Chapter 5
Wellbeing of Primary and Secondary School Students in Switzerland: A Longitudinal Perspective

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Abstract Although previous research on wellbeing has predominantly focused on wellbeing of adults, in recent years the focus has shifted to wellbeing of children and young adolescents. Most young people spend large amounts of time in the school environment; therefore, more rigorous research that monitors children and young adolescents' reported wellbeing in schools over time appears to be particularly important in identifying the underlying mechanisms behind student wellbeing and particularly vulnerable areas at different developmental stages. The present study investigated the development of student wellbeing amongst primary and secondary school students, using the multidimensional model of student wellbeing. Data from 406 primary school students in grades 4–6 and 403 secondary school students in grades 7–9 was used. The results revealed that secondary school students reported less positive attitudes towards school, less enjoyment in school, lower academic self-concept, more worries in school, and more physical complaints in school compared to primary school students. However, primary school students experienced more social problems in school. Significant differences were also found across gender and students with and without a migration background. Understanding students' wellbeing as they move through different educational stages is crucial to creating an appropriate educational environment for positive student functioning.

Keywords Student wellbeing · Primary education · Secondary education · Longitudinal design · Gender differences · Migration background

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Introduction

Children and adolescents spend a large part of their day in schools, where they acquire not only skills of academic achievement, but also social and emotional skills. Along with individual and socio-cultural influences, student success in both school and life therefore depends on how well schools support students in facilitating cognitive as well as non-cognitive outcomes (OECD, 2017). School environments that promote students' academic goals along with their social and emotional wellbeing may contribute significantly to building healthier and more satisfied societies (Seligman et al., 2009; Waters, 2011). A fair and supportive school environment enriched by trusting and higher-quality social relationships is consistently associated with student wellbeing (SWB) and satisfaction with life (Hall-Lande et al., 2007; Hascher, 2003; Roffey, 2015). Positive perceptions of the school environment can serve as a protective factor that facilitates SWB and resilience, whilst a negative school experience is considered as a risk factor and may cause a variety of ill effects, such as low SWB, disruptive and health-damaging behaviours, and other psychological and emotional problems (Bond et al., 2007). SWB is becoming an increasingly important concept in the educational milieu, especially in the secondary school environments, characterised by psychological need thwarting and less personal social interactions (Drexler, 2010; Eccles et al., 1993; Gunnell et al., 2013), and an essential part of education policy in many countries (OECD, 2017).

Based on the UNICEF report, in 2014 Switzerland ranked 12th out of 41 countries in child's good health and wellbeing, measured by the rates of neonatal mortality, adolescent suicide, mental health symptoms, drunkenness, and teenage births, with 21% of Swiss adolescents reporting two or more psychological symptoms (feeling low, feeling irritable, feeling nervous, or having sleeping difficulties) more than once a week (UNICEF Office of Research, 2017). The report also showed that the frequency of adolescent mental health issues increased in the majority of countries between 2010 and 2014, including Switzerland. Just recently, Hascher and Hagenauer (2020) found that although Swiss adolescent students generally showed high wellbeing in school, they also reported reduced enjoyment and a prevalence of worries in school. Despite growing research on SWB, there is a paucity of research regarding its development. Our study seeks to investigate children's and adolescents' wellbeing as they move through different educational stages—primary and secondary schooling—with the aim to bridge this gap and to provide a more comprehensive view of SWB that may inform research, practice, and policy with new insights and a practical guide to action.

Student Wellbeing (SWB)

There appears to be a shared consensus that SWB can be considered both as an enabling condition for successful learning in school and as an important outcome of education (OECD, 2017; Slee & Skrzypiec, 2016). On the one hand, SWB can be viewed as a resource for promoting better learning outcomes and educational opportunities. Students with greater wellbeing in school generally have higher levels of academic achievement and motivation to learn (Gutman & Vorhaus, 2012; Hascher, 2004; Noble et al., 2008). It can also serve as a protective factor in dealing with learning difficulties and problems in school (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2011). On the other hand, SWB can be considered as an outcome of successful learning and students' satisfaction with their school experiences, including the quality of instruction and social interactions at school (Eccles et al., 1991; Gutman et al., 2010; Hall-Lande et al., 2007; Wentzel, 2009). Despite mounting evidence of the benefits of SWB and the extensive literature based on the topic, there is a lack of consensus on its conceptualisation and measurement. As a consequence, the education sector has to deal with an ironic paradox: there is widely accepted importance to respond and monitor SWB and yet little consensus on what SWB at its core is (Powell & Graham, 2017; Soutter, 2011).

