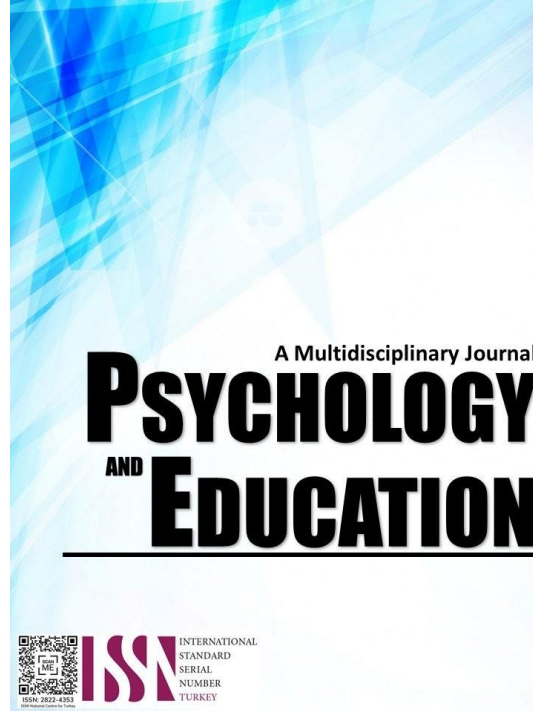


# **SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP AND STUDENTS' WELL-BEING: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**



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## Supportive Leadership and Students' Well-being: A Systematic Literature Review

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### Abstract

This systematic review examined examples and approaches of supportive leadership, factors affecting students' well-being, and how supportive leadership influences students' well-being, based on an analysis of 25 research articles published between 2020 and 2025. Following the PRISMA guidelines and literature review, the study synthesized current research trends, published results, and conclusions and recommendations in the field of education. The results showed that there are different examples of supportive leadership, including providing clear expectations, being an effective communicator, and being compassionate. Moreover, factors affecting students' well-being are well-being strategies, adult support, low-level burnout, student empowerment, positive emotions, learner engagement, purpose, accomplishment, and quality campus facilities. Finally, there is a close connection between supportive leadership and students' well-being. It is recommended for future research to prioritize how supportive leadership impacts students' well-being.

**Keywords:** *supportive leadership, students' well-being, systematic review*

### Introduction

According to UNESCO 2024, leadership is the heart of quality education and is believed to be the second most important factor predicting learning outcomes. Wilson (2025) defined educational leadership as the conduct of generating a vision, delivering direction, and giving support to staff, teachers, students, and learning communities. Educational leaders are not only superintendents and principals, but they are also teacher-leaders, coaches, and even administrative professionals.

One style of leadership is called supportive leadership, proposed by House & Mitchell (1975), and defined as a leadership style that is friendly and approachable, in which leaders show concern for their subordinates' status, welfare, and needs. Furthermore, Chi et al. (2018) concur with House & Mitchell's idea that supportive leaders exhibit behaviors that foster followers' satisfaction with their needs and well-being, creating a friendly, psychologically supportive work environment. However, support is not limited to social and emotional support; leaders should also provide informational, instrumental, and reward-based support to subordinates (Yelamanchili, 2019).

In the educational context, supportive leadership by school administrators influences teachers' organizational citizenship. Therefore, supportive school administrators can help teachers with their teaching content issues, appreciate them, and create a positive working environment (Erturk, 2023).

Nevertheless, not only do teachers need support, but students do, most importantly. According to Young et al. (2017), it is an important role of school leaders to support teachers and students in adhering to federal education policy.

In the Philippines, Yongco et al. (2025) found that the predominant leadership style in secondary schools is transformational leadership, which can positively affect students' outcomes. On the other hand, the Universities of the Netherlands (2022) defined student well-being as a condition in which students can maximize their potential, manage challenges and stress effectively, and contribute to their personal and academic growth. It refers not only to mental health but also to physical, social, and cognitive well-being.

Promoting student well-being has recently emerged as a critical educational agenda for educational systems worldwide due to its wide-reaching benefits (Joing et al., 2020). Student well-being can be considered an enabling condition for successful learning in school and an essential outcome of 21st-century education (Govorova et al., 2020).

Jin and Kim (2017) conducted a study in Korea, and their findings highlighted that the psychological well-being of nursing students was significantly correlated with academic resilience. In the Philippines, Valladolid (2021) investigated the role of coping strategies in the resilience and well-being of college students during the pandemic and found a positive relationship between academic resilience and students' well-being; however, this relationship was not moderated by the coping strategies used. This means that when students have high well-being, they can cope with the academic stress they face in school.

