*Corresponding Author's Email: luiza.capota@uadventus.ro
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Validating a School Satisfaction in the Romanian Context: The Impact of Family Background and Digital Media Exposure

Luiza-Oana Capotă

Montemorelos University, Mexico

Abstract

School satisfaction represents a crucial indicator of children's well-being and academic success, yet validated instruments for measuring this construct in Romanian primary school students are limited. This study aims to validate a school satisfaction instrument and examine the relationships between students' satisfaction levels and various factors, including parental education, family structure, and digital media exposure. The research employed a sample of 122 children from third and fourth grades across five Romanian schools, representing both urban and rural areas. The methodology involved administering a comprehensive questionnaire that assessed school satisfaction alongside demographic and lifestyle factors. Statistical analyses revealed significant differences in school satisfaction levels based on parental educational background, number of siblings, and daily digital device usage. Results indicated that children from families with higher parental education levels reported greater school satisfaction, while increased digital media exposure was associated with lower satisfaction levels. Family size showed varying effects on school satisfaction. These findings provide valuable insights for educational practitioners and policymakers, suggesting the importance of considering both family background and modern lifestyle factors in understanding and enhancing students' school satisfaction. The validated instrument offers a reliable tool for assessing school satisfaction among Romanian primary school children while highlighting the complex interplay between family dynamics, digital media usage, and educational experience.

Keywords: digital consumption; learning environment; primary education; sociodemographic variables; well-being

1. Introduction

School satisfaction, defined as the subjective evaluation and cognitive judgment a student makes regarding the overall quality of their school experience (Huebner, 1994), is recognized as a key indicator of students' overall well-being and academic success, especially during the early stages of formal education. Substantial empirical literature suggests that students who feel positively about their school experience tend to engage more deeply with academic tasks, exhibit better emotional regulation, and build stronger relationships with both teachers and peers (Furlong et al., 2014; Oriol et al., 2017; Iorga et al., 2022).

In the Romanian context, however, the availability of psychometrically validated instruments tailored to assess school satisfaction in primary education remains notably limited. Although some tools have been adapted from international frameworks, their alignment with Romania's specific cultural and educational realities is often incomplete.

Moreover, recently, changes in family life, such as more diverse household structures, and the rapid integration of digital technologies into children's routines have reshaped how school is perceived, particularly during the formative early years of schooling. Increasingly, research points to the role of parental education, especially maternal attainment, not merely as a background variable, but as a key influence on how children interpret their learning environment and how much support they are likely to receive at home throughout their academic journey. Family size, especially the number of siblings, has also been connected to unequal access to parental attention and resources, which can indirectly affect their satisfaction with school.

Digital gadgets and internet media for personal use have also become a new factor influencing students' school involvement at the same time. Recent studies have found that increased online activity among primary school students is frequently associated with lower levels of school satisfaction, reduced academic achievement, and heightened academic stress (Donoso et al., 2021; Ramírez et al., 2021).

It is essential to acknowledge the complex interplay among various elements that collectively shape a child's perception of their educational journey and their emotional equilibrium within the school environment. Although variables such as digital exposure and family dynamics have often been examined in isolation, it is necessary to consider them in their interdependence, given their subtle yet profound impact on how students experience school life. Children's perceptions of the educational environment and their emotional well-being are shaped by a constellation of contextual factors that operate simultaneously and not always in a linear manner. In this regard, a reconceptualization of theoretical models of school satisfaction is warranted, so that they accurately reflect the current realities of everyday life.

Although international research has made considerable progress in developing psychometric tools for assessing school satisfaction, there is still a notable gap in validated instruments tailored to the Romanian primary school context. Cultural adaptation efforts remain in an early phase, with limited resources specifically designed for younger students.

This study contributes to addressing that gap by exploring how school satisfaction manifests among Romanian children, with attention to both measurement and contextual influences.

2. Literature Review

2.1 School Satisfaction in Primary Education

School satisfaction is an essential component of children's personal happiness encompassing students' perceptions of the educational environment, social interactions, academic support, and the significance of their learning experiences. International research (Bernardo et al., 2022; Casas et al., 2012; Pedditzi, 2024) underscores the important role of school satisfaction in promoting intrinsic motivation, encouraging active classroom engagement, and preventing early school dropout.

Nevertheless, cultural adaptations are still in the beginning stages and validated psychometric tools that measure school satisfaction among primary-level students remain insufficient in the Romanian environment. Nonetheless, several noteworthy efforts suggest promising developments in the field. One particularly relevant contribution comes from Bălţătescu and Cernea-Radu (2024), who examined how school satisfaction varies across different age groups, drawing on sub-samples from the Romanian adaptation of the Children's Worlds Survey, an internationally recognized instrument contextualized for use with local populations. This method, while not explicitly intended for elementary education, incorporates 10-year-old students and examines mediating elements of happiness, such as school involvement, indicating partial contextual validation.

An additional pertinent example is the research conducted by Puiu & Goga (2021), which explains the perceptions of educators and school administrators around the concept of a *happy school* in Romania. The authors employ a questionnaire administered in primary schools to assess elements of satisfaction, happiness, and school well-being, providing a valuable starting point for the development of standardized instruments adapted to the local context. Their findings highlight the importance of positive relationships, emotional safety, and meaningful learning experiences as key components of school satisfaction. This aligns with international literature emphasizing the affective and relational dimensions of students' well-being in early education.

Răducu et al. (2014) also included parent questionnaires that, while not aimed directly at students, offered insights into primary education satisfaction and partially supported the instruments' validity from an adult viewpoint. Although the study targeted parental perceptions, it indirectly contributes to the broader understanding of school satisfaction by highlighting the systemic nature of the school experience. When parents express positive evaluations of school functioning and student support, this often correlates with the emotional and academic well-being of their children.

Recent data show that the school climate, relationships with teachers and peers, and family support significantly influence school satisfaction. A supportive and emotionally nurturing school environment, defined by collaboration and positive interpersonal relationships, has been consistently linked to elevated levels of school satisfaction among primary students (Bălţătescu & Cernea-Radu, 2024). Notably, the same authors observed that

satisfaction with school tends to decline gradually with age, beginning as early as the transition from grade four to lower secondary education. This trend appears to be shaped, in part, by reduced student engagement and the rising academic pressures that accompany progression through the educational system. Additional evidence from Hampden-Thompson & Galindo (2017) supports the critical influence of school–family relationships on school satisfaction and academic success, particularly in the formative years of education.

These insights point to the critical importance of early-stage interventions aimed at cultivating a strong and lasting sense of belonging to school during the foundational years of formal education. To assess school satisfaction meaningfully and with cultural sensitivity, researchers must employ psychometric instruments that are both valid and contextually adapted to the specific characteristics of the educational setting (Dickson et al., 2015; Pastori & Pagani, 2017).

At the same time, the literature underscores a fundamental discrepancy between how adults and children perceive school-related experiences. Instruments developed primarily through the lens of educators or academic researchers may inadvertently overlook dimensions of experience that are essential to children themselves. To ensure an accurate representation of students' subjective well-being, it is essential that their voices be incorporated directly into assessment frameworks (Cashman et al., 2025; Halliday et al., 2018; Huebner et al., 2013). Recent discussions in the field stress that without children's direct participation in defining the dimensions of satisfaction, measures may miss developmental and culturally nuanced aspects of school life (Bosakova et al., 2020).