Based on our review of the literature explicitly focused on wellbeing in school, we suggest to differentiate between three approaches towards defining the concept of SWB. First, SWB can be seen as an expression of individual feelings and functioning in the school context. For example, De Fraine et al. (2005, p. 297) defines SWB as "the degree to which a student feels good in the school environment." (see also Fraillon, 2004; Holfve-Sabel, 2014). The second approach reflects one's interaction with the environment and describes SWB as "a positive emotional life which is the result of harmony between the sum of specific environmental factors on the one hand and the personal needs and expectations of pupils vis-à-vis the school on the other" (Engels et al., 2004, p. 128). SWB is no longer reduced to individual feelings, but is rather an essential outcome of mutual influence of students' needs and school environment (see also Eccles & Midgley, 1989). The third approach, the one that corresponds to the theoretical construct of general wellbeing (see Diener, 2000; Diener & Lucas, 2000), provides a more holistic view of SWB integrating both positive and negative aspects of school life, including affective, cognitive, and physical elements (Hascher, 2007). According to Hascher (2003, p. 129), SWB can be conceptualised as "a quality of experience characterised by the dominance of positive feelings and cognitions towards school, persons in school and the school context in comparison to negative feelings and cognitions towards school life." Experiencing higher levels of wellbeing in school may fuel psychological resilience and lessen the resonance of any particular negative event (see also Fredrickson, 2001). In the current study, we align with this approach and argue that to understand and explain SWB it is crucial to not only concentrate on students' disorders or deficits, but also to examine students' strengths and positive attributes, which could help regulate their experiences of negative emotions.

Most scholars broadly agree that various elements constitute SWB (e.g., Borgonovi & Pál, 2016; Fraillon, 2004; Hascher, 2004; Soutter et al., 2014). Based upon grounded conceptualisations of wellbeing of adolescents (e.g., Grob et al., 1996) and adults (e.g., Ryff & Keyes, 1995), Hascher (2004) introduced a multidimensional model of SWB in school (see Fig. 5.1), taking the complexity of the construct into account (see also Bornstein et al., 2003). Three positive and three negative dimensions represent particular aspects of SWB and can be used as indicator categories. For the development of SWB, it is important that students suffer as little as possible from worries (e.g., worries about school grades), physical complaints (e.g., headaches, stomachaches), and social problems in school (e.g., problems with classmates). As such, a high level of SWB indicates the dominance of positive experiences and evaluations (i.e., positive attitudes towards school, enjoyment in school, positive academic self-concept) over the negative ones. This model has already been applied in several empirical studies (e.g., Donat et al., 2016; Hascher, 2004; Hascher & Hagenauer, 2011; Morinaj & Hascher, 2018; Urhahne & Zhu, 2015).

Based on previous findings and PISA 2015 results, the majority of students in Swiss schools appear to be reasonably satisfied with school (Hascher, 2004; OECD, 2017). However, there remains a fairly large number of students (21% of 15-year-old students in 2015) who are not or moderately satisfied with their lives (OECD, 2017). Thus far, it has been found that SWB decreases as students progress in grade level (Burke & Minton, 2019; Hascher, 2004, 2007; Inchley et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2016). Starting from childhood, some primary school children may experience declining or low levels of wellbeing (Gutman et al., 2010). Previous research has also reported a decrease in SWB during adolescence, with students reaching the end of compulsory education experiencing the lowest levels of wellbeing (Tomyn & Cummins, 2011). Declines in SWB may be at least partially attributed to the transition from childhood to adolescence and challenges during the period of adolescence, including heavier academic workload, higher academic pressure,

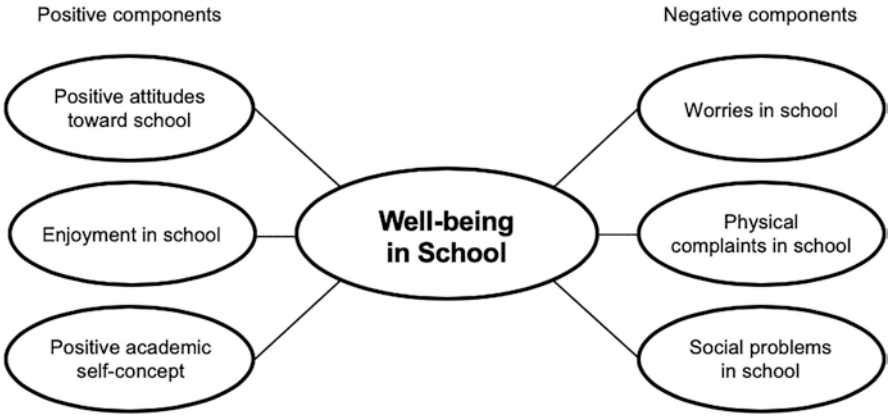

Fig. 5.1 A six-dimensional model of SWB. (Based on Hascher, 2004, p. 151)

psychological need thwarting, and less personal social interactions in school (Drexler, 2010; Gunnell et al., 2013; Gutman & Eccles, 2007; Levitin, 2015; Virtanen et al., 2019). The quality of SWB can also be affected by students' characteristics such as gender and migration history. The findings regarding gender differences are heterogeneous and thus have to be viewed critically. Some studies indicated that girls generally have lower levels of wellbeing than boys (Burke & Minton, 2019; Gestsdottir et al., 2015). Girls tend to experience more physical complaints than boys, perceive themselves more negatively than boys do, express more anxiety and worries in regard to their school performance than boys (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2020; Morinaj & Hascher, 2017; Pomerantz et al., 2002). At the same time, girls exhibit higher levels of school liking and school satisfaction than boys (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2020; Inchley et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2016). It can be thus concluded that females experience both positive and negative aspects of wellbeing more intensively (Eder, 2007). Other studies indicated no systematic gender differences in regard to SWB (e.g., Boulton et al., 2011; Hascher, 2007). It was also found that emotional dispositions and attitudes towards school worsen over school years for both male and female students (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2011).

