack of longitudinal studies:** Although pilot implementations have provided valuable data, long-term studies mapping the sustainability of changes resulting from intervention measures are still missing (Polgáryová et al., 2023c).

The *Pohodoměr* represents an important step towards better understanding and supporting mental well-being in the school environment. Its previous applications have demonstrated its ability to identify key areas for improvement and support the implementation of targeted measures. To fully realise its potential, further development, validation, and integration into the school system are required, not only in Slovakia but also in an international context. For this reason, the analysis of mental well-being and health using the *Pohodoměr* has been applied to another secondary school in Slovakia.

The research involved 68 full-time students, including 29 men and 39 females. The research was carried out according to a cooperation agreement between the League for Mental Health of the Slovak Republic, represented by JUDr. Andrej Vransk, Executive Director and statutory representative, and the Private Secondary Vocational School ADVENTIM – Magán Szakközépiskola ADVENTIM, Komenského 1219/1, Dunajská Streda, represented by the school principal, PhDr. Andrea Olejníková, as a member of the Coalition of Schools for Mental Health. The school also obtained written consent from the legal

guardians of students under the age of 18 years or from students who had reached the age of majority (18+ years).

Research was carried out in the school premises (Komenského 1219/1, Dunajská Streda) under the supervision of school psychologists (two professional staff members), class teachers and a teaching assistant for the Ukrainian refugee community.

The key research question (KRQ) is: **"How does the implementation of positive psychology principles through targeted interventions measured by the *Pohoděměr* affect the level of well-being and resilience among Slovak secondary school students?"**

Based on existing studies and previous pilot applications of the *Pohoděměr*, we formulate the research hypothesis (H): **"The implementation of positive psychology principles through targeted interventions will lead to a significant improvement in well-being and resilience among secondary school students, which can be verified through *Pohoděměr* measurements conducted during a longitudinal study."**

The research is carried out using a quantitative methodology, which includes the analysis of data obtained through the *Pohoděměr*. This tool, which measures multiple parameters, used the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) to assess resilience. The research was carried out online during September and October 2024, and the results were distributed to the school in November 2024. The tool measured various aspects of student mental well-being; however, for the purposes of this study, only the resilience parameter was selected. This focus stems from the need to work with students on resilience, as the sample group exhibited depressive moods, self-harming or suicidal tendencies, low self-esteem, and other negative phenomena, which the support team attributes primarily to the psychological resilience.

The impact of tools implemented by members of the Coalition of Schools for Mental Health on student academic performance and well-being will be observed over time (longitudinal study) and examined over two academic years. The sample will include first- and second-year students. This research not only contributes to understanding the impact of positive psychology on the school environment, but also helps formulate specific methodological approaches that can be applied in educational institutions in Slovakia and abroad.

Research Limitations

The research focused on the application of positive psychology principles through the *Pohoděměr* tool and its impact on the well-being and resilience of students and teachers contains several limitations that must be considered when interpreting the results and formulating conclusions.

1. **Representativeness of the sample:** The research sample consists of 68 students from a single secondary school in Slovakia, which limits the generalisability of the results to a broader population of secondary schools. Despite efforts to include various demographic groups, this sample may lack balance in terms of regional, cultural, or socioeconomic contexts. Future research should involve a larger number of schools and regions to ensure data representativeness.

2. **Short-term nature of the intervention:** While the research involves longitudinal observation over two academic years, this period may be insufficient for certain aspects, such as the development of resilience and long-term changes in well-being. The true impact of the positive psychology intervention on deeper psychological processes and individual resilience may only become apparent over a longer period of time.

3. **Dependence on the quality of implementation:** The success of applying positive psychology principles depends on the level of professional training provided to teachers and school psychologists involved in data collection and implementation of the intervention. Insufficient staff

training can lead to incorrect interpretation of *Pohodomĕr* results or ineffective implementation of intervention measures.

4. **Cultural and regional specifics:** Although the *Pohodomĕr* was adapted for Slovak conditions, certain cultural or regional factors, such as differing attitudes towards mental health or varying levels of mental well-being support within communities, may influence the results. This factor may limit the applicability in other cultural or educational contexts.

5. **Self-assessment nature of the questionnaire:** The *Pohodomĕr* is a self-assessment tool, which may result in socially desirable responses or bias caused by individual preferences and the respondents' current mental state. These limitations could reduce the accuracy of the results and their interpretation.

6. **Lack of a control group:** Research does not include a control group to compare the impact of the intervention with standard school environments without the targeted use of positive psychology principles. This absence complicates the ability to establish a clear causality between the intervention's implementation and the observed changes.