2.2 Parents' Educational Level, Especially the Mother's, and Its Influence on School Satisfaction

Extensive research consistently supports the link between parents' educational background and students' perceptions of their school experience. Higher-educated parents, particularly mothers, often foster a home environment that strongly values academic achievement for their children. These parents are typically more involved in the learning process and are better equipped to offer both cognitive stimulation and emotional support, factors that collectively enhance academic and personal development (Reynolds et al., 2022; Wong et al., 2018).

At the same time, the structure of the family, particularly the number of siblings, can significantly shape the quality of parental attention available to each child. As family size grows, resources such as time, individualized support, and educational involvement may be spread more thinly across children. This redistribution can indirectly diminish a student's overall satisfaction with school by reducing the level of personal support received at home (Jang et al., 2025; Santos et al., 2016; Tanskanen et al., 2016).

These dynamics are frequently integrated into predictive models of educational well-being, given their consistent correlation with higher satisfaction and academic performance. Recent studies have also begun to explore how maternal education moderates the effects of socioeconomic challenges, buffering children’s attitudes toward school even in less advantaged contexts. Understanding these layered influences is essential for designing

targeted interventions that address both school-level and family-level determinants of student well-being (Horanicova et al., 2022; Tran et al., 2023).

Moreover, parental involvement, especially through emotional availability and educational engagement, remains a crucial determinant of how children experience school. When parental involvement is irregular or the home environment is marked by instability, children, especially those experiencing socioeconomic hardship or emotional insecurity, tend to express lower levels of satisfaction with their school experience (Vujčić et al., 2025). The absence of consistent support at home can undermine both motivation and emotional connection to school, particularly in formative years.

Further evidence of this relationship is provided by Awada and Shelleby (2021), who found that increased levels of maternal education correlate positively with improved academic performance and behavioral adjustment in children. Similarly, Harding et al. (2015) underscore the role of maternal education in enhancing the quality of interaction between parents and children, enriching language acquisition, fostering self-driven motivation, and supporting scholastic success during the early stages of education.

Complementing these findings, Hsin and Felfe (2014) demonstrate that the amount and quality of time mothers spend with their children, especially in households where mothers possess advanced educational backgrounds, significantly contributes to children's linguistic and academic development. Overall, the evidence highlights that a mother's education level and how she interacts with her children function as central elements in understanding how children experience school and adapt academically in the early years.

2.3 Family Size and Educational Resources

According to the resource dilution theory (Blake, 1981), the number of children in a family affects the availability of parental resources such as time, attention, and educational support**.** This idea has since been validated and expanded by subsequent research (Chen et al., 2025; Downey, 1995; Wang et al., 2025), confirming that in larger families, children may receive less individualized support, which can negatively influence their school satisfaction. However, these effects vary depending on factors such as birth order, the child's gender, and the socioeconomic status of the family (Marteleto & De Souza, 2013; Santacroce & Barclay, 2024).

More recent studies continue to refine our understanding of how family size influences educational outcomes and school satisfaction. For instance, Gómez-Baya et al. (2021) found that 10-year-old children from smaller families reported higher school satisfaction and overall happiness, highlighting how family structure and individualized parental attention contribute to students' emotional well-being at school. Aguboshim and Otuu (2023) compared younger and older siblings, noting that birth order can shape school engagement through differing expectations and responsibilities within the household. Legas and Gu (2025) confirm that first-born children often face higher expectations, which can influence how they relate to school and their overall educational success. These findings suggest that not only the size, but also the internal dynamics of the family, play a role in shaping children's satisfaction and success in school.

2.4 Digital Use and School Satisfaction

Prolonged exposure to digital media, especially for non-educational purposes, is associated with reduced school satisfaction and lower psychological well-being (McIver, 2025; Moe, 2024). In a context where technology is omnipresent, primary school students are spending increasing amounts of time online, which can lead to concentration problems**,** school-related stress, and social isolation. Moreover, research shows that problematic internet use and unrestricted access to digital content can have significantly negative effects on school engagement (Sanders et al., 2019; Dou & Shek, 2021).

Luo et al. (2024) highlight how early exposure to digital screens for non-educational content may contribute to reduced emotional well-being in preschool-aged children. These effects, such as diminished life satisfaction, signs of social withdrawal, and mood instability, raise concerns that similar dynamics may be present in the primary school population. Since younger students are still developing self-regulatory abilities, frequent engagement with overstimulating or unstructured online material may hinder academic adjustment and increase the risk of disengagement from school-related tasks (Yang et al., 2013).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Objectives

Though psychometric measures evaluating school satisfaction have advanced internationally, validated assessments particularly suited to primary school kids in Romania are still few and their cultural adaptation is still in early stages. This study therefore aims to fulfil two main objectives: (1) the validation of a school satisfaction measurement instrument designed for Romanian primary education, and (2) the investigation of how parental education, family structure, and digital media exposure influence school satisfaction. This research aims to lay the groundwork for developing culturally attuned tools that reflect the nuances of Romanian society and support evidence-based educational policymaking.

In the accessible literature, there is still no systematic and comprehensive validation of an instrument specifically designed for children in primary school (e.g., grades I–IV) in Romania. There is a distinct necessity for instruments tailored to the developmental stage and cognitive comprehension of young children. These instruments should represent the Romanian sociocultural background and be statistically evaluated through rigorous methodologies.

3.2 Research Hypotheses - Differences in Students' School Satisfaction by Maternal Education, Family Size, and Digital Media Exposure

In line with the objectives of this study, the proposed research includes both dependent and independent variables, each selected to reflect core dimensions influencing *school satisfaction*. The dependent variable is students' perceived level of school satisfaction, which encompasses their sense of belonging, enjoyment of school activities, relationships with teachers and peers, and overall contentment with the school environment.

The independent variables include a set of socio-demographic and behavioral predictors: (1) *maternal education level*, reflecting parental educational influence on student

attitudes; (2) *family size*, which may shape children's access to attention and support at home; and (3) *time spent online for personal (non-educational) purposes*, a behavioral factor increasingly relevant in the digital age. These variables have been selected based on theoretical and empirical evidence suggesting their potential to shape students' academic experiences and emotional connection to school. The study hypothesizes that these factors will significantly predict variations in school satisfaction levels among primary school students.

Hypothesis 1 ($H_{0\ 1}$): There is no statistically significant difference in students' school satisfaction across different levels of maternal education.

Hypothesis 2 ($H_{0\ 2}$): There is no statistically significant difference in students' school satisfaction based on the number of children in the family.

Hypothesis 3 ($H_{0\ 3}$): There is no statistically significant difference in students' school satisfaction according to the amount of time spent on the internet for non-educational purposes.

Hypothesis 4 ($H_{0\ 4}$): There is no statistically significant difference in students' school satisfaction based on gender.

Hypothesis 5 ($H_{0\ 5}$): There is no statistically significant difference in students' school satisfaction across different age groups.

Hypothesis 6 ($H_{0\ 6}$): There is no statistically significant difference in students' school satisfaction depending on the type of school attended.

3.3 Research Design

The present study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional design with the aim of validating an instrument for measuring school satisfaction among primary school students and analyzing the influence of certain socio-demographic and behavioral factors on this construct. The chosen approach allows for the examination of relationships between variables in a natural setting, without experimental interventions, thus providing relevant results for the Romanian educational context.

