# The Relationship between Attributional Style and Emotion Regulation Styles with Social Well-Being in Students

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| **Article type:**<br>*Original Research*<br><br>**How to cite this article:**<br>Akbarnia, H., & Vatankhah, H. R. (2025). The Relationship between Attributional Style and Emotion Regulation Styles with Social Well-Being in Students. *International Journal of Education and Cognitive Sciences, 6*(3), 1-8.<br>https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.ijecs.6.3.1<br><br>© 2025 the authors. Published by Iranian Association for Intelligence and Talent Studies, Tehran, Iran. This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License. | Purpose: This study investigated the relationship between attribution styles, emotion regulation styles, and social well-being among students.<br>Methods and Materials: This study was both descriptive and correlational. The target population for this research comprised all secondary-level students in the 18th district of Tehran during the second semester of the academic year 2022-23. A sample size of 150 individuals was determined based on Krejci and Morgan's (1970) table and selected randomly (Krejcie, 1970). Questionnaires were utilized to gather data on attribution styles (Seligman et al., 1979), emotion regulation styles (Garnefsky et al., 2001), and social well-being (Keyes, 1998) in this study. The data in this study was examined utilizing SPSS version 23 software at both descriptive and inferential stages.<br>Findings: Results indicated that attribution and emotion regulation styles accounted for 23% of the variance in social well-being (p < 0.01), with negative emotion regulation and positive attribution styles contributing significantly to this variance.<br>Conclusion: Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, which indicate that social well-being can be forecasted by individuals' attribution events and regulate their emotions, it is recommended that schools introduce educational initiatives aimed at enhancing students' emotional regulation abilities and cultivating healthy strategies for attributing life experiences.<br><br>Keywords: Attributional styles, Emotion regulation styles, social well-being, Students |

## 1. Introduction

Student social well-being plays a critical role in fostering a thriving and productive society. It's an essential component that contributes significantly to the overall health and stability of communities (Grandchamp, Gordeeva, & Sychev, 2021). Wijngaards et al. (2021) define social well-being as the state in which fundamental needs are met and individuals are capable of living together peacefully while also having access to opportunities for personal growth and development. This encompassing definition highlights the importance of both basic security and the potential for advancement. Social inclusion

and a strong sense of belonging are crucial elements in nurturing and supporting robust social well-being among students. Furthermore, the successful reintegration of displaced individuals back into their communities, as highlighted by Cole et al. (2004), contributes significantly to the strengthening of the social fabric and the enhancement of overall social well-being. Factors such as emotional intelligence, the ability to adapt effectively to changing circumstances, and a genuine concern for the welfare of others, often expressed through altruistic behaviors, further contribute to the promotion of positive social well-being (Lopez-Zafra et al, 2019).

When students experience strong social well-being, it cultivates an environment that encourages the development of stable social structures and promotes a heightened sense of individual safety and security within the community. This sense of safety and stability, in turn, enables individuals to form and maintain meaningful and supportive relationships with others (Tracy, & Weidman, 2021). Moreover, it fosters a greater inclination to understand, respect, and adhere to the established social norms and expectations of the community, as suggested by Lopez-Zafra et al. (2019), ultimately leading to a more cohesive and harmonious social environment. Attribution styles, referring to the ways individuals understand and explain their experiences and the reasons behind them, play a crucial role in shaping their overall sense of well-being, as highlighted by research (Okadigbo & Unachukwu, 2022; Muschetto & Siegel, 2021). These attribution styles influence how we perceive ourselves and our place in the world, impacting both our emotional and psychological health. Building upon this understanding, Heider's attribution theory posits that individuals actively engage in cognitive processes to establish connections between actions and their resulting outcomes (Tian & Wang, 2020). We strive to understand why things happen, and this understanding profoundly affects our subsequent behaviors and feelings.

The process of attribution can be systematically categorized based on several key dimensions, providing a framework for analyzing how individuals interpret events. These dimensions include the internal/external dimension, differentiating between attributing causes to situational factors versus dispositional factors within the individual (Weiner, 1972). Another crucial dimension is the stable/unstable dimension, which contrasts temporary causes with enduring causes that are likely to persist over time. Finally, the general/partial dimension, further articulated by Kelly (1972) and Aftab (2021), allows us to consider whether an attribution applies broadly or only to a specific situation. The interplay of these dimensions provides a comprehensive view of attributional biases (Okadigbo, & Unachukwu, 2022).

