

AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON SUBJECTIVE
WELL-BEING EXPERIENCES OF ROMA EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN PUBLIC
MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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WELL-BEING EXPERIENCES OF ROMA EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN
PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOLS**

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ABSTRACT

AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING EXPERIENCES OF ROMA EARLY ADOLESCENTS IN PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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The current study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of Roma early adolescents' experiences of subjective well-being in public middle schools. Additionally, this study emphasized how Roma early adolescents made meaning of their current circumstances in school by listening to their narratives and allowing them to raise their voices. Using purposive sampling, the study was conducted with 12 Roma early adolescents, aged between 11 and 14, attending four different public middle schools in the Körfez district of Kocaeli. Semi-structured and face-to-face interviews were conducted with each of the 12 participants. The data were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis, resulting in two group experiential themes. These were “They face challenges in adapting to the school system” and “Middle school is the last opportunity to engage with the educational system.” Findings were discussed based on the related literature, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research were presented.

Keywords: subjective well-being, Roma, early adolescents, interpretative phenomenological analysis, qualitative study



ÖZ

DEVLET ORTAOKULLARINDAKİ ROMAN ÖN ERGENLERİN ÖZNEL İYİ OLUŞ DENEYİMLERİ ÜZERİNE YORUMLAYICI FENOMENOLOJİK BİR ÇALIŞMA

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Bu çalışma, Roman ön ergenlerin devlet ortaokullarındaki öznel iyi oluş deneyimlerini derinlemesine anlamayı amaçlamıştır. Ayrıca bu çalışmada, Roman ön ergenlerin hikayelerini dinleyerek ve seslerini duyurmalarına fırsat tanıyarak okuldaki mevcut durumlarını nasıl anlamlandırdıkları vurgulanmıştır. Amaçlı örneklem yöntemi kullanılarak yapılan çalışma, Kocaeli'nin Körfez ilçesindeki dört farklı devlet ortaokuluna devam eden, yaşları 11 ile 14 arasında değişen, 12 Roman ön ergen ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Her bir katılımcıyla yarı yapılandırılmış ve yüz yüze görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Veriler, yorumlayıcı fenomenolojik analiz yöntemiyle incelenmiş ve iki grup deneyimsel tema elde edilmiştir. Bunlar, “Okul sistemine uyum sağlamada zorluklarla karşılaşmaktadırlar” ve “Ortaokul, eğitim sistemiyle etkileşim kurmak için son bir fırsattır” temalarıdır. Bulgular, ilgili literatür çerçevesinde tartışılmış, uygulamaya yönelik çıkarımlar ve gelecekte yürütülecek araştırmalar için öneriler sunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: öznel iyi oluş, Roman, ön ergen, yorumlayıcı fenomenolojik analiz, nitel çalışma



To my beloved family

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
HBSC	Health Behavior in School-Aged Children
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
NSCS	New Social Childhood Studies
GRT	Gypsy, Roma, and Traveler
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the Study

In some countries, education tends to prioritize academic success over students' subjective well-being, often neglecting their emotional experiences and personal development (Dello-Iacovo, 2009; Noddings, 2003). This focus is primarily driven by school accountability efforts that emphasize proficiency in core subjects like mathematics and reading (Huebner et al., 2014). Consequently, schooling is frequently framed as preparation for future economic and vocational success, sometimes at the expense of addressing students' current social and emotional needs. When students struggle to meet the academic expectations set by teachers, parents, and school administrators, they may feel pressured to focus solely on their weaknesses, leaving little room for personal growth (Gordon & Crabtree, 2006; Noddings, 2003). This can negatively affect their confidence, self-efficacy, and engagement in school.

Furthermore, an excessive emphasis on academic performance, particularly on grades, can lead schools to overlook other crucial aspects, such as social relationships, emotional experiences, and identity development (Tomas et al., 2020). However, as Noddings (2003) points out, there is a strong connection between education and happiness. A comprehensive educational approach should integrate both academic achievement and student well-being (Tian et al., 2016). Schools play a vital role not only in gaining academic knowledge but also in shaping students' social experiences, enhancing relationships, and preparing them for active participation in society (Bücker et al., 2018; Gray & Hackling, 2009). Therefore, examining their experiences beyond academic performance is essential to assess the

overall quality of education and its impact on personal growth and well-being (Morinaj & Hascher, 2022).

Well-being has been conceptualized differently by various people and carries multiple meanings. Generally, it refers to the quality of life that individuals experience, encompassing the idea that one's condition is positive or simply how well life is going for them (Cho, 2018; Rees et al., 2013; Veenhoven, 2007). Despite the differences in what constitutes a high quality of life, it is widely accepted that well-being encompasses both subjective experiences and feelings, as well as the objective conditions in which one lives (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). It is linked to the fulfillment of desires, the balance between pain and pleasure, and the availability of possibilities for personal growth and self-fulfillment (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). On the other hand, the subjective well-being literature focuses primarily on how and why individuals positively experience their lives, composing cognitive assessments and affective responses (Diener, 2009). The most widely accepted model of subjective well-being, developed by Diener (1984), suggests that people having higher levels of subjective well-being experience frequent positive emotions and infrequent negative emotions with positive levels of life satisfaction (Huebner et al., 2014). It is important to note that adolescents who are satisfied with their lives can still experience negative emotions like sadness, boredom, or stress without necessarily having a negative evaluation of their entire lives (Corominas et al., 2020). This promotes the notion that positive developments may occur in stressful environments (Diener, 2009).

According to Diener (1984), subjective well-being has three main distinctive features. Firstly, it is subjective and based on the individual's experience. Based on this aspect of subjective well-being, there is a significant absence of objective conditions considered (Kammann, 1983). Despite the potential impact on subjective well-being, objective conditions are not addressed as necessary and inherent. Secondly, it is defined not only by the absence of negative elements but also by positive factors. Lastly, it encompasses a broader assessment of an individual's overall life satisfaction rather than just focusing on one specific area. In other words, while evaluating a person's satisfaction in a specific domain is possible, the focus is typically on their overall evaluation of life (Diener, 2009).

However, Sarason (1997) suggests that it is essential for researchers to acknowledge that satisfaction with life is influenced by different factors in one's ecological context, including interpersonal relationships, social and familial connections, and institutional surroundings. In other words, it is widely agreed that subjective well-being is influenced by interactions with various environments, such as family, school, and neighborhood (González-Carrasco et al., 2019). These interactions play a role in constructing and maintaining subjective well-being (Coyl-Shepherd & Newland, 2013; Oberle et al., 2011). As adolescents' subjective well-being is a combination of experiences in different contexts and dimensions, it is essential to note that relying solely on overall life satisfaction may not provide a complete picture of their well-being (Lee & Yoo, 2015).

The increasing emphasis on context-specific domains of well-being has led to a growing recognition of the importance of students' well-being within the school environment. Researchers have attempted to define school-specific indicators of subjective well-being within the context of students' experiences in educational settings (Renshaw et al., 2024). In that sense, school satisfaction, as a critical aspect of school-related subjective well-being, has been a topic of interest among scholars. School satisfaction refers to how students evaluate their overall experience in school based on their subjective standards, such as their feelings toward the school community, the relationships they have formed, and their perceptions of the school's significance (Huebner, 1994; Huebner & McCullough, 2000). Grounded in Diener's (1994) subjective well-being model, Tian (2008) conceptualized school-related subjective well-being as comprising three aspects: school satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. According to her conceptualization, school-related subjective well-being points out adolescents' subjective evaluations and emotional experiences in their school lives (Tian, 2008). In this study, school-related subjective well-being was conceptualized based on Tian's (2008) multidimensional model, which offers a broader perspective for understanding the cognitive and affective dimensions of student well-being.

From another perspective, Hascher (2003) integrated the hedonic approach with the eudaimonic approach, which points out a process of realizing or fulfilling one's

potential (Deci & Ryan, 2008) to conceptualize student well-being. She defined student well-being in school as students' positive feelings and cognitions toward school, individuals in school, and the school environment, outweighing negative emotions and thoughts about school life. In other words, well-being in schools encompasses the subjective, emotional, and cognitive assessments of the school environment. It reflects the balance of positive and negative elements, emphasizing the prevalence of positive aspects (Hascher, 2003).

Moreover, there are two other models applying schools as a distinct domain to understand students' well-being, which are the EPOCH-S Model (Buerger et al., 2023) and the School Well-Being Model (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002). In the first model, school-related well-being includes five domains: engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness. Engagement involves becoming focused on school activities and tasks. Perseverance entails working hard towards achieving one's goals, even when faced with obstacles. Optimism reflects confident and hopeful expectations about future school experiences and academic success. Connectedness refers to positive relationships in school, for example, with peers and teachers. Happiness denotes satisfaction with life and feeling content. In the School Well-Being Model, well-being in school is conceptualized in four categories, namely school conditions, social relationships, means for self-fulfillment, and health status. School conditions encompass factors that affect children's schoolwork, the learning environment, and school services. Social relationships deal with the school climate, group dynamics, and relationships with peers and teachers, while means for self-fulfillment refer to opportunities for children to participate in decision-making, develop their interests, and engage in leisure activities. Lastly, health status represents psychosomatic symptoms, illnesses, and chronic diseases.

The contributions of these two models to school-related subjective well-being highlight key psychological and social factors that shape students' school experiences. By focusing on engagement in academic tasks, participation in school activities, interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, perseverance in the face of challenges, and overall feelings of contentment, these models provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how students experience their learning

environment, develop social connections, and maintain positive feelings at school. In this respect, these two models provide a perspective in this research to examine students' relationships with different systems, to understand their academic learning experiences, and to make sense of how they relate to the school.

Research on school-related subjective well-being shows that factors, like academic self-efficacy (Serinci et al., 2023), academic support (Zullig et al., 2011), positive peer and teacher relationships (Friedrich-Schutz et al., 2024), close relationships with families (Wasif & McAuley, 2024), school engagement (Fomina et al., 2024), and social adjustment (Yu et al., 2024), serve as protective and promotive functions that contribute to the positive development. Additionally, as indicated in the study by Lee and Yoo (2015), school safety and frequency of activities with peers and family have a significant impact on students' school-related subjective well-being. In contrast, social exclusion and loneliness (Büyükebeci & Deniz, 2017), bullying (Katsantonis et al., 2024), problematic internet use (Cengiz & Peker, 2023), and digital game addiction (Baysan et al., 2019) have been associated with low levels of school-related subjective well-being. Moreover, Marquez and Main (2020) found that school-related anxiety, unfair treatment by teachers, and academic competence were negatively related to students' life satisfaction. Therefore, understanding the descriptive features of schools to promote the domain-specific subjective well-being of students is essential.

Additionally, it is particularly important to consider students' developmental stage when trying to understand how school environments impact student well-being. In Türkiye, middle school students are typically between the ages of 10 and 14. This period is considered a transitional stage that encompasses late childhood, the onset of puberty, and early adolescence. As Lally and Valentine-French (2022) note, middle and late childhood span approximately from ages 6 to 11, bridging early childhood and adolescence. Therefore, in this study, the relevant literature was reviewed concerning both childhood and adolescence, given the developmental characteristics of this age group.

When considering student well-being, it is essential to recognize the broader social and cultural contexts in which children live. The Roma community is often

mentioned as one of the most socially excluded groups in society (Kesik et al., 2018). Members of the Roma community face significant challenges, including low educational attainment, high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inadequate housing (Fleck & Rughinis, 2007). According to the European Commission (2013), Roma adolescents encounter significant vulnerabilities, like inadequate housing, exclusion, discrimination, and violence. This social exclusion extends to educational practices, greatly impacting the schooling experiences of Roma students (Kesik et al., 2018).

Research into Roma students shows they are largely overlooked in existing literature. Little has been reported about Roma students until after the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was signed in 1989, which brought their situation to the forefront of public interest (Çalışkan et al., 2017). The UNCRC provides a basis to enhance the well-being of all children in schooling by ensuring their rights to provision, protection, and participation. The right to provision refers to access to education for all children easily and readily, and provides them development opportunities. Regarding the right to protection, schools are obligated to protect all children from all forms of mental and physical danger. Lastly, as for participation rights, they should guarantee children freedom of expression and association (United Nations, 1989).

However, previous research demonstrated that Roma students were the most marginalized group in school settings (Karan, 2017) and they were far beyond getting access to their right to education. Schools in the catchment areas of Roma students' neighborhoods encounter numerous disadvantages due to their unmet fundamental requirements by the state, and school administrators have to demand financial support from parents (Kesik et al., 2018). As Roma people are economically more disadvantaged, they cannot make sufficient donations to schools and this situation largely leads to less sufficient conditions in schools where Roma students attend than in other schools (Karan, 2017). However, the resources that the adolescents' immediate environment, such as the neighborhood and school, can shape their perception of deprivation and therefore their capabilities (Uyan Semerci et al., 2012). As a result, this circumstance reproduces injustices and inequalities again (Kesik et al., 2018).

Additionally, Roma students face the issue of segregation. For instance, they are often forced to attend poorly performing schools, commonly referred to as “Roma schools”, sit exclusively with other Roma peers in the classroom or a specific section of it, or study in separate classes or buildings from their non-Roma peers (Karan, 2017). Inevitably, it brings along negative consequences for Roma students. The higher rates of school dropout, absenteeism, and illiteracy constitute the most problematic areas among Roma students (Akkan et al., 2011). The Strategy Paper on Roma People (2017) indicates that Roma students could not afford their education due to the restrictions on their financial possibilities and to provide support for the family budget. Similarly, Karan (2017) points out that significant causes of early school dropout and absenteeism were related to poverty, exposure to marginalization and discrimination, the lack of support from family members, child labor, and child marriage. While these findings highlight the current situation of Roma students regarding their right to education, there is still a need to explore the schooling experiences of Roma early adolescents with a focus on their subjective well-being from their perspective. Therefore, this study aims to comprehend how Roma early adolescents have been experiencing their subjective well-being at school and making meaning of their school lives.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of Roma early adolescents’ experiences of subjective well-being in public middle schools. Additionally, this study emphasized how Roma early adolescents made meaning of their current circumstances in school by listening to their narratives and allowing them to raise their voices.

1.3. Research Questions

In accordance with the aim of the current study, the research questions were posed as follows:

How do Roma early adolescents make meaning of their lived experiences in public middle schools regarding their subjective well-being?

- a. How do Roma early adolescents perceive the role of their schools in influencing their experience of subjective well-being at school?
- b. How do Roma early adolescents perceive their social relationships with peers and teachers in influencing their experience of subjective well-being at school?
- c. How do Roma early adolescents perceive their parents' involvement and communication with the school in influencing their experience of subjective well-being at school?
- d. How do Roma early adolescents perceive their academic learning experiences influencing their experience of subjective well-being at school?

1.4. Significance of the Study

Extensive literature on child development emphasizes the significant impact of the living context on a child's psychosocial development (González-Carrasco et al., 2019). Schools were one of those contexts where they spent much of their time. At schools, students engage in school-related activities and form numerous social interactions (Marquez & Main, 2021). Beyond formal education, the school offers a social space where adolescents can spend time with their friends, have fun, build meaningful relationships, and develop a sense of belonging (Akkan et al., 2011; Stefes, 2024). Moreover, schools are of great significance, especially for adolescents from low socio-economic status and those with restricted opportunities to socialize outside of the school (Müderrisoğlu et al., 2023; Uyan Semerci et al., 2012). For girls, in particular, school represents a place of freedom, a space free from parental pressure (Akkan et al., 2011). Relationships formed at school become even more vital for those dealing with family issues at home (Akkan et al., 2011), offering a source of support. During adolescence and later, schools are the first social contexts they join, and therefore, understanding how they are welcomed at school, how this affects their well-being, and how they experience the educational process, in general, is extremely important (Uyan Semerci et al., 2012).

In that sense, some researchers have studied how school experiences contribute to the overall subjective well-being of students. Through a literature review, for

instance, Suldo et al. (2006) identified three dimensions of schooling regarding life satisfaction: students reported higher life satisfaction, when they perceived their teachers as supportive and caring, interpreted their school experiences positively, and felt they were performing well academically (Suldo et al., 2006). Similarly, the findings of Corominas et al. (2022) indicated that students were more satisfied with their learning experiences when they perceived their teacher provided attention and support, and actively listened to them. These findings suggest that the actions of teachers have a significant effect on the learning processes of students, making them a crucial factor in the learning experience (Corominas et al., 2022). Besides, the school context differentiates itself from other socialization contexts like families, by providing opportunities for students to interact with their peers (Kochenderfer Ladd & Ladd, 2019). Peer relationships are unique and different from adult relationships, but they complement and supplement family relationships (Rubin et al., 2015). Social interactions with peers play a significant role in shaping their well-being (Rudolph et al., 2005). For instance, the study by Oberle et al. (2011) revealed that having positive relationships with peers and having a strong sense of belonging in school were crucial factors that positively impact life satisfaction during early adolescence. These results highlight that schools hold great importance for promoting happiness during this stage of development and promote growth in youth beyond their family.

However, according to the findings of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022, it was observed that about three out of ten adolescents in Türkiye reported a lack of a sense of belonging at school, ease in making friends at school, and perceived likability among their peers at school. Approximately three out of ten adolescents also indicated that they experienced feeling excluded and alienated, feeling awkward and out of place, and feeling lonely at school. Similarly, when adolescents from Türkiye were asked whether they were hit or excluded by their peers, 53.6 % of them reported they were hit, and 28.8 % of them reported they were left out by classmates (Children's World Report, 2014). Furthermore, adolescents in Türkiye perceived that their classmates were not kind and helpful (Currie et al., 2012), although an increase in their perceptions has emerged (Currie et al., 2008). Concerning perceived school pressure, they reported the highest level of

feeling pressured by schoolwork among all other Health Behaviors in School-Aged Children (HBSC) countries (Currie et al., 2012). Interestingly, the HBSC report (2009-2010) also revealed that adolescents from Türkiye scored highest in the domain of liking school. These findings underline the importance of further investigating the schooling experiences of adolescents in Türkiye to comprehend which aspects of the school contribute to their well-being, as this could enhance the overall understanding of school well-being.

