

## RESEARCH ON THE CURRENT SITUATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AFFECTING THE SELF-ESTEEM AND WELL-BEING OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN HO CHI MINH CITY

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Received:</b> 19/10/2023	This article presents a comprehensive assessment of self-esteem and well-being among high school students in Ho Chi Minh City using a questionnaire interview method. A 5-point Likert scale was employed to evaluate the perceptions of self-esteem and well-being. Data were collected through 1,300 distributed questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 97.08%, resulting in 1,262 valid survey questionnaires. The survey findings revealed that the overall average scores of self-esteem assessments consistently achieved level 3 or higher, with a substantial proportion reaching level 4, showcasing a positive self-perception among the students. Notably, statistical analysis highlighted a significant difference in self-esteem between male and female students. Furthermore, an analysis of self-esteem based on grade levels indicated a progressive increase in self-esteem scores as students advanced from lower to higher grades, underlining the influence of age and approaching adulthood on self-perception. Male students exhibited slightly higher self-esteem scores compared to their female counterparts, aligning with existing research that indicates a minor gender disparity in self-esteem. Gender-wise, female students exhibited a higher level of well-being than male students, possibly indicating differences in cognitive awareness and mental health concern. Additionally, a variation in well-being across different grade levels was observed, potentially reflecting the evolving cognitive and emotional states of students as they progress through high school.
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## NGHIÊN CỨU THỰC TRẠNG VÀ CÁC YẾU TỐ NHÂN KHẨU HỌC TÁC ĐỘNG ĐẾN LÒNG TỰ TRỌNG VÀ MỨC ĐỘ HẠNH PHÚC CỦA HỌC SINH TRÊN ĐỊA BÀN THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH

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THÔNG TIN BÀI BÁO	TÓM TẮT
<b>Ngày nhận bài:</b> 19/10/2023	Bài viết này trình bày đánh giá về lòng tự trọng và hạnh phúc của học sinh trung học phổ thông tại Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh bằng phương pháp phỏng vấn bảng câu hỏi. Thang đo Likert 5 điểm được sử dụng để đánh giá nhận thức về lòng tự trọng và hạnh phúc. Dữ liệu được thu thập thông qua 1.300 bảng câu hỏi phát tán, đạt tỷ lệ phản hồi là 97,08%, thu được 1.262 bảng câu hỏi khảo sát hợp lệ. Kết quả khảo sát cho thấy điểm trung bình tổng thể của các bài đánh giá lòng tự trọng luôn đạt cấp độ 3 hoặc cao hơn, với tỷ lệ đáng kể đạt cấp độ 4, cho thấy sự tự nhận thức tích cực của học sinh. Đáng chú ý, phân tích thống kê nêu bật sự khác biệt đáng kể về lòng tự trọng giữa sinh viên nam và nữ. Hơn nữa, một phân tích về lòng tự trọng dựa trên các cấp lớp cho thấy sự gia tăng dần dần về điểm số về lòng tự trọng khi học sinh tiến từ lớp thấp lên lớp cao hơn, nhấn mạnh ảnh hưởng của tuổi tác và sự trưởng thành đối với sự tự nhận thức. Học sinh nam có điểm số về lòng tự trọng cao hơn một chút so với các học sinh nữ, phù hợp với nghiên cứu hiện tại cho thấy có sự chênh lệch nhỏ về lòng tự trọng giữa các giới tính. Xét về mặt giới tính, học sinh nữ thể hiện mức độ hạnh phúc cao hơn học sinh nam, điều này có thể cho thấy sự khác biệt trong nhận thức và mối quan tâm về sức khỏe tâm thần. Ngoài ra, kết quả nghiên cứu còn cho thấy sự khác biệt về sức khỏe giữa các cấp lớp khác nhau, có khả năng phản ánh trạng thái nhận thức và cảm xúc đang phát triển của học sinh trung học.
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## 1. Introduction

