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SUMMARY OF THE Ph.D. THESIS SOCIAL SUPPORT AND WELL-BEING IN ROMANIAN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A RELATIONAL ANALYSIS OF MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION AND THEORY

1.1. Introduction, Research Questions and Relevance

The educational system can be conceptualized as a complex structure composed of multiple interdependent actors. A central component of this system is the school, understood as an organization or social system in which individuals work together in a coordinated manner to achieve shared goals (Norlin, 2009). In light of this perspective and in accordance with the principles of open systems theory, schools can be regarded as complex entities operating under the input–process–output model (Katz & Kahn, 1978). As such, due to their continuous interaction with external contexts (social, economic, and political), schools strive for organizational effectiveness by constantly adapting to societal demands (Lunenburg, 2010).

Within educational institutions, various actors or stakeholders interact with the goal of enhancing the quality of education. Stakeholders are defined as individuals or groups who can influence or are influenced by the achievement of an organization's objectives (Freeman, 2005). In line with this definition, teachers, students, and parents occupy key stakeholder roles in education, engaging in frequent and meaningful interactions that involve problem-solving, decision-making, and the continuous improvement of the learning process (Wood & Su, 2019; Hammonds, 2022; Sliwka & Istance, 2006; Munthe & Westergård, 2023).

To thoroughly describe and understand the educational actors embedded in this system, various conceptual lenses may be employed, ranging from educational psychology to organizational psychology. Among these, organizational psychology holds the greatest potential to advance knowledge in the educational context due to its overarching focus on understanding how individuals think, feel, and behave in the workplace, how teams function, and how organizational culture, climate, and structures influence performance (Nord, 1980; Giberson,





2015). Numerous studies have highlighted how specific organizational psychology principles bring added value to education from a stakeholder-centered perspective—whether examining educational leadership (Bush & Glover, 2014; Tucaliuc, Curşeu & Muntean, 2023), teachers' job performance, occupational stress and workload (Asaloei, Wolomasi & Werang, 2020; Jomuad et al., 2021; Reinke, Herman, Stormont & Ghasemi, 2025), school organizational culture and climate (MacNeil, Prater & Busch, 2009), organizational citizenship behavior in schools (Somech & Ohayon, 2020; Oplatka, 2009), or teacher satisfaction and organizational commitment (Zeinabadi, 2010; Toropova, Myrberg & Johansson, 2021; Bellibaş, Gümüş & Chen, 2024). This stakeholder dynamic can be rigorously studied precisely because schools function as microcosms of society (National Association of School Psychologists, 2020).

This theoretical perspective has been reinforced by bibliometric analyses revealing a significant increase in interest in organizational behavior between 1994 and 2019 (Sott, Bender, Furstenau, Machado, Cobo & Bragazzi, 2020). In this context, employee wellbeing has become an increasingly important focus (Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). A core component of organizational behavior in schools is wellbeing, which carries important implications for students, teachers, and school personnel alike (Miller, Connolly & Maguire, 2013; Simovska et al., 2016; Heidmets & Liik, 2014; McCallum, 2021; Norozi, 2023). From an organizational perspective, the school environment, defined not only by its physical infrastructure but also by institutional values, school climate, governance structures, and education policies, can exert a significant influence on staff wellbeing (Argyris, 1978; Schein, 1996; Biggio & Cortese, 2013). The importance of wellbeing is often best understood through the negative consequences that arise from its absence. For instance, teacher burnout has been associated with ineffective classroom and behavior management strategies (Lamude & Scudder, 1992), absenteeism





(Schonfeld, 2001), job abandonment (Marvel et al., 2006; Whipp et al., 2007), and turnover intentions (Klassen & Chiu, 2011).

When it comes to students, the central stakeholders in the educational process, promoting wellbeing has become a critical item on educational agendas due to its proven benefits (Joing et al., 2020). Student wellbeing is both a necessary precondition for learning and a global educational outcome in its own right (Govorova et al., 2020). In a longitudinal study, Kiuru et al. (2020) demonstrate that student wellbeing enhances academic performance, consistent with findings from a 15-month intervention focused on student wellbeing (Adler, 2016).

Another organizational behavior construct that is equally important in both educational and organizational psychology is engagement (whether conceptualized as school engagement or work engagement). Work engagement can be defined as cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy directed toward positive organizational outcomes (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). School engagement is similarly understood as the extent to which students or parents are involved in school activities and practices, contributing to a sense of belonging and commitment to the educational institution (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). In the school context, both parental and student engagement are key determinants of academic performance and wellbeing (Bussu & Pulina, 2020; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Lei, Cui & Zhou, 2018; Mielityinen et al., 2023). In understanding student wellbeing, one cannot ignore the moderating role of parental involvement in children's education (Reynolds, 1992; Sullivan & Feinn, 2012; Thomas, Muls, De Backer & Lombaerts, 2020).

