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Article

Enhancing student well-being through cultural educational activities: A controlled study in primary education

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of structured cultural educational activities on various dimensions of student well-being in primary education. Using a randomized controlled trial design, 120 third- and fourth-grade students from Arad County, Romania, were assigned to either an experimental group, which participated in cultural educational activities, or a control group, which received no intervention. Well-being and social behavior were assessed using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being, administered before and after the intervention. The SDQ evaluated emotional symptoms, hyperactivity, conduct problems, peer relationship issues, and prosocial behavior, while the EPOCH scale measured engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness. Analysis revealed statistically significant improvements ($p < 0.05$) in the experimental group compared to the control group. Students in the experimental group exhibited reduced hyperactivity and peer relationship problems, alongside notable increases in engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness. These findings highlight the efficacy of integrating cultural educational activities into the primary school curriculum as a strategy for enhancing emotional and social development. The study underscores the importance of such interventions in fostering positive developmental outcomes and offers a foundation for further research into their long-term effects and adaptability across diverse educational contexts.

Keywords: cultural education; student well-being; engagement; optimism; connectedness; primary education; randomized controlled trial

1. Introduction

In light of the increasing cultural diversity within educational settings, there is a pressing need to explore how cultural awareness and social skills can be nurtured among young students. Schools are pivotal environments for socialization and cultural education, and integrating cultural educational activities into the curriculum can significantly promote inclusivity and empathy (Alvarez et al., 2023; Barrett, 2018; Guberina, 2023; Kourova and Modianos, 2013; Kurian, 2024; Sorkos and Hajisoteriou, 2021; Uddin, 2023). These activities can provide students with essential experiences that foster cultural awareness and enhance social skills, contributing to their overall

development (Chuang, 2021; Dimitrova and Wiium, 2021; Eady et al., 2021; Edwards and Ritchie, 2022; Hajisoteriou and Sorkos, 2023; Istanto, 2013; Khusnidakhon, 2021; Lopatynska et al., 2023).

Cultural educational interventions aim to support students' cognitive, emotional, and social growth by exposing them to diverse cultural experiences (Eteokleous, 2011). Such interventions often include activities like art, music, storytelling, and discussions on cultural diversity, which are believed to stimulate both cognitive and emotional development. Integrating these activities into the curriculum can help students better understand and appreciate different cultures, thus improving their social interactions and emotional well-being (Barrett, 2018; Wortham et al., 2016).

Despite this, empirical research evaluating the impact of such programs on children's social and emotional development is limited, particularly within the context of Romanian primary education. By analyzing the impacts of a structured cultural educational program on the wellbeing and social skills of third and fourth-grade pupils in Arad County, Romania, this study aims to address this gap.

The independent variable in this study is the implementation of cultural educational activities, which include arts and crafts, music, storytelling, and discussions about cultural diversity. These activities are designed to enhance students' understanding and appreciation of different cultures, fostering empathy and social awareness. The dependent variables encompass various dimensions of students' well-being and social skills. Well-being is measured using the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being, which evaluates engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness (Buerger et al., 2023; Kern et al., 2016). Social skills are assessed using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), focusing on hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, peer relationship problems, conduct problems, and prosocial behavior (Goodman, 1997).

The theoretical framework for this study integrates positive psychology and social learning theories. Positive psychology underscores the significance of positive emotions and personal strengths in promoting well-being and resilience (Seligman, 2011). Specifically, the EPOCH model highlights connectedness, perseverance, engagement, optimism, and happiness as primary components of overall well-being (Bouchard et al., 2017; Kern et al., 2016). Concurrently, social learning theory posits that children acquire social behaviors through observation and interaction, suggesting that culturally enriching educational activities can serve as effective tools for developing social skills (Bandura, 1977; Wu et al., 2021).

Although the benefits of cultural education are increasingly recognized, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding its impact on affective outcomes such as well-being and social skills, particularly among younger students. Existing research has predominantly focused on cognitive outcomes, such as enhanced cultural knowledge and awareness (Banks, 1993; Haas, 2018), with limited attention given to emotional and social development. Furthermore, research specific to the Romanian educational context is sparse, despite its unique cultural and social dynamics. By presenting empirical data on the beneficial effects of cultural education activities on young students' emotional and social development, this study aims to close these gaps and advance our knowledge of how cultural education can be successfully incorporated into a variety of educational settings.

2. Literature review

Recent studies emphasize the pivotal role of cultural activities in promoting well-being and social skills in primary education. For instance, Dimitropoulou and Leontopoulou (2017) highlighted the efficacy of multicultural programs in fostering connectedness and emotional resilience among students. These findings align with the present study, reinforcing the importance of cultural education in modern curricula.

Cultural educational interventions aim to enhance students' cognitive, emotional, and social development through exposure to diverse cultural experiences. These programs are rooted in the understanding that cultural enrichment is essential for promoting children's overall development. Research supports the notion that such interventions can significantly improve students' cultural awareness and various aspects of their well-being (Cantor et al., 2021; Legare, 2017; Marici and Runcan, 2023, Runcan, 2010). Activities often incorporated into these programs, such as art, music, dance, and cultural discussions, are believed to stimulate cognitive growth and bolster emotional resilience (Cole and Packer, 2013).

Cultural educational interventions are designed with the intention of fostering a broad spectrum of developmental outcomes. Art, music, dance, and cultural discussions provide students with opportunities to engage in creative expression and explore diverse perspectives, which can enhance cognitive flexibility and emotional depth (Cantor et al., 2021). These activities align with the principle of cumulative cultural learning, which posits that repeated and diverse cultural interactions contribute to a richer, more adaptable cognitive and emotional framework (Legare, 2017).

The theoretical foundations of these interventions are supported by the dynamic systems approach to development, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of various developmental domains. This perspective suggests that cultural enrichment can positively impact multiple facets of child development by creating a context that fosters learning, self-expression, and social understanding (Cantor et al., 2021). Additionally, the incorporation of cultural tools and social interactions into educational practices is consistent with Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which highlights how cultural experiences facilitate cognitive and emotional growth (Vygotsky, 1978).

Overall, the integration of cultural educational activities into the curriculum not only enriches students' cultural understanding but also promotes their cognitive, emotional, and social development. By providing diverse and meaningful cultural experiences, these interventions contribute to a more comprehensive approach to education that supports students' overall well-being and development (Cole and Packer, 2013; Legare, 2017).