With respect to migration background, results from PISA 2015 showed that in Switzerland students without a migration background reported higher life satisfaction and stronger sense of belonging at school compared to students with a migration background that may be at least partially attributable to teachers' expectations and judgments (Glock et al., 2013; OECD, 2017). However, both first-generation students (both students and their parents born outside Switzerland) and second-generation students (students born in Switzerland, but parents born in another country) expressed a greater achievement motivation than students without a migration background (see OECD, 2017, p. 314), which can be attributed to an ambition to succeed and higher levels of academic self-concept (Stanat & Christensen, 2006). Considering that more and more people migrate across the world, the importance of investigating the wellbeing of students with a migration background becomes paramount. In Switzerland in 2018, about 38% of the permanent resident population aged 15 or over has a migration background (30.2% 1st generation, 7.3% 2nd generation) (Federal Statistical Office (FSO), 2018). Taking all of this into consideration, the aim of the current study was twofold: to shed light on the development of SWB in Swiss primary and secondary schools and to examine the prevalence of SWB according to educational stage, gender, and migration background.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

A review of existing theory and recent research on SWB provided an opportunity to address specific research questions. The following four research questions were addressed:

1. What are the developmental trends in SWB amongst Swiss primary (Grades 4–6) and secondary (Grades 7–9) school students?

   We assumed a decrease in positive dimensions of SWB and an increase in negative dimensions of SWB in both primary and secondary school (Hypothesis 1).
2. How do Swiss primary and secondary school students differ in their wellbeing?

   We expected that secondary school students would exhibit lower wellbeing compared to primary school students (i.e., higher scores on negative wellbeing dimensions and lower scores on positive wellbeing dimensions) (Hypothesis 2).
3. What are the gender differences in wellbeing scores of Swiss primary and secondary school students?

   We assumed that female students would report more positive attitudes towards school and higher level of enjoyment in school, but also lower scores in academic self-concept, more worries, more physical complaints, and more social problems in school compared to male students, in both primary and secondary schools (Hypothesis 3).
4. What are the differences in wellbeing scores between students with and without a migration background in Swiss primary and secondary schools?

   We expected that students with a migration background would exhibit lower wellbeing compared to their native counterparts, in both primary and secondary schools (i.e., higher scores on negative wellbeing dimensions and lower scores on positive wellbeing dimensions) (Hypothesis 4).

Method

Participants and Procedure

The present study used data from the longitudinal research project **"**School Alienation in Switzerland and Luxembourg" (SASAL, 2015–2019). Two cohorts—primary and secondary school students—were assessed annually for 3 years, starting in Grade 4 and Grade 7. The sample included 406 primary school students (t_1: 46.3% male; M_{age} = 10.3 years [*SD* = .99]; t_1: Grade 4, t_2: Grade 5, t_3: Grade 6) and 403 secondary school students (44.3% male; M_{age} t_1 = 13.0 years [*SD* = .54]; t_1: Grade 7, t_2: Grade 8, t_3: Grade 9) from the Swiss canton of Bern who participated in all three waves of the study. Fifty-two percent of the primary school students and 45% of the secondary school students had a migration background (at least the child and/or one parent not born in Switzerland). The self-report questionnaire was voluntarily and anonymously completed by students in their classrooms during regular school time.

Measures

Student wellbeing was assessed with the 19-item SWB questionnaire (Hascher, 2007), including six distinct dimensions of wellbeing in school: (1) positive attitudes towards school (PAS, 3 items; e.g., "I like to go to school"), (2) enjoyment in school (EIS, 3 items; e.g., "Have you experienced joy because of teachers' friendliness in the past few weeks?"), (3) positive academic self-concept (PASC, 3 items; e.g., "I don't have problems mastering school tasks"), (4) worries in school (WIS, 3 items; e.g., "Have you been worried about your school grades in the past few weeks?"), (5) physical complaints in school (PCS, 4 items; e.g., "Have you had a severe headache in school in the past few weeks?"), and (6) social problems in school (SPS, 3 items; e.g., "Have you had problems with your classmates in the past few weeks?"). Participants indicated their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *never/disagree,* 6 = *very often/agree*). A confirmatory factor analysis supported the six-factor structure of the scale (Hascher, 2007). In both the primary and secondary school samples, the internal reliability at all three measurement points was very good (McDonald's ωs = .70–.89 for primary school and McDonald's ωs = .73–.85 for secondary school) (see Table 5.1).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Means, standard deviations, and internal reliability for the six SWB dimensions are presented in Table 5.1. The intercorrelations between the three positive dimensions and between the three negative dimensions of SWB were positive and low to moderate, indicating that the dimensions are interrelated, but conceptually distinct (bivariate correlations between SWB dimensions can be obtained from the authors upon request).