A key construct in both organizational behavior and stakeholder dynamics is social support, which has wide-ranging implications across organizational life, from work engagement and motivation to wellbeing (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Brough &





Pears, 2004). Current research emphasizes its role as a job resource that buffers the adverse effects of occupational demands (Jolly et al., 2021), a resource particularly necessary in high-demand environments such as the school microcosm (Bakker et al., 2007), where stakeholder interactions are complex and dynamic.

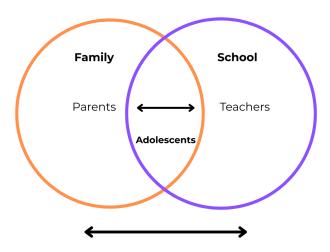
Bibliometric analyses of educational research in Romania highlight a significant interdisciplinary potential that is becoming increasingly visible in the national academic literature (Creţu & Grosseck, 2025). In this context, the present work aims to deepen the understanding of organizational psychology's impact on educational institutions by adopting a multi-stakeholder perspective, focusing on three key domains: teacher wellbeing, student wellbeing, and parental engagement. Generating knowledge across these dimensions, while addressing gaps between theory and practice, can enrich organizational life through targeted interventions and evidence-based practices grounded in organizational psychology, thereby enhancing the overall performance of the educational system.

A deeper understanding of the dynamic interplay between multiple stakeholders in the educational process can serve as the foundation for designing high-impact interventions that support both wellbeing and organizational performance (Tucaliuc, Curşeu & Muntean, 2023). Social support, wellbeing, and school engagement, when examined through the conceptual apparatus of organizational psychology, can highlight new avenues for enhancing educational quality and school climate (Jolly et al., 2021; Lindel & Brandt, 2000; McEvoy & Welker, 2000; Kelley, Thornton & Daugherty, 2005), potentially accelerating systemic progress. At the center of these interactions are adolescents (students) who represent the ultimate beneficiaries of any educational or organizational intervention. They are directly or indirectly influenced by all efforts aimed at improving pedagogical quality or enhancing school performance.





Figure 1. Educational Stakeholders Dynamics



Although wellbeing in educational contexts has been extensively studied (Kaya & Erdem, 2021; Maricuţoiu et al., 2023; Tejada-Gallardo, Blasco-Belled, Torrelles-Nadal & Alsinet, 2020; Wang, Burić, Chang & Gross, 2023), teachers' dysfunctional cognitive schemas and their impact on school life have only recently been explored (Tucaliuc, Curşeu & Muntean, 2023). To date, a limited number of studies have addressed the effects of dysfunctional schemas in work-related contexts (Tezel, Kışlak & Boysan, 2015; Bamber, 2006; Ragins & Verbos, 2007). Such early maladaptive schemas have a significant impact on individual wellbeing (Young, 1998; Baldwin, 1992), acting as cognitive filters in the interpretation of social information (Baldwin, 1992; Rumelhart, 1974).

Recent studies show that when calculated as a percentage (i.e., the proportion of cases caused by a particular disorder relative to the total number of cases across all causes), the prevalence of mental disorders in Romania is 11.89% (with depressive disorders accounting for





3.51% and anxiety disorders for 3.86%) (Brătucu et al., 2022). Complementary evidence also indicates that early maladaptive schemas are strongly associated with mental disorders (Thimm & Chang, 2022). Given these prevalence rates and findings, it is imperative to consider how early maladaptive schemas manifest in the professional lives of teachers, in order to accelerate the design of preventive and interventional wellbeing strategies.

Social disconnection and loneliness are highly prevalent among adults experiencing mental health disorders (Michalska da Rocha et al., 2017; Nenov-Matt et al., 2020; Stickley & Koyanagi, 2016). At the same time, workplace social support promotes reciprocity and fosters a return of support (Bowling, Beehr & Swader, 2005), thereby mitigating these effects. In organizational psychology, social support is often enacted through organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) (Oplatka, 2006), particularly as extra-role helping behaviors that directly provide social support in the form of instrumental or emotional resources (Jolly et al., 2021). However, there is currently no clear understanding of the buffering effect that social support at work may have on the negative consequences of teachers' early maladaptive schemas. Moreover, when considering extra-role helping behavior, providing support may also have detrimental consequences for the individual, manifesting as the depletion of personal resources (Koopman, Lanaj & Scott, 2016). In the context of public education in Romania, investigating the dynamics of both dysfunctional schemas and helping behaviors among teachers can offer valuable insights and guidance in the design of prevention and intervention protocols that indirectly enhance school performance and wellbeing.