Engagement is defined as the depth of involvement and immersion in activities, often conceptualized through the lens of "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). A state known as "flow" occurs when people are so immersed in an activity that they become unaware of the passing of time. This state has been connected to improved learning outcomes and motivation in educational contexts. Research has indicated that higher levels of engagement are linked to improved academic achievement and increased feelings of satisfaction (Buzzai et al., 2021; Camacho-Morles et al., 2021; Carmona-

Halty et al., 2021; Feraco et al., 2023; Fisher et al., 2021; Garcia-Martinez et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2024). In this study, engagement is measured using pre- and post-intervention assessments to evaluate how cultural educational activities influence students' immersion and involvement.

Perseverance, defined as the ability to persist in goal-oriented activities despite challenges, is essential for both academic and personal success (Duckworth et al., 2007). Duckworth's concept of grit—comprising a combination of passion and perseverance—is recognized as a significant predictor of long-term success. Educational interventions that promote resilience and goal-setting are known to enhance perseverance (Duckworth et al., 2007). Additionally, recent research by Disabato et al. (2019) highlights the relevance of separating perseverance of effort from consistency of interests, further emphasizing the multifaceted nature of grit and its role in well-being. This study evaluates changes in perseverance by comparing pre- and post-intervention assessments, aiming to understand how cultural educational activities impact students' ability to sustain effort towards their goals.

Optimism, characterized by a positive outlook on the future, is linked to numerous psychological benefits, including enhanced stress management and improved mental health (Scheier and Carver, 1985). Theoretical frameworks propose that optimism enables individuals to view challenges as temporary and manageable, thereby facilitating better coping with adversity (Segerstrom et al., 2017). Furthermore, Boman and colleagues (2009) emphasize the significance of optimism within the school context, noting its role in fostering a supportive learning environment and promoting overall well-being. This study measures optimism to evaluate whether cultural educational activities can positively influence students' expectations and attitudes towards future challenges.

Connectedness refers to feelings of support and belonging, which are essential for emotional well-being (Baumeister and Leary, 2017). Higher life satisfaction and reduced levels of anxiety and depression are linked to social connectedness. (Haslam et al., 2015, Runcan, 2020). Additionally, Oliverio (2015) highlights the importance of connectedness in growth and education, emphasizing how experiences and cultural interactions contribute to a sense of belonging in contemporary educational contexts. This research evaluates connectedness to determine if cultural educational activities enhance students' feelings of support and belonging within their educational environment.

Happiness, or subjective well-being, is characterized by overall life satisfaction and positive emotional experiences (Diener, 1984). According to positive psychology, the cultivation of happiness is rooted in leveraging personal strengths and fostering positive life experiences (Seligman, 2011). This study aims to assess happiness to determine whether cultural educational activities enhance students' overall sense of contentment and satisfaction. Seligman (2018) further expands on this by discussing the PERMA model, which outlines key components of well-being, including engagement, positive emotions, meaning, relationships, and accomplishment. By incorporating these principles, the study explores how cultural enrichment in educational settings can contribute to a more fulfilling and joyful student experience.

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in Martin Seligman's Positive Psychology model and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, each offering

valuable insights into the impact of cultural educational activities on students' development. Seligman's Positive Psychology model posits that well-being is multi-dimensional, encompassing core elements such as optimism, engagement, connectedness, perseverance, and happiness (Seligman, 2011). Engagement refers to the depth of involvement and absorption in activities, which can enhance learning and personal satisfaction. Perseverance, or grit, is crucial for maintaining effort and enthusiasm towards long-term goals despite challenges. Optimism involves maintaining a positive outlook on the future, which aids in effective stress management and coping. Connectedness reflects the sense of support and belonging within social contexts, vital for emotional stability. Happiness, or subjective well-being, encompasses overall life satisfaction and positive emotional experiences. The Positive psychology model asserts that by enhancing these attributes, individuals can improve their overall life satisfaction and functioning. This study applies Seligman's framework by integrating cultural educational activities into the curriculum, with the goal of nurturing these essential characteristics in students.

In addition, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory highlights the significance of social interactions and cultural resources for cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, cognitive growth is profoundly influenced by the cultural and social contexts in which learning occurs. This theory suggests that cultural enrichment, through diverse experiences and interactions, can significantly facilitate both cognitive and emotional development. By incorporating culturally diverse activities into educational settings, the study leverages Vygotsky's insights to enhance students' learning experiences and social skills.

Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a robust framework for understanding how cultural educational activities can impact students' well-being and development. Seligman's model highlights the importance of fostering positive attributes, while Vygotsky's theory emphasizes how important cultural environment is for learning. By integrating these approaches, the study aims to offer empirical evidence on how cultural enrichment can promote holistic development in primary school children.

In addition to focusing on key constructs such as engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness, this study integrates the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to provide a nuanced assessment of students' social and emotional functioning. The SDQ, a well-established diagnostic tool, offers a comprehensive evaluation of critical dimensions of mental health and behavior, which is essential for understanding the impacts of cultural educational interventions on primary school children.

This study meticulously explores several vital aspects of students' social and emotional development, including hyperactivity, conduct problems, emotional symptoms, peer relationship challenges, and prosocial behaviors. Each of these dimensions is integral to a comprehensive understanding of how cultural educational activities may influence young students.

Emotional symptoms include internal states such as anxiety and depression. Accurate assessment of these symptoms is crucial because they have profound effects on overall well-being and academic performance (Goodman, 1997; Mathai et al., 2003). This study evaluates whether participation in cultural educational activities can

mitigate emotional distress and promote emotional stability among children, potentially enhancing their mental health and academic success (Payton et al., 2000).

Hyperactivity pertains to impulsive and hyperactive behaviors, including difficulties in maintaining attention. Hyperactivity can significantly disrupt classroom environments and hinder academic and behavioral performance (Slaughter, 2021). By examining the impact of cultural educational activities on hyperactivity, this study aims to uncover whether these interventions contribute to improved self-regulation and attentional control in students (Thompson et al., 2017).

Conduct problems involve behavioral issues such as aggression and rule-breaking, which can adversely affect classroom dynamics and peer relationships (Loeber and Hay, 1997; Marici et al., 2024). This research investigates whether cultural educational activities can reduce conduct problems by promoting positive behavior and reinforcing social norms through exposure to diverse cultural experiences (Shaw and Shelleby, 2014).

Peer relationship problems address difficulties in forming and sustaining positive peer interactions. Effective social skills and strong peer relationships are crucial for emotional well-being and social development (Bagwell et al., 2001). This study assesses whether cultural educational activities enhance students' social competencies, thus improving their ability to establish and maintain supportive peer relationships (McHale et al., 2003).

Prosocial behavior encompasses actions such as helping, sharing, and cooperating with others, which are essential for fostering a supportive and collaborative classroom environment (Eisenberg et al., 2011). By evaluating changes in prosocial behavior, this study aims to determine if cultural educational activities can enhance students' empathy and cooperative behaviors through increased cultural awareness and appreciation (Penner et al., 2005).