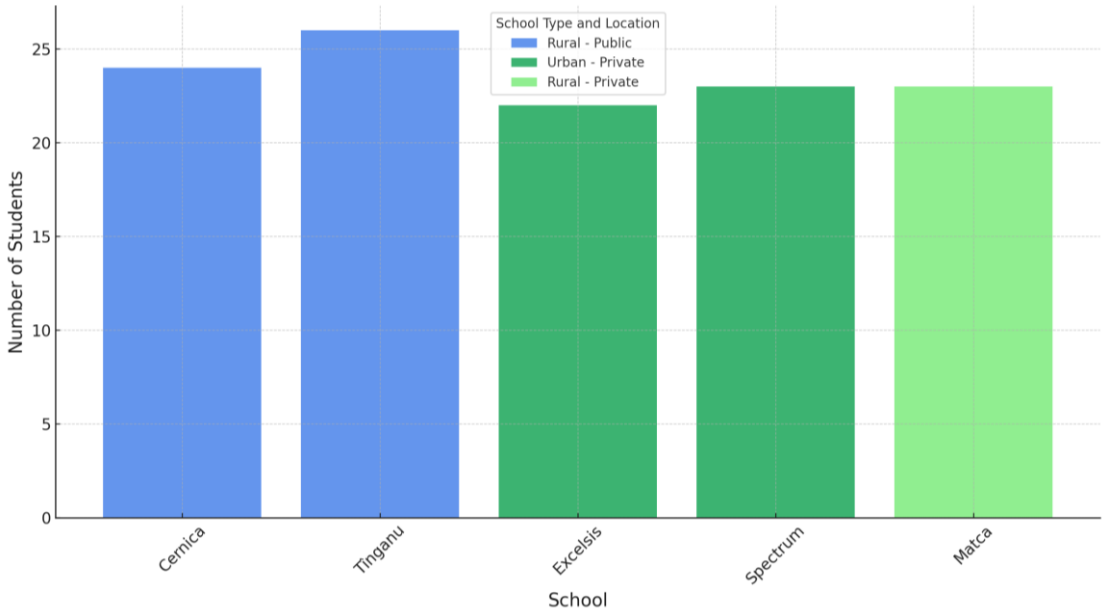
3.4 Population and Sample Characteristics

The target population of the present study includes primary school students enrolled in third and fourth grades within the Romanian educational system. These students, typically aged between 9 and 12 years, represent a critical developmental stage in which attitudes toward school begin to stabilize and influence later academic and emotional trajectories. The selection of this population was also informed by the increasing need among Romanian primary school teachers to better understand the emotional and motivational dimensions of students' school experiences. Insight into these factors is essential for adapting teaching strategies, improving classroom climate, and supporting early interventions aimed at fostering long-term educational engagement.

The sample consisted of 122 third- and fourth-grade students from five Romanian schools, both public and private, situated in urban and rural contexts (*Figure 1*). Participants

were selected through a convenience sampling method, in collaboration with teachers involved in counseling and guidance activities. Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from both parents and school administrations, ensuring ethical compliance with research standards concerning minors.

Figure 1: Grouped Distribution of Students by School Location and Type



Source: Adapted and elaborated by the author

3.5 Instrument

Data collection was carried out using a set of three structured questionnaires, each targeting a specific dimension of the study: (1) a culturally adapted instrument for measuring school satisfaction, (2) a demographic questionnaire collecting background variables such as age, gender, family size, and maternal education level, and (3) a questionnaire focused on digital media usage, particularly the frequency and purpose of internet use outside school-related activities.

3.5.1. School Satisfaction

To measure school satisfaction, the present study employed an adapted version of the school domain from the internationally validated *Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale* (MSLSS; Huebner, 1994). The MSLSS assesses satisfaction across five key domains - school, self, family, friends, and living environment - and has demonstrated robust psychometric properties across international samples (Gilman et al., 2008; Irmak &; Kim & Kim, 2013; Kuruüzüm, 2009).

In its original version, the school domain uses a 4-point Likert scale (*never = 1*, *sometimes = 2*, *often = 3*, *almost always = 4*). For the purposes of this study, a 5-point scale (*never*, *rarely*, *sometimes*, *often*, *always*) was employed to enhance response granularity and better suit the developmental stage of primary school students. Responses were coded from 1 to 5, with negatively worded items reverse-scored.

3.5.2 Demographic Variables

The questionnaire also included items assessing the following demographic characteristics**:** gender, mother's level of education, number of siblings (family size), type of residence (urban vs. rural), type of school (public vs. private). These variables were selected based on prior literature suggesting their predictive value in explaining differences in school-related perceptions and satisfaction.

3.5.3 Internet Use

The assessment of digital behavior involved a singular item that measured the average daily time students dedicated to online activities for personal use, encompassing gaming, social media engagement, and video consumption. Students provided self-reported data on their daily hours, which served as an independent variable to investigate possible correlations with school satisfaction.

3.6 Procedure

Data collection proceeded over a two-week period during the 2024–2025 school year. The participating schools approved permission for the study, which followed to ethical standards for research involving children. Informed written agreement was acquired from parents or authorized guardians, and verbal assent was provided by all student participants.

The questionnaire was administered in a controlled environment during school counseling hours using a paper format. Students completed the instrument in classroom groups, with the researcher available for clarification if necessary. Participation was voluntary, and anonymity and confidentiality were fully ensured throughout the process.

3.7 Data Analysis

For the validation of the school satisfaction measurement instrument and the testing of hypotheses regarding the influence of contextual factors, the study employed a series of statistical procedures aligned with the rigor of quantitative research in educational sciences. The internal consistency of the school satisfaction scale was assessed through the calculation of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, in order to evaluate the instrument's reliability. Welch's ANOVA was used to compare school satisfaction scores, selected for its robustness given the violation of normality and homogeneity of variance assumptions. The Kruskal-Wallis test, as a non-parametric alternative, was applied to confirm ANOVA results in cases where data distributions did not meet parametric criteria.

To examine differences between groups, post-hoc analyses were conducted using the Tukey test or the Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner procedure, depending on the nature of the primary analysis. Additional analyses involved the use of independent samples t-tests and Mann-Whitney U tests to compare school satisfaction across gender and school type (public vs. private), as well as the Kruskal-Wallis test for analyzing differences by age. This comprehensive statistical approach enabled both the preliminary validation of the culturally adapted instrument and the investigation of relationships between school satisfaction and selected socio-demographic and behavioral variables.

4. Results

4.1 Reliability Analysis of the School Satisfaction Scale

Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the 8-item school satisfaction subscale was α = 0.71, a value generally regarded as acceptable for newly adapted instruments in psychological and educational research. This result reflects a satisfactory level of internal consistency among the items. The adapted Romanian version of the scale demonstrated adequate reliability, as confirmed by the alpha coefficient, and was subsequently used to investigate the relationship between school satisfaction and the selected socio-demographic and behavioral variables.

Although the internal consistency of the scale was acceptable overall (Cronbach's α = 0.71), two negatively worded items, Item 5 ("Unpleasant things happen at school") and Item 8 ("I don't feel very well at school") showed slightly higher alpha values if removed (α = 0.736 and α = 0.713, respectively) (*Figure 2*).