Turning to students, another key stakeholder group in education, school-based social support is most often found in friendships, which are considered virtuous and beneficial to wellbeing (eudaimonia, Sherman, 1987; Chung et al., 2018; Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995;





Schacter et al., 2021). Despite these favorable qualities, no studies to date have explored the potential consequences of having a large number of friends, particularly the adverse effects of excessive social connections. Given that adolescents have limited personal resources to sustain a large number of authentic relationships (Hobfoll, 1989), maintaining too many friendships may result in negative consequences that ultimately affect adolescent wellbeing. This hypothesis remains untested in the current literature, but it holds important implications for school-based interventions aimed at cultivating adolescent wellbeing.

Parental involvement in school has also been shown to be an important factor in students' wellbeing (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; Richards et al., 1991; Simons-Morton & Chen, 2009). There is also evidence of a positive association between student wellbeing and school engagement (Van Ryzin, Gravely & Roseth, 2009). Recent studies highlight the pressing need to jointly investigate student and parent engagement to generate strategies that promote mutual involvement in school, especially given the scarcity of studies addressing this relationship (Yang et al., 2023). Such strategies may foster greater satisfaction with school and the educational process overall, both for students (Lewis, Huebner, Malone & Valois, 2011) and for parents (Oberfield, 2020).

In response to the specific needs highlighted by the literature, the studies presented in this doctoral dissertation address the aforementioned dimensions, with important implications for promoting school wellbeing. These aspects are investigated through a rigorous methodological framework, supported by a large-scale, multi-source data collection effort. The methodological apparatus employed in this thesis generates robust conclusions based on a sample of approximately 9,000 respondents (teachers, students, and parent-student dyads), using multilevel





modeling techniques that capture complex curvilinear effects, interaction patterns, and dynamic phenomena at the dyadic level.

In conclusion, this doctoral research seeks to explore and deepen our understanding of complex multilevel patterns in the interaction between multiple stakeholders in the Romanian educational system. Its overarching aim is to generate knowledge that contributes to the enhancement of wellbeing and social support in Romanian public schools, ultimately informing evidence-based educational practices and interventions.

CHAPTER II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND GENERAL METHODOLOGY

2.1 Theoretical Objectives

From a theoretical standpoint, our aim is to undertake a nuanced, multilevel, and relational analysis of the multiple stakeholders interacting within the educational process (teachers–students–parents). Accordingly, the theoretical objectives branch into multiple, interrelated directions, all converging toward the ultimate goal of improving the educational process within the microcosm of a school.

First, we aim to investigate how teachers' workload and social support function as mechanisms within the cost-benefit dynamic concerning the relationship between organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), work performance, stress, and burnout. OCB is considered one of the most powerful positive behaviors at work, contributing significantly to the development of social support. Building on Social Exchange Theory and Conservation of Resources Theory, we argue that both the benefits (social support) and the costs (increased workload) explain the associations between OCB and work performance, as well as stress and burnout. These





mechanisms are further influenced by the type of citizenship behavior (organization-oriented vs. individual-oriented) and by the intensity with which these behaviors are enacted.

Second, we examine how social support received at work interacts with teachers' dysfunctional cognitions and how the latter shape perceptions of the work climate, specifically conflict and psychological safety. Drawing on Cognitive Schema Theory, we explore the filtering role of dysfunctional cognitive schemas in interpreting social information at school, amplifying negative perceptions of task and relationship conflict, and facilitating the emergence of counterproductive work behaviors. Social support is expected to play a protective role in mitigating these negative effects, and we argue that these moderating effects will manifest in the relationship between dysfunctional schemas and perceived climate.

Third, we shift our focus to students as central stakeholders in the educational system to investigate the relational costs and benefits of the number of friends at school. We build on the meta-theoretical principle of "too much of a good thing," Social Interdependence Theory, and Conservation of Resources Theory to argue that harmonious social interactions (e.g., social acceptance and psychological safety) are more likely when the number of friends is low to moderate, while coercive interactions (e.g., conflicts and bullying) are more likely as the number of friends increases from moderate to high.

Finally, we explore for the first time the dynamics of trust, engagement, and school satisfaction within parent–adolescent dyads. Grounded in Social Quality Theory and Social Exchange Theory, we argue that trust in school is a key antecedent of both parent and student engagement, and we test the mediating role of student engagement in the relationship between trust in school and school satisfaction as experienced by both members of the dyad.