7. **Ethical considerations:** Despite the right to obtain the consent of the legal guardians of students and teachers, ethical issues related to collecting data on mental health, particularly for underage respondents, must be addressed. Potential risks include data misuse, stigmatisation, or negative impacts on students' mental health if results are handled improperly.
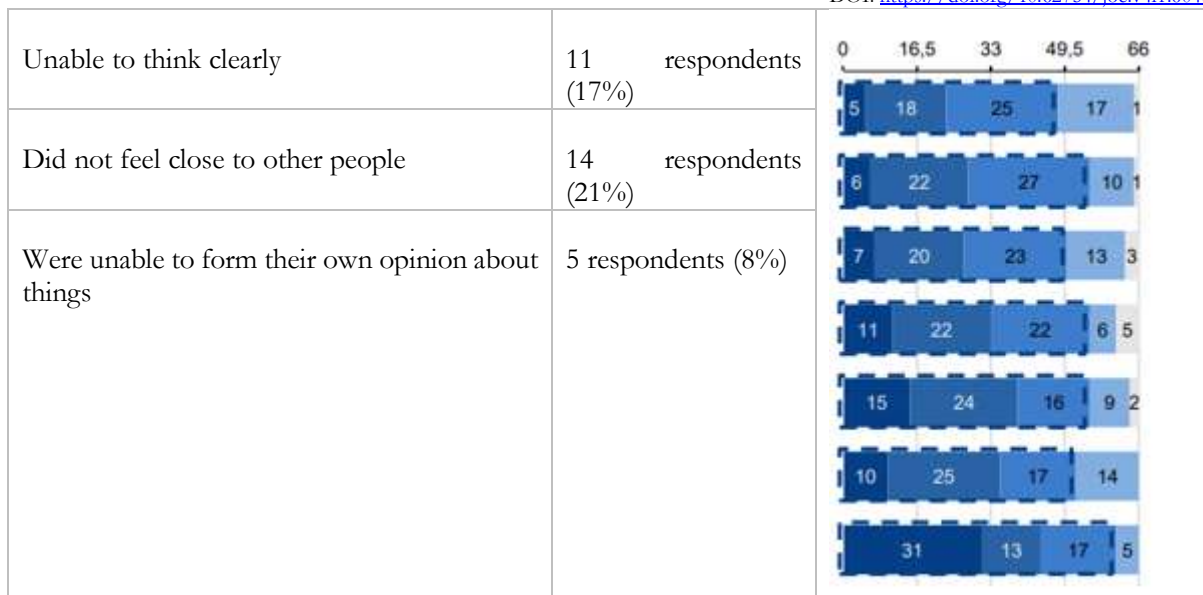
The limitations outlined emphasise the importance of a cautious interpretation of the results and the need for further research. Including a larger sample, a control group, and longer observation periods could provide more precise and robust conclusions. Additionally, attention should be paid to ensuring comprehensive staff training and developing culturally specific approaches to mental health in educational settings.

Results

Table 1 provides a detailed overview of the disturbances in mental wellbeing, evaluated in several key dimensions, including optimism for the future, a sense of usefulness, the ability to manage problems, clarity of thought, feelings of social connectedness, and the ability to form independent opinions. The results highlight significant issues, particularly **optimism about the future (27%)** and **feelings of social connection (21%)**. These dimensions are crucial not only for immediate mental wellbeing, but also for long-term psychological health and students' social functioning.

<div align="center">Table 1: Mental Well-being Scale for all students in the school (2023)</div>

Data	Answers	Scale
Did not see the future optimistically	18 respondents (27%)	
Did not feel useful	11 respondents (17%)	
Did not feel relaxed	16 respondents (24%)	
Were unable to deal with their problems	11 respondents (17%)	

Unable to think clearly	11 respondents (17%)	
Did not feel close to other people	14 respondents (21%)	
Were unable to form their own opinion about things	5 respondents (8%)	

Source: own analysis

According to Seligman (2011), **learnt optimism** is a key tool for developing psychological resilience and managing stress. Students who perceive the future pessimistically may face a higher risk of developing depressive symptoms. This is supported by research conducted by Peterson et al. (2020), who found that a pessimistic view of the future is associated with reduced academic motivation and increased anxiety. Therefore, it is crucial to implement intervention programmes focused on learnt optimism. These programmes include exercises designed to reframe negative thoughts and strengthen positive expectations.

Feelings of alienation and the absence of closeness with others can lead to social isolation, as demonstrated by Hargreaves et al. (2021). Their study revealed that students with weak social bonds are more likely to exhibit signs of anxiety, low self-esteem, and poor academic performance. Volunteer activities proposed by schools play a crucial role in this context, as they foster collective participation and improve a sense of belonging (Kern & Waters, 2020).

The dimensions "I cannot cope well with my problems" (17%) and "I cannot think clearly" (17%) suggest issues with the development of cognitive flexibility and effective stress management strategies. Research by Ciarrochi and Parker (2024) shows that cognitive behavioural exercises can significantly improve stress management skills and improve self-confidence in challenging situations. The school plans to implement these interventions, which represents a positive step toward strengthening student resilience.

Low scores related to the **sense of usefulness** (17%) and the **ability to form independent opinions** (8%) highlight the need to involve students in activities that promote autonomy and self-actualisation. Research by Deci and Ryan (2020) emphasises the importance of meeting basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, for mental well-being and academic performance. School volunteer activities could help fulfil these needs and strengthen the student's sense of self-worth.

Based on the results of the analysis, the school should focus on the following interventions:

1. This intervention will include exercises aimed at identifying and reframing negative thoughts, which should improve students' optimistic outlook on the future. Research by Fredrickson and Joiner (2023) demonstrated that these exercises can significantly improve mood and increase the capacity to manage stress.

2. Volunteer activities have the potential to increase the student's sense of usefulness and foster social bonds among them. A study by Schwartze et al. (2020) found that volunteering not only improves social skills, but also improves overall mental well-being.

3. Designed activities aimed at developing coping strategies and cognitive flexibility can improve students' ability to manage stressful situations and improve the clarity of thought. This approach is supported by research by Beck and Emory (2021).

4. The school will focus on identifying specific causes of students' lack of closeness through structured interviews and surveys. This approach aligns with the recommendations by Hargreaves et al. (2021), who emphasise the need for a detailed analysis of social relationships in schools.

The findings align with several international studies:

- Research by Peterson et al. (2020) highlights the importance of an optimistic outlook as a factor that reduces the likelihood of developing depressive symptoms.

- Kern and Waters (2020) emphasise that volunteer activities foster a sense of belonging and improve the overall atmosphere in schools.

- Studies by Schwartze et al. (2020) and Fredrickson (2001) confirm that positive interventions focused on stress management and resilience development lead to long-term improvements in mental health.

Table 2 presents areas where students can seek support, covering dimensions such as family relationships, school relationships, community relationships, community engagement, peer support, participation in family and school life, empathy, problem solving, and goals and plans. The highest scores were recorded in the areas of **family relationships** and **goals and plans**, while the lowest scores were observed in **community engagement**, **peer support**, and **problem-solving abilities**. These results indicate the specific needs of students within the school environment.