In addition to exploring Roma early adolescents' experiences of subjective well-being in a school context, this study provides valuable insights into the experiences of early adolescents. Studies focused on changes in subjective well-being over time among adolescents underscore the importance of distinguishing between early, middle, and late adolescence. Longitudinal studies with middle and late adolescents, for instance, have shown a trend of increasing subjective well-being during these stages of life (Salmela-Aro & Tuominen-Soini, 2010; Steinmayr et al., 2019). In contrast, González-Carrasco et al. (2017) highlight the decrease in subjective well-being starts at the age of 11-12, marking the onset of early adolescence. This aligns with the findings of Casas et al. (2013) and González-Carrasco et al. (2020), who observed a decreasing-with-age trend in school satisfaction among early adolescents. Similarly, the study by Wu et al. (2023) points out the decrease in life satisfaction and school satisfaction from early adolescence (about age 13) to the beginning of middle adolescence (about age 15).

Moreover, early adolescence often coincides with the transition from elementary to middle school in many countries. This change can intensify negative experiences and stress during these formative years (Borman et al., 2019), which, in turn, may negatively impact subjective well-being (Wu et al., 2023). Upon entering middle school, students face more complex peer relationships and tend to interact less with their teachers (Wang & Eccles, 2012). Additionally, research has shown a decline in school satisfaction, engagement, and the sense of belonging among middle school students (Borman et al., 2019; Jiang et al., 2022). During this stage of life, social and emotional support from teachers and peers becomes increasingly vital, with the quality of these relationships playing an important role in the school environment

(Borman et al., 2019; Kiuru et al., 2019). In alignment with this context, this study aims to deepen our understanding of how early adolescents make meaning of their schooling experiences by listening to their stories.

Given the significance of exploring the subjective well-being of early adolescents, especially in the school context, studies conducted with Roma early adolescents in Türkiye to investigate their subjective well-being are scarce. To the best of the researcher, the study by Deniz (2019) was the first and last attempt to understand the wellness of Roma early adolescence in Türkiye. Although the study by Öksüz et al. (2018) examined the school satisfaction with the Roma sample, they addressed the issue with primary school students. When the related literature was examined, it was observed that most studies conducted with Roma early adolescents had built upon problematic areas, such as absenteeism or school dropout. Besides, most studies tried to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of parents, teachers, or school administrators, while not enough space was given to the adolescents to speak for themselves.

However, understanding the schooling experiences of Roma early adolescents from their perspectives can help teachers, school counselors, and school administrators to develop prevention and intervention programs to adjust to their different needs and reconsider the role and meaning of schools in these adolescents' lives. For example, one of the problematic areas faced by Roma students with academic difficulties is referral to guidance and research centers, and getting diagnosed with mental deficiency. However, the research presented that Roma students could enhance their academic success if they received the support they needed (Education Reform Initiative, 2017). This situation reveals how schools and other institutions overlooked the disadvantages faced by Roma students and how they were insufficient to adjust to these students' different needs. All in all, ignoring the subjective experiences of Roma adolescents and the effects of their cultural and social context might result in their exclusion from schools. Inevitably, such an approach prevents the effort to hold Roma students in education, bringing along issues like child labor and child marriage (Education Reform Initiative, 2017). Keeping in mind that adolescents' experiences and needs are established in their

cultural and social environment (Oyarzún-Gómez & Loaiza de la Pava, 2020), this study might contribute to understanding Roma early adolescents' subjective experiences regarding their cultural and social differences. Additionally, despite the high number of Roma population living in the Körfez district, studies were mostly conducted in other districts of Kocaeli, particularly in the İzmit district. Therefore, this study holds importance in shedding light on the experiences of Roma early adolescents living in the Körfez district of Kocaeli.

Lastly, another significance of this study lies in how it positions early adolescents in the research process while examining the meaning-making of schooling experiences regarding their subjective well-being. Firstly, this study accepts early adolescents as active, autonomous, and independent participants capable of narrating their own stories. They are knowledgeable in their own lives and have the right for their opinions to be heard and considered by adult researchers (Casas et al., 2012). Their perspectives, evaluations, and understandings of their lives are essential to making meaning of their quality of life (Casas et al., 2013). Considering advancements in positive psychology and positive youth development, researchers and professionals now acknowledge that the quality of school life should include students' subjective assessments and perceptions of their educational experiences (Jiang et al., 2022). Secondly, this study also underscores that adolescents are actual members of society, not only potential members in preparation for adulthood (Ben-Arieh et al., 2001). It recognizes adolescence as a unique stage of being rather than a transitional phase of becoming, emphasizing that their lives hold inherent significance (Akkan et al., 2018; Fattore et al., 2007). Lastly, this study takes the perspective that the indicators of their well-being in education need to go beyond solely focusing on negative aspects like school dropout or absenteeism and cover the quality of school life of adolescents, as the absence of negative situations does not guarantee they are happy.

1.5. Definitions of Terms

Subjective well-being is defined as individuals' cognitive appraisals and their positive and negative affects regarding their overall life or specific life domains

(Diener, 1984). It refers to a positive sense, including longer-lasting positive affect, lack of negative affect, and higher levels of overall life satisfaction (Diener, 1984).

Overall life satisfaction refers to personal appraisals and opinions about the individual's life as a whole. It represents the cognitive component of the subjective well-being (Diener et al., 2018)

Positive affect involves experiencing emotions like energy, happiness, alertness, and enthusiasm (Savahl et al., 2021).

Negative affect involves unpleasant emotions, such as stress, sadness, boredom, and lethargy (Savahl et al., 2021).

School-related well-being refers to students' subjective evaluations and emotional experiences within their school settings. Children with higher levels of school satisfaction and more positive and less negative affect in a regular school day experience higher school-related subjective well-being (Tian, 2008).

School satisfaction covers the subjective and cognitive evaluation of school life regarding particular school domains, such as relationships with teachers and academic achievement (Tian, 2008).

Positive affect in school refers to positive feelings experienced during the school day, including happiness, pleasure, or relaxation (Tian, 2008).

Negative affect in school refers to negative feelings experienced in school, like feeling bored, upset, or depressed (Tian, 2008).

Roma: The region in which Gypsy groups reside often indicates their specific name. There are three primary groups—Rom, Dom, and Lom—living in various regions of Türkiye (Kolukırık, 2008). Rom groups, often referred to as “Roman” or “dark-skinned citizens” in public, are the most well-known Gypsy group and are primarily located in the western regions (Kolukırık, 2008).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviewed the literature on subjective well-being in children and adolescents, with a particular focus on the school context. The first section provided an overview of the historical foundations and key concepts of well-being studies in children and adolescents. Following that, the conceptualization of school-related subjective well-being was examined. A discussion of previous research on subjective well-being in the school context was presented. Finally, the experiences of Roma early adolescents in school environments and their school-related subjective well-being were explored.

2.1. From Well-Being to Child Well-Being

The significance of the well-being of children cannot be underestimated since it sheds light on children's feelings and evaluations of their environments, relationships, and lives (Vujčić et al., 2022). Recent literature has shown that children's well-being has become a topic of interest through the growth in childhood theory, children's rights legislation, and the transition toward positive social sciences (Savahl et al., 2015) and has raised with "the child indicator movement" (Ben-Arieh, 2008). Additionally, both individual and international studies like the Children's Worlds Survey (Rees et al., 2020), the Multinational Qualitative Study on Children's Understandings of Well-Being (Fattore et al., 2019), and the Research on the Children's Society (Rees et al., 2012). These studies established an empirical foundation for enhancing the measurement, conceptualization, and theoretical understanding of children's subjective well-being (Savahl et al., 2021). Another explanation for the increasing curiosity about children's well-being is the transition in political will in OECD countries (Betz, 2013). In other words, since the policy-

making studies have risen in value, the indicators as tools for monitoring child well-being and the definition of child well-being have begun to take place in the policy development processes (OECD, 2009). Modern societies' paradox of affluence is a third reason why child well-being is receiving increasing attention. Questions have arisen regarding the connection between material wealth, economic growth, and well-being due to challenges brought about by technological advancements, demographic shifts, and environmental sustainability concerns. The significance of factors such as education has been identified as enhancing a more complex understanding of well-being (Fattore et al., 2019).

Studies on child well-being have indicated significant growth in the last decades with an extension in the cross-national, inter-, and trans-disciplinary areas of research (Fattore et al., 2019). While its popularity and usage in the field have been increasing, the concept of child well-being is rarely theorized, and its structure has been infrequently examined in the literature (Savahl et al., 2021), compared to the well-being of adults. The adult-centered well-being literature underlined most of the recent framework for child well-being and these conceptualizations have contributed to positioning the fundamental points while structuring its construct (Vujčić et al., 2022). Therefore, before explaining the perspective adopted in conceptualizing the subjective well-being of children in this research, the concept of subjective well-being is illustrated in detail by focusing on the shift from well-being to subjective well-being.

The well-being concept in social sciences was initiated with the development of social indicators (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). Starting with the 1960s, social indicators were accepted to evaluate social changes and social conditions, which was called "the social indicators movement" (Casas et al., 2013). The emergence of this movement was mainly influenced by Bauer's book on social indicators (Bauer, 1966), which is considered the starting point. Bauer (1966) proposed that social indicators serve as measurements to evaluate current conditions and potential outcomes related to our values and goals. They can also help assess the effectiveness of specific programs and their impact. Alongside its definition, there have been essential implications for understanding people's well-being.

For instance, social indicators emerged as new tools for evaluating social change and thus for enabling policy decisions purposing to develop society's life situations (Casas, 2011). Furthermore, they facilitated the challenge of assessing subjective social realities in social sciences by involving both objective and subjective indicators (Casas et al, 2013). In other words, in addition to their material conditions, researchers have begun to improve social indicators that include the perceptions of subjects on their current life circumstances to better understand their experiences. At the same time, these social indicators aided researchers in defining social conditions and comparing the subjective data collected directly from individuals at an international level (Casas, 2011).

Until the rise of quality of life, only the objective state of living determined people's life situations. However, the definition of quality of life also constitutes the psychosocial conditions of living as a relatively new concept (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). As Campbell et al. (1976) explained, the meaning of psychosocial living conditions includes how people evaluate, perceive, and aspire to their own lives. This sheds light on the definition of well-being. Although there are differences in deciding what forms a high quality of life or a good state, many authors consider that well-being involves both material conditions of living, i.e., objective state, and subjective experiences (Huppert, 2014; Veenhoven, 2007).

Material conditions of living or objective well-being refer to the considerations that people's lives may be reflected by indicators in various life domains like housing, education, health, and employment, and can take place at a societal level (Cho, 2018). However, objective indicators are barely contributing to the knowledge of subjective experiences of people, since the differences exist between how they perceive, aspire, and evaluate the situations (Cho, 2018). For instance, household income might not be a reasonable measure for understanding the actual economic experiences of children, as the distribution of resources may not show equivalency between family members. (Dunbar et al. 2013; Phipps & Burton 1995). Similarly, Cho (2018) underlined that even if it seems reasonable to anticipate a positive association between economic status and the subjective well-being of children, there are numerous findings showing inconsistency. As a result, Cho (2018) argues that

relationships with significant others play a crucial role in their sense of well-being. Children, for instance, have different views on the effect of financial stress on the lives of their families, with some believing that it supports the togetherness of their family members, while others point out the strain among their parents (Hooper et al. 2007). In that sense, it brings the significance of subjective well-being to conceptualize the experiences of people.

Subjective well-being refers to how individuals assess their current life situations and feel about their conditions (Diener et al., 2018). In other words, the concept of subjective well-being deals with how individuals evaluate and feel their lives positively or negatively (Diener et al., 2018). It relates to the tripartite models of Diener (1984), including life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. In this respect, Diener (1994) defined subjective well-being as a positive sense, including longer-lasting positive affect, lack of negative affect, and higher levels of overall life satisfaction. As stated by Diener et al. (2018), subjective well-being contains personal appraisals and opinions about the individual's life as a cognitive component, positive affects such as happiness, enjoyment, or interest, and the lack of negative affects like shame and guilt.

Diener's (1984) tripartite models of well-being constitute the fundamentals of the hedonic approach, one of the two approaches in conceptualizing well-being. Hedonic well-being, or subjective well-being, encompasses cognitive and affective elements. The affective state refers to the balance of positive and negative emotions, while the cognitive state refers to life satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The hedonic approach describes core features of well-being as the experience of feeling well and being happy (Vujčić et al., 2022). On the other hand, the eudemonic approach, usually called psychological well-being, assumes that even if affective components and life satisfaction are noteworthy, they are insufficient indicators of well-being (Martela & Sheldon, 2019). Thus, it posits that core characteristics of high well-being comprise the meaning of life, self-actualization, and goals of life (Casas, 2011). Besides, the eudemonic approach is concerned with concepts such as positive functioning, a sense of engagement, and positive relationships (Martela & Sheldon, 2019). Subjective well-being has been relatively more studied compared to psychological well-being

(Rees et al., 2013). However, recent literature has shown an attempt to focus on both hedonic and eudemonic well-being approaches in the studies among children and adolescents (Gómez-López et al., 2019; Oprea et al., 2018). These studies disclosed that these approaches are separate but associated constructs and require further investigation.

Even if the importance of adult-centered well-being literature cannot be undervalued, we still need to examine the knowledge gaps in our recognition of child well-being (Vujčić et al., 2022). Studies conducted with adults are restricted in addressing the distinct requirements and phases of childhood with respect to cognitive and socio-emotional growth (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). While it was once believed that adults could accurately evaluate children's well-being, there is now a greater interest in including the perspectives of children and adolescents to improve the methodology and understanding of child well-being. Liu et al. (2014), for example, conducted a study to develop a scale to understand the subjective well-being of elementary school students in school settings. Similarly, in a study conducted by Loureiro et al. (2020), primary school children's drawings were analyzed to fill the knowledge gap in methodological tools used at early ages. They emphasized the importance of understanding children's perspectives, which may lead to different results than adult perspectives. Likewise, some studies revealed discrepancies between adults' and children's perspectives while predicting well-being. The well-being of children and adolescents relies on their feelings and evaluations of their relationships, surroundings, and lives. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate their perceptions, assessments, and appraisals in research. As an illustration, the study of Ben-Arieh et al. (2009) showed the differences between the viewpoints of students and teachers on the safety of their schools. While teachers evaluated students as safe at school, students did not share the same perspective. To fully understand child well-being, it is essential to be cautious of the differences between children's and adults' perspectives. While the thoughts of adults can be valuable, they are not the same as those of children (Casas, 2011).

Therefore, to gain a better insight into how children can flourish, it is crucial to incorporate theoretical and methodological approaches that address children's well-

being, containing positive and subjective dimensions of well-being (Huebner & Diener, 2008). In that sense, new conceptual and normative theories and methodological developments in measuring and monitoring child well-being have introduced new standpoints to the field. Ben-Arieh (2008) identified six major global trends that have significantly influenced the construction and development of indicators for child well-being. Three of these trends relate to normative and theoretical changes, namely the acceptance of children's rights with the approval of the United Nations Convention (UNCRC), the development of the new sociology of childhood, and the ecology of child development. The remaining three trends relate to new methodological perspectives, including the growing importance of subjective viewpoints, the acceptance of children as the primary unit of observation, and the increased use of administrative data and various data sources. Finally, policy-oriented studies have guided the direction of this evolution. In the following paragraphs, these global trends are addressed in detail.

Recognizing children's rights as human rights has been a crucial advancement in the development of child well-being literature. The UNCRC, which raised its impact in 1990, has defined the normative understanding of child well-being (UNICEF, 2014). The convention serves as a starting point to enhance the perception of childhood as an independent, autonomous, and active stage (Kutsar et al., 2019). The four main principles, namely non-discrimination, the best interest of the child, survival, and development, and respecting the view of the child closely align with the conceptualization of child well-being (Ben-Arieh, 2007). With the acceptance of UNCRC, children have been put on the agenda to investigate more about their lives and well-being (Ben-Arieh, 2007). Secondly, it has revealed the importance of research on the well-being of children to monitor the implementation of the UNCRC and the fulfillment of children's rights. Still, there is doubt about which rights and principles in the convention are implied in children's daily lives. For example, it remains unclear how participation has been put into practice in communities and schools, how children view it based on their daily experiences, and how it impacts their overall assessment of a good life (Kutsar et al., 2019). Lastly, the requirement of new indicators to be measured and monitored in subdomains and topics of interest that were previously neglected has been brought in front.

Additionally, the other significant contribution to the field is recognizing childhood as a distinct stage in itself (Ben-Arieh, 2007). As argued by Ben-Arieh (2007), regarding politics, people tend to view child well-being in terms of their prospects, such as education and job opportunities. However, this narrow focus can cause us to overlook children's current life circumstances. The new sociology of childhood is founded on the notion that children's lives have significance and should be heard in their own right (Fattore et al., 2007). In other words, childhood is a distinct phase of identity rather than a stage toward adulthood with its sociological features (Uyan-Semerci & Erdoğan, 2017). They are active members of society affected by the social situations, social networks, and resources surrounding them. Nevertheless, they are subjects of their own well-being (Uyan-Semerci & Erdoğan, 2017).

Therefore, the New Social Childhood Studies (NSCS) forms a central theoretical and methodological approach for conducting interdisciplinary and international research on the well-being of children (Fegter & Richter, 2014). As noted by Fegter and Richter (2014), this approach has become prominent in criticizing certain aspects of developmental psychology and socialization research since the 1970s, and it has brought a social-constructivist theory to the study of children and childhood. Consequently, new theoretical concepts have been foregrounded in the NSCS: the "child as a social actor" and "childhood as a generational order" (Heinzel et al., 2012).

Trying to comprehend children's well-being from their perspectives truly begins with accepting them as social actors (Fattore et al., 2007). This has resulted in various consequences for studies related to the child's well-being (Fegter & Richter, 2014). Firstly, children are no longer viewed as part of a family but are positioned at the center of their distinct analyses. In other words, children began to emerge as distinct social actors, shifting the focus from families to studies on child protection and education (Fattore et al., 2019). Secondly, the diversity of life domains related to their daily lives is examined to evaluate childhood properly. Lastly, the notion of the child as a social actor foreground that children should be considered as experts on themselves. This underscores the idea that children are essential informants regarding their well-being and play a vital role in providing valuable insights into the realities they encounter (Casas et al. 2012).

Similarly, the concept of “child as a social actor” closely links with the concept of “childhood as a generational order”. According to this view, the differentiation between children and adults and their distinct but interdependent societal situation does not exist by itself. Instead, it is permanently constructed and transformed due to discourses and social practices in each historical context (Alanen, 1992; Heinzl et al., 2012). Generational difference is created and maintained as a structural category of social inequality controlling the access of children and adults to resources, opportunities, and legal statuses in society (Alanen, 1992). This creates the idea that children are a vulnerable group with limited chances to participate (Fegter & Richter, 2014). However, as suggested by Fegter and Richter (2014), the concept of “childhood as a generational order” stresses the requirement of strengthening the child’s status in generationally structured societies. Additionally, it is vital to understand if child well-being studies can promote children’s participation as a marginalized group by giving them a voice. The phrase ‘giving children a voice’ aims to increase children’s social visibility and provide them with a platform to express their views on a political level (Lipski, 2000). Therefore, participation strategies should be observed to notice whether they provide a trustworthy effort to utilize children’s participation to understand the articulation of children’s voices as authentically as possible (Hunner-Kreisel & Kuhn, 2010).