2.2. Methodological Objectives

A central methodological objective is to rely on large samples in order to implement complex multilevel analyses, with a specific emphasis on curvilinear phenomena and dyadic effects. This approach reduces the limitations of cross-sectional designs and common method bias. Additionally, multilevel modeling allows us to identify nuanced mechanisms and provide a more accurate understanding of the interactions between our constructs.

2.3. Practical Objectives

From a practical perspective, we hope that the findings presented in this thesis will offer valuable contributions that can serve as a foundation for the development of future educational policies aimed at enhancing stakeholders' wellbeing and the organizational performance of schools. The dense and diverse multilevel approach provides a dynamic and nuanced overview of stakeholder interactions in the everyday life of the school. We aim for these recommendations to be easily implementable in Romanian schools and to generate added value. The variety of results may offer educational managers the opportunity to implement targeted or comprehensive interventions tailored to each stakeholder group—be it teachers, parents, or students.

2.4. General Methodology

The methodology adopted in this comprehensive research is aligned with the needs of each specific research design and is primarily structured through cross-sectional designs.





To investigate the role of teachers as educational stakeholders, we worked with a total sample of 5,913 teachers from Romanian public schools in two stages (Study 1 – 2,224 teachers; Study 2 – 3,689 teachers). To test nonlinearity and slope estimation, we employed the "two-slope" method (Simonsohn, 2018) to explore the mediating role of workload and social support across different levels of OCB. To verify the robustness of our findings, we used Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through AMOS version 23.

In the second teacher-focused study, the data were structured hierarchically (nested – teachers from 331 schools) and analyzed using multilevel modeling. We also integrated the MLMed procedure and the multilevel mediation macro (Beta 2 version) for SPSS developed by Rockwood (2017). This allowed us to distinguish between within-school and between-school effects.

For analyzing students as educational stakeholders, the total sample included 2,674 adolescents (2,168 in Study 1; 506 in the parent–student dyads in Study 2). In Study 1, we employed hierarchical regression analysis and the MEDCURVE procedure to explore the nonlinearity of mediation effects in the proposed interactions. Additionally, we calculated the inflection point of the curve (if present) to identify where the relationship between our variables shifts.

In Study 4, we applied the Actor–Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny, 1996; Cook & Kenny, 2005) to examine dyadic effects within parent–adolescent pairs, aiming to capture interdependence in attitudes and behavioral intentions within interacting dyads. This final study represents one of the first empirical investigations focused specifically on parent–student dyads and their relationship with the school.



III. ORIGINAL RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

3.1 Study 1: A Social Support and Resource Drain Exploration of the Bright and Dark Sides of Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors.¹

Our study explores the role of workload and social support as mechanisms involved in the cost-benefit dynamics between organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), work performance (WP), and maladaptive work-related outcomes (MWRO) such as stress and burnout. Using a cross-sectional design, we test the costs and benefits associated with OCB in the case of teachers, drawing on a sample of 2,224 Romanian teachers (mean age 42.72 years). The results indicate that workload mediates the association between OCB, WP, and MWRO, particularly at higher levels of OCB. In contrast, social support mediates this relationship regardless of the level of OCB. More specifically, the relationship between OCB directed toward the organization, WP, and MWRO is mediated by workload, while the association between OCB directed toward individuals, WP, and MWRO is mediated by social support. These findings align with concerns in the literature emphasizing the need for more nuanced perspectives on the typology and quality of OCB in relation to teacher performance and well-being.

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¹ This subsection is based on the published study: Muntean, A. F., Curşeu, P. L., & Tucaliuc, M. (2022). A social support and resource drain exploration of the bright and dark sides of teachers' organizational citizenship behaviors. Education Sciences, 12(12), 895.





3.2. "I Receive Support, I Think Better" – Dysfunctional Cognitions, Social Support, and Counterproductive Work Behaviors in Romanian Schools.²

This study aims to explore the interaction effect between dysfunctional cognitions and social support on conflict and psychological safety, both considered antecedents of counterproductive work behaviors (CWB). Using a multilevel analysis on a sample of 3,689 teachers nested within 331 Romanian schools, we examine the association between dysfunctional cognition and the work climate, characterized by conflict and psychological safety. We also investigate the extent to which these dimensions influence the occurrence of counterproductive work behaviors. Our findings indicate that social support mitigates the positive relationship between dysfunctional cognitions and conflict, while also reducing the negative consequences of dysfunctional cognitions on psychological safety. Furthermore, social support buffers the association between dysfunctional cognitions and CWB, whereas the perception of a conflictual and psychologically unsafe work climate mediates the relationship between dysfunctional cognitions and CWB. These results generate valuable implications for educational leaders by highlighting the nuanced role of social support in preventing the detrimental effects of dysfunctional cognitions. We also emphasize the aggregate effects of dysfunctional cognitions at the school level, offering a valuable direction for future research on their impact in educational settings.