Table 2: Psychological resilience of students in the areas of relationships, peer support, empathy, problem solving, and goals and plans (2023)

Area		Frequency	Score
Family relationships	(The average of sub-questions): 11 children always/almost always, 9 children often, 2 children sometimes, 2 children rarely	often	4,0 out of 5
Relationships at school	(The average of sub-questions): 6 children always/almost always, 6 children often, 3 children sometimes, 1 child rarely	often	3,5 out of 5
Relationships within community	(The average of sub-questions): 3 children always/almost always, 2 children often, 4 children sometimes, 2 children rarely	often	3,7 out of 5
Involvement in community life	(The average of sub-questions): 8 children always/almost always, 6 children often, 3 children sometimes, 4 children rarely	rarely	2,0 out of 5
Peer support	(The average of sub-questions): 1 child always/almost always, 3 children often, 2 children sometimes, 1 child rarely, 1 child never/almost never	sometimes	3,4 out of 5
Involvement in family and school life	(The average of sub-questions): 1 child always/almost always, 5 children often, 2 children rarely, 2 children never/almost never	sometimes	3,1 out of 5

Empathy	(The average of sub-questions): 10 children always/almost always, 8 children often, 7 children sometimes, 4 children rarely, 1 child never/almost never	often	3,6 out of 5
Problem solving	(The average of sub-questions): 5 children always/almost always, 10 children often, 4 children sometimes, 3 children rarely, 1 child never/almost never	sometimes	3,4 out of 5
Peer relationships	The average of sub-questions): 25 children always/almost always, 6 children often, 10 children sometimes, 4 children rarely	often	4,0 out of 5

Source: own analysis

In the following, we provide a detailed argument and comparison with available research studies.

The high score in **family relationships** reflects the importance of a supportive family background as a fundamental source of support for students. Research by Reuter and Kuperschmidt (2021a) shows that strong family relationships contribute to emotional stability and the ability to manage stress. This finding is further supported by Marshall and Knight (2020), who emphasise that students with strong family bonds demonstrate higher academic motivation.

The high score in **goal planning** indicates that students are future-orientated and willing to work toward achieving specific outcomes. Locke and Latham (2020) confirm in their research that the ability to set goals is positively correlated with higher academic performance and overall life satisfaction.

Low scores in **community engagement** and **peer support** suggest weak social connections outside the family environment. According to Zinsser et al. (2021), community involvement plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging and overall well-being. The absence of peer support can further contribute to feelings of loneliness and isolation, as highlighted by Thompson and Belamy (2021), who stress the importance of peer support in developing social and emotional skills.

The low score on problem solving **abilities** points to a lack of skills among students to handle stressful situations and challenging tasks. Beck et al. (2021) emphasise that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can be an effective tool for developing these skills, particularly during adolescence. These results highlight the need for targeted programmes that address the strengthening of practical problem-solving strategies.

Based on the analysis, the school should focus on the following interventions.

1. Based on the findings, the school plans to expand community activities, including volunteer work, extracurricular programmes, and projects. Research by Kah et al. (2022) shows that involvement in community life promotes social cohesion and enhances the sense of belonging.

2. The school plans to implement peer mentoring and group activities aimed at building relationships among students. The study by Hammond and Farrell (2022a) confirms that peer programmes support emotional health and reduce stress levels in adolescents.

3. The introduction of workshops and practical exercises focused on stress management and problem solving is another planned step. Beck and Emory (2021) recommend the use of cognitive behavioural techniques to develop these skills, which can improve self-confidence and effectiveness in managing challenging situations.

4. As part of the planned interventions, the school will focus on providing support to students' family members, such as through psychological counselling. The study by Rodriguez et al. (2022) emphasises that strong family support is a key factor for the mental health of adolescents.

The analysis of **Table 2** highlights the disparities in areas of student support. While family relationships and goal planning represent strengths, community participation, peer support, and problem-solving skills are areas requiring intervention. Recommendations to support these areas, based on available research, can contribute to improving students' mental wellbeing and overall stabilisation.

Table 3 presents the results of a survey item focused on the sources of support that students seek in the school environment. Options included relationships within the school, an adult in the school, someone who shows interest in the participant, someone who praises the participant, someone who listens to the participant, and belief in one's success. The results were evaluated on a five-point scale and achieved an average score of **3.5 out of 5.0**, indicating a slightly above average level of perceived support. However, this result also highlights room for improvement, particularly in strengthening the school climate and creating a more stimulating and safer environment.

Table 3: Psychological resilience of students in the area of Community relationships (2023)

Area		Frequency	Score
Community relationships	3 children always / almost always, 2 children often, 4 children sometimes, 3 children rarely, 2 children never	often	3,7 out 5
Outside of school there is an adult...			
… who is really interested in me	27 children always/almost always, 11 children often, 21 children sometimes, 4 children rarely, 5 children never/almost never	often	3,8 out of 5
… who praises me if I achieve success	21 children always/almost always, 16 children often, 21 children sometimes, 7 children rarely, 3 children never/almost never	often	3,7 out of 5
… who believes that I will become successful	26 children always/almost always, 13 children often, 20 children sometimes, 5 children rarely, 4 children never/almost never	often	3,8 out of 5
… who I can trust	25children always/almost always, 13 children often, 13 children sometimes, 15 children rarely, 2 children never/almost never	often	3,6 out of 5

Source: Own analysis

In the following, we provide a detailed argument and comparison with available research studies.

The results highlight the significant value **relationships within the significance of the school** and the presence of supportive adults for students, though there is room for improvement. According to DePaoli and Atwell (2022), strong relationships between students and adults in the school environment enhance feelings of safety and contribute to greater engagement and motivation. This was corroborated by Jennings and Greenberg (2020), who emphasise that positive interactions with teachers support emotional regulation and increase student resilience.

The support provided by individuals capable of offering praise and active listening received an average rating. This suggests that while students perceive a certain level of recognition and support, their needs are not fully met. Nodding (2021) demonstrates that active listening and acknowledgement from teachers are crucial to building trust and self-confidence in students. Introducing structured opportunities for teachers to provide positive feedback and spaces for student expression could strengthen this area.