This study approached the subjective well-being of Roma early adolescents through the NSCS since the researcher aims to understand their current situations by listening to their narratives as experts of their own experiences and revealing the meanings they made of their schools from their standpoints. However, while this study values participants’ narratives, it primarily focuses on the lived experiences of participants and tries to understand how they make sense of their school experiences. It recognizes that the findings are influenced by the researcher’s interpretations of these participant perspectives, which are based on the principles of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Although this study was constructed around the NSCS, it aimed to comprehend the influences of being a child in the Roma cultural context and the schools as social spaces on their subjective well-being at public middle schools by depending on Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model. This model

provides a framework for comprehending child development and well-being (Joing et al., 2020).

The ecology of child development emphasizes the interaction between children and their surroundings that significantly impacts their well-being regarding balancing various elements, enhancing and using resources, and responding to stress (Ben-Arieh, 2007). It acknowledges that children and adolescents play a significant role in their own well-being besides considering the influence of sociocultural systems and their interactions in these systems (Nastasi & Borja, 2016).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) identifies three fundamental principles that form the basis of the ecology of human development. First, children as active participants in society affect and are affected due to direct and indirect actions of others and the surrounding environment. Second, changes that occur over time affect how children and environments adjust and react. Lastly, a child's development is influenced by various interrelated systems, namely micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems, which together form the child's human ecology.

Ben-Arieh (2007) summarizes the ecology of child development in terms of these systems as follows. First and foremost, children interact with the family and a variety of other individuals and systems such as friends, neighbors, health care providers, childcare services, and school. The child's microsystem consists of these direct interactions, which have the most significant impact on children. At this level, each unique set of relationships forms a separate microsystem. Therefore, understanding children's relationships with their parents, teachers, and friends is critical for assessing their well-being within each microsystem (Uyan-Semerci et al., 2012). The mesosystem, however, refers to the connections between different parts of the microsystem, such as the relationship between parents and schools. To gain a holistic understanding of child well-being, it is fundamental to look beyond individual microsystems and instead focus on how different microsystems interact with each other (Uyan-Semerci et al., 2012). As a result, the quality of the reciprocal relationship established between family and teachers, parents and their workplaces, family and the social institutions and how each side perceives these relationships is

examined (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Up one level, the exosystem defines the societal context in which families reside, including the social networks of parents, the conditions of the community they live in, the availability and quality of services, the workplace of parents, and the influence of media. Unlike the micro- and mesosystem, children are indirectly influenced by the exosystem, which affects different parts of the microsystem. Lastly, the macrosystem represents the broader societal context, including global developments, cultural norms and values, economic circumstances, and policies. Considering the child's well-being, the extent to which children belong to an excluded minority group, and the negative effects of this process can be discussed (Uyan-Semerci et al., 2012). The different systems are constantly changing and affecting each other in a dynamic and interconnected way.

Finally, in conjunction with the theoretical and normative changes presented above, methodological shifts have also contributed to the rapid growth of child well-being literature. For example, it has become apparent that a new role for children has evolved that necessitates coupling the quest for objective measures with a subjective understanding of childhood (Casas et al., 2004). Research has demonstrated that it is essential to consider children's viewpoints. It is not only because their perspectives vary from adults but also because it shows respect for children as individuals, helps policymakers make decisions, establishes a basis for advocating for children's rights, and improves children's legal and political socialization (Melton & Limber, 1992). Previously, the indicators used to measure well-being focused on adult perspectives. However, the new indicators prioritize child-centered views, with children as the unit of observation. Researchers now study children's well-being by paying attention to their daily stories and experiences, recognizing them as essential research subjects (UNICEF, 2014). Lastly, in the past, administrative data existed only in paper files and could not be used for research. However, with the computerization of information systems, access to administrative data has increased, and it supplies a valuable source of information for developing indicators of children's well-being (Ben-Arieh, 2007).

In addition, new theoretical and methodological advancements in measuring and monitoring the well-being of children have contributed to dynamic changes and

developments in the field (Ben-Arieh, 2005). Those changes and developments occurring in the field are referred to as the “child indicators movement” (Ben-Arieh, 2007). As noted by Ben-Arieh (2007), the previous indicators of child well-being were mainly centered around child survival, while the current indicators now consider child well-being more comprehensively. Therefore, the focus shifted from basic needs and physical survival of children, such as child mortality, school enrollment and dropout, and childhood disease, to improving the quality of life. Further, indicators have changed their focus from negative outcomes, such as death, discomfort, and distress, to positive outcomes, such as well-being and satisfaction. Third, much more attention has been paid to the well-becoming of children than to the well-being of children. In other words, the concept of well-becoming represents a future-oriented view of preparing children to be generative and happy adults. On the other hand, this perspective denies the notion that children were citizens during childhood. Lastly, with all these steps, researchers have directed their attention to new domains of child well-being like civic life skills, children’s activities, and safety. Besides, how children are involved in measuring and monitoring their well-being has changed. They are no longer just subjects for research but active participants in the research process (Ben-Arieh, 2005).

2.2. Conceptualization of Well-Being in School

While understanding the role of well-being in school, three perspectives were taken in the related literature (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2020). Previously, well-being in school was studied regarding its impact on students’ academic achievement, learning, and behavior, which highly emphasized successful learning and adaptive student behaviors. From another perspective, well-being in school was seen as a protective factor for students when dealing with adverse events and issues. It implied that well-being in school played a role in preventing maladaptive behaviors and negative attitudes toward learning and growth in school. Lastly, well-being in school served as an educational goal and was investigated mainly in school quality and health education research. In this regard, this perspective highlighted the need to respond to the basic psychological needs of students (Ryan & Deci, 2001) and examine the factors contributing to students’ well-being (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2020).

As mentioned above, researchers have yet to agree on a shared theoretical foundation or common ground for conceptualizing the school-related subjective well-being of students. Considering the contextual nature of subjective well-being, some researchers pointed out the need to use school satisfaction as a critical domain-specific measure to understand how the school environment ultimately shapes children's and adolescents' subjective well-being (Wu & Becker, 2023). In that regard, Tian (2008) conceptualizes school-related subjective well-being based on Diener's tripartite model (1984). In her study, school-related well-being refers to students' subjective evaluations and emotional experiences within their school settings. In that sense, she has adapted a multidimensional model defining school-related subjective well-being in three aspects: school satisfaction, positive affect in school, and negative affect in school. School satisfaction covers the subjective and cognitive evaluation of school life regarding particular school domains, such as relationships with teachers and academic achievement. Positive affect in school deals with positive feelings experienced during the school day, including happiness, pleasure, or relaxation. Lastly, negative affect in school is related to negative feelings experienced in school, like feeling bored, upset, or depressed. Besides, she states that children with higher levels of school satisfaction, together with more positive affect and fewer negative affect in a regular school day, experience higher school-related subjective well-being (Tian, 2008). In this study, school-related subjective well-being was conceptualized based on Tian (2008)'s multidimensional model.

However, positive psychology claims that well-being is a multidimensional construct, including positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA model; Seligman, 2011). This theoretical rationale integrates the hedonic approach with the eudaemonic approach, which points out a process of realizing or fulfilling one's potential (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Integrating the PERMA model on adolescents' well-being revealed the EPOCH model (Kern et al., 2015), which consists of five domains: engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness, and focused on adolescents aged 10 to 18. However, considering the high importance of domain-specific measures of school-related well-being, this model was adapted to the school context and concluded in the EPOCH-School or the EPOCH-S model (Buerger et al., 2023). According to the EPOCH-S

model, engagement refers to becoming focused on school activities and tasks. Perseverance refers to working hard towards achieving one's goals, even when faced with obstacles. Optimism reflects confident and hopeful expectations about future school experiences and academic success. Connectedness reflects positive relationships in school, for example, with peers and teachers, and happiness refers to satisfaction with life and feeling content (Holzer et al., 2022).

Similarly, Hascher (2003) integrated the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches into conceptualizing student well-being. She defined it as the presence of higher positive feelings and cognitions towards school, individuals in the school, and the school environment, along with lower negative emotions and cognitions about school life. As a result, the multidimensional model of student well-being in school was developed (Hascher, 2003). According to this model, student well-being in school comprises three positive dimensions, namely positive attitudes toward school, enjoyment in school, and positive academic self-concept, and three negative dimensions, namely worries in school, physical complaints, and social problems in school (Morinaj & Hascher, 2022). Furthermore, this concept emphasizes that both positive and negative dimensions can exist at the same time. For instance, students may find joy in their positive interactions with teachers yet simultaneously experience worries and concerns about their academic performance and grades (Saxer et al., 2024).

From another perspective, Allardt's sociological theory of welfare defines well-being as the state in which individuals can fulfill their needs (Allardt, 1989). This conceptualization of well-being brings along both material and non-material basic human needs, which must be considered. It classifies these needs into three categories: 'having,' 'loving,' and 'being.' The term 'having' encompasses material conditions and impersonal needs from a broad perspective and regards satisfaction-dissatisfaction. The term 'loving' contains the human need for meaningful connections with others and the formation of social identities through these relationships and regards happiness-unhappiness. The term 'being' includes the necessity for personal development, emphasizing the importance of integrating into society and coexisting harmoniously with nature. While the positive aspect of 'being'

pertains to personal growth, the negative aspect pertains to alienation. In addition, he examines the relationship between ‘having,’ ‘loving,’ and ‘being’ in conjunction with the objective and subjective indicators dichotomy. Objective indicators are derived from external observations, while subjective indicators represent individuals’ attitudes and perceptions regarding their living conditions (Allardt, 1989).

Based on Allardt’s well-being model, Konu and Rimpelä (2002) conceptualized well-being in school and developed the School Well-Being Model, which consists of four dimensions, namely school conditions (having), social relationships (loving), means for self-fulfillment (being) and health status (health). In this model, the concept of well-being is closely linked to teaching and education, as well as to achievements and learning (Konu et al., 2002).

As Konu and Rimpelä (2002) explain, ‘school conditions’ refers to the inside and outside physical environment of a school, which encompasses three aspects. Firstly, in this category, factors disturbing children’s schoolwork, like crowdedness in the classroom, room air quality, appropriateness of desks, quality of facilities, etc., are considered. The other aspect is related to the learning environment, including school subjects, schedules, group sizes, punishments, and safety. The last aspect contains services such as health care and school lunches. The ‘social relationships,’ on the other hand, deal with school climate, group dynamics, decision-making in school, relationships with peers and teachers, cooperation between school and parents, and bullying (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002). The third category of ‘means for self-fulfillment’ refers to how schools provide means for self-fulfillment. In that sense, schools should offer children opportunities to participate in decision-making that affects and concerns them, to pave the way for them to develop their knowledge and skills concerning their interests, and for leisure time activities during breaks. Moreover, providing positive learning experiences, appropriate teaching, value and respect for their work, and guidance and encouragement are crucial for their self-fulfillment (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002). Lastly, ‘health status’ represents psychosomatic symptoms, illness, and chronic and other diseases (Konu & Rimpelä, 2002). Allardt (1989) classifies health as belonging to the ‘having’ category, emphasizing that it is a fundamental aspect of well-being and a crucial resource that influences other

dimensions of well-being. However, Konu and Rimpelä (2002) added ‘health status’ as a distinct category since they view health as an individual’s personal state.

According to this model, even though all aspects of well-being are important, educators and other school staff should focus more on providing opportunities for students to experience personal fulfillment (Konu et al., 2002). In the school setting, this could involve allowing each student to learn at their own pace and according to their abilities, considering their individual talents and skills. This, combined with positive social connections, could greatly impact students’ well-being in school (Konu et al., 2002).

2.3. School Context and Subjective Well-Being of Children and Adolescents

2.3.1. Academic Achievement

Previous research has noted that student well-being is associated with academic achievement. Some studies revealed that subjective well-being was an antecedent of academic achievement. High levels of subjective well-being in school enable students to enlarge their learning sources alongside academic achievement (Fredrickson, 2001). When students have positive emotions and enjoyment in school, they cope better with issues in learning and enhance their educational outcomes (Morinaj & Hascher, 2022). In addition, enhancing trust and positive relationships between teachers and middle school students improves academic results (Borman et al., 2019). On the other hand, poor well-being in school can lead to reluctance to attend school, truancy (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2020), chronic absenteeism, and suspension (Renshaw et al., 2024).

From another perspective, Yang et al. (2018) suggested that higher academic achievement positively predicted higher satisfaction, happiness, and positive feelings in school, but not vice versa. They grounded their study on self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which proposes that fulfilling basic psychological needs, namely autonomy, relatedness, and competence, promotes individuals’ well-being and social development. Therefore, they explained the positive relationship between

academic achievement and subjective well-being in school by highlighting the role of fulfilling the need for competence.

The results of Morinaj and Hascher (2022) pointed out that academic achievement was positively related to positive components of student well-being, such as school enjoyment, positive attitudes toward school, and higher academic self-concept, but not to negative components of student well-being, such as worry in school, social problems, and physical complaints. They stated that the reason for the non-association between negative components of student well-being and academic achievement was that worries in school and physical complaints were not linked with academic issues but could be hindered by non-cognitive elements like a classroom environment. Conversely, the study by Klapp et al. (2024) revealed that students with higher achievement reported more worry and stress about schoolwork and tests than those with lower achievement.

In their study with 1484 Austrian secondary school students, Holzer et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between academic achievement, achievement goals, and school-related well-being. In this study, adolescents' school-related well-being was conceptualized using the EPOCH-S model, consisting of five domains: engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness. As a result, they found that perseverance and optimism were positively associated with academic achievement, while happiness and engagement were negatively associated. Lastly, connectedness was found not to be related to academic achievement. Similarly, Renshaw et al. (2024) examined that the two facets of school-based subjective well-being, namely joy of learning and school connectedness, were not significantly related to educational outcomes.

2.3.2. Relationships With Peers

Considering the time students spend with their peers in school, relationships with peers can be seen as one of the most significant factors in their subjective well-being. Recent studies have indicated that relationships with peers play a crucial role in the subjective well-being of early adolescents in various ways. A high level of subjective

well-being is positively associated with classmate support (Låftman et al., 2021), peer support for learning (Jiang et al., 2013), and the frequency of activities with peers (Lee & Yoo, 2015). The relationship with peers identifies how adolescents experience bullying, anxiety or depression, social dysfunction, and self-esteem (Sarkova et al., 2014). A positive relationship with peers contributes to adolescents feeling confident in seeking help from their peers when faced with a challenge and decreases their level of distress (Corominas et al., 2022). Having a supportive friend enables them to cope better with negative feelings and the conflicts they experience with others in class (Blaskova & McLellan, 2018).

Besides, friends in students' school life serve as a source of adolescents' overall perception of liking the school (Jiang et al., 2013) and their attendance at the school (Richards & Clark-Howard, 2023). Furthermore, in the study of Graham et al. (2016), the importance of different relationships on student well-being was discussed with 606 primary and secondary school students through focus groups. Unsurprisingly, they emphasized how significant their peers were to their well-being. The research results have revealed that having a friend to have fun and laugh with and to protect and support them are strengthening factors for adolescents' well-being. They also added that friends were more confirming at times of self-doubt, and it was easier to trust friends than adults. In this article, on the other hand, adolescents underlined how friends and peers could impact their well-being negatively (Graham et al., 2016). They stated that the acts hindering their well-being are not being allowed to be themselves, being rejected, being made fun of, being excluded, being put down, and being tempted to engage in wrongful behaviors.

As discussed above, despite its positive aspects, peer relationships also bring some difficulties for students. For example, exposure to social exclusion at school decreases adolescents' affective well-being and increases their internalizing/externalizing problems (Arslan, 2018). Adolescents' subjective well-being is negatively correlated with social exclusion and loneliness (Arslan, 2021; Büyükcebeci & Deniz, 2017). In addition, long-term exposure to being ignored and excluded brings about helplessness, depression, and the feeling of unworthiness (Williams & Nida, 2022). Similarly, experiencing bullying at school has a significant

negative effect on students' happiness (Oriol et al., 2020) and subjective well-being (Katsantonis et al., 2024; Lee & Yoo, 2015). Adolescents identify bullying with negative feelings and a lack of emotional connection (Oyarzún-Gómez & Loaiza de la Pav, 2020). In their study, Alcantara et al. (2016) examined the relationship between peer violence in the school setting, subjective well-being, and perceived social support using a sample of 910 adolescents in Brazil. They found that students involved in bullying had lower rates of subjective well-being than students not involved in bullying. Their findings have also underlined that victimization behaviors and aggression were negatively associated with subjective well-being, whereas social support was positively associated (Alcantara et al., 2016). Similarly, school violence has a significant effect on low levels of subjective well-being (Varela et al., 2022). Being exposed to direct and indirect violence was correlated to anxiety, stress, and depression symptoms (Patias et al., 2017).

However, the findings of Hatzichristou et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of feeling safe at school in explaining the high rates of student subjective well-being. The results showed that adolescents had high levels of enjoyment in life, positive attitudes toward life, high levels of self-esteem, and low levels of depression, somatic complaints, and problems with life when they felt safe at school. Similarly, Varela et al. (2022) suggested that the perception of safety in the school setting is a protective factor for all students to increase their life satisfaction. Their study indicated that adolescents had higher levels of subjective well-being when they felt safe at school, even in the case of being bullying victims.

It was also examined that a sense of belonging among peers and a supportive school environment decreased the likelihood of bullying victimization and had a significant positive impact on adolescents' satisfaction with life (Castelli & Marcionetti, 2024; Gadermann et al., 2015). Feeling a strong sense of belonging and connection to school is crucial for the positive development of young people. It helps promote their social and emotional well-being, as well as their academic growth during early adolescence (Oberle et al., 2011). A sense of belonging can be experienced when adolescents perceive being valued, accepted, and included by others at school/class and feel they are a significant part of it (Goodenow, 1993). Previous studies have

pointed out a strong relationship between the sense of belonging and subjective well-being (Ahmadi & Ahmadi, 2020; Habib & Hossain, 2018; Suldo et al., 2008). In the case of a sense of belonging, adolescents experience more positive feelings like interest, joy, confidence, and passion during learning activities (Lim et al., 2024). Feeling liked by their classmates and getting along with them make adolescents happier and more content. Conversely, when they fight with their classmates and feel picked on, they experience anxiety, sadness, and unhappiness (Schmidt et al., 2020).