Emotional and behavioral problems (EBPs) have been identified as a major public health concern in industrialized nations over the past 25 years, alongside physical health complaints [1]. EBPs are associated with an increased risk of adverse later-life outcomes, such as depression, impaired social relationships, and substance abuse, as well as increased financial costs to society due to criminal activity, additional educational support, and social care [1] – [3]. As a result, preventing EBPs and promoting emotional, social, and spiritual well-being is now a national priority for children and young people in all countries worldwide, including Vietnam. While the definition of mental illness in childhood and adolescence has been extensively studied, definitions of mental well-being are less well-developed. In adults, mental well-being is conceptualized as encompassing both hedonic (happiness, subjective well-being) and eudaimonic (positive functioning) well-being [4]. In 2004, the Royal Society in the UK defined well-being as "a positive and sustainable mental state that allows individuals, groups, and nations to thrive and flourish." Mental well-being, which is conceptualized as more than just the absence of mental illness, appears to be protective against a variety of health outcomes, including self-rated general survival health [5], immune response, stress response [1], and predictors of cardiovascular disease [1], [6]. Mental well-being has also been linked to higher educational attainment in childhood and adolescence, as well as enhanced vocational functioning in adulthood [1].

Self-esteem stands as a pivotal construct tightly linked to various favorable psychological outcomes, encompassing psychological adaptation, positive affect, and prosocial conduct [7]. Empirical investigations have underscored that individuals with diminished self-esteem encounter a heightened frequency of negative emotions compared to their high self-esteem counterparts [8]. Elevated self-esteem functions as a protective barrier, mitigating anxiety and bolstering coping mechanisms, ultimately fostering both physical and mental well-being [9]. It engenders a positive emotional state through facilitating personal adjustment and shielding against stressors and adverse emotions, whereas diminished self-esteem aligns with depressive tendencies, anxiety, and a lack of adaptability [10]. Numerous scholarly inquiries have substantiated the association between self-esteem and well-being [11].

Drawing upon the antecedent rationale and extant scholarly works delineating the positive influence of mindfulness on self-esteem [12] and the established linkage between self-esteem and overall well-being [13], it can be posited that mindfulness is predictive of heightened levels of self-esteem, consequently fostering an augmentation of well-being. This prognostication holds the potential to inform the development of targeted interventions by researchers and practitioners, particularly in the context of the burgeoning information technology landscape and the burgeoning emphasis on mental health and self-focus. While earlier investigations predominantly centered on scrutinizing perceived self-esteem and well-being in the realm of adulthood, scant attention has been accorded to the analogous exploration within the cohort of high school students. Thus, this study was undertaken to appraise the extant condition of self-esteem and well-being among high school students in Ho Chi Minh City, with the aim of enriching the theoretical framework essential for proposing pragmatic solutions and heightening awareness of this pertinent issue among high school students in Ho Chi Minh City.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Scale construction

The self-esteem assessment instrument utilized in this study was adopted from prior research conducted by Rosenberg [14] and Gnambs et al. [15] (labeled from SE1 to SE10). The measurement tool assessing well-being was adapted from earlier research by Boyce et al. [16] and subsequently refined by Clarke et al. [17] (labeled from WB1 to WB14).

## 2.2. Survey methods

This study involved surveying high school students in Ho Chi Minh City, focusing on understanding the expressions and functions of self-esteem and well-being. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey research. The study area is Ho Chi Minh City, and the population comprised high school students. Simple random sampling technique was employed. Data were collected through 1,300 distributed questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 97.08%, resulting in 1,262 valid survey questionnaires. The sample size determination formula by Taro Yamane [18] was used to objectively determine a sample size of 1,262 for the study. Details regarding the participants involved in the survey are outlined in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics

Individuals characteristics	Number (n)	Frequency (%)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	490	38.8
Female	772	61.2
<b>Grade</b>		
10	453	35.9
11	400	31.7
12	409	32.4