For instance, consider the example of attributing failure to factors that are both stable and internal, such as a perceived lack of innate ability. This type of attribution can contribute to the development of learned helplessness, a state where individuals believe they lack control over their outcomes and cease attempting to improve their situation (Seligman et al., 1979; Gordeeva et al., 2020). Conversely, attributing success solely to external and temporary factors, such as mere luck, can be equally detrimental to well-being. By downplaying the role of one's effort and skills, individuals may undermine their self-efficacy and motivation to strive for future achievements. In essence, a balanced and realistic attribution style is essential for maintaining a positive outlook and promoting adaptive behavior.Beyond attribution, emotion regulation styles – the conscious abilities to manage emotions also influence social well-being (Extremera et al., 2019). Garnefski et al. (2001) outlined adaptive (e.g., acceptance, reappraisal) and maladaptive (e.g., self-blame, rumination; Sándor et al., 2021) regulation strategies. Effective emotion regulation improves functioning, well-being, and social interactions, preventing impulsive behaviors like self-harm (Shu et al., 2021).

Despite the importance of student social well-being, research on related factors remains limited (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2019; Okadigbo & Unachukwu, 2022). This study investigates the relationship between attribution styles, emotion regulation styles, and social well-being in students, addressing a crucial research gap. Understanding these influences can inform interventions by policymakers, counselors, psychologists, and parents to enhance student social well-being, particularly during the formative period of adolescence and early adulthood. Further research, both nationally and internationally, is needed to address factors affecting student health and well-being. The primary objective is to examine the association between attribution and emotion regulation styles with students' social well-being.

2.    Methods and Materials

2.1.  Study Design and Participants

The current study is both descriptive and correlational in nature.   It focused on the statistical population, sample, and sampling method used. The statistical population for this research included all second-level high school students in District 18

of Tehran in the second semester of the academic year 2022-2023. A sample size of 150 individuals was determined based on Krejci and Morgan's table (Krejcie, 1970). The sample was chosen using a multi-stage cluster random sampling technique. Initially, six schools were randomly chosen from all secondary schools in Tehran's 18th district. From each of these schools, three classes were randomly selected, totaling 18 classes. Finally, ten individuals from each class were randomly chosen as part of the statistical sample. 180 questionnaires were distributed, with 150 complete responses being analyzed. Criteria for participating in the study include being a second-year high school student, being under 18 years old, and having an interest in being involved in the research. Exclusion criteria involve having difficulty answering questionnaires, having a diagnosed psychiatric disorder in oneself or close family members, and a history of dropping out of school for more than one academic semester.

To carry out field research, he first obtained a permit from the Tehran Education Department and personally visited the schools to explain the questionnaires in detail. The research objectives were presented to the school authorities, and approval was secured from the school principal. Detailed instructions on how to fill out the questionnaires were provided, emphasizing the importance of honesty and confidentiality. Students were instructed to complete the questionnaires thoroughly and truthfully while ensuring the confidentiality of their responses. After collecting the completed questionnaires, the data was analyzed.

### 2.2. Data Collection Tools

### 2.1.2. Attribution Style Questionnaire (ASQ)

The first questionnaire used was the attribution styles questionnaire, which was originally developed by Seligman et al. (1979) (Seligman et al., 1979). This questionnaire consisted of 12 questions, with 6 focusing on causal attributions related to positive outcomes (success) and 6 related to negative outcomes (failure). Participants were required to imagine themselves in each situation and rate the causes of the events based on internal, stable, and general dimensions. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, with separate calculations for failure and success scenarios. The sum of responses to odd-numbered questions reflected the internal-external dimension, stable-unstable dimension, and general-partial dimension for failure situations. The sum of responses to even-numbered questions reflected these dimensions for success situations. The questionnaire's internal consistency has been assessed in previous studies. Seligman et al. (1979) reported alpha coefficients of 0.44 for internal negative outcomes, 0.30 for internal positive outcomes, 0.54 for stable negative outcomes, 0.64 for overall negative outcomes, and 0.58 for overall positive outcomes (Seligman et al., 1979). Ashkani and Heydari (2014) also reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.74 for all questions in the questionnaire (Ashkani & Heydari, 2014).