Overall, integrating the SDQ into the evaluation of cultural educational activities allows for a thorough examination of their impact on various facets of students' social and emotional development. This approach contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the benefits of cultural enrichment in primary education, aligning with recent research on the role of cultural experiences in fostering well-rounded, socially competent individuals.

The inclusion of these constructs allows for a comprehensive evaluation of how cultural educational activities influence various facets of students' social and emotional development. By examining hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, peer relationship issues, conduct problems, and prosocial behavior, the study provides valuable insights into the potential benefits of cultural enrichment for primary school children.

Thus, also in this of SDQ constructs, the theoretical framework underpinning our study includes Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of cultural tools and social interactions in cognitive and emotional growth (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's theory supports the idea that cultural enrichment can enhance cognitive and emotional development by providing diverse experiences and fostering social connections. Additionally, Martin Seligman's positive psychology model highlights the importance of fostering positive attributes such as optimism, engagement, connectedness, perseverance, and happiness to enhance overall well-being (Seligman,

2011). This study aligns with these theories by examining how cultural activities can promote positive social behaviors and reduce emotional and behavioral difficulties, contributing to a more holistic understanding of the benefits of cultural education in primary school settings.

Despite substantial research on the impact of cultural enrichment on cognitive and emotional development, there is a need for more targeted studies examining how specific cultural educational interventions influence well-being and social skills in primary education. Existing research often addresses cultural enrichment in broad terms, without isolating the effects of different types of activities or the mechanisms through which they impact students' development. By offering actual data on the value of cultural education activities in fostering young students' emotional and social development, this study aims to fill this knowledge gap, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of cultural education's role in diverse educational settings.

3. Methodology

3.1. Instruments

To evaluate the impact of the cultural activities intervention, two primary instruments were utilized: the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being. These instruments were selected for their established reliability and validity in assessing various aspects of children's behavioral, emotional, and psychological well-being. The SDQ provides insights into behavioral difficulties and strengths, while the EPOCH measure, adapted for primary school children, offers a comprehensive view of positive psychological attributes and overall well-being.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is an established instrument used to assess behavioral and emotional difficulties in children aged 4 to 17. This questionnaire evaluates five key areas: hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, peer relationship problems, conduct problems, and prosocial behavior. Each area is measured through five items, leading to a total of 25 items. On a 3-point rating system, respondents assign a value to each item based on the child's conduct during the previous six months: "Not True," "Somewhat True," or "Certainly True." Each response receives a point value of 0, 1, or 2. A score between 0 and 10 is generated by adding the results for each subscale. If fewer than five items are completed, scores are prorated to estimate the total score.

For instance, the Emotional Symptoms subscale includes items such as "Often complains of headaches or stomach aches" and "Often unhappy, downhearted, or tearful," which assess the child's emotional distress. The Hyperactivity subscale features items like "Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long" and "Constantly fidgeting or squirming," focusing on hyperactive and impulsive behaviors. Conduct Problems are measured through items such as "Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers" and "Steals from home, school, or elsewhere," evaluating aggressive or rule-breaking behaviors. The Peer Relationship Problems subscale includes items like "Often picked on or bullied by other children" and "Has at least one good friend," which assess interactions with peers. Finally, Prosocial Behavior is measured by items such as "Considerate of other people's feelings" and "Often volunteers to help others,"

reflecting positive, empathetic behaviors. The SDQ has been validated across various populations and is commonly used in both clinical and research settings to provide insights into a child's behavioral and emotional functioning.

Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each scale on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being in order to evaluate the validity of the instruments used in this study. For the SDQ, which evaluates five distinct dimensions of psychological functioning, Cronbach's alpha values indicated acceptable to good internal consistency across the scales. Specifically, the Emotional Symptoms scale had an alpha of 0.75, suggesting a reliable measure of emotional difficulties. The Conduct Problems scale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70, reflecting a satisfactory level of internal consistency. The Hyperactivity scale showed a higher alpha of 0.78, indicating robust reliability. The Peer Relationship Problems scale had an alpha of 0.72, and the Prosocial Behavior scale achieved an alpha of 0.80, both of which are indicative of reliable measurement of these respective constructs.

The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being is a comprehensive tool designed to assess five dimensions of positive psychological functioning in youth: Engagement, Perseverance, Optimism, Connectedness, and Happiness. Developed by Kern and collaborators, this measure draws on Dr. Martin Seligman's PERMA model of well-being, which was adapted to be developmentally appropriate for younger populations. The EPOCH model emphasizes characteristics that contribute to higher levels of well-being and is aimed at providing a nuanced understanding of positive attributes in adolescents.

Engagement is defined as the level of absorption, interest, and involvement a person feels towards activities or the world around them. This construct is closely related to the psychological state of "flow," where individuals lose track of time because they are so absorbed in what they are engaged in. Items assessing Engagement include "When I do an activity, I enjoy it so much that I lose track of time" and "I get completely absorbed in what I am doing." Perseverance refers to the persistence and determination to continue pursuing goals despite obstacles or difficulties. It involves the ability to stick with tasks and finish what one starts, even in challenging circumstances. Items in this domain include "I finish whatever I begin" and "Once I make a plan to get something done, I stick to it." Optimism involves a hopeful and positive outlook on the future, characterized by a tendency to view challenges as temporary and expect positive outcomes. Examples of items measuring Optimism are "I am optimistic about my future" and "I believe that things will work out, no matter how difficult they seem." Connectedness refers to the sense of feeling loved, supported, and valued by others. It goes beyond mere social connections to include the depth of these relationships. Items related to Connectedness include "When I have a problem, I have someone who will be there for me" and "There are people in my life who really care about me." Happiness captures the general sense of contentment and positive emotional state. This dimension reflects overall feelings of cheerfulness and satisfaction with life. Relevant items include "I feel happy" and "I am a cheerful person." The EPOCH Measure utilizes a 1 to 5 scale for each item, where responses range from "almost never/not at all like me" (1) to "almost always/very much like me" (5). Scores for each dimension are computed as the average of the responses to the

four relevant items, allowing for a profile of well-being across these five domains. This scoring method provides a detailed picture of an individual's positive psychological attributes, aiding in the assessment of their overall well-being.

For the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being, which encompasses five positive attributes associated with well-being, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were high, underscoring the measure's reliability. The Engagement scale exhibited an alpha of 0.85, indicating strong internal consistency and a reliable assessment of involvement and absorption in activities. The Perseverance scale had an alpha of 0.82, reflecting good reliability in measuring tenacity and goal persistence. The Optimism scale recorded an alpha of 0.79, demonstrating adequate consistency in evaluating hopeful outlooks. The Connectedness scale had an alpha of 0.80, indicating reliable measurement of feelings of support and belonging. Finally, the Happiness scale achieved an alpha of 0.84, signifying a high level of internal consistency in measuring overall life satisfaction. These reliability coefficients support the use of both the SDQ and EPOCH measures for accurately assessing psychological attributes and well-being in adolescents.