Figure 2: Internal Consistency Indicators for the School Satisfaction Subscale:

Cronbach's Alpha if Item Delete

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
1. Aștept cu nerăbdare să merg la școală.	3.99	1.040	0.666
2. Îmi place la școală.	4.04	1.195	0.652
3. Școala este interesantă.	4.12	1.161	0.642
4. Îmi doresc să nu fiu obligat/ă să merg la școală.	2.88	1.530	0.699
5. La școală se întâmplă lucruri care nu îmi plac.	3.11	1.225	0.736
6. Îmi plac activitățile de la școală.	4.20	1.142	0.650
7. La școală învăț multe lucruri utile.	4.58	0.889	0.686
8. Nu mă simt prea bine la școală.	3.93	0.911	0.713

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

This pattern is not uncommon in scales that include reverse-coded items, particularly when applied to younger populations. Such items may be more cognitively demanding or subject to misinterpretation, which can affect inter-item correlations. Nevertheless, both items were retained, as they capture essential aspects of negative school experience and contribute to the conceptual completeness of the construct being measured. These findings provide initial psychometric support for the use of the adapted Romanian version of the school satisfaction subscale among primary school students.

4.2 The Influence of the Mother's Level of Education

To investigate the influence of maternal education level on students' school satisfaction, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted (*Figure 3*). Participants were divided into three groups based on their mothers' level of education: no high school diploma (n = 35), completed high school (n = 25), and completed university education (n = 62). Assumption checks indicated that the homogeneity of variances was largely satisfied, as Levene's tests were non-significant for the majority of items ($p > .05$), with the exception of Item 8 ("I don't feel very well at school"), where a significant result was observed ($p = .025$).

Additionally, tests of normality (Shapiro-Wilk, Kolmogorov-Smirnov, and Anderson-Darling) revealed statistically significant deviations from the normal distribution across all items ($p < .001$), raising concerns regarding the robustness of parametric procedures. In response to these violations, the data were analyzed using Welch's ANOVA, a robust alternative to the classical F-test that accounts for heterogeneity of variances and reduced sensitivity to non-normality.

Figure 3: Descriptive Statistics for School Satisfaction Items by Maternal Education Level

	Studies: 1 – highschool; 2 – college; 3 – without highschool	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SE**
1. Aștept cu nerăbdare să merg la școală.	highschool	25	3.92	1.077	0.2154
	college	62	4.21	0.943	0.1198
	without highschool	35	3.66	1.110	0.1876
2. Îmi place la școală.	highschool	25	3.60	1.225	0.2449
	college	62	4.10	1.251	0.1588
	without highschool	35	4.26	1.010	0.1707
3. Școala este interesantă.	highschool	25	3.76	1.234	0.2468
	college	62	4.23	1.137	0.1444
	without highschool	35	4.20	1.132	0.1914
4. Îmi doresc să nu fiu obligat/ă să merg la școală.	highschool	25	2.84	1.375	0.2750

	Studies: 1 – highschool; 2 – college; 3 – without highschool	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SE**
	college	62	3.15	1.556	0.1976
	without highschool	35	2.43	1.520	0.2570
5. La școală se întâmplă lucruri care nu îmi plac.	highschool	25	3.44	1.193	0.2386
	college	62	3.00	1.159	0.1472
	without highschool	35	3.06	1.349	0.2280
6. Îmi plac activitățile de la școală.	highschool	25	4.20	1.080	0.2160
	college	62	4.26	1.227	0.1559
	without highschool	35	4.11	1.051	0.1776
7. La școală învăț multe lucruri utile.	highschool	25	4.32	1.069	0.2139
	college	62	4.66	0.867	0.1102
	without highschool	35	4.63	0.770	0.1302
8. Nu mă simt prea bine la școală.	highschool	25	3.80	0.866	0.1732
	college	62	4.15	0.786	0.0998
	without highschool	35	3.63	1.060	0.1791

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

Welch's ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference for Item 1 ("I look forward to going to school"), $F(2, 55.6) = 3.191$, $p = .049$. Students whose mothers had completed university education reported the highest mean score (M = 4.21, SD = 0.94), followed by those with mothers who completed high school (M = 3.92, SD = 1.08), and those whose mothers did not complete high school (M = 3.66, SD = 1.11). A similar pattern emerged for Item 8 ("I don't feel very well at school"), where the difference was again significant, $F(2, 55.1) = 3.787$, $p = .029$. Here, students with university-educated mothers

reported feeling better at school (M = 4.15, SD = 0.79), compared to students whose mothers completed high school (M = 3.80, SD = 0.87), and those whose mothers had no high school diploma (M = 3.63, SD = 1.06).

For the remaining items, although Welch's ANOVA (*Figure 4*) did not identify statistically significant differences ($p > .05$), small variations in mean scores were observed. For example, on Item 2 ("I like school"), students with no high school maternal background reported the highest mean (M = 4.26, SD = 1.01), slightly above the university group (M = 4.10, SD = 1.25) and the high school group (M = 3.60, SD = 1.23). These results indicate that maternal education level has a statistically significant impact on specific aspects of students' subjective school experience.

Figure 4: Welch's ANOVA Results for School Satisfaction Items by Maternal Education Level

	F	df1	df2	
2. Îmi place la școală	2.428	2	60.2	0.097
3. Școala este interesantă	1.393	2	57.6	0.257
4. Îmi doresc să nu fiu obligat/ă să merg la școală	2.425	2	61.3	0.097
5. La școală se întâmplă lucruri care nu îmi plac	1.247	2	57.4	0.295
6. Îmi plac activitățile de la școală	0.183	2	61.9	0.833
7. La școală învăț multe lucruri utile	1.023	2	56.4	0.366
8. Nu mă simt prea bine la școală	3.787	2	55.1	0.029

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

To further validate the findings, the non-parametric *Kruskal–Wallis H test* was also applied, as it does not rely on distributional assumptions and offers additional support for the observed differences (*Figure 5*). The results partially supported the findings of the parametric analysis, identifying statistically significant differences in school satisfaction based on maternal education level for Item 1 ("I look forward to going to school") with $\chi^2(2) = 6.49$, $p = .039$, and Item 8 ("I don't feel very well at school") with $\chi^2(2) = 6.63$, $p = .036$. The effect sizes ($\varepsilon^2 = 0.0536$ and 0.0548, respectively) were small to moderate, suggesting a modest practical impact.

Figure 5: The Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test for School Satisfaction Items by Maternal Education Level

	χ^2	df	p	ε^2
1. Aștept cu nerăbdare să merg la școală.	6.49	2	0.039	0.0536
2. Îmi place la școală.	4.51	2	0.105	0.0373

	χ^2	df	p	ε^2
3. Școala este interesantă.	3.09	2	0.213	0.0255
4. Îmi doresc să nu fiu obligat/ă să merg la școală.	5.12	2	0.077	0.0423
5. La școală se întâmplă lucruri care nu îmi plac.	2.23	2	0.328	0.0184
6. Îmi plac activitățile de la școală.	1.46	2	0.483	0.0120
7. La școală învăț multe lucruri utile.	3.80	2	0.149	0.0314
8. Nu mă simt prea bine la școală.	6.63	2	0.036	0.0548

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

Tukey's post-hoc tests further clarified the nature of these group differences. For Item 1 (“I look forward to going to school”), students whose mothers had completed university education (M = 4.21, SD = 0.94) reported significantly higher anticipation compared to those whose mothers had not completed high school (M = 3.66, SD = 1.11), p = .031 (*Figure 6*). The mean for students whose mothers completed high school was intermediate (M = 3.92, SD = 1.08), and the difference between this group and the others did not reach statistical significance (p > .05).