² This subsection is based on the published study: Muntean, A.F., Curseu, P.L., Tucaliuc, M. and Olar, N.I. (2025), "Dysfunctional cognition, social support and counterproductive work behaviors in schools", Central European Management Journal, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. https://doi.org/10.1108/CEMJ-05-2024-0155





3.3. Study 3: "Too Many Friends, Too Little Care": an Exploration of the Relational Benefits and Costs of Friendship for Academic Self-efficacy, Depression and Anxiety in Adolescence.³

This paper analyzes the relational benefits and costs associated with the number of school friends in a large sample of Romanian adolescents (N = 2,168). Using the MEDCURVE procedure to test for the non-linearity of mediation effects, our results highlight that psychological safety, bullying, and negative relationships mediate the association between the number of friends and levels of anxiety and depression. Meanwhile, social acceptance and bullying mediate the relationship between the number of friends and academic self-efficacy. In conclusion, our findings indicate that the relational benefits tend to diminish as the number of friends increases—more specifically, beyond nine friends (depending on the type of relational state). Therefore, parents, teachers, and school counsellors are encouraged to support adolescents in managing their friendship networks to prevent the relational costs associated with maintaining an excessively large (and potentially superficial) number of friendships.

³ This subsection is based on the published study: Muntean, A. F., Lucian Curşeu, P., & Tucaliuc, M. (2024). Too many friends, too little care: an exploration of the relational benefits and costs of friendship for academic self-efficacy, depression and anxiety in adolescence. Psychology, Health & Medicine, 29(10), 1792-1806





3.4. Study 4: "It all Comes Down to the Teens": An Actor-Partner-Interdependence Model of Trust, Engagement and Satisfaction with the School in Parent-Adolescent Dyads.⁴

Our study underscores the importance of analyzing parent–adolescent dyads to better understand the interaction between school trust, engagement, and satisfaction with school. Using an actor–partner interdependence model, we tested the mediating role of school engagement in the relationship between trust and school satisfaction within a sample of 506 parent–adolescent dyads in Romania. The results reveal that, when these variables are assessed jointly within dyads, only the adolescent's engagement acts as a significant mediator at the dyadic level, being predicted by both the adolescent's and the parent's trust in school. Moreover, engagement predicts both the adolescent's and the parent's satisfaction with school. An emergent result shows that male students report lower levels of engagement and satisfaction with school compared to their female counterparts. In line with our findings, we recommend that school principals allocate resources and develop platforms that support the joint involvement of parents and adolescents in meaningful school-related activities.

⁴ This subsection is based on the accepted article: Muntean, A. F., Lucian Curşeu, P., & Tucaliuc, M. (in press). "It all comes down to the teens": An actor-artner-interdependence model of trust, engagement and satisfaction with the school in parent-adolescent dyads. Europe's Journal of Psychology.





CHAPTER IV. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Theoretical Objectives

Our complex, multilevel, and stakeholder interaction-based investigations (teachers-students-parents) contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of the dynamics present in the school microcosm.

First, through the first study, we provide a nuanced and in-depth perspective on the costs and benefits associated with organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) in the teaching profession in Romania. In particular, we highlight that the social support received is more prominent when teachers initiate helping behaviors directed toward individuals (OCB-I) compared to when they engage in behaviors oriented toward the organization (OCB-O). These results align with the principles of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the Norm of Reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), which become active when help is interpersonal. In contrast, helping behaviors directed toward the organization (OCB-O) tend to increase teachers' workload, becoming a threat to their well-being (Bakker, Demerouti, & Sanz-Vergel, 2014). The costs and benefits of these two types of OCBs must be understood through the lens of their interactions. Our findings show that OCB-I is positively and significantly associated with job performance and indirectly with stress burnout—relations mediated by social support. Conversely, OCB-O shows an indirect negative association with job performance and a negative association with stress and burnout—mediated by workload. Another important element is the intensity of OCB enactment. Even at a low level, helping brings benefits in terms of social support; however, as OCB levels increase, the costs also rise, contributing to exhaustion and the erosion of well-being. Identifying an inverted U-shaped curvilinear relationship between OCB and





various work outcomes (performance, well-being) provides important insights into how teachers can balance costs and benefits in professional life.