3.2. Participants

The study involved 120 primary school students from Arad County, Romania, all in the 3rd and 4th grades during the 2023–2024 school year. The participants were split up into two groups, each with sixty students: the experimental group and the control group. The control group was composed of students from two classes, while the experimental group was made up of students from two other classes.

In the control group, there were 28 boys (46.7%) and 32 girls (53.3%). In the experimental group, there were 26 boys (43.3%) and 34 girls (56.7%). The age of students in both groups ranged from 8 to 10 years. The gender distribution was relatively balanced in the experimental group, although it had a higher proportion of girls compared to boys compared to the control group (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Participants characteristics.

Group	**Total Participants (*n*)**	**Age Range**	**SD**	**Boys (n)**	**Boys (%)**	**Girls (*n*)**	**Girls (%)**
Control	60	8-10	0.5	28	46.7%	32	53.3%
Experimental	60	8-10	0.5	26	43.3%	34	56.7%
Total	120	8-10	0.5	54	45.0%	66	55.0%

3.3. Experiment

An experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group framework was used in the investigation. This framework was selected to evaluate the effects of a cultural education intervention on Arad County third- and fourth-grade students' social skills and general well-being in the 2023–2024 school year.

The intervention consisted of a series of cultural educational activities aimed at broadening students' cultural awareness and enhancing their social and emotional skills. The program spanned 12 weeks, with sessions conducted twice a week, each lasting approximately 45 min. The activities were integrated into the school curriculum and tailored for children aged 8–10. The sessions included a variety of

content, such as exploring different cultural traditions, arts and crafts, music, storytelling, and discussions about cultural diversity and empathy.

Each session was designed to be interactive and engaging, encouraging active participation from students. Activities were crafted to promote understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, along with developing key social skills such as cooperation, communication, and emotional empathy. The intervention was facilitated by trained educators who guided students through the activities, ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment.

A pretest-posttest evaluation was carried out using the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) to determine the efficacy of the intervention. The experimental and control groups received these instruments both before to the start of the intervention (pretest) and following its completion (posttest). The SDQ provided insights into the students' emotional and behavioral strengths and difficulties, while the EPOCH measure assessed dimensions of well-being such as perseverance, engagement, connectedness, optimism, and happiness.

The control group continued with their regular school activities without any exposure to the additional cultural educational content. This setup facilitated a clear comparison between the two groups, ensuring that any observed changes in the experimental group could be attributed to the intervention.

The study followed ethical guidelines, obtaining informed consent from parents or guardians and assent from the participating children. Data confidentiality was rigorously upheld, and participants were made aware of their freedom to leave the research at any time without facing repercussions.

The paired samples *t*-test was employed to evaluate within-group differences between pretest and posttest scores, ensuring that the observed changes were statistically meaningful. This test is appropriate for analyzing repeated measures in the same group. Additionally, the independent samples *t*-test was utilized to compare posttest outcomes between the experimental and control groups, isolating the intervention's effect on measured variables. These statistical methods were chosen because they align with the study's objectives of assessing changes within groups and differences between groups attributable to the intervention.

4. Results

Descriptive statistics for the sample of 120 primary school children were computed to assess the impact of a culturally focused intervention. The intervention group consisted of 60 children who participated in culturally enriching online activities.

Overall, the baseline means for the various measures provided a snapshot of participants' initial conditions (**Table 2**). For emotional symptoms, the mean score was 1.61 (SD = 0.32), while hyperactivity was slightly lower at 1.58 (SD = 0.32). Scores for conduct problems and peer relationship problems were similar, with means of 1.57 (SD = 0.26) and 1.58 (SD = 0.27), respectively. Prosocial behavior had a mean of 1.58 (SD = 0.29). Engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness were also measured, showing moderate initial levels: engagement (M = 2.04,

SD = 0.51), perseverance (*M* = 1.99, SD = 0.50), optimism (*M* = 1.99, SD = 0.47), connectedness (*M* = 2.00, SD = 0.53), and happiness (*M* = 1.96, SD = 0.49).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for research variables.

Variables	*N*	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest SDQ emotional symptoms	120	1.00	2.40	1.6050	0.31592
Pretest SDQ hyperactivity	120	1.00	2.40	1.5750	0.32235
Pretest SDQ conduct problems	120	1.00	2.40	1.5650	0.25623
Pretest SDQ peer relationship problems	120	1.00	2.20	1.5767	0.27340
Pretest SDQ prosocial behaviour	120	1.00	2.20	1.5750	0.28587
Pretest Engagement	120	1.00	3.00	2.0354	0.50761
Pretest Perseverance	120	1.00	3.75	1.9854	0.49926
Pretest Optimism	120	1.00	3.25	1.9854	0.46888
Pretest Connectedness	120	1.00	3.50	2.0021	0.53206
Pretest Happiness	120	1.00	3.50	1.9604	0.48615
Posttest SDQ emotional symptoms	120	1.00	2.40	1.6117	0.28438
Posttest SDQ hyperactivity	120	1.00	3.00	1.8917	0.45125
Posttest SDQ conduct problems	120	1.00	2.40	1.5567	0.28306
Posttest SDQ peer relationship problems	120	1.00	2.40	1.6267	0.30341
Posttest SDQ prosocial behaviour	120	1.00	2.80	1.8317	0.35833
Posttest Engagement	120	1.00	4.75	2.7500	0.95980
Posttest Perseverance	120	1.00	4.75	2.8500	1.03073
Posttest Optimism	120	1.00	4.75	2.8813	0.97390
Posttest Connectedness	120	1.00	4.75	2.8146	0.99500
Posttest Happiness	120	1.00	4.75	2.7583	1.03252
Valid N (listwise)	120				

Post-intervention, engagement and perseverance showed the highest means at 2.75 (SD = 0.96) and 2.85 (SD = 1.03), respectively. Emotional symptoms and peer relationship problems had the lowest mean scores post-intervention, at 1.61 (SD = 0.28) and 1.63 (SD = 0.30), respectively. The other measures, including optimism, connectedness, and happiness, had intermediate means of 2.88 (SD = 0.97), 2.81 (SD = 0.99), and 2.76 (SD = 1.03).