Developmental Trends in SWB

To investigate developmental trends in SWB amongst primary (Grades 4–6) and secondary (Grades 7–9) school students (Hypothesis 1), we conducted a repeated measures ANOVA. In addition, for all results we reported effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) to provide information about the magnitude of the findings, with $d = 0.20$ representing small effect size, $d = 0.50$ representing medium effect size, and $d = 0.80$ representing large effect size (Kampenes et al., 2007). In primary school, post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction revealed that students' positive attitudes towards school

Table 5.1 Descriptive statistics for SWB dimensions at three time points

	Grade 4		Grade 5		Grade 6		Multiple comparisons	
Variable	*M* (*SD*)	ω	*M* (*SD*)	ω	*M* (*SD*)	ω	Grade difference	Cohen's *d*
Primary school								
PAS	4.84 (1.05)	.74	4.82 (.99)	.76	4.70 (1.03)	.81	4 > 6 5 > 6	0.13 0.12
EIS	4.79 (1.07)	.76	4.64 (1.05)	.74	4.47 (1.17)	.81	4 > 5 4 > 6 5 > 6	0.14 0.28 0.15
PASC	4.69 (.94)	.70	4.56 (1.02)	.77	4.47 (1.01)	.78	4 > 6	0.19
WIS	2.85 (1.48)	.78	3.02 (1.54)	.81	3.29 (1.48)	.80	4 > 6 5 > 6	0.29 0.17
PCS	1.79 (1.08)	.78	1.93 (1.22)	.83	1.99 (1.24)	.82	4 > 6	0.16
SPS	1.77 (1.05)	.83	1.76 (1.15)	.89	1.79 (1.13)	.85	–	–
Secondary school								
Variable	Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9		Multiple comparisons	
	M (*SD*)	ω	*M* (*SD*)	ω	*M* (*SD*)	ω	Grade difference	Cohen's *d*
PAS	4.50 (.97)	.77	4.44 (1.00)	.79	4.42 (1.00)	.78	7 > 8 7 > 9	0.18 0.27
EIS	4.22 (1.09)	.75	4.01 (1.18)	.81	3.91 (1.24)	.81	–	–
PASC	4.36 (.91)	.80	4.42 (.90)	.81	4.38 (.88)	.73	–	–
WIS	3.21 (1.36)	.77	3.55 (1.40)	.79	3.27 (1.46)	.79	7 < 8 8 > 9	0.24 0.19
PCS	2.07 (1.13)	.75	2.05 (1.17)	.82	2.00 (1.11)	.79	–	–
SPS	1.63 (.90)	.82	1.57 (.93)	.85	1.59 (.95)	.85	–	–

PAS positive attitudes to school, *EIS* enjoyment in school, *PASC* positive academic self-concept, *WIS* worries in school, *PCS* physical complaints in school, *SPS* social problems in school, *Range* min 1, max 6, ω McDonald's omega

slightly decreased from Grade 4 to Grade 6 and from Grade 5 to Grade 6 (see Table 5.1 for primary school). Students also experienced less enjoyment in school over time: They reported less enjoyment in school in Grades 5 and 6 compared to Grade 4 and in Grade 6 compared to Grade 5. Students' academic self-concept was lower in Grade 6 compared to Grade 4. Furthermore, students exhibited more worries in school in Grade 6 compared to Grade 4 and in Grade 6 compared to Grade 5. In regard to physical complaints, primary school students reported more physical complaints in school in Grade 6 compared to Grade 4. There was no significant difference in self-reported social problems in school across time ($p > 0.05$). In secondary school, the results demonstrated that students' enjoyment in school significantly decreased from Grade 7 to Grades 8 and 9 (see Table 5.1 for secondary school). Secondary school students also reported more worries in school in Grade 8 compared to Grade 7; however, they experienced less worries in school in Grade 9 compared to Grade 8. No significant changes were found with respect to other SWB dimensions ($p > 0.05$).

Group Differences in SWB

We were further interested whether there were differences in SWB dimensions between particular student subgroups. Having multiple dependent variables (i.e., SWB dimensions) and independent variables consisting of two independent groups, the one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to specify group differences in SWB between Swiss primary and secondary school students (Hypothesis 2), male and female students (Hypothesis 3), and students with and without a migration background (Hypothesis 4). The third and fourth hypotheses were addressed separately for the primary and secondary school samples.

Educational Stage (Primary vs. Secondary) Regarding the second hypothesis, the results revealed that at each of the three time points primary school students reported more positive attitudes towards school, more enjoyment in school, and more social problems in school compared to secondary school students (see Table 5.2). In addition, students from primary school exhibited higher academic self-concept at t_1 and t_2. Secondary school students experienced more worries in school at t_1 and t_2 and more physical complaints in school at t_1 compared to primary school students.