However, although literature on supportive leadership and students' well-being is available, there is no specific study on the effects of supportive leadership as a type of leadership on students' well-being. This calls for further study on how supportive leadership helps students balance their mental health and other aspects of their well-being amid the rigorous, demanding curriculum they face in today's academia.

### Research Questions

The goal of this study was to examine the literature on supportive leadership and how this leadership style can affect students' well-



being. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are examples or approaches of supportive leadership?
2. What are the factors affecting positive students' well-being?
3. How does supportive leadership affect students' well-being?

## Methodology

This systematic review was conducted following the standards of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis or PRISMA (O'Dea et al., 2021). In addition, a literature review is utilized in this study, which refers to reviewing previous studies with the topic being discussed (Levstek et al., 2018).

### Search Strategy

To identify relevant studies on the topic, the researchers conducted a comprehensive search across databases from 2020 to 2025. The databases the researcher used to locate relevant studies are Google Scholar, the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), and ResearchGate.

In conducting reference searches, the researchers set a specific criterion to ensure the research's academic rigor and quality. The criteria include only research studies published in 2020–2025, sourced from scientific journals, that focus on supportive leadership and students' well-being, and that are published in English.

Furthermore, the researcher set exclusion criteria to facilitate the selection of qualified studies for the literature review. The researcher excluded articles and studies published before 2020, studies of supportive leadership that focus on employees or teachers, articles that are not available in full text or accessible only through subscription or payment, and articles that are not translated into English.

### Procedure

The researchers searched for relevant peer-reviewed articles on online databases. After downloading articles from the databases, the researchers examined the titles and abstracts to select relevant articles according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Duplicates and studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded. After selecting the studies that qualified for the study, the researchers reviewed and analyzed all the articles, examining the results, discussion, and conclusions to answer research questions about supportive leadership and students' well-being. During the process, the researchers selected 25 relevant articles that qualify for the study.

### Ethical Considerations

This study followed ethical standards in conducting systematic literature reviews to ensure research integrity and responsible conduct. Even though the focus of this research is on analyzing published articles, the researchers took appropriate measures to select eligible data by establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria. Also, the selection and data extraction process is well presented to ensure transparency. The findings accurately represent the analyzed literature to uphold honesty and an unbiased interpretation of the results. Moreover, all authors who contributed to the literature of this study were cited correctly, acknowledging their work and avoiding plagiarism. Finally, the researchers disclose that there are no conflicts of interest related to the conduct of this study. By upholding these ethical standards, this systematic literature review adhered to responsible knowledge dissemination and supports the credibility of the research process.

## Results and Discussion

### Examples/Approaches of Supportive Leadership

Table 1. *Examples/Approaches of Supportive Leadership*

<i>Examples/Approaches</i>	<i>Source</i>
Providing clear expectations, promoting collaboration, and professional growth	(Ahmed and Ochieng, 2024)
Working peacefully, being effective listeners, and providing constructive criticism	(Erturk, 2023)
Being compassionate, understanding, and providing resources	(Clark et al., 2025)

Table 1 summarizes the synthesis of supportive leadership approaches and examples explored in the 25 research articles.

The data revealed that school principals manifest supportive leadership when they provide clear expectations and guidance, show mutual respect, promote collaboration and communication, actively foster collaboration, motivate and empower teachers, and encourage sharing ideas (Ahmed & Ochieng, 2024). Moreover, working peacefully, providing constructive criticism, listening effectively, accepting suggestions, helping solve problems, and appreciating and treating teachers equally are clear ways to show supportive leadership (Erturk, 2023).

On the other hand, students also perceived that teachers can help support them and reduce their stress. Teachers can support them by being understanding and compassionate, giving weekly announcements, allowing revisions of assignments, setting flexible deadlines, accommodating for illness and emergencies, checking students' well-being by asking how they are doing, and providing resources for

the content (Clark et al., 2025).

These findings align with House's (1971) path-goal theory, which explores the leadership styles leaders should possess, including supportive leadership, in which leaders focus on subordinates' well-being and provide a friendly, healthy, and supportive environment to help them reach their goals. Moreover, this is supported by the study of Shirazi et. al. (2014), who discovered that factors of supportive leadership, which are support for development, integrity, sincerity, and recognition.