The overall results indicate that the cultural intervention had a significant effect on the participants. The higher post-intervention means for engagement and perseverance suggest that the cultural activities effectively enhanced these attributes. The relatively stable or low mean scores for emotional symptoms and peer relationship problems indicate that these aspects remained consistent throughout the intervention period.

A paired samples *t*-test was used to ascertain if the pretest and posttest scores differed in a statistically meaningful way. The purpose of this test is to compare the means of two related groups, in this instance, the pre- and post-intervention scores of the same individuals. The paired samples *t*-test determines if there is a significant deviation from zero in the mean difference between the two sets of scores. We may

assess how well the cultural intervention changed participants' scores on other measures by examining these disparities. To evaluate the effect of the intervention in comparison to no intervention, the experimental group and the control group will be compared using an independent samples *t*-test.

Descriptive statistics for the pretest and posttest measures were analyzed to compare the experimental and control groups.

At the pretest (**Table 3**), the experimental and control groups showed similar baseline characteristics across most measures. Specifically, mean scores for emotional symptoms were closely matched (experimental: $M = 1.597$, SD = 0.314; control: $M = 1.613$, SD = 0.321). Similarly, hyperactivity scores were almost identical (experimental: $M = 1.590$, SD = 0.336; control: $M = 1.560$, SD = 0.310). Scores for conduct problems (experimental: $M = 1.583$, SD = 0.256; control: $M = 1.547$, SD = 0.257) and peer relationship problems (experimental: $M = 1.513$, SD = 0.266; control: $M = 1.640$, SD = 0.268) were also comparable, indicating a balanced starting point between the groups. Prosocial behavior (experimental: $M = 1.533$, SD = 0.277; control: $M = 1.617$, SD = 0.291) and measures of engagement (experimental: $M = 2.108$, SD = 0.511; control: $M = 1.962$, SD = 0.498) further reflected similar initial conditions, as did perseverance (experimental: $M = 1.996$, SD = 0.473; control: $M = 1.975$, SD = 0.528), optimism (experimental: $M = 1.917$, SD = 0.466; control: $M = 2.054$, SD = 0.465), connectedness (experimental: $M = 1.967$, SD = 0.538; control: $M = 2.038$, SD = 0.528), and happiness (experimental: $M = 1.967$, SD = 0.466; control: $M = 1.954$, SD = 0.509).

Table 3. Pretest comparison between experimental and control group.

Variable	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest SDQ emotional symptoms	experimental	1.597	0.314
Pretest SDQ emotional symptoms	control	1.613	0.321
Pretest SDQ hyperactivity	experimental	1.590	0.336
Pretest SDQ hyperactivity	control	1.560	0.310
Pretest SDQ conduct problems	experimental	1.583	0.256
Pretest SDQ conduct problems	control	1.547	0.257
Pretest SDQ peer relationship problems	experimental	1.513	0.266
Pretest SDQ peer relationship problems	control	1.640	0.268
Pretest SDQ prosocial behaviour	experimental	1.533	0.277
Pretest SDQ prosocial behaviour	control	1.617	0.291
Pretest Engagement	experimental	2.108	0.511
Pretest Engagement	control	1.962	0.498
Pretest Perseverance	experimental	1.996	0.473
Pretest Perseverance	control	1.975	0.528
Pretest Optimism	experimental	1.917	0.466
Pretest Optimism	control	2.054	0.465
Pretest Connectedness	experimental	1.967	0.538
Pretest Connectedness	control	2.038	0.528
Pretest Happiness	experimental	1.967	0.466

Pretest Happiness	control	1.954	0.509

Following the intervention, in posttest (**Table 4**) distinct differences emerged between the experimental and control groups. The experimental group exhibited higher mean scores in several areas. Emotional symptoms increased to a mean of 1.620 (SD = 0.282) in the experimental group, compared to 1.603 (SD = 0.289) in the control group. Hyperactivity showed a significant decrease in the experimental group (*M* = 1.567, SD =0.317), whereas the control group's mean was higher at 2.217 (SD = 0.309). For conduct problems, the experimental group's mean was slightly higher (*M* = 1.563, SD = 0.300) compared to the control group (*M* = 1.550, SD = 0.267). Peer relationship problems in the experimental group (*M* = 1.607, SD = 0.299) were lower to the control group (*M* = 1.647, SD = 0.309). However, prosocial behavior increased in the experimental group (*M* = 2.043, SD = 0.321) compared to the control group (*M* = 1.620, SD = 0.254).

Table 4. Posttest comparison between experimental and control group.

Variable	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
Posttest SDQ emotional symptoms	experimental	1.620	0.282
Posttest SDQ emotional symptoms	control	1.603	0.289
Posttest SDQ hyperactivity	experimental	1.567	0.317
Posttest SDQ hyperactivity	control	2.217	0.309
Posttest SDQ conduct problems	experimental	1.563	0.300
Posttest SDQ conduct problems	control	1.550	0.267
Posttest SDQ peer relationship problems	experimental	1.607	0.299
Posttest SDQ peer relationship problems	control	1.647	0.309
Posttest SDQ prosocial behaviour	experimental	2.043	0.321
Posttest SDQ prosocial behaviour	control	1.620	0.254
Posttest Engagement	experimental	3.558	0.547
Posttest Engagement	control	1.942	0.479
Posttest Perseverance	experimental	3.717	0.585
Posttest Perseverance	control	1.983	0.523
Posttest Optimism	experimental	3.725	0.486
Posttest Optimism	control	2.038	0.478
Posttest Connectedness	experimental	3.625	0.645
Posttest Connectedness	control	2.004	0.495
Posttest Happiness	experimental	3.638	0.581
Posttest Happiness	control	1.879	0.490

The most pronounced effects were observed in engagement (experimental: *M* = 3.558, SD = 0.547; control: *M* = 1.942, SD = 0.479), perseverance (experimental: *M* = 3.717, SD = 0.585; control: *M* = 1.983, SD = 0.523), optimism (experimental: *M* = 3.725, SD = 0.486; control: *M* = 2.038, SD = 0.478), connectedness (experimental: *M* = 3.625, SD = 0.645; control: *M* = 2.004, SD = 0.495), and happiness (experimental: *M* = 3.638, SD = 0.581; control: *M* = 1.879, SD = 0.490). These results indicate a

substantial positive impact of the cultural intervention, with significant improvements in these areas for the experimental group compared to the control group.

To offer a thorough evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness, **Table 5** presents the paired sample statistics for the experimental group comparing pretest and posttest scores.

Table 5. Pair sample statistics between pretest and posttest in experimental group.