Table 5.2 Differences in SWB between primary and secondary school students

	Primary school	Secondary school	Group comparisons		
Variable	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	Grade difference	Cohen's *d*	*p*
$PASt_1$	4.84 (1.05)	4.50 (.97)	4 > 7	0.34	<.001
$PASt_2$	4.82 (.99)	4.44 (1.00)	5 > 8	0.38	<.001
$PASt_3$	4.70 (1.03)	4.42 (1.00)	6 > 9	0.28	<.001
$EISt_1$	4.79 (1.07)	4.22 (1.09)	4 > 7	0.53	<.001
$EISt_2$	4.64 (1.05)	4.01 (1.18)	5 > 8	0.56	<.001
$EISt_3$	4.47 (1.17)	3.91 (1.24)	6 > 9	0.46	<.001
$PASCt_1$	4.69 (.94)	4.36 (.91)	4 > 7	0.36	<.001
$PASCt_2$	4.56 (1.02)	4.42 (.90)	5 > 8	0.15	<.05
$PASCt_3$	4.47 (1.01)	4.38 (.88)	–	–	–
$WISt_1$	2.85 (1.48)	3.21 (1.36)	4 > 7	0.25	<.001
$WISt_2$	3.02 (1.54)	3.55 (1.40)	5 > 8	0.36	<.001
$WISt_3$	3.29 (1.48)	3.27 (1.46)	–	–	–
$PCSt_1$	1.79 (1.08)	2.07 (1.13)	4 > 7	0.25	<.001
$PCSt_2$	1.93 (1.22)	2.05 (1.17)	–	–	–
$PCSt_3$	1.99 (1.24)	2.00 (1.11)	–	–	–
$SPSt_1$	1.77 (1.05)	1.63 (.90)	4 > 7	0.14	<.05
$SPSt_2$	1.76 (1.15)	1.57 (.93)	5 > 8	0.18	<.05
$SPSt_3$	1.79 (1.13)	1.59 (.95)	6 > 9	0.19	<.01

PAS positive attitudes to school, *EIS* enjoyment in school, *PASC* positive academic self-concept, *WIS* worries in school, *PCS* physical complaints in school, *SPS* social problems in school, *Range* min 1, max 6, t_1 wave 1, t_2 wave 2, t_3 wave 3

Gender (Male vs. Female) With regard to the third hypothesis, in primary school, girls reported more positive attitudes towards school and more enjoyment in school in Grade 6. However, girls also exhibited more worries in school in Grades 5 and 6 as well as more physical complaints and social problems in school than boys in Grades 4–6 (see Table 5.3 for primary school).

In secondary school, female participants reported more positive attitudes towards school than male students in Grade 9. They also reported more worries in school in Grade 9, more physical complaints in school in Grades 7–9, and more social problems in Grade 9 than male students (see Table 5.3 for secondary school). No systematic gender differences were found with respect to other SWB dimensions.

Migration Background (With vs. Without a Migration Background) Regarding the fourth hypothesis, in primary school, students with a migration background reported more positive attitudes towards school in Grades 4 and 5 and more enjoyment in school in Grade 4 compared to their native counterparts (see Table 5.4 for primary school). They also exhibited evidently more worries in school and physical complaints in school in Grades 4–6 compared to students without a migration background. The students did not differ significantly in terms of their academic self-concept or the experienced amount of social problems in school ($p > .05$).

In secondary school, students with a migration background experienced more positive attitudes towards school in Grade 7. They also exhibited more worries and physical complaints in school in Grades 7–9 compared to students without a migration background (see Table 5.4 for secondary school). Enjoyment in school, academic self-concept, and the occurrence of social problems in school did not differ significantly between the two groups ($p > .05$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to, first, examine the development of SWB in primary and secondary schools across time, and second, investigate the prevalence of wellbeing according to educational stage, gender, and migration history. Data were collected from Swiss primary and secondary school students annually for 3 years, starting in Grade 4 and Grade 7. By studying the change in children's and adolescents' wellbeing over the course of 3 years, our study provides empirical evidence for educators, school authorities, and researchers. Of particular significance in the current study is the finding that Swiss primary and secondary school students generally have high levels of wellbeing in school, indicating that students are exposed to a school environment that supports their socio-emotional, cognitive, and physical functioning that students need to enjoy a fulfilling life within school walls.