2.3.3. Relationships With Teachers

Another important factor that affects the subjective well-being of students is their relationships with teachers. It is evident that the actions of teachers have a significant impact on children's school life in a variety of ways. Recent studies suggest that students have higher levels of subjective well-being when they experience positive teacher-student relationships (Friedrich Schutz et al., 2024; Varela et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2024). Teachers enhance students' well-being by comforting them, supporting them in difficulties, and teaching in engaging and creative ways. Students feel respected when teachers treat them equally, listen to them, and work with them collaboratively (Graham et al., 2016). Furthermore, students perceive that teachers facilitating a classroom environment where they have privacy and a say contributes to their well-being in schools (Graham et al., 2016). Conversely, they find the yelling of teachers as the most disrespectful way of giving negative feedback and a primary source of irritation and pain (Thomas et al., 2016).

Similarly, the study by Powell et al. (2018) underlined teachers contributed to students' well-being when they supported, encouraged, and cared for them, got involved in conversations with them by showing their concern about the things that were not going well, mentored them, made the learning process more enjoyable, and treated them as individuals. On the other hand, students described teacher actions that negatively affect their well-being as not showing respect, not listening to them, treating them unequally, yelling, giving negative feedback poorly, applying school rules inconsistently, not liking them, and using uncreative teaching styles (Powell et al., 2018). In addition, the qualitative study of Akkan et al. (2019), conducted with

8–12-year-old children from Istanbul, revealed the positive and negative meanings children attributed to different experiences in different contexts using the projective storytelling method. By illustrating a happy/unhappy child's pictures in various contexts, they intended to understand how children contextualized their well-being in different social locations. As a result, they found that children attributed positive meanings to teachers' actions when teachers showed closeness to them, established close bonds with students but at the same time had a disciplinary manner, taught well, repeated the things they taught, avoided using violence and discrimination, and were not late to class (Akkan et al., 2019).

Cohen et al. (2020) also bring another perspective while explaining the influence of teacher-student relationships on students' schooling experiences by showing how teachers significantly shape the students' perception of social experiences with peers. They indicated that close teacher-student relationships were related to the positive perception of peer social support, and conflicts in teacher-student relationships increase the likelihood of experiencing perceived peer victimization. In alignment with this study, Saxer et al. (2024) found that the quality of relationships with classmates was positively linked with a close and secure classroom setting encouraged by teachers. In other words, teachers may help a student be accepted and involved in the classroom by providing positive comments and showing affection.

Besides, the study of Zullig et al. (2011) demonstrated how perceived exclusion/privilege strongly affects the level of satisfaction with school. Perceived exclusion/privilege leads students to have lower levels of satisfaction with school. This could be because they perceive that some students receive special treatment from school personnel, such as always being chosen to help the teacher or participate in after-school activities. Moreover, the findings of Zullig et al. (2011) displayed another important factor linked with higher levels of student subjective well-being. Based on research, it has been found that there is a strong connection between a student's satisfaction with their school and the level of academic support they receive from school staff. Essentially, the more academic support students believe they receive, the more satisfied they are with their school experience. Conversely, when teachers did not recognize the potential of each student and directed their attention

primarily to students being good at academic or extra-curricular activities, it hindered students from feeling or being valued (Graham et al., 2016). Maintaining a balance between academic pressures and managing their relationships in school was essential for their well-being (Blaskova & McLellan, 2018).

Teacher support strengthens the relationship between teachers and their students. The existing literature suggests that teacher support has a significant influence on students' well-being. The study by Wang (2023), conducted with 338 undergraduate students, displayed that student well-being was strongly and positively associated with teacher support and teacher care. This highlighted that teachers who support and care about students' problems, needs, and academic emotions could importantly enhance their psychological circumstances (Wang, 2023). Besides, behavioral engagement facilitated by teacher support plays a role in enhancing school satisfaction. For instance, the role of the teacher in promoting class participation, setting clear expectations, and giving positive feedback determines the level of school satisfaction (Jiang et al., 2022). In addition, teacher autonomy support is positively related to school satisfaction and enjoyment of school (Kleinkorres et al., 2023). More specifically, students are more satisfied with their school if they are allowed to participate in decision-making processes, choose between different options, and if teachers take their views into account. As pointed out Lunkina et al. (2023), psychological support from teachers was the most influential factor in predicting students' educational engagement, and well-being, whereas instrumental support from teachers was the next important factor influencing the students' cognitive and emotional engagement, and school satisfaction with their schools and relationships with their teachers.

2.3.4. Parental Support and Involvement

During adolescence, young people strive to become more independent from their parents while focusing more on their peer relationships (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). However, parents continue to play a crucial role as role models during this time, guiding adolescents as they shape their identities and take on new roles and responsibilities (Castro et al., 2015) and promoting adolescents' educational

outcomes (Suárez et al., 2011). While some studies state that parental involvement decreases during the transition to secondary school, others underline the importance of parental involvement for each grade level. For instance, in their study with 848 Finnish students, Kiuru et al. (2020) found that parental support and encouragement were valuable for adolescents during the challenging transition from elementary to lower middle school. As reported by Boonk et al. (2018), parental involvement does not show a decline as children grow older; instead, it changes over time. While in the early stages of education, parents tend to indicate direct involvement like guidance or assistance in learning, they become more influential in the face of setting academic expectations and providing a comfortable space to improve their academic motivation as their children move up to secondary school (Boonk et al., 2018). Along the same lines, the study by Tunkkari et al. (2024) highlighted the necessity of changes in parents' psychological control throughout secondary school. Their results revealed that when mothers displayed psychological control at the beginning of middle school, students became amotivated and ultimately less satisfied with their school by the end of middle school. On the other hand, adolescents with higher autonomy support from their mothers exhibit less school-related stress (Tunkkari et al., 2024).

Considering the relationship between parents and the psychological well-being of their children, parental interaction and support have a significant impact on students' emotional and mental health (Layupan & Guhao, 2024). When students perceive their parents as supportive they experience increased well-being (Hoferichter, 2021). Even though peer support for learning was a significant predictor of well-being in schools, family support for learning was a stronger predictor of school satisfaction among secondary school students (Jiang et al., 2013). In addition, adolescents with higher perceived closeness to their parents were subsequently more likely to have increased satisfaction with school and decreased school stress (Kiuru et al., 2020).

The strong connection between schools and parents, along with high school satisfaction, greatly enhances adolescents' academic achievement (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). Similarly, effective parent-school communication predicts well-being in school (Dettmers et al., 2019). According to a meta-analysis of

37 primary studies by Castro et al. (2015), a significant relationship was found between academic achievement and parental involvement. This involvement included increased academic expectations, sustaining communication with their children about schoolwork and school activities, and encouraging the development of reading habits. However, the results also showed that parental involvement, such as attending school events and supervising and controlling homework, was not correlated with academic achievement (Castro et al., 2015). In another study conducted by Santos et al. (2016) with 1359 students in Spain, it was reported that when students perceived respect, trust, support, and encouragement from their parents in schoolwork and in dealing with problems and felt a clear communication of parents' expectations and a concern for their school achievement, they show better academic performance. Along the same lines, Han and Yuen (2024) highlighted that parental support had a significant effect on shaping academic achievement and the overall well-being of high school students. They also stated that parents contributed to their children's academic self-efficacy and the ability to deal with academic issues when they increased their children's willingness for higher education.

2.3.5. Overview of Gender, Age, and Socio-Economic Status

Recent studies have also indicated how subjective well-being is related to the gender, age, and socioeconomic status of children and adolescents. However, studies examining the impact of gender on the subjective well-being of children and adolescents have produced contradictory results. Some studies indicated that females reported less satisfaction with their lives than males (Cohen et al., 2020; Esidio et al., 2023; Ma et al., 2015), while others declared the other way around (Gross-Manos et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2019). The results of Cheng and Lin (2023), conducted with 1043 high school students in China, revealed that the subjective well-being of females was lower than that of male students. On the other hand, a study by Ronen et al. (2016) found that gender did not predict subjective well-being. It seems that contradictory findings can be attributed to the particular life domain under consideration and measurement type (Montserrat et al., 2015). The findings of Casas et al. (2018) reinforce this idea by showing differences between boys and girls in specific life domains rather than in overall subjective well-being. When considering

satisfaction with specific life domains, girls reported higher school satisfaction levels than boys (Marquez, 2024; Rees et al., 2010). Girls exhibited more positive attitudes toward school and enjoyment in school than boys, whereas they had lower positive self-concepts, more worries in school, physical complaints, and social problems (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2020). A study with a sample of 351 elementary school students demonstrated a significant difference between the girls' and boys' school well-being levels (Markus et al., 2022). Specifically, girls had more positive attitudes toward school and experienced more pride, enjoyment, anxiety, and less boredom and anger at the end of the school year than their boy classmates. However, there was no significant difference between boys and girls in experiencing pride and anxiety at the beginning of the school year. Another study underlined that girls' academic satisfaction was related to higher life satisfaction, while boys' academic satisfaction was related to higher happiness (Chui & Wong, 2016).

Considering age, as children grow older, their overall satisfaction with life and various aspects of their lives, such as their school experience and other school-related factors, tend to decline (Corominas et al., 2022; González-Carrasco et al., 2017; Orben et al., 2020; Varela et al., 2019). The findings of González-Carrasco et al. (2017) revealed that a decrease in subjective well-being was observed at ages 11-12 and continued progressively in a sample of 940 Spanish adolescents aged 10 to 15. Reinforcing these results, the study of Vidić (2024) with 390 primary school students aged 9 to 14 in Croatia demonstrated that younger children were satisfied with their schools, while a decrease in school satisfaction was reported above fourth grade. Another important factor associated with the subjective well-being of students is socioeconomic status. As Loft et al. (2021) pointed out, students with more educated and higher-income parents exhibit more satisfaction with their schools than their economically disadvantaged peers. Moreover, worries about academic performance were significantly noted in students with low socioeconomic status, as measured by parental occupation (West & Sweeting, 2003).

2.3.6. New Domains Related to Subjective Well-Being at School

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides a framework for understanding and assessing children's well-being. It constructs the

basis of the right to participation, emphasizing children as agents and active social actors. However, there is still doubt about how the right to participation is implemented in children's everyday lives in different social contexts, such as schools and family, and how children perceive its existence in their daily lives (Kutsar et al., 2019). Studies have shown that the more children participate in different social contexts such as schools, community, and family, and the more they have higher levels of subjective well-being (Casas, 2013; González et al., 2015), they have more satisfaction with their lives (Casas et al., 2013). Schools, as one of these contexts, are responsible for protecting a range of participation and self-determination rights, including the freedom to associate with others, the protection of privacy, the freedom to express opinions freely, and freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (Kosher, 2014).

To understand how children's perceptions and knowledge about their rights correlated to their subjective well-being, Casas et al. (2018) selected 8-, 10-, and 12-year-old children from 18 countries. On the one hand, they found a significantly positive relationship between children's subjective well-being and their perception that adults respected their rights in all countries. On the other hand, there was no significant relationship between subjective well-being and children's knowledge about their rights in eight of 18 countries, and a weak relationship between subjective well-being and their knowledge of the UNCRC. Their findings showed that subjective well-being was much more affected by the perception that their rights were respected than by the knowledge of children's rights or the knowledge of the UNCRC. As a result, they highlight how watching adults listen to and consider their opinions is much more crucial for their subjective well-being than learning their rights. This finding is in line with the study by Barrance and Hampton (2023), aimed at understanding the association between children's subjective well-being at school and their views on participation in decision-making regarding issues significant to them. They used data from the third wave of the Children's Worlds Survey collected from children aged 12-13 from 13 European Union and former European Union countries. Their results demonstrated that participation in decision-making plays a significant role in subjective well-being at school within the European context. Furthermore, they also revealed that teacher caring and listening were significant for

subjective well-being. These findings highlighted how the supportive relationships between children and teachers facilitated the fulfillment of participation in decision-making and subjective well-being at school. In alignment with these findings, Kutsar et al. (2019) found a positive correlation between the subjective well-being of 8-year-old children and their perception that their opinions are considered and listened to by their teachers and parents.

Alongside participation in decision-making, some studies focused on participation in school activities while exploring the association between participation and subjective well-being in the school context. For example, Kennewell et al. (2022) examined the relationship between well-being and after-school activities in low SES students. They conducted surveys with 61,759 children aged 9 to 15 in South Australia. As a result, they found that after-school activities such as spending time with friends, participating in sports, reading, and homework were linked to higher well-being among low SES children. On the other hand, after-school care, video games, and social media were associated with lower well-being (Kennewell et al., 2022). Similarly, the findings of Cha and Yoo (2024) revealed that children with higher reports of engagement in physical or social activities displayed higher subjective well-being than inactive peers. Moreover, subjective well-being in the school context is also positively associated with participation in extracurricular sports activities (Li et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2023; Mallı & Yıldızhan, 2018) and school and student participation in music concerts (Kwon et al., 2020).

As another new domain of children and adolescents' subjective well-being, their social and new media use has been recently investigated in the literature on subjective well-being. However, the related literature contains a mix of findings, some of which contradict each other. On the one hand, the study by Nadan and Kaye-Tzadok (2019), which aimed to understand children's lived experiences in the virtual arena in Israel, showed that it is a new place for children to practice their social relationships with friends and families. Although negative experiences such as cyberbullying, exclusion, excommunication, and sexual harassment have emerged in the virtual arena, positive experiences such as social engagement and interaction with friends and company have also been reported (Nadan & Kaye-Tzadok, 2020). On the

other hand, the findings of George et al. (2020) indicated that social media account ownership was linked to conduct problems and psychological distress, while the frequency of social media use was only related to conduct problems. The relationship between having a social media account and higher levels of conduct problems and psychological distress among children from economically disadvantaged families was stronger than among children from more wealthy families (George et al., 2020). From another perspective, Donoso et al. (2021) explored the association between subjective well-being and digital development in Chilean schools. Their results revealed that students with higher school digital development reported more subjective well-being than students with lower school digital development. Furthermore, their findings highlighted how schools' digital development plays a role in decreasing the subjective well-being of adolescents by showing that adolescents attending schools with low digital development had lower subjective well-being even if they used computers daily out of school (Donoso et al., 2021).

2.3.7. Social Spaces

Some studies on subjective well-being focused on the entire school, while others examined the impact of specific physical spaces within schools on social relations and students' subjective well-being. Schools contain numerous social spaces that enable students to establish new, meaningful, and fulfilling relationships with their peers (Sixsmith, 2005). They were formed by not only classrooms but also sports halls, toilets, dining rooms, playgrounds, corridors, administrative buildings, supervised workrooms, locker areas, stairs, and bicycle sheds (Joing et al., 2020). Break and dinnertimes have also created a space for students to meet, talk, socialize in different peer groups, enjoy eating and drinking, play sports, and release from the obligation of schoolwork (Sixsmith, 2005). Besides, the school serves as a crucial relational space for children's freedom, especially for girls who feel confined within their homes, restricted, and sometimes oppressive environments (Akkan et al., 2021).

To understand differences in the quality of children's experiences depending on the various parts of the school, Joing et al. (2020) conducted a study with 2028 children in French middle schools aged 11 to 15. They found that children's well-being varies

across different parts of the school. In terms of the cognitive component of subjective well-being, they found that children had significantly higher subjective well-being in the playground, dining room, corridors, school entrance, and sports hall. However, their subjective well-being was significantly lower in toilets, the administrative building, the locker area, the stairs, the bicycle area, the supervised workroom, and the Principal Educational Advisor's office. The affective component, on the other hand, revealed different results compared to the cognitive component of subjective well-being. Although there was no significant difference in children's cognitive well-being in the resource center and Physical Education changing rooms, children's affective well-being in these parts of the school was significantly higher. Furthermore, their findings contributed to questioning the relationship between the feeling of safety and supervision of places. Similarly, Horton et al. (2023) aimed to investigate the interconnections between social relations, the environment, and resources in the school context. As a result, their findings displayed that the opportunities or the school environment's design could impact students' behaviors, along with the interactions between groups or peers. Specifically, the availability of resources, such as having enough building blocks, and the restricted space and equipment in the playground formed the quality of social dynamics (Horton et al., 2023).

Reinforcing these results, Müderrisoğlu et al. (2023) aimed to comprehend how children made meaning of their well-being in a pandemic atmosphere where the school had altered its meaning as a relational space and where their caretakers had shown increased vulnerability. Understanding how children have been affected by the pandemic offers valuable insights into identifying schools as essential for their well-being. Many children expressed that the long duration of school closure had brought boredom and negative experiences. Their results highlighted that schools allowed children to have fun and interact with their teachers and peers alongside interactive learning.

2.4. Roma Community in Türkiye

The Roma people's presence in Anatolia has existed for centuries, with their migration thought to have begun after leaving India. Anatolia not only served as a

transit route but also became a permanent settlement area for many Roma groups (Kolukırık, 2008). In Türkiye, Roma groups mostly consist of those who arrived from Greece following the 1923 Lausanne Treaty (Kolukırık, 2008). According to the findings of Koç et al. (2024), the estimated Roma population in Türkiye is between 1.2 million and 2.3 million individuals. This indicates that Roma people constitute approximately 1.4% to 2.7% of the total population in the country.

Roma communities are mostly centralized in specific regions (Saban-Artan, 2015). These include the Thrace region, the Aegean region, the Mediterranean region, particularly around Adana, and the Marmara region (Saban-Artan, 2015). They are most concentrated in the Marmara Region, followed by the Aegean Region. Key provinces with significant Roma communities include Edirne, Tekirdağ, Çanakkale, İzmir, İstanbul, Bursa, Sakarya, and Kocaeli (Saban-Artan, 2015). They are commonly classified into three major categories based on regional and historical distinctions: Dom in Southeastern Anatolia, Lom in Northeastern Anatolia, and Rom in Western Anatolia (Karan, 2017). The most recognized Roma communities are located in the western regions, where they are publicly referred to as “Roman” or “dark-skinned citizens” (Kolukırık, 2008). According to Kolukırık (2008), the main distinction of Roma groups from others is that they have been able to preserve their cultural identity more distinctly than related groups such as the Dom and Lom. Additionally, he argued that Roma groups tend to interact more easily with non-Roma individuals, referred to as Gaco in their communities. Compared to the Dom and Lom groups, the Roma are generally more urbanized and settled, showing higher educational attainment and a greater presence in public institutions (Kolukırık, 2008). While Roma groups are often perceived as socially isolated in urban environments, their engagement with the broader society is notable. Inter-marriage with non-Roma individuals is becoming increasingly common, and their social and economic relations with other groups are more developed than those of the Dom and Lom communities (Kolukırık, 2008).