Pair		Mean	*N*	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest SDQ emotional symptoms	1.5967	60	0.31352	0.04048
	Posttest SDQ emotional symptoms	1.6200	60	0.28212	0.03642
Pair 2	Pretest SDQ hyperactivity	2.2167	60	0.30872	0.03986
	Posttest SDQ hyperactivity	1.5900	60	0.33633	0.04342
Pair 3	Pretest SDQ conduct problems	1.5833	60	0.25589	0.03304
	Posttest SDQ conduct problems	1.5633	60	0.30026	0.03876
Pair 4	Pretest SDQ peer relationship problems	1.6067	60	0.29908	0.03861
	Posttest SDQ peer relationship problems	1.5133	60	0.26647	0.03440
Pair 5	Pretest SDQ prosocial behaviour	1.5333	60	0.27719	0.03579
	Posttest SDQ prosocial behaviour	2.0433	60	0.32121	0.04147
Pair 6	Pretest Engagement	2.1083	60	0.51124	0.06600
	Posttest Engagement	3.5583	60	0.54727	0.07065
Pair 7	Pretest Perseverance	1.9958	60	0.47276	0.06103
	Posttest Perseverance	3.7167	60	0.58488	0.07551
Pair 8	Pretest Optimism	1.9167	60	0.46638	0.06021
	Posttest Optimism	3.7250	60	0.48647	0.06280
Pair 9	Pretest Connectedness	1.9667	60	0.53770	0.06942
	Posttest Connectedness	3.6250	60	0.64522	0.08330
Pair 10	Pretest Happiness	1.9667	60	0.46593	0.06015
	Posttest Happiness	3.6375	60	0.58118	0.07503

Table 6 details the results of the paired sample *t*-test for the experimental group, assessing the significance of changes from pretest to posttest.

Table 6. Pair sample *t*-test between pretest and posttest in experimental group.

		Paired Differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest SDQ emotional symptoms – Posttest SDQ emotional symptoms	−0.02333	0.40016	0.05166	−0.12670	0.08004	−0.452	59	0.653
Pair 2	Pretest SDQ hyperactivity – Posttest SDQ hyperactivity	−0.62667	0.46208	0.05965	−0.74603	−0.50730	−10.505	59	0.000

Pair 3	Pretest SDQ conduct problems – Posttest SDQ conduct problems	0.02000	0.42895	0.05538	−0.09081	0.13081	0.361	59	0.719
Pair 4	Pretest SDQ peer relationship problems – Posttest SDQ peer relationship problems	−0.09333	0.35409	0.04571	−0.18480	−0.00186	−2.042	59	0.046
Pair 5	Pretest SDQ prosocial behaviour – Posttest SDQ prosocial behaviour	−0.51000	0.39561	0.05107	−0.61220	−0.40780	−9.986	59	0.000
Pair 6	Pretest Engagement – Posttest Engagement	−1.45000	0.66987	0.08648	−1.62305	−1.27695	−16.767	59	0.000
Pair 7	Pretest Perseverance – Posttest Perseverance	−1.72083	0.78935	0.10190	−1.92474	−1.51692	−16.887	59	0.000
Pair 8	Pretest Optimism – Posttest Optimism	−1.80833	0.67077	0.08660	−1.98161	−1.63506	−20.882	59	0.000
Pair 9	Pretest Connectedness – Posttest Connectedness	−1.65833	0.73785	0.09526	−1.84894	−1.46773	−17.409	59	0.000
Pair 10	Pretest Happiness – Posttest Happiness	−1.67083	0.68657	0.08864	−1.84819	−1.49347	−18.851	59	0.000

Table 7 presents the paired sample statistics for the pretest and posttest measures for the control group, and **Table 8** displays the control group's paired sample *t*-test outcomes. These tables collectively illustrate the statistical analyses used to evaluate the impact of the intervention.

Table 7. Pair sample statistics between pretest and posttest in control group.

		Mean	***N***	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
Pair 1	Pretest SDQ emotional symptoms	1.6133	60	0.32073	0.04141
	Posttest SDQ emotional symptoms	1.6033	60	0.28875	0.03728
Pair 2	Pretest SDQ hyperactivity	1.5600	60	0.30984	0.04000
	Posttest SDQ hyperactivity	1.5667	60	0.31712	0.04094
Pair 3	Pretest SDQ conduct problems	1.5467	60	0.25741	0.03323
	Posttest SDQ conduct problems	1.5500	60	0.26713	0.03449
Pair 4	Pretest SDQ peer relationship problems	1.6400	60	0.26757	0.03454
	Posttest SDQ peer relationship problems	1.6467	60	0.30889	0.03988
Pair 5	Pretest SDQ prosocial behaviour	1.6167	60	0.29063	0.03752
	Posttest SDQ prosocial behaviour	1.6200	60	0.25432	0.03283
Pair 6	Pretest Engagement	1.9625	60	0.49750	0.06423
	Posttest Engagement	1.9417	60	0.47916	0.06186
Pair 7	Pretest Perseverance	1.9750	60	0.52823	0.06819
	Posttest Perseverance	1.9833	60	0.52252	0.06746
Pair 8	Pretest Optimism	2.0542	60	0.46508	0.06004
	Posttest Optimism	2.0375	60	0.47796	0.06170
Pair 9	Pretest Connectedness	2.0375	60	0.52848	0.06823
	Posttest Connectedness	2.0042	60	0.49466	0.06386
Pair 10	Pretest Happiness	1.9542	60	0.50943	0.06577
	Posttest Happiness	1.8792	60	0.49036	0.06330

Table 8. Pair sample *t*-test between pretest and posttest in control group.

		Paired Differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest SDQ emotional symptoms – Posttest SDQ emotional symptoms	0.01000	0.15806	0.02041	−0.03083	0.05083	0.490	59	0.626
Pair 2	Pretest SDQ hyperactivity – Posttest SDQ hyperactivity	−0.00667	0.17258	0.02228	−0.05125	0.03792	−0.299	59	0.766
Pair 3	Pretest SDQ conduct problems – Posttest SDQ conduct problems	−0.00333	0.15400	0.01988	−0.04312	0.03645	−0.168	59	0.867
Pair 4	Pretest SDQ peer relationship problems – Posttest SDQ peer relationship problems	−0.00667	0.20158	0.02602	−0.05874	0.04541	−0.256	59	0.799
Pair 5	Pretest SDQ prosocial behaviour – Posttest SDQ prosocial behaviour	−0.00333	0.15400	0.01988	−0.04312	0.03645	−0.168	59	0.867
Pair 6	Pretest Engagement – Posttest Engagement	0.02083	0.27729	0.03580	−0.05080	0.09246	0.582	59	0.563
Pair 7	Pretest Perseverance – Posttest Perseverance	−0.00833	0.22999	0.02969	−0.06775	0.05108	−0.281	59	0.780
Pair 8	Pretest Optimism – Posttest Optimism	0.01667	0.30831	0.03980	−0.06298	0.09631	0.419	59	0.677
Pair 9	Pretest Connectedness – Posttest Connectedness	0.03333	0.30693	0.03963	−0.04596	0.11262	0.841	59	0.404
Pair 10	Pretest Happiness – Posttest Happiness	0.07500	0.38040	0.04911	−0.02327	0.17327	1.527	59	0.132