Second, in Study 2, social support proves to be a protective factor that buffers the negative effects of dysfunctional schemas among teachers. These early maladaptive schemas generate various relational costs (Young, 1998; Baldwin, 1992), and our study highlights the mechanisms through which they operate in professional life. Acting as filters in the processing of social information (Rumelhart, 1984), schemas amplify teachers' negative affectivity, distorting their perception of psychological safety and conflict, thus facilitating counterproductive work behaviors (CWB). Furthermore, our study reveals the possibility of aggregated effects of schemas across schools, as we found significant associations between dysfunctional cognitions, the work climate, and CWB both within and between schools. These results open new research directions on mechanisms involved in generating collective effects. In schools with moderate to high levels of social support, the relationships between dysfunctional schemas and both perceived relational conflict and CWB are less pronounced. This provides valuable perspectives on how teachers can maintain well-being despite the presence of maladaptive schemas.

Focusing on students, our findings highlight a novel effect in the literature: the non-linearity of the relationship between number of friends, social acceptance, and psychological safety. The number of friends shows a decreasing negative relationship with bullying and negative relationships, and a decreasing positive relationship with social acceptance and psychological safety. Our analysis identifies a significant inflection point at nine friends: from zero to eight friends, friendships have a protective effect against bullying; beyond nine friends, this protective role diminishes. These innovative findings are consistent with systematic reviews that document both the benefits and relational costs of friendships





(Schacter et al., 2021). An excessive number of friends, according to Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), drains personal resources and nullifies relational benefits. Also, according to Social Interaction Theory (Heider, 1958), the number of balanced triads (my friend's friend is also my friend) decreases with increasing network size. Additionally, we nuance how student well-being is influenced by the dynamic of facilitating (social acceptance, psychological safety) and coercive (bullying, negative relationships) relational states. We show that when coercive states are accounted for, psychological safety and acceptance have a positive effect on student well-being. Our findings also support meta-analytic conclusions regarding academic performance and school maladjustment (Wentzel, Jablansky & Scalise, 2020). Social acceptance and bullying significantly predict academic self-efficacy, while psychological safety and negative relationships do not. An emergent finding is that girls report greater difficulties in well-being and self-efficacy compared to boys, even when controlling for relational states.

Finally, focusing on parent–student dyads, we explored the interaction between trust, engagement, and school satisfaction using the APIM methodology. A key finding is that student engagement is the only significant mediator of the relationship between trust and satisfaction for both stakeholders. This partner-only effect highlights the centrality of students in the educational process. We show that student engagement mediates the dyadic effect of trust on satisfaction and is also the sole predictor of parental involvement. These results expand previous conclusions regarding the role of student–teacher interaction in stimulating parental involvement (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014), emphasizing that the parent–student dynamic is crucial for school engagement. Drawing on Social Quality Theory (Ward & Meyer, 2019), we argue for the strong link between trust and satisfaction, with engagement functioning as the bridge between parents and schools. An additional result is that boys report





lower levels of school engagement and satisfaction compared to girls, potentially due to a lower level of marginalization and bullying experienced by girls (Hosozawa et al., 2021; Muntean et al., 2024).

4.2. Methodologic Objectives

One of our core methodological objectives was to employ large-scale samples to implement complex multilevel analyses capable of revealing potential curvilinear phenomena and dynamic interactions within dyads. The scope and design of our studies allowed us to explore nuanced mechanisms that directly respond to recent scholarly calls for more sophisticated analyses in educational research (Grant & Schwartz, 2011).

In the first study, we used the "two-slope" method (Simonsohn, 2018) to map how workload and social support operate as mediating factors at different levels of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). Regression analyses conducted using the PROCESS macro (Hayes & Preacher, 2010) helped identify both direct and indirect effects across various types and levels of OCB.

In the second study, we employed the MLMed macro for multilevel mediation and integrated this with the SPSS macro (Beta 2 version), allowing us to distinguish between within-school and between-school effects. This methodology enabled a deeper understanding of how dysfunctional schemas operate in teachers' professional lives and how social support can buffer their negative effects.

In the third study, we identified a clear inflection point in the nonlinear relationship between the number of friends and promotive relational states, marking the first empirical demonstration of the negative effects associated with an excessive number of friendships in adolescence. Using stepwise regression, we further examined the complex interactions among





students' maladjustment (anxiety and depression), academic self-efficacy, and number of friends.

In our final study, we applied the Actor-Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) to parent-adolescent dyads to better understand the dynamic interplay of their attitudes and behaviors related to school life. This innovative use of APIM yielded valuable conclusions for improving well-being in schools, benefiting both students and parents through enhanced educational engagement.

