

ASSESSING INFLUENTIAL FACTORS OF SCHOOL PERFORMANCE IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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The profound developmental changes that occur during childhood and adolescence and their effects on quality of life (QoL) of youth and school performance have been scarcely examined. QoL, self-esteem and sense of coherence (SOC) are factors that may influence school performance affecting learning abilities or causing problematic adjustment to the school environment. The aim of this study was to investigate predictors of school performance from a Salutogenic perspective. Salutogenesis is a model proposed by Antonovsky that focuses on the assets of health, and contributes positively through SOC, the resilience of students to cope with educational contexts by improving youngsters' ability to cope with school work stress. We assume that sense of coherence, quality of life, self-esteem and gender are significant predictors of school performance. We used a cross-sectional design for this quantitative research. Sense of coherence was assessed by the Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC, Antonovsky, 1987); higher scores represent higher levels of SOC. Quality of life was assessed by the Inventory for Measuring Quality of Life (ILK, Matthejat & Remschmidt, 2006) which measures satisfaction related to school, family, social contact, time spent alone, physical and mental health. Self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE, Rosenberg, 1989) to assess positive and negative evaluations of self. School performance was assessed by the grade point average of the previous school year. The sample was composed of 322 subjects aged from 10 to 19 years; the mean age was 14.3 (SD 2.1) years. Part of the sample was recruited from elementary, vocational and high schools in Szeged, Hungary and another part from the Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Unit of Szeged University. There were 171 children and 151 adolescents. Males had significantly higher QoL than females (mean ILK: 21.1/SD: 3.9; 18.7/SD: 5.4, $p=0.006$ respectively). Females had higher grades than males (mean: 4.5/SD:2.7; 4.2/SD:0.7, $p=0.170$, respectively). Males had significantly higher SOC than females (mean SOC:59.8/SD:13.0; 53.6/SD:16.2; $p=.001$ respectively). The overall proposed model was significant. With the exception of SOC, the variables of quality of life, self-esteem and gender were significant predictors of school performance. Together they predicted 10.1% of the grade. School performance is influenced by many factors like quality of life, self-esteem and gender, among others. The study highlights the importance of assessing quality of life and self-esteem in regard to school performance to detect students who lack the ability to handle stress and are at risk of developing learning difficulties. By understanding the subjective perceptions of their health status, students may avoid school failure.