Figure 6: Tukey Post-Hoc Comparisons for Item 1 (I look forward to going to school) by Maternal Education Level

		highschool	college	without highschool
highschool	Mean difference	—	-0.290	0.263
	p-value	—	0.457	0.589
college	Mean difference		—	0.553
	p-value		—	0.031
without highschool	Mean difference			—
	p-value			—

		highschool	college	without highschool

Note. p < .05, p < .01, p < .001

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

Regarding Item 8 ("I don't feel very well at school"), a similar pattern was observed (*Figure 7*). Students with university-educated mothers reported feeling better at school (M = 4.15, SD = 0.79) than those whose mothers had no high school diploma (M = 3.63, SD = 1.06), with the difference reaching significance (p = .019). The mean for students whose mothers had completed high school was again between the two groups (M = 3.80, SD = 0.87), with no significant difference from either group.

Figure 7: Tukey Post-Hoc Comparisons for Item 8 (I don't feel very well at school) by Maternal Education Level

		highschool	college	without highschool
highschool	Mean difference	—	-0.345	0.171
	p-value	—	0.233	0.742
college	Mean difference		—	0.517
	p-value		—	0.019
without highschool	Mean difference			—
	p-value			—

Note. p < .05, p < .01, p < .001

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

For the remaining six school satisfaction items, no statistically significant post-hoc differences were found among maternal education groups (p > .05 for all). However, small variations in mean scores were still noted. For example, on Item 2 ("I like school"), students whose mothers had no high school education reported the highest average (M = 4.26), followed by those with university-educated mothers (M = 4.10), and those with high school-educated mothers (M = 3.60), though none of these differences were statistically significant.

Post-hoc pairwise comparisons using the *Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner* procedure further revealed (*Figure 8*) that students whose mothers had completed university reported

significantly higher levels of positive school anticipation (Item 1) compared to those whose mothers had no high school diploma (p = .032). A similar pattern emerged for Item 8, where children of university-educated mothers reported feeling significantly better at school compared to peers whose mothers had no formal secondary education (p = .050). For the remaining items, no statistically significant differences were detected (p > .05), although small differences in medians were observed descriptively.

Figure 8: Pairwise Comparisons for Items 1 & 8 (Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner Test)

Pairwise comparisons - 1. Aștept cu nerăbdare să merg la școală.

		W	p
highschool	college	1.70	0.453
highschool	without highschool	-1.37	0.596
college	without highschool	-3.55	0.032

Pairwise comparisons - 8. Nu mă simt prea bine la școală.

		W	p
highschool	college	2.474	0.187
highschool	without highschool	-0.747	0.858
college	without highschool	-3.310	0.050

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

Although the significant differences suggest a potential influence of maternal education on school satisfaction, these relationships should not be interpreted as causal. They may reflect underlying variables such as family climate, availability of educational resources, or broader parental attitudes toward schooling.

Based on these results, the null hypothesis ($H_{0\ 1}$) can be partially rejected. While the majority of the school satisfaction items did not show statistically significant variation between groups, Items 1 and 8 demonstrated significant differences, particularly between students whose mothers had completed university education and those whose mothers had no high school diploma. These findings indicate that maternal education level is associated with specific dimensions of students' emotional and motivational responses to school, though the effect does not extend uniformly across all aspects of school satisfaction.

4.3 The Influence of the Number of Children in the Family

To investigate whether students' school satisfaction varies according to the number of children in the family, a one-way Welch's ANOVA was conducted across four groups: only child (n = 21), two children (n = 58), three children (n = 23), and four or more children (n = 20) (*Figure 9; Figure 10*). Assumption checks confirmed variance homogeneity for most items, while normality tests showed significant deviations across all items ($p < .001$), which justified the use of the robust Welch procedure.

Figure 9: Descriptive Statistics for School Satisfaction Items by Number of Children in the Family

	Number of Children: 1 - alone; 2 – two children; 3 – three children; 4- four or more children	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SE**
1. Aștept cu nerăbdare să merg la școală.	alone	21	4.43	0.676	0.148
	two children	58	4.05	0.944	0.124
	three children	23	4.09	1.125	0.235
	four or more children	20	3.25	1.209	0.270
2. Îmi place la școală.	alone	21	4.48	0.981	0.214
	two children	58	4.00	1.199	0.157
	three children	23	4.00	1.348	0.281
	four or more children	20	3.75	1.164	0.260
3. Școala este interesantă.	alone	21	4.33	0.966	0.211
	two children	58	3.98	1.221	0.160
	three children	23	4.35	1.112	0.232
	four or more children	20	4.05	1.234	0.276
4. Îmi doresc să nu fiu obligat/ă să merg la școală.	alone	21	3.24	1.578	0.344
	two children	58	2.81	1.561	0.205

	Number of Children: 1 - alone; 2 – two children; 3 – three children; 4- four or more children	N	Mean	SD	SE
	three children	23	2.70	1.490	0.311
	four or more children	20	2.90	1.483	0.332
5. La școală se întâmplă lucruri care nu îmi plac.	alone	21	3.10	1.261	0.275
	two children	58	3.09	1.189	0.156
	three children	23	2.83	1.267	0.264
	four or more children	20	3.50	1.235	0.276
6. Îmi plac activitățile de la școală.	alone	21	4.57	0.870	0.190
	two children	58	4.33	1.130	0.148
	three children	23	4.13	1.254	0.262
	four or more children	20	3.55	1.099	0.246
7. La școală învăț multe lucruri utile.	alone	21	4.81	0.512	0.112
	two children	58	4.64	0.931	0.122
	three children	23	4.57	0.896	0.187
	four or more children	20	4.20	1.005	0.225
8. Nu mă simt prea bine la școală.	alone	21	4.33	0.966	0.211
	two children	58	4.12	0.796	0.105
	three children	23	3.65	0.775	0.162
	four or more children	20	3.25	0.910	0.204

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

Figure 10: Welch's ANOVA Results for School Satisfaction Items by Number of Children in the Family

	F	df1	df2	p
1. Aștept cu nerăbdare să merg la școală.	4.865	3	47.2	0.005
2. Îmi place la școală.	1.742	3	48.0	0.171
3. Școala este interesantă.	0.877	3	48.7	0.460
4. Îmi doresc să nu fiu obligat/ă să merg la școală.	0.502	3	47.7	0.682
5. La școală se întâmplă lucruri care nu îmi plac.	1.029	3	46.5	0.389
6. Îmi plac activitățile de la școală.	3.715	3	48.4	0.017
7. La școală învăț multe lucruri utile.	2.033	3	49.7	0.121
8. Nu mă simt prea bine la școală.	6.833	3	45.8	< .001

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

Significant group differences emerged for three satisfaction items: Item 1 - "I look forward to going to school", Welch's F(3, 47.2) = 4.865, p = .005. Mean scores showed that only children reported the highest anticipation (M = 4.43, SD = 0.68), followed by students with three siblings (M = 4.09, SD = 1.13), two siblings (M = 4.05, SD = 0.94), and those from families with four or more children (M = 3.25, SD = 1.21). Tukey post-hoc comparisons indicated that students from families with four or more children scored significantly lower than only children (p = .001), those with two siblings (p = .012), and three siblings (p = .033).

