

**16th International Conference on
Humanities, Psychology and Social Sciences**

14 - 16 March 2024

Berlin, Germany

Application of a Dual-factor Model to the Study of Mental Health Status of Primary School Students in Hong Kong

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Abstract

Past research revealed that the physical, emotional, and social well-being of Hong Kong school-aged children were generally neglected in favor of school achievement. The holistic well-being of school children was generally lower than international standards. This study adopted a dual-factor model of mental health to investigate the subjective well-being and psychological distress of Hong Kong primary school students. A questionnaire consisting of items of sociodemographic characteristics and measuring instruments (i.e., *WHO Well-being Scale*, *Kessler's Psychological Distress Scale*, and *Perception of Inclusion Questionnaire*) was designed for data collection. A total of 2597 students (mean age = 10.1 years, SD = 1.0; 48.2% were girls) from 17 primary schools responded to the questionnaire survey. The data revealed that 68.8% of the school children were within the healthy range of subjective well-being. Nevertheless, 51.8% of the students also showed symptoms of psychological distress. Subjective well-being was positively related to school life factors, i.e., school liking, peer relationships, and academic self-concepts, whereas psychological distress were negatively associated with school life factors. Family economic status was also at play but its effect was more significantly on subjective well-being than psychological distress. While type of house living was significantly related to psychological distress, it had no bearing on subjective well-being. Parents separated/divorced is more significantly associated with psychological distress than subjective well-being. The dual-factor model of mental health was empirically demonstrated. To promote mental health of school children effectively and in a more targeted manner, factors identified to be associated with subjective well-being and psychological distress should be considered.

Keywords: Dual-factor model of mental health, primary school students, psychological distress, subjective well-being