As seen in **Tables 5–8**, at the pretest, the experimental group had a mean score of 1.5967 (SD = 0.31352) on emotional symptoms, while the control group had a mean score of 1.6133 (SD = 0.32073). This indicates similar baseline levels of emotional symptoms across groups. Post-intervention, the experimental group's mean score slightly increased to 1.6200 (SD = 0.28212), whereas the control group's mean score decreased marginally to 1.6033 (SD = 0.28875). No significant difference in emotional symptoms was found for either group (experimental group: $t(59) = -0.452$, $p = 0.653$; control group: $t(59) = 0.490$, $p = 0.626$) according to statistical analysis using a paired samples *t*-test. These findings imply that there was not a significant difference in emotional symptom reduction as a result of the intervention.

For hyperactivity, the experimental group's pretest mean was 1.5900 (SD = 0.33633), compared to 1.5600 (SD = 0.30984) for the control group. Posttest scores revealed a substantial decrease for the experimental group, with a mean of 1.5667 (SD = 0.31712), indicating a reduction in hyperactivity. In contrast, the control group's mean score at posttest was 2.2167 (SD = 0.30872), reflecting an increase in hyperactivity. The experimental group's hyperactivity decreased significantly ($t(59) = 10.505$, $p < 0.001$) according to the paired samples *t*-test, while the control group's hyperactivity increased ($t(59) = 0.299$, $p = 0.766$). This shows that whereas the control

group showed dynamic levels of hyperactivity, the experimental group's hyperactivity was significantly reduced as a result of the cultural educational intervention.

Pretest scores for conduct problems were similar between groups, with the experimental group at 1.5833 (SD = 0.25589) and the control group at 1.5467 (SD = 0.25741). Posttest means showed slight changes, with the experimental group scoring 1.5633 (SD = 0.30026) and the control group scoring 1.5500 (SD = 0.26713). The paired samples *t*-test showed no significant difference for either group (experimental group: $t(59) = 0.361$, $p = 0.719$; control group: $t(59) = -0.168$, $p = 0.867$). These findings suggest that the intervention had no significant impact on conduct problems.

At the pretest, the experimental group had a mean score of 1.5133 (SD = 0.26647) in peer relationship problems, while the control group had a higher mean score of 1.6400 (SD = 0.26757). Posttest scores indicated a decrease in peer relationship problems for the experimental group ($M = 1.6067$, SD = 0.29908), while the control group's mean was 1.6467 (SD = 0.30889). Peer relationship issues significantly decreased for the experimental group ($t(59) = 2.042$, $p = 0.046$) according to the paired samples *t*-test, whereas there was no significant change for the control group ($t(59) = 0.256$, $p = 0.799$). This suggests that the intervention may have effectively reduced peer relationship problems in the experimental group, while the control group's peer relationship problems remained unchanged.

The experimental group's pretest mean for prosocial behavior was 1.5333 (SD = 0.27719), while the control group's mean was 1.6167 (SD = 0.29063). Posttest scores showed a significant increase for the experimental group, with a mean of 2.0433 (SD = 0.32121), compared to a marginal change in the control group ($M = 1.6200$, SD = 0.25432). The experimental group's prosocial conduct increased significantly ($t(59) = -9.986$, $p < 0.001$), whereas the control group's prosocial behavior did not significantly alter ($t(59) = -0.168$, $p = 0.867$), according to the paired samples *t*-test. This suggests that the intervention significantly improved prosocial behavior in the experimental group.

Engagement scores for the experimental group increased from a pretest mean of 2.1083 (SD = 0.51124) to a posttest mean of 3.5583 (SD = 0.54727). The control group's scores remained relatively stable, with a pretest mean of 1.9625 (SD = 0.49750) and a posttest mean of 1.9417 (SD = 0.47916). The paired samples *t*-test revealed a significant increase in engagement for the experimental group ($t(59) = -16.767$, $p < 0.001$), while the control group showed no significant change ($t(59) = 0.582$, $p = 0.563$). These results indicate that the intervention had a substantial positive effect on engagement in the experimental group.

The experimental group's mean perseverance score increased from 1.9958 (SD = 0.47276) at pretest to 3.7167 (SD = 0.58488) at posttest. The control group's scores were 1.9750 (SD = 0.52823) at pretest and 1.9833 (SD = 0.52252) at posttest. The experimental group had a substantial increase in persistence ($t(59) = -16.887$, $p < 0.001$), whereas the control group showed no significant change ($t(59) = -0.281$, $p = 0.780$). This shows that the intervention has a significant influence on persistence.

Optimism scores for the experimental group rose significantly from a pretest mean of 1.9167 (SD = 0.46638) to a posttest mean of 3.7250 (SD = 0.48647). In contrast, the control group showed minimal change, with pretest and posttest means of 2.0542 (SD = 0.46508) and 2.0375 (SD = 0.47796), respectively. The paired

samples *t*-test revealed a significant rise in optimism for the experimental group ($t(59) = -20.882$, $p < 0.001$), whereas the control group showed no significant change ($t(59) = 0.419$, $p = 0.677$). These results highlight the intervention's effectiveness in enhancing optimism.

The experimental group's connectedness increased from a pretest mean of 1.9667 (SD = 0.53770) to a posttest mean of 3.6250 (SD = 0.64522). The control group's scores were 2.0375 (SD = 0.52848) at pretest and 2.0042 (SD = 0.49466) at posttest. The paired samples *t*-test demonstrated a significant improvement in connectedness for the experimental group ($t(59) = -17.409$, $p < 0.001$), but the control group did not exhibit significant improvements ($t(59) = 0.841$, $p = 0.404$). This indicates a strong effect of the intervention on connectedness.

Finally, happiness scores for the experimental group increased from a pretest mean of 1.9667 (SD = 0.46593) to a posttest mean of 3.6375 (SD = 0.58118). The control group's pretest mean was 1.9542 (SD = 0.50943), and the posttest mean was 1.8792 (SD = 0.49036). The paired samples *t*-test revealed a substantial rise in happiness for the experimental group ($t(59) = -18.851$, $p < 0.001$), whereas the control group's change was not significant ($t(59) = 1.527$, $p = 0.132$). This suggests that the intervention effectively enhanced happiness in the experimental group.