Item 6 – "I enjoy school activities", Welch's $F(3, 48.4) = 3.715$, $p = .017$. Only children again reported the highest enjoyment (M = 4.57, SD = 0.87), followed by students with two siblings (M = 4.33, SD = 1.13), three siblings (M = 4.13, SD = 1.25), and four or more siblings (M = 3.55, SD = 1.10). Post-hoc analysis showed significant differences between students from large families and only children ($p = .020$), as well as those with two siblings ($p = .039$).

Item 8 – "I don't feel very well at school", Welch's $F(3, 45.8) = 6.833$, $p < .001$. Students from families with four or more children reported the lowest emotional well-being (M = 3.25, SD = 0.91), compared to only children (M = 4.33, SD = 0.97), those with two siblings (M = 4.12, SD = 0.80), and three siblings (M = 3.65, SD = 0.78). Post-hoc tests indicated significant differences between the large-family group and all others: only children ($p < .001$), two children ($p < .001$), and three children ($p = .042$).

To assess whether students' school satisfaction differs according to the number of children in the family, a non-parametric Kruskal–Wallis H test was conducted across four groups (*Figure 11*). Significant group differences were identified for three items of the school satisfaction scale: Item 1: "I look forward to going to school", $\chi^2(3) = 12.47$, $p = .006$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.103$. Item 6: "I enjoy school activities", $\chi^2(3) = 12.00$, $p = .007$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.099$. Item 8: "I don't feel very well at school", $\chi^2(3) = 20.91$, $p < .001$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.173$. These results suggest moderate to large effect sizes and point to meaningful differences in students' emotional and motivational responses to school depending on family size.

Figure 11: The Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test for School Satisfaction Items by Number of Children in the Family

2 Îmi place la școală	5.37	3	0.147	0.0444
3 Școala este interesantă	2.24	3	0.524	0.0185
4 Îmi doresc să nu fiu obligat/ă să merg la școală	1.44	3	0.696	0.0119
5 La școală se întâmplă lucruri care nu îmi plac	3.47	3	0.325	0.0287
6 Îmi plac activitățile de la școală	12.00	3	0.007	0.0992
7 La școală învăț multe lucruri utile	7.80	3	0.050	0.0645
8 Nu mă simt prea bine la școală	20.91	3	< .001	0.1728

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

To explore these differences further, pairwise comparisons were conducted using the Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner test. For *Item 1*, students from families with four or more children reported significantly lower anticipation to attend school compared to only children ($p = .005$), and those with two ($p = .033$) or three siblings ($p = .085$). For *Item 6*, enjoyment of school activities was significantly lower for students from large families compared to only children ($p = .009$) and those with two siblings ($p = .017$). Regarding *Item 8*, students from families with four or more children reported significantly lower emotional well-being at school compared to only children ($p = .005$), students with two siblings ($p = .002$), and those with three siblings ($p = .035$).

The results of the non-parametric test confirm and strengthen those obtained through the Welch's ANOVA analysis. The significant differences identified for Items 1, 6, and 8 are statistically valid and robust, as they are supported by both analytical methods. This convergence increases confidence in the validity of the conclusions regarding the influence of family size on specific dimensions of school satisfaction. These findings are consistent with the resource dilution theory, which posits that parental attention and resources become increasingly stretched as family size grows, potentially diminishing individual children's educational experiences. Therefore, the null hypothesis $H_{0\ 2}$ can be partially rejected. While no significant differences were observed for five of the eight items, the significant results for Items 1, 6, and 8 suggest that family size may influence specific emotional and motivational components of school satisfaction.

4.4 The influence of the Digital Media Exposure

To examine the effect of personal internet use on school satisfaction, students were categorized into four groups based on their average daily non-educational usage time: ≤30 minutes (n = 16), 1 hour (n = 48), 2 hours (n = 31), and more than 2 hours (n = 27).

Both parametric (Welch's ANOVA) and non-parametric (Kruskal-Wallis) tests were applied, considering the violation of the normality assumption (Shapiro-Wilk $p < .001$ for all items) and, in some cases, the violation of homogeneity of variances. In the parametric analysis using Welch's ANOVA, only one out of the eight school satisfaction items "I don't feel very well at school" showed a statistically significant difference across internet usage groups, $F(3, 51.1) = 4.251$, $p = .009$ (*Figure 12*).

Figure 12: Descriptive Statistics for School Satisfaction Items by Digital Media Exposure

	Device: 30 minutes; 2 - 1 hour; 3 - 2 hours; 4 - more than 2 hours)	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SE**
1. Aștept cu nerăbdare să merg la școală.	30 minutes	16	3.94	1.181	0.2954
	1 hour	48	4.10	1.057	0.1525
	2 hours	31	4.13	0.957	0.1719
	more than 2 hours	27	3.67	1.000	0.1925
2. Îmi place la școală.	30 minutes	16	3.88	1.204	0.3010
	1 hour	48	4.15	1.091	0.1575
	2 hours	31	4.42	1.025	0.1842
	more than 2 hours	27	3.52	1.397	0.2688
3. Școala este interesantă.	30 minutes	16	4.25	1.065	0.2661
	1 hour	48	4.27	1.180	0.1704
	2 hours	31	4.13	1.147	0.2060
	more than 2 hours	27	3.78	1.188	0.2285
4. Îmi doresc să nu fiu obligat/ă să merg la școală.	30 minutes	16	2.81	1.721	0.4303

	Device: 30 minutes; 2 - 1 hour; 3 - 2 hours; 4 - more than 2 hours)	N	Mean	SD	SE
	1 hour	48	3.23	1.547	0.2233
	2 hours	31	2.52	1.546	0.2777
	more than 2 hours	27	2.70	1.295	0.2493
5. La școală se întâmplă lucruri care nu îmi plac.	30 minutes	16	3.25	1.125	0.2814
	1 hour	48	3.21	1.220	0.1760
	2 hours	31	2.81	1.223	0.2196
	more than 2 hours	27	3.19	1.302	0.2506
6. Îmi plac activitățile de la școală.	30 minutes	16	4.13	1.147	0.2869
	1 hour	48	4.35	1.062	0.1532
	2 hours	31	4.35	1.082	0.1943
	more than 2 hours	27	3.81	1.302	0.2506
7. La școală învăț multe lucruri utile.	30 minutes	16	4.69	0.793	0.1983
	1 hour	48	4.79	0.617	0.0891
	2 hours	31	4.45	1.060	0.1903
	more than 2 hours	27	4.30	1.068	0.2054
8. Nu mă simt prea bine la școală.	30 minutes	16	3.94	0.772	0.1930
	1 hour	48	3.96	0.898	0.1296
	2 hours	31	4.29	0.783	0.1406
	more than 2 hours	27	3.44	0.974	0.1875

	Device: 30 minutes; 2 - 1 hour; 3 - 2 hours; 4 - more than 2 hours)	N	Mean	SD	SE

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

The mean scores for this item revealed that students who used the internet for ≤30 minutes (M = 3.94, SD = 0.77), 1 hour (M = 3.96, SD = 0.89), and 2 hours (M = 4.29, SD = 0.78) reported higher discomfort than those using it for more than 2 hours (M = 3.44, SD = 0.97) (*Figure 13).* Tukey post-hoc analysis indicated a significant difference between the 2-hour and >2-hour groups, with a mean difference of 0.846 (p = .002). This pattern suggests that moderate internet users may experience greater discomfort at school compared to heavy users, possibly reflecting different coping strategies or contextual factors associated with more extensive internet use.