Belief in one's success emerged as another important factor, albeit at an average level. Bandura's (2020) concept of self-efficacy highlights that belief in the ability to overcome challenges significantly influences

academic performance and overall wellbeing. Strengthening students' confidence in their abilities through successes in academic and extracurricular activities can be an effective tool to improve this indicator.

Based on the analysis, the school should focus on the following interventions.

1. The school plans to introduce regular individual consultations between students and their class teachers or school psychologists. According to Jennings and Greenberg (2020), such interactions enhance trust and strengthen students' sense of security. Additionally, regular activities that focus on improving classroom dynamics, such as team building workshops, will be prioritised.

2. The school will implement structured programmes where educators provide students with regular positive feedback. Research by Weinstein and Madison (2022) confirms that students who consistently receive positive recognition for their efforts and achievements demonstrate higher levels of self-confidence and motivation.

3. The school plans to implement programmes aimed at strengthening students' belief in their own abilities. These initiatives will focus on empowering students and developing their self-efficacy in academic and social settings.

4. The school will prioritise creating a safe and stimulating environment through participatory activities, such as classroom discussions addressing student needs, and the introduction of peer-to-peer mentoring. Research by Farrington et al. (2021) highlights that the school climate plays a critical role in supporting the well-being and their overall sense of belonging.

The results of **Table 3** indicate that students perceive a certain level of support within the school environment, but there are areas that need improvement, particularly in strengthening relationships, providing feedback, and fostering belief in their own success. The proposed interventions, supported by research, have the potential to improve the school climate and contribute to a higher level of student well-being.

Table 4 provides an overview of areas where students seek support in terms of community involvement, extracurricular participation, membership in interest groups (e.g., sports, leisure, religious organisations), and participation in club activities. The results, rated on a five-point scale, achieved an average score of **2.0 out of 5.0**, indicating a low level of student participation in these areas. This outcome highlights the need for systematic support and the development of extracurricular activities to encourage students' involvement in community **life.**

Table 4: Psychological resilience of students in the Area of community life outside of school (2023)

Area		Frequency	Score
Involvement in community life	(Average of sub-questions): 3 children always/almost always, 2 children often, 4 children sometimes, 3 children rarely, 2 children never/almost never.	rarely	2,0 out of 5
Outside of school…			
… I am a member of a club, a sports team, a parish community, or another group	8 children always/almost always, 7 children often, 5 children sometimes children never/almost never.	rarely	2,0 out of 5
… I participate in extracurricular activities (music, art, sports, or have another hobby)	9 children always/almost always, 7 children often, 6 children sometimes, 2 children rarely, 44 children never	rarely	2,0 out of 5

Source: own analysis

Based on the analysis, the school should focus on the following interventions.

The **low score on community participation** indicates that students have limited opportunities to participate in activities outside of school, which can lead to feelings of isolation. Hammond et al. (2022a) highlight that participation in community life plays a crucial role in building social connections and strengthening a sense of belonging. Students who actively participate in community projects demonstrate higher levels of mental health and more developed social skills.

The **below average ratings for extracurricular involvement** and membership in interest groups point to a limited range of opportunities and low student motivation to participate in these activities. Research by Darling and Stein (2021) confirms that participation in sports and leisure activities not only improves physical fitness, but also improves mental health and collaboration skills. Similarly, Mullan et al. (2020) found that participation in interest groups fosters the development of soft skills such as communication and teamwork.

Participation in after-school clubs, traditionally considered a cornerstone of extracurricular development, also received below-average ratings. Eccles and Barber (2022) show that regular participation in extracurricular activities not only increases student self-confidence, but also improves academic performance. Additionally, it helps to build long-term social connections and career growth. The low score in this area highlights the need for a wider range of clubs tailored to the interests of students.

Based on the analysis, the school should focus on the following interventions.

1. The school should establish partnerships with local community organisations, such as cultural centres, sports clubs, or charitable organisations, to offer students opportunities to participate in community projects. According to Hammond et al. (2022b), these activities improve the sense of belonging and strengthen social competencies.

2. It is essential to expand the range of extracurricular activities to meet the diverse interests of students, such as creative workshops, technology clubs, or outdoor activities. Research by Darling and Stein (2021) confirms that a broader spectrum of activities increases the likelihood that students will find an area that motivates them to participate.

3. Introducing programmes focused on discovering students' personal potential, such as workshops on creative thinking or courses on soft skills, can boost their self-confidence and motivation. Mullan et al. (2020a) recommend activities aimed at developing creativity and innovative thinking, which can help students better adapt to the challenges of the modern world.

4. Involving students in local and regional competitions in fields such as science, art, or sport can enhance their motivation and engagement with the community. Eccles and Barber (2022) state that competitive environments improve students' ability to manage stress and develop their resilience.

The results of **Table 4** reveal that student participation in community life, extracurricular activities, and interest groups is low. This underscores the need for systematic support and development in these areas. The proposed interventions, supported by relevant research, have the potential to increase student motivation and contribute to their overall development, both within the school environment and in the broader community context.

Table 5 presents the results of a survey item that focusses on peer support, student cooperation, and trust (confidence secrets). The average score on a five-point scale was **3.4 out of 5.0**, indicating a slightly above average level for these indicators. The results suggest that while students perceive a certain degree of support and cooperation within their peer groups, there is still room for improvement, particularly in the areas of trust and peer collaboration.

Table 5: Psychological resilience of students in the area of peer support (2023)

Area		Frequency	Score
Peer support	(Average of sub-questions): 1 child always/almost always, 3 children often, 2 children sometimes, 1 child rarely, 1 child never/almost never.	sometimes	3,4 out of 5
There are students at school, who...			
… choose to be part of a team through school activities or games	16 children always/almost always, 19 children often, 16 children sometimes, 10 children rarely, 7 children never/almost never.	sometimes	3,4 out of 5
… reveal you secrets	20 children always/almost always, 10 children often, 15 children sometimes, 14 children rarely, 9 children never/almost never.	sometimes	3,3 out of 5

Resource: Own Analysis

In the following, we provide a detailed argument and comparison with available research studies.