Despite these strengths, Roma citizens face significant challenges. As a disadvantaged group, they experience widespread social exclusion and often lack adequate access to healthcare, education, housing, and employment opportunities

(Çağlayan, 2021). Their socioeconomic struggles mirror those faced by Roma communities across Europe. High rates of poverty and unemployment, combined with low school attendance and completion rates, hinder the development of vocational skills and contribute to poor housing and health conditions (Kolukırık, 2008).

In the current study, participants were selected from Roma early adolescents who were enrolled in public middle schools in the Kocaeli province. The Roma people of Kocaeli primarily earn their livelihoods through various occupations, including musicianship, portering, shoe shining, peddling, and scrap collecting (Saban-Artan, 2015). It has been reported that around 40,000 Roma people live in Kocaeli (Saban-Artan, 2015). In Kocaeli province, Roma citizens predominantly reside in the districts of Gebze, İzmit, Kandıra, Körfez, and Karamürsel. The Roma community in Kocaeli also continues to face challenges accessing the region's socio-economic resources (Bingöl & Büyükakın, 2012). These include discrimination, limited access to education, inadequate social support, and poor housing conditions (Bingöl & Büyükakın, 2012). Unemployment and informal employment rates are notably high among them, and the jobs they typically hold in Kocaeli tend to be unskilled positions (Saban-Artan, 2015).

2.5. Roma Students in School Settings

When the school-related subjective well-being of Roma students was examined, it was noted that they were invisible in literature. Most of the studies in Türkiye were designed to understand problems faced by Roma children in school life and their potential impact on them. While some studies discussed the phenomenon from the perspectives of adults like teachers or parents, others emphasized children's perspectives. For example, Mercan-Uzun and Bütün (2015) aimed to understand the reasons for absenteeism and its possible effects on Roma children attending pre-and-primary schools. The results of semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers working at schools with a high number of Roma students showed that children fall behind in their education and are far behind their class level due to not attending school regularly. Additionally, they found that financial difficulties, the lack of parental

support, and the lack of hope were the primary reasons for school absenteeism. According to the findings, absenteeism was explained by taking care of siblings while their parents were working and supporting parents at work. Although teachers stated families' financial difficulties as a barrier to school attendance, they still considered that families did not give enough importance to their children's education (Mercan-Uzun & Bütün, 2015). Along the same line, in another study, teachers stated that school absenteeism or dropout did not mean any problems for children and families and was considered a 'normal' or quite usual situation (Saritaş & Çoban, 2022). However, such a notion that seems to underline the stereotypes against Roma children and their parents can also bring along the exclusion of Roma children from mainstream education (Kesik et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the study results of Orcan et al. (2011) highlighted that the family environment played an important role in explaining the lower social adaptability and ability scores of Roma children than non-Roma children. When the differences in Roma and non-Roma parents' levels of employment and education were examined, Roma parents had much lower levels of employment and education. They had more children, were younger, and almost half of them were divorced or separated, and some of the fathers were in prison (Orcan et al., 2011). This is in line with the findings of Akkan et al. (2011), emphasizing that poverty was the fundamental reason for disconnection from education.

Contrary to the perceptions of teachers, parents address issues related to children's school life differently. For instance, semi-structured interviews with 13 Roma mothers in Kocaeli displayed that one of the most significant barriers to school dropout and absenteeism was perceived as discrimination (Konaklı & Göktürk, 2018). Parents stated that they and their children were labeled as Gypsy by school administrators, teachers, other children, and their parents. They also emphasized that the negative views of teachers and school administrators regarding Roma children did not reflect the reality that they are unsuccessful and not want to continue to school. Moreover, they declared that they were unwilling to attend parental meetings due to their discriminatory attitudes. Findings showed that parents looked for attention, support, and understanding from teachers and school administrators that

enabled them to increase their willingness to participate in school. The study suggested that organizing sportive, cultural, and artistic activities with parents and children could increase participation and decrease discrimination (Konaklı & Göktürk, 2018). Parallel with these results, in the study by Kumcağız et al. (2018), parents expressed that they were expecting teachers to care for their children.

Similarly, the study by Diktaş et al. (2016) pointed out the divergencies in the perceptions of parents and school administrators. According to the results, parents reported that prejudice was a primary issue they encountered in their children's education. They stated that their children did not enjoy school because of this prejudice, leading to a lack of interest in their lessons and a reluctance to study even at home. On the other hand, school administrators did not share the same thoughts regarding the existence of prejudice against Roma students within the school. School administrators stated that the existing prejudice stems from Roma students and their actions, such as isolating themselves from their friends, immediately forming groups to deal with minor issues, and the potential to harm other students with this attitude, contribute to the prejudice against them (Diktaş et al., 2016). However, their views appear to blame for discrimination and inequalities on Roma children themselves.

When the issues encountered by Roma children and adolescents in the school context are examined from their perspectives, it sheds light on a different side of the problem. From another perspective, Rotaru and Grebeldinger (2020) investigated the reasons behind early school leaving and school dropout among disadvantaged youths who were not able to complete secondary education. Participants reported that poverty and financial insufficiencies were the fundamental reasons for leaving school early. Regarding the school dropout of young women, they stated that household care like cooking, giving care for siblings and elderly family members, and teenage pregnancy led them to leave school early. Lastly, they underlined that schools and the state did not provide the necessary educational support for them was another reason for school dropouts. Additionally, they also interviewed three postgraduate Roma youths, and the results showed that parental support, different family models, and financial and economic support from the family contributed to Roma youths continuing their education (Rotaru & Grebeldinger, 2020).

Social exclusion presents another challenge for Roma children in their school experience, leading to negative feelings and barriers to access to educational opportunities. Not only being socially excluded by friends but also being excluded by school administrators leads to a lack of interest in school and eventually dropping out (Akkan et al., 2011). By taking children's perceptions regarding social exclusion into account, Genç et al. (2015) highlighted that children attending schools with low Roma students expressed that they hid their Roma identity, so they were not excluded. They added that they would be made fun of, excluded, and humiliated if they told that they were Roma. In addition, some of them said they were not allowed to join plays and were very upset about this, but they did not know why they were not allowed into the play. Another study conducted with 20 Roma students attending middle schools in Samsun indicated that they encountered difficulties in relationships with their friends (Kumcağız et al., 2018). Some of these negative relationships with friends can be listed as physical and verbal violence, calling names, and making fun of them. In addition to the difficulties in relationships with friends, they stated that they were exposed to adverse behaviors of their teachers like yelling at them, becoming angry without allowing them to express themselves, and disinterest (Kumcağız et al., 2018).

In another study, to understand how Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) children had been experiencing school community, Pollock and Barrow (2021) conducted semi-structured interviews with six GRT children enrolled in four different schools. Children's perspectives showed differences regarding difficulties and opportunities in sustaining relationships with teachers and peers. These differences were involved in not only the experiences of ambiguity, rejection, and discomfort about their cultural identity but also recognition and connection within the wider school context. For example, some children evaluated their relationship with non-GRT peers and recognition in school positively, felt in some degree belonging to the school, group cohesiveness, and shared emotional connection, while others felt emotional disconnection from their non-GRT peers. Besides, the results highlighted teachers' role in sharing GRT students' conditions with peers. The interest or disinterest of teachers in children's culture and themselves appeared crucial concerning their adjustment in the school community. Lastly, when it comes to meeting educational

needs, children valued the functional skills and considered them essential, but found the curriculum irrelevant and discussed not going to college after primary education was completed (Pollock & Barrow, 2021).

Despite Roma children and adolescents' adverse experiences in schools, the study by Öksüz et al. (2018) demonstrated that Roma children reported high levels of school satisfaction. Researchers explained the high levels of school satisfaction with the participants' demographic features. In other words, they discussed the possible influence of the high number of Roma students attending the school and the number of Roma families living in the neighborhood. Additionally, Öksüz et al. (2018) aimed to examine the relationship between school satisfaction and gender, perceived teacher behavior, levels of hope, and perceived social support among Roma children at primary schools in Samsun. According to the results, there was a non-significant relationship between school satisfaction and gender, and perceived teacher behavior. However, a significant relationship exists between school satisfaction and levels of hope. Regarding perceived social support, results showed that family and teacher support, as subdomains of perceived social support, were positively correlated with school satisfaction. From another perspective, Deniz (2019) found that perceived social support from families, teachers, and friends contributed significantly to Roma early adolescents' levels of wellness. Specifically, perceived social support from friends had the strongest impact on their levels of wellness. Furthermore, this study showed that Roma early adolescents reported higher levels of wellness when they had higher resilience and perceived friend support.

2.6. Summary of the Literature Review

Literature on child well-being has gained significant attention (Savahl et al., 2015). While it was once believed that adults could accurately evaluate children's well-being, there is now a greater interest in including the perspectives of children and adolescents to improve the methodology and understanding of child well-being (Ben-Arieh et al., 2014). Several global trends have influenced the development of child well-being research. These include the acceptance of children's rights through the UNCRC, the recognition of childhood as a distinct stage with its own features, and

the ecological model of child development, which emphasizes the interaction between children and their environments. Methodological shifts, such as the growing importance of subjective perspectives, the acceptance of children as primary research subjects, and the increased use of administrative data, have also contributed to the field's advancement.

In the school context, researchers have yet to agree on a shared theoretical foundation or common ground for conceptualizing the school-related subjective well-being of students. There are several conceptualizations of school-related subjective well-being. For example, Tian (2008) conceptualizes school-related subjective well-being based on Diener's tripartite model (1984). In her study, school-related well-being refers to students' subjective evaluations and emotional experiences within their school settings. Kern et al. (2015) revealed the EPOCH model, which consists of five domains: engagement, perseverance, optimism, connectedness, and happiness, and focused on adolescents aged 10 to 18. This model was adapted to the school context and concluded in the EPOCH-School or the EPOCH-S model (Buerger et al., 2023). Furthermore, Hascher (2003) integrated the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches into conceptualizing student well-being. She defined it as the presence of higher positive feelings and cognitions towards school, individuals in the school, and the school environment, along with lower negative emotions and cognitions about school life. Lastly, Konu and Rimpelä (2002) conceptualized well-being in school and developed the School Well-Being Model, which consists of four dimensions, namely school conditions (having), social relationships (loving), means for self-fulfillment (being), and health status (health).

Regarding academic achievement, the related literature revealed that student well-being is associated with academic achievement (Fredrickson, 2001; Hascher & Hagenauer, 2020; Morinaj & Hascher, 2022; Renshaw et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2018). Positive relationships, like feeling of safe, a sense of belonging, classmate support, peer support for learning, and the frequency of activities with peers contributed to higher levels of well-being (Ahmadi & Ahmadi, 2020; Brolin-Låftman et al., 2021; Hatzichristou et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2013; Lee & Yoo, 2015), while experiences of bullying, social exclusion, and being exposed to violence at school

negatively impacted well-being (Alcantara et al., 2016; Arslan, 2018; Patias et al., 2017; Williams & Nida, 2022). Recent studies suggested that students have higher levels of subjective well-being when they experience positive teacher-student relationships (Friedrich Schutz et al., 2024; Varela et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2024). Parental support, parent-school communication, and parental involvement in their children's education were associated with higher well-being (Dettmers et al., 2019; Han and Yuen, 2024; Hoferichter, 2021). Regarding age, as children grow older, their overall satisfaction with life and school experience tends to decline (Corominas et al., 2022; González-Carrasco et al., 2017; Orben et al., 2020; Varela et al., 2019). Socioeconomic status was also linked to students' school satisfaction and academic performance, with economically disadvantaged students reporting lower well-being (Loft et al., 2021; West & Sweeting, 2003). However, studies examining the impact of gender on the subjective well-being of children and adolescents have produced contradictory results.

The relevant literature suggested Roma students faced challenges in school settings, such as absenteeism, discrimination, social exclusion, and difficulties in relationships with peers and teachers. However, there was limited research on the well-being of Roma children and adolescents in school settings. Those studies found that there were high levels of school satisfaction among Roma students, and perceived social support from families, teachers, and friends contributed significantly to Roma early adolescents' levels of wellness (Öksüz et al., 2018; Deniz, 2019).

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

In this chapter, research design, sampling method, participants, data collection instrument, data collection procedure, data analysis, trustworthiness, and limitations were presented.

3.1. Research Design

Qualitative research design attempts to reflect on the meanings and interpretations of people attributed to specific life experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Therefore, it primarily deals with understanding meaning, such as how people interpret the world, experience events, and attribute meaning to phenomena (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The main concern of qualitative research is to explore a phenomenon of interest from the view of participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In qualitative studies, the focus is on understanding the thoughts and reasons behind the actions of individuals. The researcher asks questions to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences (Fraenkel et al., 2023).

In this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted since the purpose of the current study was to gain an in-depth understanding of Roma early adolescents' experiences of subjective well-being in public secondary schools.

3.1.1. The Method of Qualitative Investigation

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has become extensively used as a methodological framework within psychological research (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). IPA is a qualitative method focusing on people's lived experiences, primarily

concerning their meaning-making (Smith et al., 2009). It applies the fundamental principles of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography to explore and deeply understand the lived experiences of individuals (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Based on phenomenology, the focus is on determining what makes the essential components of experiences unique and distinct from others (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Phenomenologists thus aim to comprehend how individuals interpret and discuss certain life events by setting aside preconceptions and letting phenomena express themselves (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Its hermeneutic or interpretative nature posits that the process of conducting an IPA study is dynamic and involves the researcher's active participation (Smith, 2004). Through interpretation, they aim to convey the meaningful essence of these experiences by translating and articulating them, while recognizing the limitations in fully grasping them (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The final result always reflects the researcher's interpretation of how participants interpret their own experiences, illustrating IPA's double hermeneutic process (Smith et al., 2022).

Given the idiographic nature of IPA, the researcher examines one case in detail and then moves to the second case when the first one is fully captured (Smith, 2004). In summary, IPA incorporates ideas from phenomenology and hermeneutics, as it focuses on how things appear and allows individuals to tell themselves, and interpretive, as it acknowledges that all phenomena are interpreted in some way (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

In line with the core feature of IPA, this study aims to understand how Roma early adolescents make meaning of their everyday circumstances at schools by positioning them as experts of their own experiences and reflecting on their experiences from their standpoints. While this study positions Roma early adolescents as experts of their own experiences, the analysis follows IPA's double hermeneutic process. In this process, the researcher not only seeks to understand the participants' experiences but also interprets how these individuals make sense of their own experiences and the

meanings they attribute to them. Therefore, IPA was considered the most appropriate approach for the study.

3.2. Context of the Study

In Türkiye, Roma groups' estimated population ranges from 1.2 to 2.3 million, accounting for approximately 1.4% to 2.7% of the national population (Koç et al., 2024). Roma communities are largely concentrated in specific regions such as the Marmara, Aegean, Mediterranean, and Thrace (Saban-Artan, 2015), with key provinces including Edirne, Tekirdağ, Çanakkale, İzmir, İstanbul, Bursa, Sakarya, and Kocaeli. Roma populations are commonly categorized into three groups: Rom, Dom, and Lom (Karan, 2017). Among these, Roma communities are the most urbanized and integrated, showing stronger interaction with the wider society and higher educational participation (Kolukırık, 2008). Despite these positive aspects, Roma citizens still experience considerable social exclusion, particularly in accessing education, employment, housing, and healthcare (Çağlayan, 2021).

This study focuses on Roma early adolescents enrolled in public middle schools in Kocaeli province, where approximately 40,000 Roma people reside (Saban-Artan, 2015). They primarily live in the districts of Gebze, İzmit, Kandıra, Körfez, and Karamürsel and earn a livelihood through unskilled jobs such as musicianship, portering, peddling, and scrap collecting. They continue to face barriers such as discrimination, limited educational access, poor housing, and high rates of informal employment (Bingöl & Büyükakın, 2012; Saban-Artan, 2015). Existing research on Roma communities in Kocaeli has primarily focused on the İzmit district, leaving the Körfez district underexplored. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by examining the subjective well-being experiences of Roma students in the Körfez district, where a significant number of Roma families live. In the Körfez district, Roma students are enrolled in four of the 19 public secondary schools. Therefore, this study was conducted in these four schools, all of which have a notable presence of Roma students. To maintain confidentiality, the schools are anonymized as Schools A, B, C, and D. These four schools are located closer to each other than the other schools. Specifically, Schools A and B, as well as Schools C and D, are located

near each other. Notably, School A has the highest number of Roma students, as it primarily serves children from a specific neighborhood known as the “Roma neighborhood,” where most Roma citizens in Körfez reside. Based on information from the school administrations, approximately 100 students are enrolled at School A, where around 15 percent of the students are Roma. Notably, School A has the highest number of Roma students, as it primarily serves children from a specific neighborhood known as the “Roma neighborhood,” where most Roma citizens in Körfez reside. After School A, School B has the second highest percentage of Roma students, representing six percent of its total student population. Although a relatively high number of Roma students were enrolled in this school, the school administration reported the attendance rate to be low. In School D, this proportion is about two percent, while School C has the lowest percentage of Roma students, with less than one percent. By focusing on these schools, this study aims to gain in-depth understanding of the school-related subjective well-being experiences of Roma early adolescents.

3.3. Participants

Probability and non-probability sampling methods are the two main types of sampling in social sciences. In qualitative research, using probabilistic sampling is not reasonable because the purpose of qualitative studies is not to generalize results. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Participants who are rich in information and experience are essential for gaining a deep understanding of issues central to the research’s purpose. Studying with such participants allows the researcher to gain valuable insights instead of empirical generalizations (Patton, 2015). Therefore, non-probability sampling is the primary sampling method used in qualitative research. Purposive sampling, the most common form of non-probability sampling method, assumes that the researcher aims to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding and thus selects a sample that can provide the most valuable information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The IPA guidelines also suggest utilizing purposive sampling to reach out to participants who are rich in information and experience (Smith et al., 2009).