Figure 13: Welch's ANOVA Results for School Satisfaction Items by Digital Media Exposure

	F	df1	df2	p
2 Îmi place la școală	2.700	3	48.6	0.056
3 Școala este interesantă	1.059	3	50.9	0.375
4 Îmi doresc să nu fiu obligat/ă să merg la școală	1.516	3	49.5	0.222
5 La școală se întâmplă lucruri care nu îmi plac	0.832	3	50.6	0.483
6 Îmi plac activitățile de la școală	1.280	3	48.9	0.292
7 La școală învăț multe lucruri utile	2.103	3	45.9	0.113
8 Nu mă simt prea bine la școală	4.251	3	51.1	0.009

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

In the non-parametric analysis using the Kruskal-Wallis test, a significant group difference emerged only for the item "I don't feel very well at school", $\chi^2(3) = 12.92$, p = .005, with an effect size $\varepsilon^2 = 0.1068$, indicating a medium effect (*Figure 14*). This suggests that students' self-reported discomfort at school varies significantly depending on their daily internet use.

Figure 14: The Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test for School Satisfaction Items by Digital Media Exposure

	χ^2	df	p	ε^2
2 Îmi place la școală	8.49	3	0.037	0.0701
3 Școala este interesantă	4.21	3	0.240	0.0348
4 Îmi doresc să nu fiu obligat/ă să merg la școală	4.83	3	0.184	0.0399
5 La școală se întâmplă lucruri care nu îmi plac	2.44	3	0.486	0.0202
6 Îmi plac activitățile de la școală	4.96	3	0.175	0.0410
7 La școală învăț multe lucruri utile	6.63	3	0.084	0.0548
8 Nu mă simt prea bine la școală	12.92	3	0.005	0.1068

Source: Descriptive statistics computed using JAMOVI

Although most pairwise comparisons did not reach statistical significance, a key difference was observed between students who used the internet for 2 hours per day and those who used it for more than 2 hours, with a Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner test result of W = -4.850, p = .003. This finding aligns with the parametric analysis and indicates that moderate users (2 hours/day) reported significantly more discomfort at school compared to heavy users (>2 hours/day). No other school satisfaction item showed statistically significant differences between groups (all p > .05), with the exception of "I like school", which reached significance in the overall test ($\chi^2(3) = 8.49$, p = .037, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.0701$), though pairwise contrasts did not remain significant after correction, except for a marginal difference between the 2-hour and >2-hour groups (W = -3.81, p = .035).

The converging results of both parametric and non-parametric analyses indicate that students' emotional well-being at school, as measured by the item "I don't feel very well at school", is significantly associated with daily internet usage. Interestingly, students who reported using the internet for approximately 2 hours per day consistently exhibited the highest levels of discomfort, while those in the >2-hour group reported comparatively lower discomfort levels. This unexpected pattern may reflect adaptive behaviors or coping mechanisms among heavy users, such as using digital engagement to counteract or escape from school-related stress. The marginally significant findings related to the item "I like school" further suggest that moderate internet use may be associated with reduced school satisfaction, although the evidence is less robust.

These findings highlight the complexity of the relationship between screen time and school well-being, pointing to a non-linear association where moderate use may pose greater risks than either low or very high usage. Further research is needed to explore underlying psychological, social, and contextual variables—such as purpose of internet use, social support, and academic pressure—that might explain this pattern.

The null hypothesis was rejected for the item "I don't feel very well at school", in both the parametric and non-parametric tests. This result suggests that internet use duration has a measurable impact on students' affective experience at school. Specifically, moderate users (around 2 hours/day) appear to be more emotionally vulnerable than both light and heavy users. These findings have implications for educators and policymakers who aim to promote student well-being: simply limiting screen time may not be sufficient; instead, attention must be paid to how students are engaging with the internet and the role it plays in their school and emotional lives.

4.5 Additional Analyses

To gain deeper insight into the factors that may influence school satisfaction, a series of additional statistical analyses were performed. These included an examination of gender-based differences, age-related variations, and disparities linked to school type. Each of these analyses aimed to identify specific demographic influences on students' overall satisfaction with their educational experience.

4.5.1 Gender Differences in School Satisfaction

To assess whether school satisfaction differs by gender, an independent samples t-test was conducted for each of the eight items measuring affective and cognitive components of students' school experiences. Due to significant violations of the normality assumption across all items (Shapiro-Wilk $p < .001$), the results were corroborated with non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests to ensure robust conclusions. Two items revealed statistically significant gender differences. First, for the item "I look forward to going to school", girls reported significantly higher levels of enthusiasm compared to boys, $t(120) = -2.210$, $p = .029$; $U = 1462$, $p = .031$. The mean score was $M = 4.20$ ($SD = 0.95$) for girls and $M = 3.79$ ($SD = 1.10$) for boys. Second, on the item "At school, things happen that I don't like", boys reported significantly more negative experiences than girls, $t(120) = 2.974$, $p = .004$; $U = 1336$, $p = .006$. Boys had a mean score of $M = 3.43$ ($SD = 1.13$), while girls reported $M = 2.79$ ($SD = 1.24$).

The analysis indicates that gender plays a role in shaping certain aspects of school satisfaction. Girls appear to exhibit more positive emotional engagement with school, while boys report more negative experiences. These findings highlight the importance of considering gender-specific perspectives in educational well-being research and intervention design.

4.5.2 Age Differences in School Satisfaction

To examine whether students' school satisfaction differs by age, a non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted, given that all items violated the assumption of normality (Shapiro-Wilk $p < .001$ for all). Students were grouped into four age categories: 9, 10, 11, and 12 years old. A significant difference between age groups was found for the item "I learn many useful things at school", $\chi^2(3) = 8.93$, $p = .030$, with a moderate effect size ($\varepsilon^2 = 0.0738$). Although the overall result indicates that perceptions of usefulness vary across age groups, post hoc Dwass-Steel-Critchlow-Fligner comparisons did not reveal statistically significant differences between specific pairs of age groups after correction (all $p > .05$),

though one comparison (9 vs. 11 years) approached significance (W = -3.57, p = .056). This trend suggests a potential decline in perceived educational utility as children grow older, which may reflect developmental changes in motivation or expectations. For the remaining seven items such as "I like school," "School is interesting," and "I don't feel very well at school" - no significant differences were observed across age groups (all p > .05). Effect sizes were small (ε^2 ranging from 0.0095 to 0.036), indicating minimal variation in emotional and cognitive school engagement as a function of age within this sample.

The analysis revealed that age has a statistically significant, though modest, impact on how students perceive the usefulness of what they learn at school. While most aspects of school satisfaction remained stable across ages 9 to 12, the perception of educational value showed signs of decline in older students. These findings underline the importance of age-responsive pedagogical strategies to maintain perceived relevance and engagement throughout primary school.