## 2.3. Survey methods

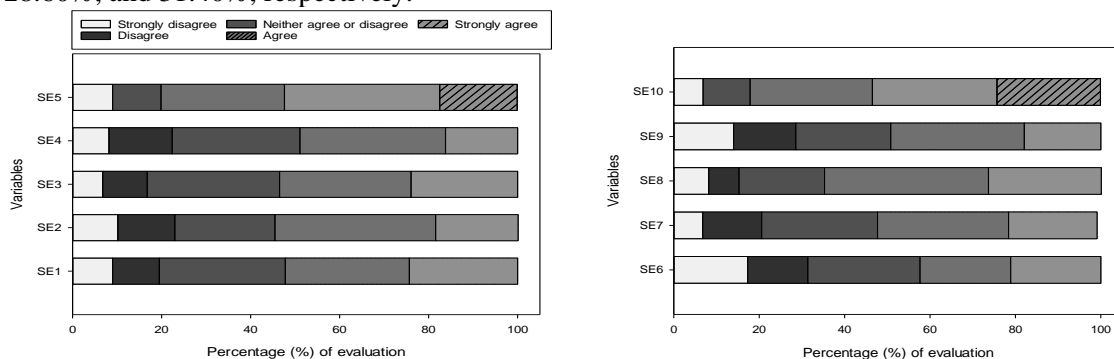
Upon data collection, the unsatisfactory answer sheets were filtered out, and subsequent data encoding and entry were executed using Excel software. The amassed data underwent processing employing SPSS software, involving two primary analytical approaches: (i) employing descriptive statistical techniques encompassing key indicators such as mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values, among others. The descriptive statistics employed in this study encompassed mean (average score), Std. Deviation (standard deviation); (ii) Utilizing inferential statistical methodologies, specifically Independent sample t-Test for gender variable, and One-Way ANOVA for grade variable, both at a 5% significance level ( $p < 0.05$ ).

## 3. Result and discussion

### 3.1. Survey results on self-esteem of high school students in Ho Chi Minh City

#### 3.1.1. Current status

The outcomes of the survey as shown in Figure 1 indicate that the highest overall student agreement rate, marked as level 4 (agree), across all observed variables related to self-esteem, ranged from 21.20% to 38.40%. Furthermore, the assessment rate at levels 4 and above was notably significant, ranging from 48.90% to 64.80%. Simultaneously, approximately 15.30% to 31.40% of students provided evaluations at levels 1 and 2. Among these, three variables (SE4, SE9, SE6) exhibited notably high evaluation rates at levels 1 and 2, with rates of 22.40%, 28.60%, and 31.40%, respectively.



**Figure 1.** Current status of self-esteem of high school students in Ho Chi Minh City

Furthermore, Figure 1 reveals that the average self-esteem assessment scores consistently reached level 3 or higher, with the majority attaining level 4. Among the observed variables, "SE8. I wish I respected myself more" garnered the highest average score of 3.68, highlighting a self-neglect trend among contemporary students. This result is believed to stem from the multifaceted pressures students face, encompassing economic concerns, familial responsibilities, academic demands, and overall well-being. Conversely, manifestations of lower self-esteem were apparent in variables "SE6. Sometimes I feel really worthless" and "SE9. In short, I tend to think that I am a failure" with average scores of 3.15 and 3.25, respectively.