In primary school, the developmental trend in SWB was as expected: positive attitudes towards school, enjoyment in school, and academic self-concept decreased from Grade 4 to Grade 6, whilst worries in school and physical complaints increased

Table 5.3 Differences in SWB between male and female students in primary and secondary school

	Male (M)	Female (F)	Group comparisons		
Variable	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	Gender difference	Cohen's *d*	*p*
Primary school					
$PASt_1$	4.82 (1.03)	4.86 (1.05)	–	–	–
$PASt_2$	4.77 (.97)	4.87 (1.01)	–	–	–
$PASt_3$	4.58 (1.06)	4.80 (1.00)	M < F	0.22	<.05
$EISt_1$	4.75 (1.05)	4.80 (1.11)	–	–	–
$EISt_2$	4.65 (.99)	4.64 (1.10)	–	–	–
$EISt_3$	4.34 (1.17)	4.57 (1.16)	M < F	0.20	<.05
$PASCt_1$	4.69 (.94)	4.71 (.94)	–	–	–
$PASCt_2$	4.60 (.94)	4.54 (1.07)	–	–	–
$PASCt_3$	4.48 (.97)	4.45 (1.05)	–	–	–
$WISt_1$	2.75 (1.41)	2.93 (1.52)	–	–	–
$WISt_2$	2.79 (1.45)	3.22 (1.60)	M < F	0.28	<.01
$WISt_3$	3.01 (1.48)	3.53 (1.45)	M < F	0.35	<.001
$PCSt_1$	1.56 (.87)	1.97 (1.17)	M < F	0.40	<.001
$PCSt_2$	1.69 (1.04)	2.12 (1.32)	M < F	0.36	<.001
$PCSt_3$	1.67 (1.04)	2.27 (1.33)	M < F	0.50	<.001
$SPSt_1$	1.64 (.95)	1.89 (1.13)	M < F	0.25	<.05
$SPSt_2$	1.63 (1.05)	1.87 (1.22)	M < F	0.21	<.05
$SPSt_3$	1.68 (.91)	1.90 (1.29)	M < F	0.21	<.05
Secondary school					
$PASt_1$	4.47 (1.05)	4.53 (.92)	–	–	–
$PASt_2$	4.40 (1.05)	4.47 (.96)	–	–	–
$PASt_3$	4.29 (1.03)	4.52 (.96)	M < F	0.23	<.05
$EISt_1$	4.27 (1.20)	4.18 (1.01)	–	–	–
$EISt_2$	4.02 (1.27)	3.99 (1.11)	–	–	–
$EISt_3$	3.82 (1.24)	3.99 (1.24)	–	–	–
$PASCt_1$	4.42 (.92)	4.33 (.90)	–	–	–
$PASCt_2$	4.50 (.87)	4.36 (.92)	–	–	–
$PASCt_3$	4.35 (.89)	4.41 (.87)	–	–	–
$WISt_1$	3.10 (1.40)	3.34 (1.32)	–	–	–
$WISt_2$	3.40 (1.43)	3.66 (1.37)	–	–	–
$WISt_3$	3.12 (1.42)	3.41 (1.47)	M < F	0.21	<.05
$PCSt_1$	1.89 (1.05)	2.22 (1.18)	M < F	0.29	<.01
$PCSt_2$	1.74 (1.04)	2.30 (1.22)	M < F	0.49	<.001
$PCSt_3$	1.71 (.97)	2.25 (1.17)	M < F	0.50	<.001
$SPSt_1$	1.59 (.82)	1.67 (.97)	–	–	–
$SPSt_2$	1.54 (.90)	1.61 (.97)	–	–	–
$SPSt_3$	1.49 (.88)	1.68 (1.01)	M < F	0.20	<.05

PAS positive attitudes to school, *EIS* enjoyment in school, *PASC* positive academic self-concept, *WIS* worries in school, *PCS* physical complaints in school, *SPS* social problems in school, *Range* min 1, max 6, t_1 wave 1, t_2 wave 2, t_3 wave 3

Table 5.4 Differences in SWB between students with and without a migration background in primary and secondary school