4.5.3 School type Differences in Student Satisfaction

An independent samples t-test, confirmed by Mann-Whitney U tests due to non-normal distributions and unequal variances, showed that students in private schools reported significantly higher emotional well-being than those in public schools. For example, private school students were less likely to want to avoid school (M = 2.42, SD = 1.45) compared to public school students (M = 3.51, SD = 1.42), $p < .001$. They also reported fewer negative experiences (M = 2.65 vs. 3.75, $p < .001$) and felt better at school (M = 4.20 vs. 3.55, $p < .001$). No significant differences emerged for cognitive items such as "I like school" or "I learn useful things", indicating that differences are primarily affective rather than academic.

5. Discussion

This study offers a significant contribution to the research on school satisfaction among Romanian primary school students, highlighting the influence of specific family and behavioral factors on how children perceive their educational experience. In the current context, where school well-being is regarded as a key indicator of students' socio-emotional and academic development, these findings align with and expand upon existing international literature.

Students showed strong agreement with the statement "At school, I learn many useful things," suggesting that school is primarily perceived as a valuable learning environment. This perception is supported by studies such as those by Wang and Eccles (2013) and Casas et al., (2012), which emphasize that recognizing the relevance of learning enhances intrinsic motivation and academic engagement. Conversely, the lowest-rated item, "I wish I didn't have to go to school", reflects a general acceptance of compulsory education and a low level of resistance to school attendance, consistent with findings from Bălţătescu & Cernea-Radu (2024), who observed stable satisfaction levels in early school years.

One of the study's most consistent findings relates to the influence of maternal education on students' affective dimensions of school satisfaction. Children whose mothers had completed university-level education reported higher levels of enthusiasm and emotional well-being at school. These findings are in line with Awada & Shelleby (2021), who

demonstrated that higher maternal education correlates with better academic performance and emotional adjustment in children. Similarly, Harding et al., (2015) argue that higher-educated mothers create more stimulating family environments that support both cognitive and emotional school engagement.

Another significant predictor was family size. Students from families with four or more children reported lower levels of school anticipation, enjoyment, and emotional well-being. These results validate the resource dilution theory proposed by Blake (1981) and supported by recent research such as Gómez-Baya et al. (2021) and Chen et al. (2025), which show that in larger families, parental resources (attention, time, educational support) are distributed more thinly, negatively impacting children's educational experiences and development.

Excessive digital exposure was also negatively associated with students' emotional well-being at school, particularly among those reporting around two hours of daily non-educational internet use. Although the relationship was not strictly linear, students who used the internet for more than two hours reported slightly less discomfort, this finding aligns with studies by Dou and Shek (2021) and Moe (2024), which document the negative impact of unregulated digital media consumption on school engagement and psychological balance. It is possible that frequent users develop coping mechanisms or use digital engagement to buffer stress associated with school dissatisfaction. Gender differences also emerged, with girls reporting greater anticipation for school and fewer negative experiences. These results are consistent with findings by Oriol et al. (2017) and Vujčić et al. (2025), who suggest that girls tend to exhibit more emotional engagement and harmonious relationships in the school environment, which contributes to higher satisfaction levels.

Lastly, school type proved to be a significant differentiator. Students in private schools reported higher levels of emotional well-being and fewer negative experiences, which are consistent with Santacroce & Barclay (2024) and Huebner et al. (2013). These differences may be attributed to structural advantages such as smaller class sizes, closer teacher-student relationships, and better access to educational resources in private settings.

Overall, the findings confirm the multidimensional and context-dependent nature of school satisfaction. They suggest that educational well-being cannot be fully understood without considering the familial, digital, and institutional factors that shape students' school experiences. These conclusions underscore the importance of developing culturally adapted assessment tools and inform educational policies that are responsive to the real needs of primary school students in Romania.

6. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although this study offers valuable insights into the emotional and motivational dimensions of school satisfaction among Romanian primary school students, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the sample size, while adequate for an initial exploratory analysis, was relatively small and unevenly distributed across the independent variables. Future research should employ larger and more balanced samples that allow for comparative analyses and more informative interaction models.

Secondly, the study employed a convenience sampling strategy, selecting participants from five schools that agreed to participate. While this method facilitated access and ethical approvals, it limits the generalizability of the results to the wider population of Romanian primary school students. Future validation stages should incorporate probabilistic sampling to ensure regional and institutional representativeness (urban/rural, public/private).

Another limitation concerns the reliance on student self-reports, particularly from younger children, who may interpret Likert-type items or negatively worded statements differently. Despite careful item adaptation, some reverse-coded statements exhibited lower internal consistency and were more difficult for participants to comprehend. This difficulty is also confirmed in the literature (Barnette, 2000), suggesting that future versions of the scale should avoid negative phrasing and instead use positively framed, age-appropriate statements. Furthermore, although the study controlled for some basic socio-demographic variables, other relevant factors - such as parenting style, socioeconomic status, or the quality of teacher-student relationships - were not included. Incorporating these variables in future models would provide a more detailed understanding of how school satisfaction develops in the early years of education. Regarding behavioral predictors, the relationship between digital media exposure and school satisfaction revealed a complex, non-linear pattern. While moderate use (around two hours per day) was associated with increased discomfort, this model requires further investigation. Future studies should disaggregate screen time by content and context (e.g., educational vs. recreational use) and explore mediating variables, such as self-regulation or parental supervision.

Finally, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw causal inferences. Longitudinal studies that follow the evolution of school satisfaction over time and across educational transitions (e.g., from primary to secondary school) would provide valuable insights into the stability and predictors of school well-being.

This study provides a solid foundation for adapting and validating a culturally relevant instrument for measuring school satisfaction in Romania. Future research is encouraged to use larger and more representative samples, improve item clarity, integrate additional contextual variables, and adopt longitudinal approaches. These improvements will enhance the psychometric validity of the instrument and broaden its applicability in Romanian educational research and practice.

7. Conclusion

This study represents one of the first empirical attempts to validate a culturally adapted instrument for measuring school satisfaction among Romanian primary school students, while also examining the influence of contextual variables such as maternal education, family size, and digital media exposure. The findings confirm that school satisfaction is a multidimensional construct shaped by both individual experiences and broader family and lifestyle dynamics.

Psychometric analyses support the use of the adapted instrument, with acceptable internal consistency and relevance for the target population. Contextual findings underscore that student with university-educated mothers, from smaller families, and with lower daily

screen time reported significantly higher levels of emotional and motivational engagement with school. These results align with international literature, confirming the predictive power of parental education and family context in shaping students' well-being and attitudes toward education.

Moreover, the study reveals that digital media use does not affect school satisfaction in a linear manner, and that gender and school type can further differentiate students' affective responses to the school environment. Together, these insights highlight the importance of integrating sociocultural and behavioral factors into both theoretical models and practical interventions aimed at enhancing school well-being.

By offering a validated measurement tool and contextually grounded findings, this study provides a meaningful step toward strengthening evidence-based research and policy in Romanian primary education. Future efforts should build on these foundations by expanding sample representativeness, refining measurement instruments, and adopting longitudinal frameworks to better understand the development of school satisfaction across time and transitions.

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