Peer support and collaboration among students are key factors that influence the social climate in schools. Lee et al. (2022) demonstrate that students who feel supported by their peers are better equipped to handle stress and exhibit higher levels of social skills. Similarly, research by Thapa et al. (2021) emphasises that cooperative activities within classroom groups build trust and improve interpersonal relationships. The findings suggest that while peer support and collaboration are perceived positively, their levels could be improved through targeted interventions such as team activities or group projects.

Confidentiality, represented by the ability to share personal thoughts and secrets, received an average rating. This result may indicate students' hesitancy to trust their peers, a common phenomenon in groups lacking a well-developed culture of safety and mutual respect. Research by Rotenberg and Hymel (2020) confirms that trust in peer relationships is crucial for developing empathy and emotional resilience.

These findings align with several international studies on school environments. For example, Jennings et al. (2021) confirm that activities promoting student collaboration positively impact the school climate and reduce conflicts. Further research, such as that of Farrell and Hammond (2022), demonstrates that regular peer interactions through extracurricular activities improve social cohesion and strengthen trust within groups.

Based on the results of the analysis, the school should focus on the following interventions:

1. The school should implement regular team activities, such as group projects or joint workshops, that foster collaboration among students. According to Thapa et al. (2021), these activities improve interpersonal relationships and build team spirit.

2. Class teachers can organise discussions and activities aimed at building trust among students, such as self-reflective exercises or trust circles. Rotenberg and Hymel (2020) recommend structured activities that promote empathy and respect.

3. Expanding the range of extracurricular activities, such as experiential learning, excursions, or interactive workshops with experts, can support not only collaboration but also the overall cohesion of class groups. Farrell and Hammond (2022a) highlight that extracurricular activities play a crucial role in improving social dynamics within groups.

4. The school plans to intensify the activities of the student council, which will discuss ways to improve students' mental health and propose specific measures. Jennings et al. (2021) emphasise

that student participation in school decision-making processes enhances their sense of autonomy and belonging.

The results of **Table 5** highlight the need to strengthen peer support, trust among students, and collaboration within groups. The proposed interventions, including team activities, support for extracurricular participation, and participation of students in decision-making processes, have the potential to significantly improve the school's social environment and contribute to the general well-being of students.

Table 6 presents the results of a survey item that focusses on peer support in the specific scenarios outlined in the table. The average score on a five-point scale was **3.4 out of 5.0**, indicating a slightly above average level of perceived peer support. Although the results show positive tendencies, they also highlight opportunities for further improvement in social interactions and collective dynamics within the school environment.

Table 6 Psychological resilience of students in the Area of peer support (2023)

Area		Frequency	Score
Peer support	(The average of sub-questions): 1 child always/almost always, 3 children often, 1 child rarely, 1 child never/almost never	sometimes	3,4 out of 5
There are students at school, who....			
… choose you into a team by tasks and games	16 children always/almost always, 19 children often, 16 children sometimes, 10 children rarely, 7 children never/almost never	sometimes	3,4 out of 5
… miss you if you are not at school	15 children always/almost always, 9 children often, 20 children sometimes, 9 children rarely, 15 children never/almost never	sometimes	3,0 out of 5
... Help you feel better if you are not well	13 children always/almost always, 19 children often, 12 children sometimes, 13 children rarely, 11 children never/almost never	sometimes	3,1 out of 5
… choose you to be their partner (e.g. by tasks or games)	16 children always/almost always, 19 children often, 12 children sometimes, 13 children rarely, 11 children never	sometimes	3,3 out of 5
… support you in case other students handle you badly	16 children always/almost always, 16 children often, 20 children sometimes, 10 children rarely, 6 children never	often	3,4 out of 5
… tell you that you are their friend	27 children always/almost always, 16 children often, 10 children sometimes, 8 children rarely, 7 children never	often	3,7 out of 5
… invite you to join them in case you feel lonely	22 children always/almost always, 15 children often, 15 children sometimes, 8 children rarely, 8 children never	often	3,5 out of 5

Source: own analysis

In the following, we present a detailed argument and comparison with available research studies.

Peer support plays a critical role in creating a safe and respectful environment in which students feel accepted. Research by Hayes and O'Brien (2021) shows that students who perceive positive support from their peers exhibit higher levels of emotional stability and greater participation in social activities. Similarly,

Frost and Mullan (2022) confirm that students with positive relationships within their peer groups achieve better outcomes in stress management and conflict resolution.

The school has access to professional publications that focus on strengthening peer groups, fostering respect for diversity, and promoting assertive communication. These approaches align with the recommendations of Rotenberg and Hymel (2020), who emphasise that a respectful and inclusive environment not only supports group cohesion, but also enhances individual well-being. Incorporating assertive communication into teaching can improve student interactions and strengthen their ability to navigate complex social situations.

Although the school plans to incorporate these activities into lessons without disrupting educational goals, it is essential to highlight their potential benefits. Research by Kramer and Chen (2022) shows that integrating social and emotional activities into regular lessons not only fosters a positive school climate but also improves academic outcomes by increasing student motivation and engagement.

Based on the results of the analysis, the school should focus on the following interventions:

1. The school should introduce regular activities aimed at fostering mutual understanding and building respect among students. These could include team-building games, discussion circles, or empathy-focused workshops. Research by Frost and Mullan (2022) confirms that regular interactions in these formats improve peer relationships and enhance the overall sense of cohesion.

2. Incorporating elements of assertive communication into lessons, for example, through role-playing simulations or model scenarios, can enhance students' ability to resolve conflicts effectively. Rotenberg and Hymel (2020) state that these skills positively influence the social climate within the school and build trust among students.