### 2.2.2. The Emotion regulation styles questionnaire

The scale was created by Garnevsky et al. in 2001 and consists of 36 items with 5 options, designed for both adults and children (Garnefski et al., 2001). It evaluates 9 cognitive strategies including self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive refocusing, refocusing on planning, positive reappraisal, open-mindedness, catastrophizing, and blaming others. This questionnaire measures both positive and negative emotion regulation. Garnevsky (2001) found good validity and reliability for this questionnaire, with reported alpha coefficients ranging between 0.71 and 0.81 for the subscales (Garnefski et al., 2001). The Persian version of the questionnaire was validated in Iran by Hosni in 2009, showing good internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.76 to 0.92. Scores on the subscales were significantly correlated with total scores on the questionnaire. The retest correlation coefficients ranged from 0.51 to 0.77, indicating the scale's stability. Principal component analysis supported the original nine-factor model, explaining 74% of the variance with relatively high internal relationships between subscales (0.32 to 0.67). In terms of criterion validity, the subscales of the Persian version of the questionnaire were specifically linked to symptoms of depression.

### 2.3.2. The Social Well-Being

The questionnaire developed by Keys in 1998 consists of 33 items based on his theoretical model of social well-being (Keyes, 1998). This questionnaire is commonly used in social health psychology to assess social well-being levels. Responses are scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Scores on this questionnaire can range from 33 to 165. To validate his questionnaire, Keys conducted factor analysis in two studies involving 373 and 2887 participants in America (Keyes, 1998). The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which ranged from 0.43 to 0.81 in the two studies. In the Iranian version, internal consistency is reported at 0.72

using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. A CVR score of at least 0.62 is deemed acceptable based on input from 10 specialists, while a minimum CVI score of 0.79 is required (Shayeghian, Amiri, Vahedi-Notash, Karimi, & Azizi, 2019). Their research yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.83 and confirmed the five-factor structure of the questionnaire through exploratory analysis, with some adjustments needed for items within the student population.

2.3. Data Analysis

The data in this study was examined utilizing SPSS version 23 software at both descriptive and inferential stages. Statistical attributes like frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were looked into at the descriptive stage. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was utilized at the inferential level to assess the normality assumption of the variables in the research. Following this, the hypotheses of the study were explored through multiple linear regression and correlation tests concurrently.

3. Findings and Results

150 students participated in the present study, from among whom 65 students (43.3%) were boys and 85 students (56.6%) were girls. In terms of educational level, 45 students were in 10th grade, and 55 and 50 students were in 11th and 12th grades, respectively.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the scores of research variables

| Variable | | M | SD | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social well-Being | | 104.56 | 14.57 | 80 | 136 |
| Emotion Regulation | Negative emotion regulation | 54.43 | 10.86 | 28 | 85 |
| | Positive emotion regulation | 51.77 | 8.81 | 24 | 76 |
| Attribution style | Affirmative attribution style | 64.39 | 11.98 | 35 | 99 |
| | Negative attribution style | 46.15 | 15.71 | 18 | 81 |

Table 2

Pearson's correlation test to investigate the relationship between document styles and social well-being

| Variable | | R | P |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social well-Being | Affirmative attribution style | **0.334 | 0.001 |
| | Negative attribution style | *-0.171 | 0.037 |
| Emotion Regulation | Negative emotion regulation | -**0.361 | 0.001 |
| | Positive emotion regulation | **0.279 | 0.001 |

Based on the results of the correlation test presented in Table 2, there is a strong and positive correlation between a positive attribution style and social well-being, indicated by a correlation coefficient of 0.334 (r=0.334) at the 0.99 significance level. Conversely, there is a negative and significant relationship between a negative attribution style and social well-being, with a correlation coefficient of -0.171 (r=-0.171) at the 0.95 level. It was also revealed that a negative emotion regulation style is negatively correlated with social well-being, as indicated by a correlation coefficient of -0.361 (r=-0.361) at the 0.99 level. On the other hand, positive emotion regulation is positively correlated with social well-being, with a correlation coefficient of 0.279 (r=0.279) at the 0.99 significance level.