	MB	No MB	Group comparisons		
Variable	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	MB difference	Cohen's *d*	*p*
Primary school					
$PASt_1$	5.02 (.99)	4.67 (1.08)	MB > No MB	0.34	<.01
$PASt_2$	4.94 (.96)	4.73 (1.00)	MB > No MB	0.20	<.05
$PASt_3$	4.74 (1.07)	4.71 (.99)	–	–	–
$EISt_1$	4.92 (1.00)	4.67 (1.11)	MB > No MB	0.24	<.05
$EISt_2$	4.73 (1.07)	4.57 (1.03)	–	–	–
$EISt_3$	4.44 (1.25)	4.49 (1.09)	–	–	–
$PASCt_1$	4.69 (.93)	4.69 (.96)	–	–	–
$PASCt_2$	4.58 (.99)	4.54 (1.04)	–	–	–
$PASCt_3$	4.45 1.02)	4.52 (.98)	–	–	–
$WISt_1$	3.30 (1.56)	2.36 (1.23)	MB > No MB	0.66	<.001
$WISt_2$	3.48 (1.55)	2.55 (1.39)	MB > No MB	0.63	< .001
$WISt_3$	3.77 (1.49)	2.78 (1.31)	MB > No MB	0.71	<.001
$PCSt_1$	2.03 (1.24)	1.56 (.86)	MB > No MB	0.44	<.001
$PCSt_2$	2.24 (1.38)	1.59 (.91)	MB > No MB	0.57	<.001
$PCSt_3$	2.30 (1.35)	1.68 (1.02)	MB > No MB	0.52	<.001
$SPSt_1$	1.71 (.98)	1.84 (1.10)	–	–	–
$SPSt_2$	1.84 (1.25)	1.68 (1.05)	–	–	–
$SPSt_3$	1.75 (1.10)	1.83 (1.15)	–	–	–
Secondary school					
$PASt_1$	4.61 (.93)	4.42 (1.00)	MB > No MB	0.20	<.05
$PASt_2$	4.50 (1.02)	4.40 (.99)	–	–	–
$PASt_3$	4.48 (1.00)	4.36 (.99)	–	–	–
$EISt_1$	4.29 (1.04)	4.17 (1.13)	–	–	–
$EISt_2$	4.06 (1.17)	3.96 (1.20)	–	–	–
$EISt_3$	3.88 (1.33)	3.92 (1.17)	–	–	–
$PASCt_1$	4.34 (.95)	4.39 (.88)	–	–	–
$PASCt_2$	4.50 (.87)	4.36 (.92)	–	–	–
$PASCt_3$	4.36 (.87)	4.41 (.89)	–	–	–
$WISt_1$	3.58 (1.38)	2.93 (1.28)	MB > No MB	0.49	<.001
$WISt_2$	3.94 (1.40)	3.25 (1.33)	MB > No MB	0.51	<.001
$WISt_3$	3.66 (1.34)	2.97 (1.48)	MB > No MB	0.49	<.001
$PCSt_1$	2.28 (1.16)	1.90 (1.08)	MB > No MB	0.34	<.01
$PCSt_2$	1.25 (1.23)	1.90 (1.11)	MB > No MB	0.30	<.01
$PCSt_3$	2.17 (1.17)	1.89 (1.06)	MB > No MB	0.25	<.05
$SPSt_1$	1.65 (.93)	1.60 (.88)	–	–	–
$SPSt_2$	1.53 (.91)	1.63 (.97)	–	–	–
$SPSt_3$	1.63 (.98)	1.57 (.94)	–	–	–

MB migration background, *PAS* positive attitudes to school, *EIS* enjoyment in school, *PASC* positive academic self-concept, *WIS* worries in school, *PCS* physical complaints in school, *SPS* social problems in school, *Range* min 1, max 6, t_1 wave 1, t_2 wave 2, t_3 wave 3

with grade level. Amongst secondary school students, the developmental trends were not consistent across all components of wellbeing, offering partial support for Hypothesis 1. For example, students' enjoyment in school significantly decreased from Grade 7 to Grade 9, although no significant change occurred in students' (positive) attitudes towards school or (positive) academic self-concept. It has also been found that secondary school students experienced more school-related worries in Grade 8 compared to Grade 7, 1 year after the transition to a tier of lower secondary education; however, they had less worries in school in Grade 9 compared to Grade 8. The transition from primary to lower secondary education is accompanied by crucial changes, including students' adaptation to a new class and school context and increasing achievement pressure (Eccles et al., 2008; Schunk & Meece, 2005). In addition, students in Switzerland start in Grade 8 to prepare for upper secondary education and undergo a selection either to general education program or vocational education and training program based on their grades, individual characteristics as well as institutional restrictions (i.e., school type at lower secondary level) (Glauser & Becker, 2016). Students are confronted with the necessity to choose a profession and obtain an apprenticeship place or decide which school they want to attend at upper secondary level. This important phase of students' professional identity development seems to be mirrored in more pronounced worries in Grade 8. It may be that towards the end of lower secondary education the transition effects have already manifested themselves, contributing to academic adjustment, and most students have reached a crucial step in shaping their future career pathway. Moreover, students could develop positive and stable interpersonal relationships, fulfilling the basic need for relatedness and enhancing socio-emotional adjustment (Holfve-Sabel, 2014; Jose et al., 2012). In both primary and secondary schools, no significant changes in self-reported social problems in school could be detected over time. This pattern of findings may be associated with only minor changes in the classroom composition and thus relatively little disruption of social networks, except for Grade 7. Although casual contacts with peers might decrease after the transition from primary school to the first year of lower secondary school, they tend to recover by the end of the year (Pellegrini & Bartini, 2000). This finding might also be affected by a self-report format.

Secondary school students scored lower than primary school students on all positive dimensions of SWB and higher on the negative dimensions of SWB, offering support for Hypothesis 2. The only exception to this general pattern was the scores on social problems in school, mainly reflecting students' relationship with their class fellows, with higher scores amongst primary school students. At the primary level, teacher–student relationships are usually more personal, supportive, and friendly than in secondary schools, because teachers know their students well due to teaching the same class for several years (Eccles et al., 1991). It could be therefore argued that close relations with teachers may be more important for primary school students' development (Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Although children's relationships with classmates can also operate as a source of support, previous research shows that they may also be a reason for stress, behaviour problems, and loneliness in school when students are rejected by their classmates (Demanet & Van Houtte,

2012; Ladd, 1990). Our findings suggest that social problems with classmates remained stable during the primary school years. During the turbulent time of later adolescence, the quality of teacher–student relationship weakens and students become increasingly focused on peers (Furman & Collins, 2009; McGrath & Noble, 2010). Secondary school students invest in building and maintaining supportive and trusting interpersonal peer relations to satisfy their needs for acceptance and belonging. In addition, secure and more stable relationship with peers may be viewed as a protective factor, buffering against psychosocial and environmental difficulties. These age-related differences (i.e., a more important role of peers, less personal relations with teachers) could imply that relationships with class fellows are more important for secondary school students than primary school children, resulting in lower incidence of social problems with classmates and no increase in the frequency of social problems over time.