3. The school should systematically integrate social-emotional learning into regular lessons. This includes short activities at the beginning or end of classes that promote interaction and emotional regulation. Kramer and Chen (2022) recommend that these activities be seamlessly embedded into the curriculum while also contributing to the achievement of educational goals.

4. Supporting student self-governance: The school plans to use the student council to organise discussions on improving students' mental health and peer support initiatives. Hayes and O'Brien (2021) highlight that involving students in decision-making processes enhances their sense of autonomy and responsibility for the school environment.

The results of **Table 6** indicate that peer support in specific situations is perceived positively, but there is room for improvement. Structural changes aimed at fostering social interactions, assertive communication, and mutual respect could enhance the school climate. The proposed interventions, supported by relevant research, represent a step toward strengthening the well-being and building stable, safe peer groups.

Table 7 provides an overview of students' access to support in problem solving, the availability of people to seek help, and their ability to verbally express issues verbally. The results, evaluated on a five-point scale, achieved a slightly above average score of **3.4 out of 5.0**, with the highest score (**3.8**) recorded for the item that assesses whether students know to turn to when facing problems. This is presumed to primarily include homeroom teachers and school psychologists, which will be further investigated through semi-structured surveys in the next school year.

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Table 7: Psychological resilience of students in the area of problem solving (2023)

</div>

Area		Frequency	Score

Problem solving	(The average of sub-questions): 5 children always/almost always, 10 children often, 3 children rarely, 2 children never/almost never	sometimes	3,4 out of 5
When I need help, I look for someone I can talk to	16 children always/almost always, 11 children often, 19 children sometimes, 16 children rarely, 6 children never/almost never	sometimes	3,2 out of 5
I know who to go to when I have a problem	28 children always/almost always, 13 children often, 18 children sometimes, 3 children rarely, 6 children never/almost never	often	3,8 out of 5
I try to solve my problems by talking about them	12 children always/almost always, 15 children often, 18 children sometimes, 18 children rarely, 5 children never/almost never	often	3,2 out of 5

Source: own analysis

In the 2023/2024 school year, the school stabilised its support team by comprising three professional staff members: two school psychologists and one teaching assistant for the Ukrainian refugee community. A professional is funded through the **Support for Helping Professions (POP)** project, and funding is secured for the following school years as well. The school plans to expand the team further by hiring a teaching assistant for students outside of the refugee community, reflecting a proactive approach to improving the quality of student support.

In the following, we present a detailed argument and comparison with available research studies.

The results indicate that the presence of a professional support team improves student access to help. Research by Day and Leithwood (2022) highlights that the availability of school psychologists and other specialists is crucial to improving student well-being and academic success. Similarly, Cartwright et al. (2023) show that students with access to a professional team demonstrate higher levels of emotional stability and more effective problem-solving skills.

The ability to verbally solve problems is essential for effective problem resolution. Willoughby and Dean (2021) confirm that students who learn to articulate their problems achieve higher levels of social competence and better stress management. A score of **3.4** indicates that this skill is moderately developed within the school, leaving room for improvement through targeted programmes.

The score of **3.8** highlights a positive outcome, indicating that students perceive the presence of trusted individuals within the school environment. Research by Jennings and Greenberg (2022) emphasises that homeroom teachers and school psychologists often serve as primary points of contact for students. However, it is important to improve student awareness of available support resources and ensure accessibility, even for less active students.

Based on the analysis, the school should focus on the following interventions.

1. The school plans to create an additional position for a teaching assistant focused on supporting students outside of the Ukrainian refugees. This step aligns with the recommendations of Cartwright et al. (2023), who emphasise that a higher number of specialists in the school environment ensures better access to support and reduces the risk of burnout among existing staff.

2. Workshops focused on developing communication skills and the ability to verbalise problems. These programmes could include discussion circles, conflict resolution games, or model scenarios. Willoughby and Dean (2021) recommend integrating these skills into regular teaching, ensuring their long-term sustainability.

3. Increasing student awareness of available support services through school bulletin boards, websites, or regular class meetings is essential. Jennings and Greenberg (2022) suggested using modern technologies, such as mobile applications, to facilitate access to information about school psychologists and other resources.

4. Activities that promote problem solving and verbalisation should be integrated into lessons, for example, through project-based learning or group work. Research by Day and Leithwood (2022) shows that these approaches improve not only the social competencies but also their academic performance.

The results of **Table 7** reveal a slightly above-average level of support in problem solving and the ability to verbalise challenges, with the availability of trusted individuals standing out positively. Planned interventions, such as expanding the support team, implementing communication development programmes, and increasing awareness of available resources, have the potential to significantly strengthen this area. The proposed measures, supported by research, represent a strategic approach to improving student well-being within the school environment.

Table 8 presents the results of a survey item that focusses on the extent to which students seek support in areas related to personal goals, plans, and future success. The average score of **4.0 out of 5.0** reflects an above-average level of student confidence in their potential and their ability to set goals and plan for the future. These results indicate a positive trend, although more research is needed to understand how these goals and plans are influenced by school experience, the choice of study programme, and potential participation in dual education systems.

Table 8: Psychological resilience of students in the Area of goals and plans (2023)

Area		Frequency	scores
Goals and plans	(The average of sub-questions): 25 children always/almost always, 6 children often, 4 children rarely	often	4,0 out of 5
I have my own future goals and plans	34 children always/almost always, 12 children often,15 children sometimes, 6 children rarely, 1 child never/almost never	often	4,1 out of 5
In my opinion I will become succesful in my adulthood	31 children always/almost always, 13 children often, 19 children sometimes, 4 children rarely, 1 child never/almost never	often	4,0 out of 5

Source: own analysis

In the following, we present a detailed argument and comparison with available research studies.

High **scores in goal setting and planning** confirm that the students have a clear vision of their future intentions. Research by Locke and Latham (2022) shows that targeted planning and the establishment of realistic goals significantly contribute to higher motivation and long-term success. Similarly, Bandura (2021) highlights that belief in one's abilities, known as self-efficacy, plays a key role in achieving personal and professional goals.