### 3.1.2. Demographic factors

**Table 2.** Statistical testing of the difference in self-esteem of students

Variables	Sex		Grade		
	Male	Female	10	11	12
SE1	3.75 ± 1.22	3.12 ± 1.12*	3.21 ± 1.08 <sup>a</sup>	3.30 ± 1.31 <sup>a</sup>	3.94 ± 1.12 <sup>b</sup>
SE2	3.55 ± 1.16	3.18 ± 1.25*	3.19 ± 1.12 <sup>a</sup>	3.33 ± 1.37 <sup>b</sup>	3.68 ± 1.07 <sup>c</sup>
SE3	3.72 ± 1.16	3.29 ± 1.11*	3.23 ± 1.06 <sup>a</sup>	3.51 ± 1.19 <sup>b</sup>	3.87 ± 1.12 <sup>c</sup>
SE4	3.55 ± 1.10	3.08 ± 1.16*	3.08 ± 1.05 <sup>a</sup>	3.33 ± 1.18 <sup>b</sup>	3.64 ± 1.14 <sup>c</sup>
SE5	3.61 ± 1.11	3.14 ± 1.18*	3.19 ± 1.07 <sup>a</sup>	3.33 ± 1.25 <sup>a</sup>	3.70 ± 1.08 <sup>b</sup>
SE6	3.36 ± 1.36	2.86 ± 1.33*	2.83 ± 1.26 <sup>a</sup>	3.11 ± 1.48 <sup>b</sup>	3.50 ± 1.26 <sup>c</sup>
SE7	3.56 ± 1.16	3.30 ± 1.14*	3.13 ± 1.14 <sup>a</sup>	3.58 ± 1.31 <sup>b</sup>	3.61 ± 1.16 <sup>b</sup>
SE8	3.79 ± 1.12	3.53 ± 1.22*	3.66 ± 1.13 <sup>ab</sup>	3.58 ± 1.23 <sup>a</sup>	3.81 ± 1.14 <sup>b</sup>
SE9	3.54 ± 1.20	2.85 ± 1.32*	2.86 ± 1.26 <sup>a</sup>	3.09 ± 1.31 <sup>b</sup>	3.79 ± 1.14 <sup>c</sup>
SE10	3.75 ± 1.09	3.23 ± 1.20*	3.24 ± 1.12 <sup>a</sup>	3.51 ± 1.23 <sup>b</sup>	3.83 ± 1.08 <sup>c</sup>
<b>Total</b>	3.61 ± 1.17	3.16 ± 1.22*	3.16 ± 1.15 <sup>a</sup>	3.37 ± 1.28 <sup>b</sup>	3.74 ± 1.14 <sup>c</sup>

Note: Data are presented as Mean ± Std. The letters a, b, c in the same row indicate the ANOVA statistical difference for the class variable, the letter \* in the same row indicates the t-Test statistical difference for the gender variable in level of statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ).

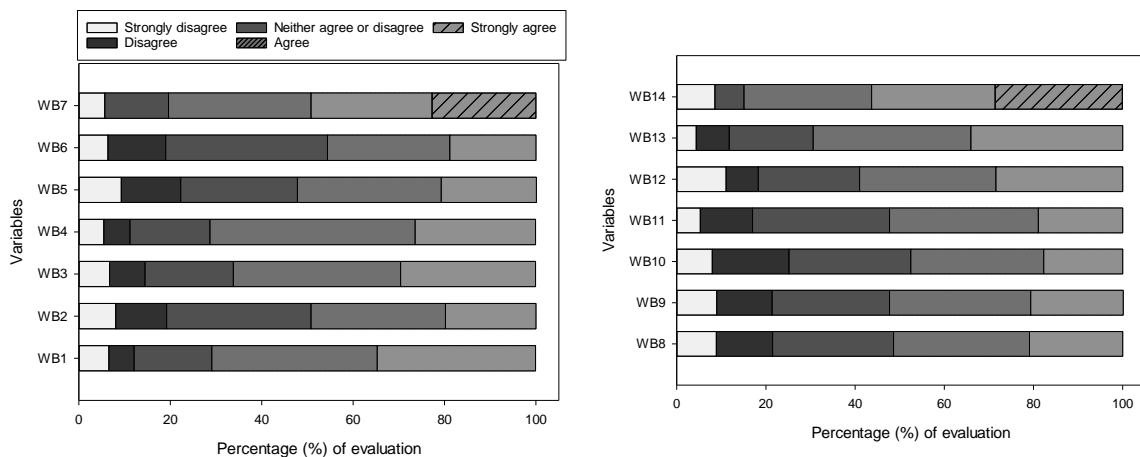
The results from Table 2 showed within the examined variables pertaining to self-esteem, the average score range for male students varied from 3.36 to 3.37. Conversely, among female students, the observed variables concerning self-esteem spanned from 2.85 to 3.30. Across all facets of self-esteem, male students consistently received higher assessment scores compared to their female counterparts, and this disparity was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). The overall average self-esteem score for male students was 3.61, surpassing that of female students (3.16), and this difference was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). These findings align with earlier research suggesting a higher level of self-esteem in males compared to females [19]. Bleidorn et al. [20] similarly identified notable gender disparities in self-esteem, with males consistently exhibiting higher levels of self-esteem across all surveyed countries, and both genders displaying an upward trajectory with age from late adolescence to middle age. This implies that normative differences in self-esteem related to gender and age are, to some extent, influenced by universal mechanisms. These mechanisms may encompass biological factors underpinned by genetic processes transcending various cultures and contexts. However, only a limited number of studies have explored biological origins, such as hormonal influences, contributing to gender differences in self-esteem [21]. Notably, several studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between male traits and self-esteem in both men and women, while the association between female traits and self-esteem is considerably weaker and less consistent [22], [23].