Table 3

Regression model summary and autocorrelation study

| Criterion variable | R | $R^2$ | $AR^2$ | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social well-being | 0.050 | 0.25 | 23% | 12.74 |

Based on the information provided in Table 3, there is a moderate connection between how individuals attribute social well-being and how they regulate their emotions. The correlation coefficient for social well-being is 0.25, with an adjusted R square of 0.23, suggesting that 23% of the differences in social well-being can be explained by these factors.

Table 4

Variance analysis table to check the significance of the regression model

| Criterion variable | Source | SS | DF | MS | F | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social well-being | | | | | | |
| | Regression | 8114.348 | 4 | 2028.587 | 12.48 | 0.001 |
| | the remainder | 23554.612 | 145 | 162.446 | | |
| | total | 31668.960 | 149 | - | | |

According to the data presented in Table 4, the calculated significance level of F for social well-being, using 4 degrees of freedom and 145, is less than 0.01. This suggests that the regression model is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level (p < 0.01 and 12/48 = (145,4) F). Additionally, it indicates that the variables of attribution styles and emotion regulation styles effectively predict social well-being.

Table 5

Correlation coefficient and regression of attribution styles and emotion regulation styles on social well-being

| Factor | Non-standard coefficients | | Beta. Standard | t | P |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | SD | | | |
| Fixed value | 111.040 | 17.675 | - | 6.282 | 0.001 |
| Negative emotion regulation | - 0.511 | 0.142 | -0.381 | -3.593 | 0.001 |
| Positive emotion regulation | 0.002 | 0.175 | 0.001 | 0.010 | 0.992 |
| Affirmative attribution style | 0.382 | 0.096 | 0.314 | 3.964 | 0.001 |
| Negative attribution style | -0.073 | 0.074 | -0.079 | -0.986 | 0.326 |

Based on the data presented in Table 5, it is apparent that negative emotion regulation, with a significance level of 0.001 and a standardized regression coefficient of -0.381, plays a role in influencing well-being. In contrast, the positive attribution style, with a significance level of 0.001 and a standardized regression coefficient of 0.314, also impacts well-being. The significance level of the constant value was determined to be 0.001, indicating that this continuous value affects the criterion variable.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between attribution styles, emotion regulation styles, and social well-being in students. Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive association between positive attribution style and social well-being, and a significant negative association between negative attribution style and social well-being. These findings are consistent with previous research (Grandchamp et al., 2021; Okadigbo & Unachukwu, 2022). Specifically, students with a positive attribution style, who tend to view setbacks as temporary, external, and specific, exhibited higher social well-being. This is likely because a positive attribution style fosters a sense of control and self-confidence, leading to increased social participation and stronger relationships (Grandchamp et al., 2021; Okadigbo & Unachukwu, 2022). Conversely, a negative attribution style, characterized by attributing failures to internal, stable, and uncontrollable factors (Sanjuán et al., 2008), was linked to lower social well-being. This pessimistic outlook can lead to self-criticism, decreased self-esteem, and difficulty experiencing success and satisfaction in social settings.

Furthermore, the study found a significant positive relationship between positive emotion regulation and social well-being, and a significant negative relationship between negative emotion regulation and social well-being, supporting prior research (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2019; Tracy & Weidman, 2021). Students who employ negative emotion regulation strategies may struggle with social interactions and relationship building, potentially leading to reduced social support and overall well-being (Lopes et al., 2004). In contrast, positive emotion regulation, which involves effectively managing and channeling emotions, was associated with higher social well-being. Adaptive strategies such as focusing on the positive, expressing emotions

constructively, and using positive coping mechanisms can help students manage stress, strengthen social connections, and increase their confidence and comfort in social settings (Bonanno & Burton, 2013).

According to the findings, 23 percent of the variations in the criterion variable, social well-being, are elucidated by attribution styles and emotion regulation styles, with negative emotion regulation having a negative impact and positive attribution style positively correlated with social well-being. This finding supports previous research (Chernosky & Hunt, 2019; Grandchamp et al., 2021; Okadigbo & Onachiko, 2022; Tracy & Wideman, 2021) and implicitly corroborates studies Chernosky and Hunt (2019).