Hence, in the current study, purposive sampling was utilized to select study participants. Participants were selected from Roma early adolescents attending public

secondary schools in the Körfez district of Kocaeli. Two inclusion criteria for the sample were decided to reach out to participants with schooling experiences in public secondary schools. The first inclusion criterion was being between the ages of 11-14, including the stage of early adolescence. The second was to have Roma early adolescents who attend school, since the study aimed to make sense of their everyday lived experiences during a school day. In addition, two exclusion criteria were defined to intentionally specify which individuals would not be included in the sample. The first exclusion criterion for the sample was excluding Roma early adolescents with disability. The last exclusion criterion was settled as Roma early adolescents attending Imam Hatip secondary schools and special needs practice schools were excluded to homogenize participants, since those schools show different characteristics.

3.4. Sample Size and Demographics of Participants

3.4.1. Sample Size

There is no definitive answer to the question of sample size for qualitative research, as it largely depends on factors such as the level of analysis, the depth of the individual cases, and any constraints the researcher may face (Smith et al., 2009). IPA studies have successfully been conducted with a range of sample sizes, from one participant to fifteen participants and more (Smith et al., 2009). In this study, a sample of 12 Roma early adolescents was chosen, following the guidelines of IPA. This number was considered adequate for exploring the subjective well-being experiences of the participants, allowing for the collection of rich, detailed data. The 12 participants, representing a specific target group, were sufficient to reach data saturation and provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

3.4.2. Demographics of Participants

The current study was carried out with 12 Roma early adolescents, aged between 11 and 14, attending four different public middle schools in the Körfez district of Kocaeli. Among 12 participants, eight were attending School A, one was attending

School B, one was attending School C, and two were attending School D. Since the catchment area of School A includes the neighborhood where most of the Roma population in the Körfez district live, the number of participants in that school was higher than the other schools. Six of the participants were female, and six of them were male. One of the participants was a 5th grader, six were 6th graders, one was a 7th grader, and four were 8th graders. The names of all participants and their schools were kept anonymous to maintain confidentiality. The demographic information of participants is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Demographic Information of the Participants

	School Name (anonymized)	Gender	Age	Grade	Years in Current School
Kerem	School A	Male	14	8 th	4
Melis	School A	Female	14	7 th	4
Emre	School A	Male	14	8 th	4
Selin	School A	Female	12	6 th	2
Efe	School A	Male	12	6 th	2
İrem	School A	Female	14	8 th	3
Eylül	School A	Female	11	6 th	2
Elif	School A	Female	13	6 th	2
Yusuf	School B	Male	13	6 th	3
Can	School C	Male	12	6 th	2
Defne	School D	Female	12	5 th	1
Arda	School D	Male	14	8 th	4

3.4.2.1. Kerem

Kerem is 14 years old. He is attending School A, and he is in 8th grade. He has attended this school for four years and has never repeated a grade. The grade points average on his last report card is around 60. His family consists of three people: his mother, his father, and himself. He lives with them. His mother is currently unemployed, and his father works as a driver. The interview was held in the school counselor's office.

3.4.2.2. Melis

Melis is 14 years old. She is attending School A, and she is in 7th grade. She has attended this school for four years. She repeated a grade last year due to absenteeism. The grade point average on her last report card is around 40. Her family consists of four people: her mother, her father, her little sister, and herself. She lives with them in a family apartment. Her mother is currently unemployed since she must take care of her little sister, and his father works as a driver. The interview was held in the school counselor's office.

3.4.2.3. Emre

Emre is 14 years old. He is attending School A, and he is in 8th grade. He has attended this school for four years. He repeated the first grade. He explained that his teacher failed him in class because he hit the table slowly in front of his teacher. The grade points average on his last report card is around 50. His family consists of nine people: his mother, his father, his grandmother, his grandfather, his little brother, his elder brother, his sister-in-law, his nephew, and himself. He lives with his mother, his father, and his little brother in a family apartment. His little brother is in 4th grade, and his elder brother works as a driver. His mother is currently unemployed, and his father works as a driver. The interview was held in the school counselor's office.

3.4.2.4. Selin

Selin is 12 years old. She is attending School A, and she is in 6th grade. She has attended this school for two years and has never repeated a grade. The grade points average on her last report card is around 70. Her family consists of four people: her mother, her father, her little brother, and her elder sister. She lives with her family, except for her elder sister, who is married. Her little brother is in 2nd grade. Her mother is a worker in a factory, and his father works as a driver. The interview was held in the school counselor's office.

3.4.2.5. Efe

Efe is 12 years old. He is attending School A, and he is in 6th grade. He has attended this school for two years and has never repeated a grade. The grade points average on

his last report card is around 55. His family consists of nine people: his mother, his father, his little brother, his elder sister, his brother-in-law, and his nephews. He lives with his mother, his father, his little brother, and his grandmother. His little brother is in 5th grade, and his elder sister neither attends school nor works anywhere. His mother is currently unemployed, and his father works as a driver. The interview was held in an available classroom.

3.4.2.6. İrem

İrem is 14 years old. She is attending School A, and she is in 8th grade. She has attended this school for three years and has never repeated a grade. The grade points average on her last report card is around 45. Her family consists of twelve people. All her siblings, except for one elder brother, are married, and she does not have contact with them. She lives with her mother, her father, and her elder brother. Her elder brother does not attend high school. He is working and is providing for their living. Her mother and father are currently unemployed due to their health problems. His father has a disability report. They receive social assistance and disability benefits. The interview was held in the school counselor's office.

3.4.2.7. Eylül

Eylül is 11 years old. She is attending School A, and she is in 6th grade. She has attended this school for two years and has never repeated a grade. The grade points average on her last report card is around 60. Her family consists of five people: her mother, two elder brothers, and two elder sisters. She lost her father. All her siblings are married. She lives with her mother. Her mother is currently unemployed. The interview was held in the school counselor's office.

3.4.2.8. Elif

Elif is 13 years old. She is attending School A, and she is in 6th grade. She has attended this school for two years. She repeated the first grade due to absenteeism, which she attributes to social exclusion. The grade points average on her last report

card is around 60. Her family consists of two people: her mother and her little sister. She lives with her mother and her little sister, as well. She does not have contact with her father. Her elder sister is married and neither attends school nor works anywhere. Her mother collects papers for their living. The interview was held in the school counselor's office.

3.4.2.9. Yusuf

Yusuf is 13 years old. He is attending School B, and he is in 6th grade. He has attended this school for three years. He repeated the 5th grade. The grade points average on his last report card is below 50. His family consists of five people: his mother, his father, his elder brother, and his two elder sisters. He lives with his mother, his father, his elder brother, and his elder sister. All his siblings, except for the eldest sister who is married, neither attend school nor work anywhere. His mother is currently unemployed, and his father works as a driver. The interview was held in the vice principal's office.

3.4.2.10. Can

Can is 12 years old. He is attending School C, and he is in 6th grade. He has attended this school for two years and has never repeated a grade. The grade points average on his last report card is around 70. His family consists of seven people: his mother and his six siblings. He lives with them. He gets in contact with his father once a year. Four siblings are students, and others are not of school age. His mother is currently employed, but he does not know her job. The interview was held in the gymnasium room.

3.4.2.11. Defne

Defne is 12 years old. She is attending School D, and she is in 5th grade. She has attended this school for one year and has never repeated a grade. The grade points average on her last report card is around 70. Her family consists of seven people: her mother, her father, her three elder brothers, and her two elder sisters. All her siblings,

except for one elder sister, who is a high school student, are married and have a job. She lives with her mother, her father, and her elder sister. Her mother and her father are currently unemployed due to health problems. His father has lung cancer. The interview was held in the school counselor's office.

3.4.2.12. Arda

Arda is 14 years old. He is attending School D, and he is in 8th grade. He has attended this school for four years and has never repeated a grade. The grade points average on his last report card is around 60. His family consists of three people: his mother, his elder brother, and his elder sister. He lives with them. His parents were divorced and his father lives in another city. His elder brother works as a cargo handler, and his elder sister is employed in the textile industry. His mother works as a cleaner, and his father does not support his livelihood. The interview was held in the school counselor's office.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

Through semi-structured interviews, in-depth data were collected to reflect on each participant's realities. In the current study, semi-structured interviews with Roma early adolescents were conducted to explore their circumstances from their standpoints. In that sense, the interview protocol was designed to address six areas: (1) their relationships with the school, (2) their relationships with friends, (3) their relationships with teachers, (4) their parents' relationship with the school, (5) their relationships with themselves, and (6) demographic information. The purpose of using semi-structured interviews was to enable Roma early adolescents to tell their lived experiences in-depth. In the first part, questions related to the meaning attributed to the school, the experiences in a regular school day, the experiences of positive/negative feelings, and the liked/disliked aspects at school were included. In the second part, questions related to how they define their relationships with classmates, their importance to them, and how they feel during interaction with their classmates were included. In the third part, questions related to the expression of relationships with their teachers and their feelings while sharing an activity/work

were included. In the fourth part, questions related to how their parents maintain their relationship with teachers and how they express thoughts about their children's school achievements were included. In the fifth part, questions related to the definition of themselves as students, the difficulties they experienced in school, and their dreams for the future were included. The last part consisted of questions about demographic information.

The related literature was reviewed to develop the interview questions, and the initial version of the form was constructed. Subsequently, the first set of interview questions was examined with the supervisor. Then, two expert opinions from those experienced with working in the field of subjective well-being and with the group of early adolescents were taken. In light of their feedback, some changes were made to the interview protocol. Some questions were eliminated following suggestions that the total number was too high and that responses might not be received for all questions. It was decided to remove sections on school attendance, participation, and access to resources, as these focused on objective well-being rather than subjective well-being. Similarly, some questions were excluded because they related to different fields of study, such as democratic schools or gender-based roles, rather than the subjective well-being in schools.

Additionally, some questions were removed for being overly detailed. For example, questions like "Do you like your teachers? If so, what characteristics do you like about them?" and "Where do you spend most of your time? What topics do you talk about most? What topics do you share the most?" were eliminated for this reason. Some questions were also removed due to redundancy. For example, "What kind of class do you have?" was eliminated, while "How are your relationships with your classmates?" was retained. Similarly, "What do you think about your future? How do you imagine your future?" was simplified to "How do you imagine your future?". Another piece of feedback was that the questions should be more open-ended. As a result, a series of detailed questions about family involvement in school, such as attendance at parent-teacher meetings or school activities, were removed, since they were close-ended questions.

Moreover, it was suggested that the number of questions addressing the cognitive dimension was high and that these could be reframed as experiential questions. To address this, the following experiential questions were added: “Can you tell me how your day was at school?”, “Can you recall a special activity or project you did with your teacher? How did you feel during those moments? Can you describe them?”, and “Was there a time when you struggled as a student and needed support? Can you remember that moment? How did you feel? What did you experience? How did you try to cope?”. These additions aimed to emphasize experiential aspects of subjective well-being. Finally, “why” questions at the end of some questions were replaced with “Can you tell me a little bit?” since it could create defensive answers.

The last version of the interview protocol was decided with the guidance of the thesis supervisor. After restructuring the interview questions, the pilot study was conducted with one Roma early adolescent attending a public secondary school in the Körfez district. At the end of the pilot study, the participant was asked for feedback on whether the questions were clear and understandable and whether he felt confused about any questions. Since the participant stated that he did not have any difficulty answering the questions, no changes were made to the interview questions. Thereby, the final version of the interview questions was established. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix A.

3.6. Data Collection Procedure

Before starting data collection, the necessary approval from the Human Subjects Ethics Committee of Middle East Technical University was obtained. The approval of the ethics committee is presented in Appendix B. Then, the application to the Kocaeli Directorate of National Education was made. The application was approved on December 1, 2023. The permission is presented in Appendix C.

To reach out to participants, the researcher first identified the public secondary schools in the Körfez district along with their locations. In the Körfez district, there were a total of nineteen public secondary schools. The researcher then interviewed a vice principal who has worked in Körfez for many years to find out which schools

Roma students usually attend. The vice principal provided support by contacting other school administrators via telephone to determine the number of Roma students in their schools. Then, the researcher collected a list of schools where Roma early adolescents were enrolled. As a result, four out of nineteen public secondary schools in the Körfez district met the specified criteria.

After identifying the schools attended by Roma students, the researcher began visiting those schools. At the first interview in School A, the researcher asked for help from class teachers to reach out to students. Therefore, the research topic, the purpose of the study, and the structure of the interviews were explained, and the parent approval form (see Appendix D) was given to teachers. Then, class teachers shared the details with nine students, and parent approval forms were gathered from eight volunteer students to participate in the study. One of the students did not attend the study since her parents did not give permission to participate in the research. Additionally, based on interviews with school principals, it was found that most Roma students were enrolled in this school due to the requirement of their residential addresses.

During the interview at School B, the vice principal helped the researcher to find out which Roma students were attending their school. After that, the researcher came together with two students in the vice principal's room to introduce herself and explain the details of the study. One of them agreed to attend the study and brought the parent approval form.

Then, the researcher contacted the administration of School C. They invited two Roma students to their rooms and introduced the researcher. Then, the students were informed about the aim of the study and the structure of the interviews. Two students agreed to participate in the research, but only one got parental consent and was involved in the study.

To identify the participants of School D, the researcher requested help from the school principal after introducing herself and the details of the study. Then, the school principal asked class teachers to complete the Roma students' information on

the Google Form to identify them. Among twelve students, two of them attended the school regularly. Therefore, they were contacted with the help of the school counselor, and the research details were explained to them. Both were willing to be involved in the research and got approval from their parents.

Thereby, the semi-structured interviews were utilized with 12 Roma early adolescents in four months, from January 2024 to April 2024. The shortest interview took 30 minutes, and the longest took 50 minutes. Among 12 semi-structured interviews, nine were conducted in the school counselor's office, one in the vice principal's office, one in an available classroom, and one in the gymnasium room. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's consent.

Before conducting interviews, the researcher introduced herself, explained the purpose of the study, and gave information about the process. The researcher tried to make sure all students understood their rights as participants. They were reminded of their right to withdraw from the interview whenever they wanted. In addition, all participants were assured that all the data collected from them would be held in confidence and their names would not be used anywhere. Lastly, they were informed that the audio recording would be deleted after conducting the study. Students' verbal consent was obtained before the interviews began.

3.7. Data Analysis

After the data collection was completed, all interviews were transcribed verbatim by May 2024. The steps determined by Smith et al. (2022) for IPA were followed through the data analysis. Given the idiographic nature of IPA, the first case was analyzed in detail, followed by the analysis of the second case, and so on (Smith et al., 2022). In the first step, the researcher read the transcription of the first case multiple times to become familiar with the data. Exploratory notes began to be taken in the right column of the transcript, and further comments were added during subsequent readings. Then, experiential statements were constructed for the first case, based on those exploratory notes, and written down the left column of the transcript. After establishing connections across experiential statements and

clustering them together, personal experiential themes (PETs) and experiential sub-themes for the first case were identified. This process was repeated for each case. Finally, group experiential themes (GETs), personal experiential themes (PETs), and personal experiential sub-themes were generated after conducting a cross-case analysis.

3.8. Trustworthiness

The validity and reliability of qualitative studies involve providing information and rationale about their processes, along with sufficient evidence to ensure the trustworthiness of the results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be established through various strategies. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), four key areas contribute to the trustworthiness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

To enhance credibility, peer reviews were conducted. The trustworthiness of group experiential themes, personal experiential themes, and personal experiential sub-themes was discussed with three peers. All three peers are Ph.D. students at METU in the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, and each of them has experience with IPA. Based on the feedback received from three peers, some revisions were made. For example, the initial three group experiential themes were reduced to two. Since the personal experiential theme “School fosters meaningful connections and enhances the overall quality of life” reflects how Roma early adolescents perceive the role of their schools, it was incorporated into the first group experiential theme, which captures Roma early adolescents’ relationships with various systems such as school, friends, teachers, and parents. Additionally, the personal experiential themes “They strive to be part of the school system to the extent it allows” and “Middle school is the final destination not only for education but also for childhood”, were initially addressed under separate themes, were also grouped under the second group experiential theme to better understand Roma early adolescents’ perceptions of their academic learning processes and their transition to high school. Furthermore, the personal experiential subthemes that explained the relationships of Roma early adolescents with both their Roma peers and non-Roma

peers were merged into a single personal experiential theme. In line with comments from peers, the titles of the personal experiential themes were expanded to encompass relevant sub-themes, and some personal experiential sub-themes were reorganized and placed under different personal experiential themes.

To ensure the qualitative studies' results transfer to other settings, various strategies can be utilized, and the most commonly used is the rich, thick description (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Therefore, to establish transferability, descriptions of participants and the context were given in detail. Semi-structured interview questions were presented (Appendix A), and the process of the study was explained in detail. In addition, a detailed description of the findings was provided, supported by direct participant quotes. In this sense, the results of this study may be transferable to other contexts that involve middle school students from ethnic minority backgrounds who face systemic inequalities in accessing education, along with challenges such as social exclusion and limited school engagement. Furthermore, the findings can also offer valuable insights in settings where students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds encounter similar barriers in accessing and sustaining their educational pathways.

The dependability is that, rather than expecting outsiders to achieve the same results, a researcher wants them to agree that the findings are dependable and consistent based on the data collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Within the framework of IPA, which is grounded in the principles of idiography and hermeneutics, dependability can be achieved by transparently and coherently presenting the research process. To enhance transparency, an audit trail was presented in the methodology section, providing detailed information on how the study was conducted and how the data were analyzed. Lastly, reflexivity is a key strategy for maintaining the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Probst & Berenson, 2014). It involves recognizing and reflecting on how the researcher's own beliefs, biases, and experiences influence the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). By doing so, the researcher can critically evaluate her role in the double hermeneutic, which involves interpreting how participants make sense of their own experiences. To enhance confirmability, the researcher kept reflexive notes and voice recordings

throughout data collection and analysis, documenting personal thoughts, feelings, and observations. After each interview, the researcher recorded significant points and kept the audio recording file organized separately. During the analysis process, she also kept reflexive notes for each participant. This approach not only helped her become more deeply familiar with each case but also allowed her to track emerging patterns in her interpretations. When she noticed that she was frequently commenting on certain topics, she documented these observations in her reflexive notes. In this way, she aimed to interpret the participants' experiences from different perspectives. Additionally, these notes made her aware of her tendency to focus on issues like child marriage and negative experiences, encouraging her to critically reevaluate her interpretations and to approach the data from a broader viewpoint. In addition, the role of the researcher was discussed in the following section.