### **Factors Affecting Students' Well-Being**

**Table 2. Factors Affecting Positive Students' Well-being**

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Source</i>
Well-being strategies like exercise, social interaction	(Landon, 2025)
Teacher support through differentiated instruction and parental support	(Rahmatulla (2024)
Low level of burnout, adequate social support, and high learner empowerment	(Gebregergis and Csukonyi, 2024)
Positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and purpose, and accomplishment	(Zheng, 2022)
Quality campus facilities and the availability of campus facilities	(Shurkor et al., 2025)

Table 2 summarizes the factors that affect students' positive well-being, as explored in 25 educational research articles. After reviewing different literature, the data reveal that well-being strategies such as exercise, social interaction, and leisure engagement can help balance students' well-being (Landon, 2025). In addition, differentiated instructional support from teachers makes students feel valued and recognized, and parental support, where they feel supported and cared for by their parents, can also improve students' well-being (Rahmatulla, 2022).

Similarly, when students experience low-level academic burnout, adequate social support, and higher learner empowerment, they tend to possess stronger psychological resources such as hope, efficacy, and resilience, which contribute to their well-being (Gebregergis & Csukonyi, 2024). Moreover, Zheng (2022) stated that positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and purpose, and accomplishment are the factors for well-being. On the other hand, physical factors can also improve students' well-being, such as high-quality campus facilities, including recreational facilities, public areas, study spaces, and on-campus amenities, as well as their availability (Shurkor et al., 2025).

Similarly, this aligns with Seligman's (2018) well-being theory, also known as the PERMA model, which introduces five pillars of well-being: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Moreover, the results are consistent with the study of Hossain et. al (2022), where they identified 8 significant domains of students' well-being, namely intrapersonal and relationship domain, lack of negative emotion, positive emotion, engagement, accomplishment, relationship, intrapersonal, having access to external resources, and a sense of purpose at school.

### **Supportive Leadership on Students' Well-being**

**Table 3. Supportive Leadership on Students' Well-being**

<i>Literature on Supportive Leadership and Students' Well-being</i>	<i>Source</i>
Academic success is inseparable from students' well-being	(Tarimo, 2025)
Supportive leadership is essential for enhancing academic performance	(Ahmed and Ochieng, 2024)
Principal and teacher leadership improve students' achievement	(Ozdogru, 2025)
Student well-being significantly impacts student performance	(Govorova et. al., 2020)
Institutions need to strengthen support for students	(Macaspa et. al., (2025)

Table 3 summarizes the synthesis of supportive leadership and students' well-being across 25 educational research articles. Given the absence of a specific study on supportive leadership and students' well-being, the researcher analyzed their relationship by synthesizing articles on supportive leadership, academic performance, and students' well-being.

The data revealed that academic success is inseparable from students' well-being (Tarimo, 2025), and supportive leadership is essential for enhancing academic performance in secondary schools with a conducive learning environment, clear expectations, and teacher empowerment (Ahmed & Ochieng, 2024). Correspondingly, principal and teacher leadership improve students' achievement through attaining transformational, supportive, distributed, and instructional leadership (Ozdogru, 2025).

Likewise, Govorova et al. (2020) found that student well-being significantly affects student performance. Higher cognitive well-being is associated with better achievement. On the other hand, Macaspas et al. (2025), suggested that institutions need strengthened support to students' well-being, such as academic support initiatives that include tutoring, mentoring, study skills, workshops, and academic advising programs, and aside from this, they can also provide students with holistic support services that include counseling, stress management programs, and wellness activities.

These results are consistent with the study by Marrone et al. (2024), which found that student well-being significantly influences academic achievement, with a notable effect on male students. Also, Waters et al. (2003) found a positive relationship between school leadership practices and student academic achievement.

## Conclusions

The systematic review emphasizes that supportive leadership can be practiced by setting clear expectations, communicating effectively, and being compassionate toward students. While students' well-being is affected by well-being strategies, teacher and parental support, level of burnout and empowerment, positive emotions, engagement and accomplishment, and quality campus facilities. When discussing the impact of supportive leadership on students' well-being, it is undeniable that academic success is closely linked to well-being and that supportive leadership improves academic performance. Therefore, there is a clear relationship between supportive leadership and students' well-being. Hence, if the principal and teachers are supportive of the students, the students are more likely to perform well because they are less stressed and in better shape.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions and researchers conduct relevant studies on how supportive leadership affects students' well-being. Additionally, this study highlights the need for educational leaders, including teachers, to adopt more strategies and approaches that imply supportive leadership to address student burnout and mental health problems, which can directly affect their well-being and academic success.

Future research can conduct a study with a larger sample and diverse schools to obtain more generalizable results. Longitudinal studies are recommended to investigate the impact of supportive leadership on students' well-being over a longer period. In addition, integrating a qualitative study, such as phenomenology, can help gather data through interviews on students' lived experiences of well-being and the support they receive from school. Lastly, exploring other variables, such as academic resilience, can also supplement understanding of the relationship between the two.

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