The findings of this research indicated that negative emotion regulation styles among students can predict a decrease in social well-being. The use of negative and inappropriate emotion regulation methods by students can have severe adverse effects on their social well-being. Such approaches, like suppressing emotions or reacting strongly negatively, can lead to difficulties in expressing and managing emotions appropriately, consequently affecting their ability to form and maintain positive relationships. Additionally, employing negative emotion regulation styles can result in feelings of loneliness and isolation, impacting students' self-confidence and self-perception (Chervonsky & Hunt, 2019; Grandchamp et al., 2021; Tracy & Weidman, 2021). These styles could also increase the likelihood of students facing social conflicts and misunderstandings with others. Consequently, negative emotion regulation styles not only harm individual social relationships, but also contribute to a decrease in satisfaction and happiness in social settings. Students who utilize these styles may struggle with effective communication with peers, and teachers engage less in social activities and interactions, ultimately leading to low social well-being (Grandchamp et al., 2021; Okadigbo & Unachukwu, 2022). When considering the connection between social well-being and positive attribution style in students, embracing a positive and hopeful perspective towards life and the future can significantly impact mental well-being and physical health. Individuals with a positive attribution style tend to attribute difficulties to temporary and changeable factors and view problems as limited to specific situations. This outlook enables them to confront challenges in a constructive and positive manner. Attributing positive outcomes to internal factors like effort, skills, and inherent qualities is a powerful catalyst for boosting students' self-esteem and independence (Okadigbo & Unachukwu, 2022). This internal locus of control, where students believe they are responsible for their achievements, fosters a strong sense of personal competence. When students recognize their role in achieving success, they develop a deeper belief in their capabilities, leading to increased self-assurance. This confidence extends beyond academic performance, influencing their overall sense of self-worth and their ability to navigate various life situations. Moreover, acknowledging their efforts as key to positive results cultivates self-reliance, empowering students to take initiative and pursue their goals without constant external validation.

This fortified self-image plays a crucial role in enabling students to feel more empowered and in control, particularly within social contexts. Consequently, this feeling of agency directly contributes to the development and maintenance of healthy and stable social relationships. Students with a positive self-perception tend to approach social interactions with greater confidence and optimism. They are more likely to initiate conversations, participate in group activities, and express their opinions without fear of judgment. Generally, these students exhibit a positive perception of their social exchanges and derive pleasure from interacting with their peers. They view social situations as opportunities for connection and collaboration, rather than sources of anxiety or potential conflict.

Furthermore, adopting a positive attribution style can significantly enhance students' resilience when confronted with social challenges, encompassing academic setbacks or interpersonal disagreements. Instead of internalizing failures as evidence of personal shortcomings, they tend to view these setbacks as transient and specific to the situation. They are more inclined to perceive these challenges as valuable opportunities for learning and personal growth, rather than definitive reflections of inherent flaws or inadequacy. This adaptive mindset is crucial for maintaining social well-being, as it equips students with the psychological tools to navigate diverse experiences and overcome obstacles positively and constructively (Okadigbo and Onachiko, 2022; Grandchamp et al., 2021; Tracy and Wideman, 2021). By framing setbacks as temporary and manageable, students can preserve their self-esteem and continue engaging in social interactions with optimism and hope. They are better equipped to learn from their mistakes, adapt their strategies, and ultimately build stronger and more resilient social connections. Based on the finding from this study, which indicate that social well-being can be forecasted by individuals' attribution events and regulate their emotions, it is recommended that schools introduce educational initiatives aimed at enhancing students'

emotional regulation abilities and cultivating healthy strategies for attributing life experiences. Additionally, given the findings of this research, which suggest that social well-being can be predicted based on the methods of attribution and emotion regulation, it is proposed that workshops be organized for parents and educators to assist them in supporting students as they develop these critical skills.

The findings of this study are confined to students in the second year of high school in District 18 of Tehran City during the second semester of the academic year 1401-02, so caution is needed when applying these results to students in other grade levels. It is important to note that the lack of separation by gender may impact the ability to generalize the findings to boys and girls separately. Therefore, when extending the results of this research to different groups, it is essential to consider factors such as time, location, and gender.

Authors' Contributions

All authors significantly contributed to this study.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants. Each participant received an informed consent form to understand the study's objectives.

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