3.9. The Role of the Researcher

The researcher has been working as a school counselor for nine years in a district characterized by highly diverse student populations. Through her professional experience, she has had the opportunity to observe the varied challenges faced by different student groups. One group that has particularly drawn her attention is Roma children, whose educational experiences are marked by systemic barriers and social inequalities. In her school setting, she has identified several persistent challenges affecting Roma students, including low school attendance, poor academic performance, early school dropout, and child marriage. Another concerning issue is that many Roma children, despite attending middle school, continue to struggle with basic literacy skills. Moreover, the dropout rates among Roma girls are high, with most leaving school before reaching seventh grade. Through her observations, the researcher has noted that in many cases, school dropout among Roma girls is linked to early engagement and marriage, a practice that appears to be normalized and accepted by school staff and the local community. Despite the widespread nature of this issue, the researcher has found that no significant intervention or preventive programs have been implemented by school authorities or other stakeholders. This lack of action has reinforced her belief that the educational challenges and social vulnerabilities of Roma children must be addressed. Her professional

engagement in this context has shaped her motivation to shed light on these issues and interventions that promote educational equity and social inclusion for Roma students.

However, working as a school counselor for a long time also presented several challenges for the researcher. Based on her prior experiences, she realized a preconceived notion that students would mostly share negative experiences during the interviews, particularly concerning their relationships with teachers. Additionally, she recognized a bias related to the influence of cultural norms and values, especially regarding educational disengagement. She expected that child marriage would be central to participants' narratives and noticed her heightened interest in these statements. Recognizing these assumptions, she documented them in her reflexive notes and kept voice recordings. These practices enabled her to shift her focus and explore a broader range of school experiences, including positive aspects that participants shared.

3.10. Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study is related to how the interview questions were phrased. They mainly focused on experiences of happiness and unhappiness. This structure may have restricted the emotional range of participants' responses, preventing diverse emotional experiences from being expressed.

Another limitation of this study concerns language and cultural differences, which may have impacted both the interview process and the interpretation of participants' experiences. There is a possibility that specific expressions unique to the participants may not be fully captured during data collection and analysis. Moreover, these expressions could be interpreted through the researcher's own cultural perspective, potentially leading to misinterpretations or an incomplete understanding of the participants' experiences.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The current study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of Roma early adolescents' experiences of subjective well-being in public middle schools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 Roma early adolescents attending public middle schools in the Körfez district of Kocaeli. After transcribing the audio recordings, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to analyze the data. As a result, two group experiential themes emerged: (1) They face challenges in adapting to the school system and (2) Middle school is the last opportunity to engage with the educational system. In the following sections, each theme was discussed individually, accompanied by sample quotes. Table 4.1 provides a summary of all group experiential themes, personal experiential themes, and personal experiential sub-themes.

4.1. They face challenges in adapting to the school system

The first group experiential theme captures the complex and interconnected relationships that influence the subjective well-being experiences of Roma early adolescents in school. It discusses how they construct and develop relationships within diverse systems, including their schools, friends, teachers, and parents, and how these relationships influence their well-being at school. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of the interaction between schools and parents in shaping adolescents' school-related well-being.

4.1.1. School fosters meaningful connections and enhances the overall quality of life

To understand Roma early adolescents' experiences of subjective well-being in the school context, it is crucial to explore the meanings they attribute to their schools.

How they define and describe their schools provides valuable insights into their lived realities, the role schools play in their lives, and why they consider their schools important or not. In this sense, the first personal experiential theme captures how Roma early adolescents make meaning of their schools. Three subthemes were explored in the participants' narratives as they discussed the meanings they attributed to school: school as an important pathway to a better life, school as an opportunity for experiencing their childhood fully, and school as a social space for interacting with their friends.

Table 4.1. Summary of themes

Group Experiential Themes	Personal Experiential Themes	Personal Experiential Sub-themes
They face challenges in adapting to the school system	School fosters meaningful connections and enhances the overall quality of life	School serves as an important pathway to a better life School allows them to experience childhood fully School serves as a social space for interacting with friends
	The lack of strong interpersonal connections hinders the formation of meaningful relationships	An invisible barrier in friendships prevents them from forming close bonds with classmates They experience uncertainty about being “in” or “out” of peer groups School violence poses a significant threat to the sense of safety and security Support from classmates is crucial for overcoming difficulties and feeling safe at school
	Inclusive teachers play a crucial role in enhancing their well-being at school	Teachers who demonstrate a warm attitude help them feel valued and accepted They need teachers to understand their academic needs and provide guidance They need teacher support to handle challenging situations

Table 4.1.(continued)

Middle school is the last opportunity to engage with the educational system	Limited parental involvement fosters loneliness and despair in handling school issues	Minimal parental involvement leaves them to manage school matters alone They struggle to obtain parental supervision for schoolwork
	They strive to be part of the school system to the extent it allows	Behavioral engagement is characterized by avoiding disruption in school Despite facing obstacles, they strive to stay engaged in school-related responsibilities Extracurricular activities that require no cognitive skills facilitate their participation in school They struggle to fit into the curriculum, affecting their participation and ability to meet course standards The perception of falling behind the mainstream curriculum leads to a negative sense of self
	Middle school is the final destination not only for education but also for childhood	Attending high school feels new and unfamiliar, and many do not have access to it Completing middle school often leads to different paths, influenced by gender

4.1.1.1. School serves as an important pathway to a better life

An important aspect emerging from participants' descriptions of what school means to them was that it serves as a significant pathway to achieving a better life. Their descriptions showed that they placed the school in a way that would influence their future. This was expressed in several ways by half of the participants. Some participants highlighted that school allows them to prepare for their future careers and enhance their financial situations. In this sense, they view school as a stepping

stone on their journey toward achieving their dream jobs. Rather than focusing on the educational process itself, this viewpoint prioritizes the final destination that school leads them to.

For example, İrem explained the meaning of school as its role in determining her career options, including where she could work and the type of job she would pursue. The prospect of obtaining a driver's license upon graduating from high school was her main motivation to stay in school, as driving was essential for both her and her family's income.

“Geleceğimi ifade ediyor. Yani ileride ne yapacağımı ifade ediyor, neler yapacağımı ifade ediyor. Hani mesleğim, hangi mesleği kuracağım, nasıl biri olacağım büyüdüğüm zaman. Bunları gösteriyor... Yani nasıl desem? Nerede çalışacağım, hangi okulda, nasıl duruma düşeceğim? Onları açıklıyor yani... Ben şu an ehliyet için okuyorum. Ehliyet almaya çalışıyorum. Elimden geldiği kadar.” (İrem)

“It represents my future. In other words, it represents what I will do in the future, what I will do. My profession, what profession I will establish, what kind of person I will be when I grow up. It shows these... In other words, how should I say it? Where I will work, which school I will attend, what kind of situation I will end up in. It explains all of that... Right now, I am studying for my driver's license. I am trying to get it as much as I can.” (İrem)

She conveyed her belief that achieving a better and more prosperous life was linked to the opportunity of obtaining a driver's license. For her, the license represented not just a permit to drive, but a gateway to a brighter future.

“Yani ehliyeti alırsam ilk önce kendime ev, evin içine döneceğim. Sonra maddi durumum olursa araba alacağım kendime.” (İrem)

“So, if I get my driver's license, I will first buy myself a house and furnish the interior of the house. Then, if I have the financial means, I will buy myself a car.” (İrem)

Similarly, Defne developed her relationship with the school based on its role in helping her earn money and achieve a better life, not just for herself but also for her family. Her strong desire to have a job that would allow her to support herself and take care of her family was a source of motivation for her to stay in school.

“Kendi paramı kazanmak. Okulu bitirdikten sonra çalışmak. Aileme bakmak.” (Defne)

“To earn my own money. To work after finishing school. To take care of my family.” (Defne)

Some participants expressed that school offers them the opportunity to imagine a future that differs from their cultural background. In this regard, they make meaning of school as a place that enables them to differentiate themselves from their cultural norms and dream of a different life. The desire to differentiate from their cultural norms shows itself within the issue of early marriages, which is common in their culture. School reminds them that they have the potential for a different future compared to their family members, such as older siblings who faced early marriages. This is particularly expressed in the narratives of girls. For example, Elif shared her fear of getting married and having a child at an early age. At this point, she views school as a valuable resource for achieving a better future aligned with her dreams. The longer she can stay in the school system, the more she will be able to hope for a different future for herself.

“Okul benim için bir öğretim şeyi için... mesela benim hiç bilmediğim şeyleri burada öğrendim. Burada yaptığım, burayı... burayı çok sevdim. Okumak çok iyi. Ben hemşire olmak istiyorum büyüyünce. Bizim Romanlar gibi hemen evlenmeyeyim, çocuk yapmayayım diye şey yapıyorum. Benim annem arkamda duruyor zaten. Ben lisemi de okumak istiyorum.” (Elif)

“School is for me for education... for example, I learned things I never knew before. What I did here, here... I loved this place. Studying is very good. I want to be a nurse when I grow up. I do this so that I don't get married right away, don't have children like our Roma people. My mother supports me already. I also want to go to high school.” (Elif)

4.1.1.2. School allows them to experience childhood fully

Five participants discussed the meaning of school in their lives by comparing their time spent at home with their experiences at school. They expressed that school provides a break from the burdens and boredom they often encounter at home. Some participants shared how they take household chores and spend a significant amount of time managing the household. In this sense, school acts as a place where they can

be free from the responsibilities of adulthood at home and fully enjoy their childhood. Others mentioned that school allows them to take a break from boredom at home and engage in activities that are not possible at home. At school, they can have fun with friends, explore new things, and address the limitations they may experience in their home environment.

The first extract from Melis highlighted that school brings color to their lives and helps them deal with boredom at home.

“Biz okula geldik mi eğleniyoruz falan. Evde durmak daha sıkıcı çünkü. Okula geliyorsun hem öğreniyorsun hem de eğleniyorsun. Ne bileyim hocam yani, öyle... değişik hocam bizim için. Renk katıyor yani bize.” (Melis)

“When we come to school, we have fun and stuff. Staying at home is more boring. You come to school, you both learn and have fun. I don’t know, teacher, it’s like that... it’s different for us. It adds color to us.” (Melis)

The extract below from Eylül illustrates the boredom she felt at home, stemming from the limitations of her home environment on activities she enjoyed, such as studying, painting, and being with others:

“Burada (okulda) başka oluyorum bu arada evde başka oluyorum nedense. Burada (okulda) daha mutlu oluyorum, seviniyorum. Eve geldiğimde annem ben sonuçta... işte böyle ne bileyim, tek başımayım ya. O yüzden canım sıkılıyor, bir şeylerle uğraşmak istiyorum ama buraya geldiğimde her şeyle uğraşıyorum. Yani resim çiziyorum, ödev çalışıyorum. Mesela evde yapmadıklarımı burada yapıyorum. Yani burada hiç canım sıkılmıyor ama eve gidince çok canım sıkılıyor.” (Eylül)

“I am different here (at school) and by the way, I am different at home for some reason. I am happier here (at school), I am happy. When I come home, me and my mother after all... I don’t know, I am all alone. That’s why I get bored, I want to do something but when I come here, I get busy with everything. I mean I draw pictures; I do my homework. For example, I do things here that I don’t do at home. I don’t get bored here at all but when I go home, I get really bored.” (Eylül)

Eylül also added that, in her spare time after school, she takes care of housework like clearing the table, doing the laundry, and vacuuming the house. She expressed this with a tired and unhappy tone, adding, “My mother just sits there.” This expression

about her mother indicates her disappointment with her mother's lack of support and understanding of her needs and interests. Similarly, Kerem stated that he spends a considerable amount of time managing the household, which should be the responsibility of his parents.

“Hocam eğitim olsun, muhasebe olsun, aslında evin çoğu teknoloji ve nasıl diyeyim, kafadan işlerin çoğusu bende. Her şey bana kitleniyor. Hocam mesela biz şoförlük işi yapıyoruz. Bu işin muhasebe kısmı var. Nasıl diyeyim? Yıllık taksit name, öyle bir kısmı var. Onlarla falan hep ben uğraşıyorum. O vergi muhabbetiyle falan hepsi bende...” (Kerem)

“Teacher, whether it's education, accounting, most of the technology works of the house and how should I say, most of the brainy kinds of stuff of the house are on me. Everything is focused on me. Teacher, for example, we work as drivers. There is an accounting part of this job. What should I say? Annual installment payment is of that kind part. I always deal with them. That tax, all of that is on me...” (Kerem)

4.1.1.3. School serves as a social space for interacting with friends

The school serves as a social space for six participants for interacting with friends. Some of them emphasized that school provides an environment for having fun with their peers. Most participants highlighted the importance of playing and chatting with friends during breaks when discussing the meaning of school. In particular, the playground, canteen, and schoolyard are significant places for them to come together and enjoy their recess time. Additionally, for some participants, school offers a chance to build new and meaningful relationships with peers that they might not find in their neighborhood. For others, school is a place that helps them cope with sadness driven by loneliness.

While talking about his experiences with his school, Emre shared that the most satisfying aspect of the school is having friends and enjoying time spent with them.

“Arkadaşlarıyla oynamak, gezmek, eğlenmek. Böyle geziyoruz. Sabah kalkıyoruz okula geliyoruz. Çok güzel oluyor hocam benim için.” (Emre)

“Playing with your friends, walking around, having fun. We walk around like this. We wake up in the morning and come to school. It is very nice for me, teacher.” (Emre)

The extract from Kerem shows that he describes school as a resource for socializing with his peers:

“Okul benim için aslında daha çok... nasıl desem hani bir şey öğrenmek değil de daha çok böyle nasıl desem... sosyalleşmek, az da olsa bir şeyler öğrenmek için var bence.” (Kerem)

“I think school is more for me... how should I say it, not to learn anything, but to socialize and learn a little bit.” (Kerem)

According to Kerem, the school contributes to his socializing by allowing him to get to know non-Roma peers and develop new and more satisfying friendships. In this sense, the school serves as a social space that allows him to enter a new setting with different norms and rules compared to his interactions with Roma peers. School likely provides him with the first opportunity to experience relationships that contribute to him and in which he feels a greater sense of belonging.

“Mesela Romanlar hakkında söyleyeyim. Romanlar da benim kafama pek uymuyor. Onlar başka düşünüyor, ben başka düşünüyorum. O yüzden hani sizinkiler bana daha iyi geliyor. O yüzden hani mesela buradan şey yaptığım arkadaşlar benim hayatıma daha çok katkı sağlıyor. Nasıl diyeyim halı saha olsun, dışarı çıkma olsun, genel anlamda olsun, bana ondan daha yardımcı oluyor.” (Kerem)

“For example, let me talk about Roma people. Roma people don’t really match my way of thinking. They think differently, and I think differently. That’s why, like, your people seem better to me. So, for example, the friends I’ve made here contribute more to my life. What should I say? Whether it’s playing football, going out, or just in general, they help me more.” (Kerem)

Eylül mentioned that school is a place where she can find a chance to free the limitations outside of the school, more easily come together with her friends, and solve conflicts with them. In this sense, the school offers her a social support system that might be lacking at home. She also expressed gratitude for having friends at school, highlighting their importance in coping with loneliness and sharing her problems.

“Böyle işte arkadaşlarımla şey olmak, böyle... Sonuçta şöyle benim için ifade ediyor. Ben hani bazı arkadaşlarımla (mahalledeki) küs oluyorum ya... Bazen dışarı da çıkamıyorum. Ama okula geldiğimde konuşuyorum, barışıyorum, arkadaşlarımla eğleniyorum.” (Eylül)

“Like, just being with my friends, you know... After all, this is what it means to me. I have arguments with some of my friends (in the neighborhood). Sometimes, I can't go out either. But when I come to school, I talk to them, make peace, and have fun with my friends.” (Eylül)

“Arkadaşlarım (okuldaki) iyi ki var yani. Onlar olmasa var ya, hiç arkadaşım olmayacak yani, derdimi kimseyle paylaşamayacağım. Öyle yani. Onların sayesinde sonuçta daha mutlu oluyorum.” (Eylül)

“I'm so glad I have my friends (at school). If it weren't for them, I swear I wouldn't have any friends, I wouldn't be able to share my problems with anyone. That's how it is. Thanks to them, I'm happier in the end.” (Eylül)

4.1.2. The lack of strong interpersonal connections hinders the formation of meaningful relationships

The second personal experiential theme captures how Roma early adolescents make meaning of their social relationships with classmates in influencing their experience of school-related subjective well-being. Four subthemes explored in the participants' narratives can be listed as the experience of an invisible barrier in friendships with their classmates preventing them from forming close bonds, the experience of uncertainty about being “in” or “out” of peer groups, the experience of school violence as a threat to the sense of safety and security, and the experience of support from classmates in difficult times.

4.1.2.1. An invisible barrier in friendships prevents them from forming close bonds with classmates

The participants' narrative illustrates that there is an invisible barrier in the friendships of Roma early adolescents and their classmates, which prevents them forming close bonds. Although they establish relationships at school, these connections often remain confined to the school boundaries, and for some, even within the classroom. This was expressed in different ways by five of the participants.

Selin mentioned that she has closer relationships with her Roma peers and feels happier when spending time with them. She finds a greater sense of commonality in

her perception of friendship and shared interests with her Roma friends, which enables positivity and a stronger feeling of belonging. The closer she feels to her friends, the more satisfied she is with her relationships. However, the limited nature of her relationships with classmates undermines her sense of belonging in those friendships. Selin's sharing indicates that just because they play together does not mean they have a close relationship. According to Selin, the fact that someone can come to her home holds significant meaning for their friendships. Her statement, "My other friends can't come to my house that often," suggests that she does not reach the desired level of satisfaction in her relationships with classmates. It seems that Selin does not have enough opportunities to feel close and to belong with her classmates. Additionally, her distinction between Roma and non-Roma peers may indicate challenges in adapting to different social dynamics at school. The limitations of the school environment, which affect opportunities for students to get to know one another, combined with living in segregated neighborhoods - while Roma homes are clustered together, her non-Roma classmates live farther away, may significantly impact the relationships between children. As Selin noted, she frequently sees her Roma friends outside of school but interacts with her other classmates only in the classroom. This suggests that residential segregation might also limit opportunities for meaningful cross-group friendships.