Another finding in the present study was that boys' SWB was higher compared to girls' SWB. Consistent with previous research on gender differences in wellbeing (Gestsdottir et al., 2015; Hascher, 2004; Morinaj & Hascher, 2017; Morinaj & Hascher, 2019), female students exhibited more worries, more physical complaints, and more social problems in school than male students in both primary and secondary school. At the same time, however, school liking was greater amongst girls (Inchley et al., 2016; Ireson & Hallam, 2005; Liu et al., 2016; in the present study, a significant effect was found only at t_3 in primary and secondary school). Boys tend to have more negative relationships with their teachers and more negative attitudes towards school that may result in lower liking for school than girls (Ireson & Hallam, 2005; Rice et al., 2011; Sullivan et al., 2008). Another study demonstrated that poor social relations, school fear, and deviant peer association were linked to school dislike amongst boys (Rönkä et al., 2017). Considering that gender differences are not consistent across all dimensions of SWB, these findings emphasise the importance of promoting socio-emotional, cognitive, and physical functioning of students of both sexes and providing opportunities for both boys and girls to like school. In contrast to some previous studies (e.g., Sullivan, 2009), the results showed that a gender difference in academic self-concept was not significant, neither in primary nor in secondary school, suggesting that the academic self-concept of students in our sample was not affected by gender, offering partial support for Hypothesis 3.

In line with previous studies (e.g., OECD, 2017; Stanat & Christensen, 2006), SWB appears to vary between students with and without a migration background. Students with a migration background showed more worries and more physical complaints in school compared to students without a migration background in both primary and secondary school. Students with a migration background come from relatively less advantaged backgrounds, typically perform less well, and are more frequently allocated to lower school tracks compared to students without a migration background (Caro et al., 2009; Dee, 2005). Furthermore, teacher attitudes and expectations towards ethnic minority students may influence academic performance of students with a migration background as well as the quality of teacher–student

relationships (Glock et al., 2013; van den Bergh et al., 2010). This could imply that teachers may interact with students without a migration background more positively. Therefore, it seems important to support pre-service and in-service teachers in preparing instructional repertoire to teaching students from migrant families. Despite these challenges, students with a migration background appear to have more positive attitudes towards school in primary school and at the beginning of lower secondary education compared to their native peers. Immigrant parents are likely to possess high academic expectations and aspirations for their children (Areepattamannil & Lee, 2014), to overcome many challenges and struggles that immigrant families confront with. The importance of receiving good grades and pursuing further education, transmitted to children by their parents, may in turn intensify students' worries about not being able to succeed in school and fulfil parental expectations. Higher motivation, positive attitudes, and positive emotions of students with a migration background may act as a buffer against the academic challenges they face (e.g., poor grades, increased risk of dropping out of school). Helping students, especially those with a migration background, to link their positive attitudes and high motivation to academic achievement is likely to reduce their school-related anxiety and improve their performance. Educational success of students with a migration background may also benefit from quality relationships with teachers who can promote students' learning directly (Hadjar et al., 2015) and mitigate students' challenges in school (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2010). Also, it may be encouraging that students with a migration background did not appear to experience significantly more social problems in school, offering partial support for Hypothesis 4. Students with a migration background showed similar levels of academic self-concept compared to students without a migration background.

The current study provides a comprehensive picture of children's and young adolescents' wellbeing as they progress through the grades. This research supports the multidimensional nature of SWB construct, consisting of several distinct but related dimensions, suggesting that the SWB questionnaire might be a useful indicator for teachers and schools to monitor their students' wellbeing. Careful monitoring of SWB taking into account students' educational stage would seem to be essential. Similarly, schools might find it useful to examine SWB over time, providing an opportunity to design the most suitable interventions for improving wellbeing of young people. Our findings indicate that SWB may vary by gender and a migration background. Future research should also investigate other factors that may contribute to the development of SWB applying a multi-causal and multi-level perspective (i.e., individual, classroom, school, societal), because multiple factors at different levels may contribute to this process (Hascher, 2010, 2012). Considering the significant differences in regard to gender and migration background, the study illuminates the importance of taking these differences into account when designing positive psychology and classroom interventions. Using longitudinal data, the results also indicated that SWB decreases with age, suggesting that it is necessary to promote the development of wellbeing skills as early as during the primary school age years.

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