Results of a one-way ANOVA analysis reveal discernible differences among class levels concerning the observed self-esteem variables. Specifically, grade 12 students display a predominant majority of assessment scores ranging from 3.50 to 3.94, surpassing those of grade 10 and 11 students, and this disparity holds statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). Assessment scores on the observed variables for 11th-grade students exceeded those of 10th-grade students, ranging from 3.09 to 3.58 compared to 2.83 to 3.24. The cumulative assessment scores across the three

grades, arranged from lowest to highest, are as follows: grade 12 students (3.74), grade 11 students (3.37), and grade 10 students (3.16). The average assessment scores exhibited statistical variance among the three grades ( $p < 0.05$ ). Time emerges as a significant factor in altering or redirecting life trajectories, impacting behaviors, emotions, cognitions, and contexts, and is also relevant to an individual's evolving perception of self-esteem [24]. For instance, during early and middle adulthood, individuals engage in diverse societal roles, such as students participating in clubs, NGOs, and similar entities. These roles associated with societal engagement can impart a sense of self-worth and potentially elevate self-esteem [25]. Notably, successful mastery of challenges linked to initial employment can enhance a young person's sense of mastery and, consequently, elevate self-esteem [26].

### 3.2. Survey results on well-being of high school students in Ho Chi Minh City

#### 3.2.1. Current status



**Figure 2.** Current status of well-being of high school students in Ho Chi Minh City

The survey results showed from Figure 2 revealed that the highest overall student agreement rate, denoted as level 4 (agree), across all observed self-esteem variables, ranged from 26.50% to 44.90%. Furthermore, the evaluation rate of students at levels 4 and above ranged from 45.60% to 71.20%. Concurrently, approximately 11.80% to 25.20% of students provided evaluations at levels 1 and 2. Among these, four variables (WB6, WB9, WB10, and WB11) exhibited notably high evaluation rates at levels 1 and 2, with rates of 21.40%, 21.50%, 22.30%, and 25.20%, respectively. The average self-esteem assessment scores consistently attained level 3 or higher, with the majority achieving level 4. Among the observed variables, the variable "WB13. I've been interested in new things" received the highest average score of 3.87, indicating a positive inclination toward discovering new aspects about oneself. Students' expressions of lower evaluation were observed in "WB10. I've been feeling confident" which attained an average score of 3.31. This could be attributed to the academic pressures and demands of the current period impacting the ratings for WB10.