The results suggest that the school environment plays a significant role in supporting students in defining their goals. Haller and Stokes (2021) show that schools that promote individual planning and reflective processes help students develop the skills necessary to plan their future careers. Additionally, involvement in a dual education system can positively influence the alignment of student goals with their professional aspirations, as evidenced by Schneider and Meier (2022).

Participation in dual education programmes can play a crucial role in shaping students' career goals. Dual education, which combines theoretical learning with practical experiences, has been identified by Müller and Gruber (2021) as an effective tool to improve career orientation and employability. Additionally, this form of education allows students to connect their short-term goals with a long-term career vision.

Based on the analysis, the school should focus on the following interventions.

1. The school should introduce regular workshops focused on future career planning and goal setting. These workshops could include personal reflection, discussions with industry professionals, and the development of career plans. Locke and Latham (2022) emphasise that such activities not only boost student motivation, but also enhance their ability to effectively achieve their goals.

2. In the next school year, it will be important to examine how the dual education system influences student goals and plans. Schneider and Meier (2022) recommend regularly assessing the effectiveness of dual education through surveys and semi-structured interviews to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the system.

3. The school can establish regular consultations between students and their homeroom teachers or career counsellors, focussing on individual future planning. Bandura (2021) emphasises that a personalised approach helps students better understand their abilities and opportunities.

4. The school can implement project-based activities that connect students' goals with their field of study. For example, participation in real-world projects within the framework of dual education can strengthen the link between theoretical learning and practical experience. Haller and Stokes (2021) highlight that this approach increases students' sense of purpose and relevance of their studies.

The results of **Table 8** indicate that the students demonstrate a high level of self-confidence and clearly defined goals and plans. Proposed interventions, such as supporting targeted planning, evaluating the impact of dual education, and adopting a personalised approach to goal setting, can further enhance this positive trend. These measures, supported by relevant research, have the potential to increase the efficiency of the school's educational system and support the professional growth of students.

Discussion

The implementation of the positive psychology in the school environment through targeted interventions, measured by the Pohodoměr tool, has provided significant insights into the levels of well-being and resilience among high school students in Slovakia. The analysis not only offered an overview of the current state, but also identified key areas for improvement, which are crucial for developing effective strategies to support mental health in schools.

Key Findings and Their Implications

The results indicate that the students exhibit an overall positive attitude towards future planning and goal setting, as evidenced by an average score of **4.0 out of 5.0**. This high score suggests that most students have clearly defined ambitions and believe in their potential. These findings align with the research by Locke and Latham (2022), which emphasises that goal-setting and clear articulation of goals are key factors for success and motivation. Furthermore, these results highlight the importance of a school environment that provides students with space for reflection and support in realising their plans.

Another significant finding is the slightly above average level of **social support and the ability to verbally address problems**, scoring **3.4 out of 5.0**. While students generally know who to approach when facing issues (score of **3.8**), it is clear that social dynamics within and outside of classroom groups require further support. Willoughby and Dean (2021) confirm that the ability to verbalise problems and seek help is critical for managing stress and building resilience. These results suggest that school interventions focused on strengthening communication and problem-solving skills could have a substantial impact.

The high score of **4.0** in planning and belief in one's potential confirms that the principles of positive psychology contribute to student goal-setting skills. This skill is closely related to motivation and academic success, as supported by Locke and Latham (2022). Having clearly defined goals increases the likelihood of achieving both short- and long-term success.

The item assessing support from homeroom teachers and peers revealed that a slightly above-average level of support (**3.4 out of 5.0**) provides a foundation for improving social bonds. Research by Jennings and Greenberg (2022) highlights that trust between students and their teachers is a key factor in creating a supportive school environment. Schools can further strengthen these relationships through systematic activities such as homeroom sessions or communication workshops.

Targeted interventions focused on the development of resilience had a positive impact, particularly in areas of stress management and emotional regulation. Willoughby and Dean (2021) note that resilience programmes that address emotional management and problem solving significantly improve adolescents' ability to handle challenging situations. This result is crucial, as resilience is one of the primary determinants of long-term mental health.

One identified weakness was the low level of student participation in **community and school life**, which was rated below average. The results suggest that many students have limited opportunities to actively participate in extracurricular activities, potentially affecting their sense of belonging. Hammond and Farrell (2022) emphasise that community involvement improves interpersonal relationships and supports emotional stability. Schools should therefore expand extracurricular offerings and encourage student participation in interest groups, which can develop social skills and boost self-confidence.

Regarding the planned study on the impact of dual education on student goals and plans, it is worth noting that this educational system has the potential to link theoretical knowledge with practical skills, increasing the relevance of studies. Research by Müller and Gruber (2021) suggests that students engaged in dual education exhibit higher levels of career orientation and a clearer vision of their career goals.

Based on the above findings, several key recommendations can be formulated.

1. Introducing workshops and activities focused on verbalising problems and building communication skills.

2. Expanding extracurricular activities such as volunteer projects, interest groups, and team competitions.

3. Systematically supporting students in setting goals through career guidance and reflective activities.

4. Using opportunities to connect theory with practice, which supports professional orientation and motivation of students.

The findings are consistent with global studies:

- Waters et al. (2021) confirm that targeted positive psychology interventions improve student interpersonal relationships and overall well-being.

- Lomas et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of students' participation in community activities to improve social dynamics.

- Fredrickson (2001) supports the hypothesis that positive emotions contribute to the development of long-term sources of resilience and well-being.

Comparison with Slovak Studies Based on the Pohoděmer Tool

The results of the Pohoděmer application in our research have key similarities and differences compared to previous Slovak analyses of this tool. Below we present a detailed comparison:

Similarities:

1. Our research confirmed that family relationships are one of the most important sources of support for students, which is in line with the findings of Polgáryová et al. (2023). In both cases, family support was rated above average (4.0/5), indicating the importance of the family environment in the lives of Slovakian students.