In conclusion, the methodological approach of this comprehensive research project was tailored with precision to the unique needs of each study. It provided robust analytical frameworks for capturing nuanced elements within Romania's educational system.

4.3. Practical Objectives

From a practical standpoint, the primary aim of these studies is to generate meaningful scientific conclusions that can form the foundation for developing more effective educational practices. The well-being of adolescents, teachers, and the overall school system, as an organizational entity, is a multifaceted construct that must be approached from multiple angles. Educational actors and the nature of their school-based interactions offer a critical starting point for designing impactful interventions to improve the educational process.

Building on the findings related to teachers, we emphasize the need for effective management of organisational citizenship behaviours (OCB) within schools. Helping behaviors are not only predictive of job performance (Podsakoff et al., 2009) but also represent a normative expectation within educational environments that fosters collaborative team climates. However, as demonstrated in our first study, interpersonal helping behaviors (OCB-I) are more effective in generating social capital than those oriented toward the





organization (OCB-O), such as working extra hours or leading school-wide projects. Educational managers can design team processes and protocols that encourage direct, interpersonal support, thereby allowing teachers to more readily benefit from helping spirals. At the same time, excessive helping can lead to overload and burnout, ultimately undermining teachers' well-being. A team climate in which helping is transparently distributed based on workload can mitigate the disadvantages of high levels of OCB. In such contexts, educational managers should closely monitor teacher workload to prevent overextension and promote balance between the benefits of extra-role behavior and the avoidance of associated costs, while providing targeted support when necessary.

This transition brings us to the conclusions of the second study, which highlight the importance of social support in sustaining teachers' professional engagement (Jolly et al., 2021). Our findings indicate that teachers with dysfunctional schemas perceive the school climate more negatively; however, social support can mitigate these adverse effects, lowering the likelihood of counterproductive behaviors such as sabotage or retaliation. Both instrumental and emotional support from colleagues and supervisors can defuse the impact of maladaptive schemas. Educational managers can take a holistic approach—providing direct support through mentoring, coaching, and resource allocation, while also building an organizational culture that fosters mutual support and team-based interventions.

Establishing peer support structures and fostering cooperative leadership relationships can reduce the adverse effects of dysfunctional cognition. Individuals with such schemas are often less likely to seek help due to stigma (Mănescu, Henderson, Paroiu, & Mihai, 2023). In such cases, social support may serve as a non-intrusive and healthy mechanism for coping. By integrating the results of the first two studies, we argue that teachers can simultaneously benefit from socially supportive organizational behaviors enacted by colleagues—thereby





reducing the impact of dysfunctional schemas and promoting a harmonious and functional team climate. Additionally, more structured interventions, such as group coaching for teaching teams, may strengthen cohesion, foster a psychologically safe space, and create opportunities to directly address dysfunctional cognitive patterns. Well-being-focused staff meetings that nurture belonging and camaraderic could serve as key elements of team resilience amid occupational demands.

Next, we turn our attention to the results relevant to student and parent stakeholders. The nonlinear relationship between the number of friends, facilitating states (psychological safety, social acceptance), and coercive states (bullying, negative relationships) draws explicit attention, for the first time in the literature, to the negative consequences of having a large social network in adolescence. Teachers, parents, and adolescent counselors can focus on shaping a mindset where adolescents value authentic and meaningful friendships rather than exponentially expanding their peer group, a pattern frequently seen during adolescence (Elmore & Huebner, 2010).

Additionally, Study 3 revealed positive associations between social support and social acceptance on the one hand, and academic self-efficacy, as well as the association between psychological safety and well-being, on the other. Adolescents need a supportive climate in the classroom to promote well-being and academic adjustment. In contexts where teachers foster peer support and mutual aid, students can emulate such dynamics through social learning (Bandura & Hall, 2018). Thus, the behaviors modeled by adult teachers within the school setting directly influence student behavior. Consequently, how teachers and school management cultivate a supportive organizational climate will indirectly shape the relational dynamics among students in class.





These efforts can be reinforced by the findings from Study 4. Student well-being can be enhanced through effective parental involvement in school life. Previous research has emphasized the need for parental engagement both at school and at home (Jeynes, 2018) to enhance educational outcomes. However, this study offers a deeper and more dynamic perspective by clarifying the essential role of the student in the parent-school interaction. Within parent-student dyads, student engagement proved to be the only significant mediating factor between school trust and school satisfaction for both stakeholders. This partner-only effect highlights the centrality of the student and their role in the educational process. School managers and administrators can implement platforms or learning communities that involve both parents and students to foster interactive effects.