#### 3.2.2. Demographic factors

The research outcomes reveal variations in well-being assessment scores between male and female students. In most observed variables from Table 3, assessment scores of female students surpass those of male students, demonstrating a statistically significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, two observed variables, WB4 and WB13, do not exhibit statistical disparities between male and female students ( $p > 0.05$ ). The overall average score illustrates that female students perceive a higher level of well-being in comparison to male students (3.73 compared to 3.31), and this distinction is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Earlier research findings indicate that

gender disparities in well-being are associated with differing ages and educational levels among women and men [27]. Despite the small effect size of these differences, statistically significant variations were identified in various psychological dimensions of well-being, with men achieving higher scores than women in self-acceptance and autonomy, while women scored higher than men in personal growth and positive relationships with others [28]. Additionally, studies conducted by Ryff and colleagues both in the United States and Japan [29] revealed that women consistently score higher than men in positive relationships with others.

**Table 3.** Statistical testing of the difference in well-being of students

Variables	Sex		Grade		
	Male	Female	10	11	12
WB1	3.67 ± 1.14	4.02 ± 1.13*	3.88 ± 1.20 <sup>b</sup>	3.60 ± 1.06 <sup>a</sup>	4.12 ± 1.10 <sup>c</sup>
WB2	3.20 ± 1.13	3.58 ± 1.16*	3.31 ± 1.19 <sup>a</sup>	3.23 ± 1.13 <sup>a</sup>	3.73 ± 1.09 <sup>b</sup>
WB3	3.56 ± 1.16	3.88 ± 1.14*	3.74 ± 1.16 <sup>b</sup>	3.55 ± 1.10 <sup>a</sup>	3.93 ± 1.19 <sup>c</sup>
WB4	3.73 ± 1.11	3.87 ± 1.02	3.74 ± 1.07 <sup>a</sup>	3.74 ± 1.07 <sup>a</sup>	3.94 ± 1.04 <sup>b</sup>
WB5	3.00 ± 1.17	3.72 ± 1.11*	3.26 ± 1.22 <sup>a</sup>	3.16 ± 1.10 <sup>a</sup>	3.84 ± 1.20 <sup>b</sup>
WB6	3.01 ± 1.09	3.67 ± 1.05*	3.32 ± 1.10 <sup>b</sup>	3.07 ± 1.04 <sup>a</sup>	3.78 ± 1.10 <sup>c</sup>
WB7	3.15 ± 1.13	3.71 ± 1.11*	3.36 ± 1.14 <sup>b</sup>	3.19 ± 1.06 <sup>a</sup>	3.85 ± 1.14 <sup>c</sup>
WB8	3.13 ± 1.19	3.64 ± 1.17*	3.27 ± 1.22 <sup>b</sup>	3.12 ± 1.09 <sup>a</sup>	3.88 ± 1.16 <sup>c</sup>
WB9	3.10 ± 1.16	3.68 ± 1.18*	3.29 ± 1.25 <sup>b</sup>	3.12 ± 1.05 <sup>a</sup>	3.88 ± 1.16 <sup>c</sup>
WB10	2.89 ± 1.13	3.64 ± 1.11*	3.18 ± 1.22 <sup>b</sup>	2.98 ± 1.09 <sup>a</sup>	3.80 ± 1.07 <sup>c</sup>
WB11	3.17 ± 1.08	3.12 ± 1.03*	3.49 ± 1.10 <sup>b</sup>	3.25 ± 1.09 <sup>a</sup>	3.73 ± 1.03 <sup>c</sup>
WB12	3.34 ± 1.38	3.76 ± 1.16*	3.54 ± 1.29 <sup>b</sup>	3.32 ± 1.27 <sup>a</sup>	3.88 ± 1.19 <sup>c</sup>
WB13	3.89 ± 1.07	3.86 ± 1.12	3.95 ± 1.05 <sup>b</sup>	3.79 ± 1.02 <sup>a</sup>	3.87 ± 1.22 <sup>ab</sup>
WB14	3.51 ± 1.19	3.69 ± 1.22*	3.75 ± 1.12 <sup>b</sup>	3.44 ± 1.11 <sup>a</sup>	3.63 ± 1.36 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Total</b>	3.31 ± 1.19	3.73 ± 1.13*	3.51 ± 1.19 <sup>b</sup>	3.32 ± 1.12 <sup>a</sup>	3.86 ± 1.13 <sup>c</sup>