2. Our findings on below-average student participation in community activities correspond to the results of the Pohoděmer pilot project, which took place in 2021. The Liga za duševné zdravie SR (2023) stated that in less developed regions of Slovakia, student participation in community life and extracurricular activities is significantly lower. Both studies emphasise the need to support community involvement through new extracurricular activities and projects.

3. The slightly above-average level of peer support (3.4/5) in our research is consistent with the findings of the 2021 Pohoděmer pilot program. Both studies suggest that peer support and the quality of relationships between students are average and recommend strengthening these areas through structured peer-to-peer programmes.

Differences:

1. Although our research shows a high score on the item related to belief in one's own goals and future (4.0/5), the results of the Pohoděmer pilot project showed lower values in this area, especially among students from less developed regions. This difference may be due to the higher level of support in the school environment, which focusses on systematically strengthening this dimension.

2. Our findings point to the ability to solve problems, which is consistent with previous Slovak analyses. However, our research specifies in more detail the need for targeted cognitive behaviour interventions. Previous results (Liga za duevné zdravie SR, 2023) focused on general recommendations for improving school climate rather than specific tools.

3. In our research, the key role of the school support team (school psychologists and assistants) was explicitly emphasised. The Pohoděmer pilot project did not focus on this dimension in such detail, which may be another difference in the way support is implemented in different schools.

Comparing our research with previous results from the Pohoděmer application in Slovakia shows that key areas such as family support, social relationships, and community involvement are consistently important for student wellbeing. However, our research findings provide deeper insights into specific interventions such as future planning support and targeted cognitive behaviour activities.

The results suggest that schools with well-established support systems and structural positive psychology programmes can achieve better outcomes, especially in the areas of academic motivation and resilience. This comparison also confirms that long-term monitoring and systematic implementation of positive psychology principles are key to effectively supporting the mental health in Slovakia.

Comparison with International Studies Based on the Pohoděmer Tool

Based on the results of our research and the analysis of the Pohoděmer application in Slovak secondary schools, we can compare the results with available studies at the international level.

1. Our research found a high level of family support (above average rating). This is in line with studies such as the research by Reuter and Kuperschmidt (2021), which emphasises that family ties play a crucial role in emotional stability and the ability to cope with stress. However, in the context of Slovak education, the lower level of student involvement in community life is striking, which, on the contrary, is often perceived by foreign studies as a balanced complement to the family environment (Hammond et al., 2022).

2. The below-average assessment of student participation in community life indicates a weak connection between schools and the wider community. Research, such as the work of Mullan et al. (2020), shows that active participation in community activities contributes to the development of social skills and mental well-being. These results support the need to expand community projects, which we correctly identified in our recommendations.

3. Our findings on slightly above-average peer support (3.4/5) correspond to the results of research by Hammond and Farrell (2022), who emphasise that peer-to-peer support increases emotional stability and promotes self-confidence. The development of structured peer programmes, such as mentoring, appears to be an effective solution, which was rightly included in our proposal.

4. Our findings about the low ability of students to solve problems correspond to the results of Beck and Emory (2021), who recommend the implementation of cognitive behaviour interventions as a tool for improving coping skills. The implementation of workshops, as we proposed, corresponds to current trends in psychological interventions for students (Matulková et al., 2004).

5. The above average level of belief in one's own goals and success corresponds to Bandura's (2020) conclusions about the importance of self-efficacy. Studies show that the ability to set realistic goals and the belief in achieving them are keys to motivation and long-term satisfaction.

Conclusions

The implementation of positive psychology principles, measured through the Pohodoměr tool, demonstrated significant potential to improve the wellbeing and resilience of secondary school students in Slovakia. The results of the pilot study conducted at the Private Secondary Vocational School ADVENTIM indicate that targeted interventions in areas such as positive thinking, social support, and resilience can significantly enhance students' mental health and their ability to face daily challenges. This approach also opens the door to deeper development of personal competencies, positively impacting not only academic performance but also student overall mental health.

In recent years, particularly following the "COVID era," the mental health of students and teachers has become a growing concern. This shift is linked to the rise in mental health issues and the need to strengthen well-being, which encompasses several key dimensions: emotional stability, social connections, optimism, and stress management. Positive psychology, particularly the concepts introduced by Martin Seligman, offers effective tools for systematically addressing these dimensions.

Based on the Pohodoměr results, the school identified key areas requiring support, including student participation in community life, the development of social bonds, and the strengthening of resilience. In response, the school is preparing a comprehensive plan for implementing positive psychology, which will be part of its long-term development strategy starting in the academic year. This plan will include specific interventions, such as workshops on learnt optimism, stress management training, and activities promoting peer collaboration and community involvement.

One of the primary objectives of the project is to monitor the impact of positive psychology principles on the academic performance of first- and second-year students from September 2024 to June 2026. The research sample will consist of 150–200 participants. In September 2024, the school will conduct an initial analysis of academic performance and develop a detailed implementation plan, including delegating tasks to teacher ambassadors. The first impact assessment will take place in June 2025, followed by a second in

June 2026. Based on the results, the effect of the interventions on students' well-being and academic success will be evaluated.

If the results confirm the positive impact of the interventions implemented, the school plans to develop a methodological guide detailing the procedures and tools necessary to introduce positive psychology into the school environment. This guide could serve as an inspiration for other educational institutions that want to systematically support the mental health of their students and staff.

Despite the positive outcomes, it is essential to address some persistent challenges. In particular, increasing student engagement in community life and creating more opportunities to build social bonds remain critical. Global studies, such as those of Fredrickson (2001) and Waters et al. (2021), highlight that positive emotions and meaningful relationships are fundamental to long-term mental health and resilience.

The findings of this study suggest that the implementation of positive psychology can serve as an effective tool not only to improve mental health but also for fostering an inclusive and supportive school environment. This approach represents a significant step toward modernising the education system and creating conditions for the harmonious development of students in all areas of their lives.

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