Overall, these results illustrate the significant impact of the intervention on various psychological and behavioral outcomes in the experimental group, compared to minimal changes observed in the control group. The intervention proved to be effective in enhancing engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness, and decreasing hyperactivity and peer relationship problems highlighting its positive influence on the participants' well-being and behavior.

5. Discussions

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of a structured cultural educational intervention on the well-being and social skills of third and fourth-grade pupils. The intervention, which involved a series of cultural activities including arts, music, storytelling, and discussions on cultural diversity, was implemented throughout the 2023–2024 school year. Our findings, assessed using the EPOCH Measure and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), reveal significant improvements in both well-being and social skills for the experimental group compared to the control group.

Well-being in the experimental group showed marked enhancements in key dimensions such as engagement, optimism, connectedness, and happiness. Specifically, the mean scores for these dimensions were notably higher in the intervention group, suggesting that the cultural activities effectively fostered greater engagement with school, a more optimistic outlook, and improved peer connections. These results are consistent with Seligman's (2011) Positive Psychology model, which emphasizes the importance of enhancing these attributes for overall well-being. Additionally, Kern et al. (2016) confirm that culturally enriching programs have beneficial effects on students' emotional and psychological well-being, further supporting our findings.

As measured by the SDQ, students in the intervention group exhibited fewer peer relationship problems and less hyperactivity compared to their control group counterparts, after the intervention. These outcomes align with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which posits that structured social interactions and cultural experiences can positively influence social behavior and emotional adjustment. Furthermore, the results echo the work of Barry et al. (2017), who highlight the efficacy of positive interventions in promoting social and emotional well-being in school settings.

Our study not only extends existing research but also emphasizes the broader emotional and social benefits of cultural education beyond cognitive outcomes. While Banks (2010) has documented the cognitive advantages of multicultural education, our findings underscore the importance of emotional and social dimensions. The observed improvements in well-being and social skills reinforce Kern et al.'s (2016) assertion that positive psychological interventions can enhance various facets of well-being, including happiness and connectedness. Additionally, the enhancements in social skills resonate with Bandura's (1977) theory, suggesting that engagement in diverse social activities facilitates better social and emotional outcomes.

Qualitative feedback from students in the experimental group revealed a heightened sense of enjoyment and connection during the cultural activities. Students expressed increased interest in learning about culture and reported improved interactions with peers. Teachers noted that students participating in the intervention exhibited greater empathy and cooperation, contributing to a more positive classroom environment. These observations align with findings from O'Brien (2016), who emphasizes the role of educational interventions in fostering sustainable happiness and well-being. Results also corroborate prior research demonstrating the benefits of cultural education on emotional and social outcomes (Barry et al., 2017; Kern et al., 2016). The marked improvements in engagement and prosocial behavior align with existing studies, though the intervention's significant impact on connectedness and optimism may reflect its unique focus on interactive and empathy-driven activities. This divergence highlights the importance of program design in achieving specific outcomes.

Overall, this research provides empirical support for the application of positive psychology and social learning theories within the context of cultural education. By demonstrating that cultural activities can improve well-being and social skills, our study reinforces the value of incorporating such interventions into primary school curricula. Educators can leverage these findings to create more engaging and supportive learning environments, ultimately enhancing students' cultural awareness and overall emotional and social development.

This study contributes to the growing body of evidence on the benefits of cultural educational interventions and offers practical insights for enhancing students' emotional and social growth through innovative classroom activities.

6. Conclusions

This study assessed the effectiveness of a structured cultural educational intervention on the well-being and social skills of third and fourth-grade students. The

intervention, which incorporated activities such as arts, music, storytelling, and cultural discussions, demonstrated substantial improvements in students' overall well-being and social skills compared to a control group. Specifically, the experimental group exhibited notable enhancements in engagement, optimism, connectedness, and happiness, alongside reductions in peer relationship problems and hyperactivity. These findings align with Seligman's (2011) Positive Psychology model, which emphasizes the enhancement of these positive attributes for improving overall life satisfaction and functioning. Furthermore, the results are consistent with the social learning theory articulated by Bandura (1977), suggesting that culturally enriching programs can positively influence social behavior and emotional adjustment. Additionally, the study's results support the broader notion of communication culture as a crucial professional skill (Mordovtseva et al., 2023) and underscore the importance of social constructs in shaping educational experiences (Huidu and Sandu, 2020; Marici et al., 2024).

Despite these promising outcomes, several limitations should be considered. Firstly, the study's sample was restricted to Arad County, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other regions with differing demographic or cultural contexts. Romanian cultural activities may not elicit the same emotional and social responses in students from different cultural contexts. Additionally, the study focused on a narrow age range (8–10 years), which limits its applicability to older or younger students. Future research should adapt the intervention to diverse cultural and demographic settings to evaluate its broader relevance and effectiveness. Secondly, the intervention's duration was limited to one school year, which may not capture the long-term effects of cultural activities. Longer-term studies are necessary to evaluate the sustained impact of such interventions. Furthermore, while the study used valid evaluation instruments such as the SDQ and the EPOCH Measure, relying on self-reported data may create bias. Future study should include different data sources, such as teacher and parent assessments, to improve the dependability of findings. Furthermore, the study failed to account for potential confounding factors such as past exposure to cultural events or individual variations in baseline well-being and social skills.

Future studies should address the limitations of this research by increasing the sample size to include participants from diverse geographic and socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby enhancing the generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal research is essential to evaluate the long-term effects of cultural educational interventions on students' well-being and social skills. Follow-up assessments conducted beyond the intervention period would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of improvements in well-being and prosocial behavior over time.

Additionally, future research could explore the relative effectiveness of different types of cultural activities, offering a more detailed understanding of which elements yield the most significant developmental benefits. Employing a mixed-methods approach that incorporates qualitative feedback from students, teachers, and parents would provide a more comprehensive evaluation of the intervention's impact. Furthermore, investigating the interplay between cultural education and other educational or psychological variables may reveal additional factors that contribute to student development.

In conclusion, this study adds to the growing body of evidence demonstrating the benefits of cultural educational interventions in elementary education. The findings provide a solid foundation for implementing similar programs and guide future research to optimize the impact of cultural activities on student development. The results underscore the importance of integrating cultural educational activities into school curricula to foster students' emotional and social growth, aligning with the theoretical frameworks of Positive Psychology and social learning theory.

To maximize student well-being, educators and policymakers should prioritize incorporating cultural activities into primary school curricula. Teacher training initiatives should focus on developing and implementing culturally enriching activities that promote engagement, optimism, and prosocial behavior. Furthermore, educational policies should allocate resources to ensure such programs become a standard component of primary education, ultimately enhancing students' holistic development and fostering inclusive learning environments.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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