*Note: Data are presented as Mean ± Std. The letters a, b, c in the same row indicate the ANOVA statistical difference for the class variable, the letter \* in the same row indicates the t-Test statistical difference for the gender variable in level of statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ).*

The outcomes of the one-way ANOVA analysis demonstrated notable distinctions across different grade levels concerning the observed variables related to well-being. From Table 3 specifically, students in grade 12 exhibited the highest assessment scores, ranging from 3.63 to 4.12, surpassing their counterparts in grade 10 and 11, with this disparity being statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Evaluation scores of observed variables for 10th-grade students exceeded those of 11th-grade students, ranging from 3.18 to 3.88 compared to 2.98 to 3.79. Cumulative assessment scores, ordered from lowest to highest, are as follows: 12th-grade students (3.86), 10th-grade students (3.51), and 11th-grade students (3.22). The average assessment score displays a statistically significant difference among the three grades ( $p < 0.05$ ). Abdullahi et al. [30] found that older individuals are more inclined than their younger counterparts to engage in activities that imbue their lives with purpose and enrich their well-being. A plausible rationale for this discovery, according to Carstensen et al. [31], is that perceived time constraints prompt older adults to shift their mindset, leading them to focus on meaningful activities. For instance, as individuals age, they tend to engage in more self-reflection, becoming acutely aware of their lifespans, exerting more influence, and thus choosing to lead purposeful lives, engaging solely in endeavors that bring meaning to their existence. Conversely, young individuals primarily navigate an exploratory phase, often marked by challenges, uncertainties, and numerous mistakes and setbacks. Consequently, they are less likely to value their pursuits, potentially impacting their psychological well-being [31]. Grade 11 signifies a transitional phase between high school and career orientation, marked by a myriad of emotional fluctuations. A plausible explanation for this lies in the fact that as individuals age and accumulate experiences, they seek more support and companionship from family and friends. As a result, older individuals tend to form more valuable relationships and friendships, aiding in better management of daily tasks, including emotional

regulation. Hence, they tend to exhibit greater emotional stability. This aligns with Taneva [32], which demonstrated that older adults reported better control over negative emotions compared to their younger counterparts.

#### 4. Conclusion

The survey results have provided valuable insights into the self-esteem and well-being of high school students in Ho Chi Minh City, shedding light on essential facets of their psychological and emotional experiences. The overall self-esteem assessment scores were notably favorable, with a predominant majority achieving level 4, showcasing a positive perception of self. Furthermore, distinct gender and grade-level variations were observed. Gender-wise, male students exhibited slightly higher self-esteem scores than their female counterparts, aligning with existing literature suggesting minor gender disparities in self-esteem, where men tend to maintain a slightly higher level of self-esteem.

On the other hand, the well-being assessment scores, encompassing variables related to happiness and overall well-being, were consistently positive, with the majority surpassing level 4. Notably, female students demonstrated a higher level of well-being compared to males, which may reflect differences in cognitive awareness, sensitivity, and concern for mental health. Additionally, a compelling trend emerged with grade levels, indicating a progression in self-esteem and well-being as students advanced through high school in Ho Chi Minh city. Therefore, developing orientation lesson plans and interventions focused on self-esteem and well-being, which ensure profound benefits, is of paramount importance in opening doors for students to access this aspect. This, in turn, would lead to the promotion of their mental well-being, as well as the enhancement of their social support.

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