Moreover, the key driver of engagement is trust, as evidenced by previous research (Houri, Thayer & Cook, 2019; Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). School staff must therefore initiate and maintain communication with parents to facilitate the trust of both parents and students in the school. Programs in which family feedback can influence interventions may stimulate trust and foster a supportive context. Additionally, interventions should account for gender differences, ensuring that boys are actively engaged to increase their school satisfaction. Such interventions can also positively influence class dynamics by promoting cohesion and group-level positive states.

In conclusion, our study findings offer variety and depth as a foundation for designing educational policies focused on fostering school well-being. Well-being must be understood as influenced by multiple factors operating across different levels, and the proposed interventions represent a vital piece of the educational puzzle. The practical results of these interventions can add value to schools by influencing various other variables. Furthermore, we emphasize the importance of replicating these findings in other educational contexts to





test the robustness of the observed effects. Still, our findings refine key insights, open new research directions, and offer future opportunities to explore the dynamics of Romanian schools.

4.4. Limitations and Future Research

Beyond the valuable contributions it illustrates, this dissertation also presents a series of limitations that should be appropriately addressed when interpreting the results. In this section, we outline these limitations along with future research directions that could strengthen our findings and deepen the empirical investigation centered around educational life.

4.4.1. Limitations of the Research Design

First, it is important to note that all our studies follow a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to infer cause–effect relationships. Our data were collected and analyzed within this type of design, increasing the likelihood of "Common Method Bias." However, common method bias is less likely to lead to an overestimation of interaction effects (Siemsen et al., 2010), which provides confidence that the interaction effects reported here were not significantly distorted. In the first study, we attempted to reduce the risk of common method bias by using a numeric scale, specifically, workload was measured as the number of hours spent at school. Future studies could explore longitudinal approaches based on data collected from multiple sources. More advanced analyses could be conducted with different samples to isolate interaction effects more precisely. For example, a phenomenon worth studying would be how teachers' dysfunctional schemas influence the psychological safety perceived by students and parents, particularly in the context of specific types of school





leadership, such as distributed leadership (Tucaliuc et al., 2024). An added value would be brought by longitudinal research, which could more accurately explore how these dysfunctional schemas interact over time. While experimental designs in educational settings may disrupt ecological validity, we recommend quasi-experimental designs that include interventions aimed at enhancing social support in teacher groups showing vulnerabilities. The effects of such interventions could also be examined in relation to other important variables in the school microcosm.

4.4.2. Limitations Related to Measurement Scales

In the first study, we used a self-report scale to measure performance. Previous research has shown that self-reports are less objective than supervisor ratings, the latter being more reliable (Heidemeier & Moser, 2009; Conway & Huffcutt, 1997). Moreover, although we used a numerical scale to measure workload and reduce the likelihood of Common Method Bias, the variable was assessed with a single item (teachers were asked how many hours they spend at school), which did not allow us to capture more nuanced or specific aspects of workload. In the case of maladaptive outcomes (stress, burnout), we also used a single-item measure for each variable, which may affect the validity of the measurements. Despite these limitations, the two items used for stress and burnout had previously been validated as appropriate for application.

In the second study, we used the number of friends reported by students as an indicator of peer relationships; however, this scale also fails to provide a comprehensive picture of the quality and authenticity of adolescent friendships. A similar limitation appears in the third study, where we used single-item measures for parents' trust and satisfaction with the school, which proved to be a constraint in applying the APIM methodology. To mitigate





these effects, we performed additional analyses using corresponding items from the student questionnaire that matched those used by the parents. The use of short-item scales is a strategy to ensure meaningful responses from participants (Wanous, Reichers & Hudy, 1997), and based on our analyses, we believe we have sufficiently mitigated potential negative effects of these measurements. Future studies may incorporate more complex instruments to capture more nuanced aspects. For example, teachers' self-reported performance can be cross-validated with objective data (results from national assessments and exams) and principal evaluations. Another relevant example would be developing better methods to assess the nature of adolescent friendships, perhaps by using network analysis approaches.

4.4.2. Sampling Limitations

Finally, one limitation of our studies lies in the over-representation of female participants in our samples. Although this sampling reflects the actual gender distribution in the Romanian educational system (Eurostat, 2016), it may influence how certain variables manifest among teachers, such as dysfunctional cognitive schemas. Furthermore, this aspect prevents us from drawing definitive conclusions about the general population of Romanian high school students concerning the impact of the number of friends. Nonetheless, emerging results from the literature converge on a similar principle (Telecan et al., 2024).





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