"Roman arkadaşlarımla daha mutlu oluyorum hocam. Onlarla daha yakınız ya hocam yani." (Selin)

"I'm happier with my Roma friends, teacher. We're closer with them, you know, teacher." (Selin)

"Hocam fark var onlarla (Roman arkadaşlarımla) daha yakınım, onlar (Roman arkadaşlarım) benim evime geliyor. Ama öbür arkadaşlarım evime çok gelemiyor. Çünkü uzaklar. Bizim Romanlarla hep dip dibe evlerimiz. Ama (sınıf arkadaşlarım) birazcık uzak. Mesela benim arkadaşlarım (Roman arkadaşlarım) hep bana yakınlar yani. Başka yok yani hocam. Çok fark var yani. Onlarla (sınıf arkadaşlarımla) oynuyorum ama yani onlarla (Roman arkadaşlarımla) daha çok eğleniyorum, daha çok oynuyorum, daha çok görüyorum onları. Onları (sınıf arkadaşlarımı) sadece sınıfta görüyorum. Ama onları (Roman arkadaşlarımı) her gün, her gece görüyorum." (Selin)

"Teacher, there's a difference. I'm closer to them (my Roma friends), they come to my house. But my other friends can't come to my house that often because they live far away. Our houses are always next to each other with the

Roma people. But my classmates are a bit farther away. For example, my friends (Roma friends) are always close to me. There's nothing else, teacher. There's a big difference. I play with my classmates, but I have more fun, play more, and see them (my Roma friends) more. I only see my classmates in class, but I see my Roma friends every day, every night.” (Selin)

Kerem mentioned that he is satisfied with his relationships with his classmates when considering his relationships within the school context. However, according to him, meeting with his classmates outside of school means elevating these relationships to a higher level of friendship.

“Sınıftaki arkadaşlarım (sınıf arkadaşlarımla aram) iyidir hani. Mükemmel değildir. Çünkü mükemmellik kısmı çok başka bir şey. Hani sınıf dışında (görüşmek) falan... ama okul (okulda görüşmek) anlamında bakarsak, mükemmel. Okul içinde (arkadaşlığımız) çok iyi.” (Kerem)

“My friends in class (my relationship with my classmates) is good, you know. It's not perfect. Because perfection is something else. Like, (meeting) outside of class... but if we look at it in terms of (meeting at) school, it's perfect. It (Our friendships) is really good within school.” (Kerem)

The extract from Emre stated that his relationship with classmates is limited to class hours. Even though they establish relationships with his classmates, he spends his recess time mostly with Roma friends.

“Ahmed... nasıl desem... Ahmed... böyle biz teneffüste (sınıfta) oynuyoruz hocam. Böyle Suriyeli olduğu için Suriyeli konuşuyor. Ben anlamıyorum. O kadar yani. Ondan sonra gidiyor arkadaşlarının yanına, takılıyor. Ben gidiyorum Umutlarla (Roman arkadaşlarımla) takılıyorum.” (Emre)

“Ahmed... how should I say... Ahmed... we play during the break (in class), teacher. He speaks in Syrian because he's Syrian. I don't understand. That's it. Then, he goes to hang out with his friends. I go and hang out with Umut and the others (my Roma friends).” (Emre)

Some participants noted that there are significant differences in how Roma and non-Roma friends interact with each other. As a result, they feel pressured to change their behavior to align with the friendship styles of their classmates. This effort to adjust their approach to friendship creates a boundary between them and their peers, inhibiting them from being their authentic selves. The perception of “us” and “them”

leads to a sense of obligation to conform to the general norms of interpersonal relationships in their schools. For example, Selin mentioned that while she spoke “normally” to her classmates, she and her Roma friends joked around calling each other “crazy”:

“Bizde deli falan diyorlar. Ama yani çok aldırıyoruz. Birbirimize hep öyle söylediğimiz için. (Birbirimize) Çok söylemiyoruz, yani böyle güceniyorlar. Ama alıştıkları zaman gücenmiyorlar, bir şey söylemiyorlar... Hocam onlara (sınıf arkadaşlarımıza) hiçbir şey söylemiyoruz. Şakalaşmıyoruz onlarla. Normal oturuyoruz öyle. Normal konuşuyoruz.” (Selin)

“We (Roma people) call each other crazy. But we don’t really mind. We say that to each other all the time. We don’t say too much because they get upset. But once they get used to it, they don’t mind and don’t say anything... Teacher, we don’t say anything to them (our classmates). We don’t joke around with them. We just sit normally, like that. We talk normally.” (Selin)

4.1.2.2. They experience uncertainty about being “in” or “out” of peer groups

In discussing social relationships within the school environment, seven participants highlighted the challenges of engaging with peer groups in their classrooms. They articulated that they experience uncertainty about being in or out of peer groups in different ways.

For some participants, their experiences point out that an imbalance of power in their relationships with classmates brings along uncertainty about being a part of the group. In other words, they often make initial attempts to join in their classmates’ activities, but while these efforts are not explicitly rejected, their classmates do not seem willing to form friendships with them. At this point, their classmates appear to play a more significant role in determining who joins the group and who does not. For example, Melis expressed that she feels “not much” excluded by her classmates. However, her emphasis on the phrase “not much” may indicate that she experiences loneliness in her relationships with them. It seems she feels a distance from her classmates, making it difficult for her to engage in peer groups. While she does not face overt social exclusion or marginalization, she also does not feel fully included in the class, which affects her satisfaction with her relationships. This creates a situation

in which she does not feel comfortable enough to talk to her classmates. When she says, “I talk to all of them, I ask them, and they give it to me” indicates a lack of mutual effort in her relationships. Her use of the pronoun “I” instead of “we” suggests her attempts to build relationships are one-sided.

“Ne bileyim hocam arkadaşlarım biraz şey yani uzaklar. Benden biliyorsunuz, bizi hep şey yapıyorlar ya böyle uzak görüyorlar.” (Melis)

“I don’t know, teacher, my friends are a bit distant. They see us as distant, you know, they always treat us like that.” (Melis)

“Şey yapmıyorlar yani, çok dış... çok dışlamıyorlar. Böyle ya git falan demiyorlar. Hepsiyle konuşuyorum, onlardan istiyorum, onlar veriyor. Ben istiyorum falan öyle yani hocam. İyi aramız. Kötü şeyleri yok yani bana karşı. Dışlamıyorlar falan. Demiyorlar ki “Ya Romansın, şöylesin, böylesin.” demiyorlar.” (Melis)

“They don’t do that, I mean, they don’t too much exclude us. They don’t say things like ‘go away’ or anything. I talk to all of them, I ask them, and they give it to me. I ask for things, and that’s how it is, teacher. Our relationship is good. They don’t have anything bad against me. They don’t exclude me or anything. They don’t say ‘Oh, you’re Roma, this or that.’ They don’t say that.” (Melis)

For some participants, the uncertainty about being in or out of a group is reflected in inconsistent relationships with classmates. In other words, the experience of being accepted into the group one day and not being accepted the next day raises questions and brings insecurity and uncertainty.

Yusuf shared that his classmates prevented him from participating in their plays, which has made him increasingly frustrated and angry. As a result, he feels a sense of not belonging in the class. His statement, “Sometimes I even go and cry out,” illustrates the difficulty he has in coping with this challenging situation. Yusuf needs consistency and safety in his relationships with his classmates, but he currently feels unsafe and believes that he could be left alone at any moment.

“O anlarda (arkadaşlarımla bir etkinlik yaparken) bazı kişiler... nasıl desem? Oyuna, şey yapmak istemiyor, aralarına almak istemiyor. Ona çok gıcık kapıyorum. İyi hissetmiyorum bazen. Bazen sinirleniyorum. Hatta bazen gidip ağladığım bile oluyor. Sinirden.” (Yusuf)

“At those moments (when I'm doing an activity with my friends), some people... how should I say? They don't want me to join the game, they don't want to include me. It really annoys me. I don't feel good sometimes. Sometimes I get angry. Actually, sometimes I even go and cry out of frustration.” (Yusuf)

“Teneffüslerde genellikle arkadaşlarımla konuşuyorum. Ama yani... hemen satıyorlar. Biri geldi mi yani... Roman olduğum için de bir şey var.” (Yusuf)

“I usually talk to my friends during breaks. But I mean... they immediately betray me. If someone comes, you know... there's something because I'm Roma.” (Yusuf)

Defne expressed that she tries to engage with her peer groups, and they included her in a game when one participant was absent during gym class. However, when there are too many players, they often exclude her and reject her participation. This leads to feelings of exclusion, sadness, and shame. In alignment with Yusuf, her classmates are inconsistent in their approach towards her. They accept her when they want to include her in games, but they reject her when they do not need her. Her use of the word “sometimes” indicates the lack of consistency in her relationships with classmates.

“Hep onların yanında durdum. Benimle konuşmaya başladılar. Onlarla da aram... hani onlar da benimle konuşmuyordu. Sonra konuşmaya başladılar. Biri yere düşmüştü. Bir ara. Onu kaldırdım, yerden iyi misin falan dedim. O zaman konuştu işte. Beden dersinde de onlarla birlikte oynadım. Bir kişi eksikti diye. O zaman yani konuşmaya başladık, oynamaya başladık.” (Defne)

“I've always stood by them. They started talking to me. At first, they didn't talk to me. Then they started talking. One of them had fallen on the ground once. I picked her up and asked if she was okay. That's when she started talking. During physical education class, I played with them because one person was missing. That's when we started talking and playing together.” (Defne)

“Bazenleri de benimle oynamak istemiyorlar. O zaman aşağı iniyorum, geziyorum... Ben onunla, onlarla konuşmaya çalışıyorum ama onlar benimle konuşmak istemiyorlar.” (Defne)

“Sometimes they don't want to play with me. Then I go downstairs, walk around... I try to talk to them, but they don't want to talk to me.” (Defne)

4.1.2.3. School violence poses a significant threat to the sense of safety and security

Five of the participants talked about how they experience different kinds of violence at school, which brings along the feeling of unsafe. While some of them are exposed to the violence of their classmates, others are involved in violent incidents themselves. The nature of these experiences differs by gender. For example, boys shared encounters with both physical and verbal violence, whereas girls' narratives focused on verbal violence.

Can mentioned that the violent incidents he experienced in class are among the things that upset him the most about school. He describes his relationships with his classmates as generally positive but notes that conflicts sometimes arise. The extract from Can illustrates that when he encounters problems with his classmates, he struggles to resolve them peacefully and often resorts to physical violence. His use of the word “kid” for his classmates indicates a lack of closeness in their relationships as well.

“Tek bir kere kavga etmişim. O zaman kendimi mutsuz hissettim. Hocam bir tane kağıt vardı işte. Çocuk çekiştirdi, çekiştirdi. Sonra orada kavga çıktı. O çekiştirdi. Sonra hocam ben de çektim. Bırak dedim, bırakmadı. Sonra kavga çıktı. Ben vurdum. O vurdu. Sonra hocalar geldi ayırdı.” (Can)

“I only fought once. I felt sad at that moment. Teacher, there was a piece of paper. The kid kept pulling on it, pulling on it. Then a fight broke out. He pulled it on. Then, teacher, I pulled too. I said ‘Let’s go,’ but he didn’t. Then the fight happened. I hit him. He hit me. Then the teachers came and separated us.” (Can)

Efe stated that he experiences verbal violence from his classmates. When he talked about a moment that made him feel angry in class, he said that his classmates teased him by calling him “exemplary.” He later expressed shame as a result of his classmates’ behavior. This suggests that while his outward reaction is anger, being subjected to verbal violence from his classmates leads to an underlying feeling of shame.

“Mesela sınıfta bazen... Bazıları çok bana şey yapıyor... Dalga geçiyorlar. Erdem hoca bir defasında derste bana örnek demişti. Herkes örnek örnek diye dalga geçiyor.” (Efe)

“For example, sometimes in class... some of them really make fun of me... They joke around. Once, Erdem’s teacher called me an exemplar in class. Everyone started teasing me, saying, “exemplar, exemplar.” (Efe)

For girls, exposure to verbal violence from their classmates brings along negative feelings like shame, sadness, and fear. In this sense, it seems they do not feel safe in their relationships with some of their classmates. According to them, their classroom is a place where they can be humiliated and made fun of at any time. For instance, İrem mentioned that she does not want to attend a particular lesson, as she is teased by some of her classmates. She finds this lesson tiring and feels pressured to meet the expectations of her teacher. However, when she cannot meet those requirements, she faces teasing from certain classmates. This situation had an impact on her motivation to attend the school.

“Yani bazı arkadaşlarım dalga geçmesin diye gelmiyorum, (ödevi) yapmadığım zaman dalga geçmesinler diye gelmiyorum. Yani dalga geçtikleri zaman beni mutsuz ediyorlar. Yani şaka da olsa mutsuz ediyor beni. Ama İlafl benim grupta olduğu için bir o biraz tepki veriyor bana dalga geçen arkadaşlarla.” (İrem)

“I don’t come to school sometimes so that some of my friends don’t make fun of me. I don’t come when I haven’t done my homework because I don’t want them to make fun of me. When they make fun of me, it makes me unhappy. Even if it’s a joke, it still makes me unhappy. But since İlafl is in my group, she reacts a bit to the friends who make fun of me.” (İrem)

4.1.2.4. Support from classmates is crucial for overcoming difficulties and feeling safe at school

While discussing the meaning of their relationships with their classmates, eight participants emphasized the importance of receiving support from their classmates whenever needed. This support holds particular significance for several reasons. For some participants, getting support from classmates allows them to overcome challenging lesson situations, especially when they struggle to follow or understand the material. They noted that peer support plays a crucial role in helping them manage academic difficulties and confusion. For some participants, their classmates serve as a social support system to help them overcome difficulties. Having someone

who volunteers to assist and support them enables a sense of safety and comfort at school.

Elif stated that what she likes most about her friends is the support she gets from them. She feels comfortable asking for help from her friends and receiving help, and she feels safe in her relationship with them. She smiles and uses an enthusiastic tone of voice when expressing this. She explained the social support from her classmates in adverse situations:

“Kim düşerse onun elinden tutup kaldırıyoruz. Hele ki kızlar! Benim arkamdan koşuyorlar. “Elif üzülme! Elif bir şey olmaz! Elif bırak onları... ben döverim onları (sorun yaşadığı kişileri) ...” çok iyi davranıyorlar.” (Elif)

“Whoever falls, we lend a helping hand and pick them up. Especially the girls! They run after me. “Elif, don’t be sad! Elif, it’s okay! Elif, forget about them... I’ll beat them (the ones she’s having trouble with)...” They treat me really well.” (Elif)

She also mentioned the peer support for learning as:

“Mesela ben bir konuyu anlamadım ama o gidip arkadaşlarıma sorabilirim, “Arkadaşım ben şu konuyu anlayamadım, şunu yapamadım. Lütfen bana gösterir misin?” Diyorlar, “Evet, gösterebilirim” diyorlar ve gösteriyorlar. Onu çok sevdim.” (Elif)

“For example, if I don’t understand something, I can go and ask my friends, ‘I didn’t understand this topic, I couldn’t do this. Could you please show me?’ They say, “Yes, I can show you,” and they show me. I really like that.” (Elif)

Selin mentioned that her hardest moment at school was when she was confused by the questions. She emphasized that she overcame this problem by asking for support from her friends during these times.

“Çok zorlandığım bir anı oldu. Yani hocam şimdi... Sorularda çok oluyor hocam zaten başka türlü olmuyor. İki-üç tane soru çok karışıyor. Yani çok karıştırıyorum hocam. Biraz zorlanıyorum. Ama arkadaşım bana anlatıyor, sonra ben yapıyorum. Yani başka yok. O anım vardı. Başka zaten öbürkü derslerde iyi olduğum zaman yani kolaylıkla yapıyorum. Anlamadığım soruları arkadaşlarıma soruyorum, onlar anlatıyor bana sonra ben cevap veriyorum.” (Selin)

“There was a moment when I really struggled. I mean, teacher... It happens a lot in the questions, teacher, it doesn't work any other way. Two or three questions get really confusing. I mix them up a lot, teacher. I struggle a bit. But my friend explains it to me, and then I do it. That's the only time. Otherwise, in other subjects where I do well, I do them easily. I ask my friends about the questions I don't understand, they explain it to me, and then I answer.” (Selin)

Like Selin, Can shared that his most difficult moment at school was struggling to complete an assignment. However, his experience highlights that, rather than offering academic assistance, his classmates provided social support to help him cope with the stress resulting from missing the instruction.

“Ya hocam ben bir ara uykuya dalmıştım. Hoca da bize de kağıt verdi çözmek için. Sonra ben onu yapamadım. Arkadaşımdan destek istedim. Onunla birlikte yazdık. Bu kadar... İlkte hocam baktım, gözüüm şey oldu hocam. Lavaboya gittim. Yüzümü falan yıkadım. Geldiğimde dediler, “Şey (kağıt) var. Yapın!” Herkes bitirmiş. Hoca da böyle yazı yazıyor tahtaya, anlatıyor ders. Sonra bana yanımdaki kişi dedi... “soruyu yapın” falan dedi. Sonra ben de hocam hiç bilmiyordum valla. Hiç dinlemedim. Sonra hocam arkadaşşımdan destek aldım böyle. Onun kağıdından. O kadar.” (Can)

“Well, teacher, I had fallen asleep. The teacher gave us a handout to solve. Then I couldn't do it. I asked my friend for help. We wrote it together. That's all... At first, teacher, I looked, and something happened to my eyes. I went to the bathroom and washed my face. When I came back, they said, “The handout is here. Do it!” Everyone had finished. The teacher was writing on the board, explaining the lesson. Then the person next to me told me... “Do the question.” Then, teacher, I really didn't know. I didn't listen at all. Then, I got support from my friend, from his handout. That's it.” (Can)

4.1.3. Inclusive teachers play a crucial role in enhancing their well-being at school

The third personal experiential theme captures how Roma early adolescents make meaning of their interpersonal relationships with their teachers that influence their experience of school-related subjective well-being. Three subthemes underline their need to have a teacher who demonstrates a warm attitude, which helps them feel valued and accepted, shows understanding for their academic needs, offers guidance, and lastly supports them in handling challenging situations.

4.1.3.1. Teachers who demonstrate a warm attitude help them feel valued and accepted

Except for one participant, Efe, all participants shared positive experiences with their teachers. They described their relationships with their teachers as being good. When asked to elaborate on what makes their relationships good, their varied experiences revealed that they believe their teachers exhibit a warm attitude, which helps them feel recognized and accepted. Participants' narratives highlighted that they value several qualities in their teachers, including making jokes, not yelling at them, being funny, appreciating and noticing them, being kind, friendly, and caring, being aware of their needs and capabilities, treating them fairly, and encouraging them to participate in the lesson. They seem to evaluate their relationships with their teachers based on the closeness and warmth they establish, which goes beyond just teaching. In this way, they can feel valued, noticed, and supported.

Kerem described his teacher as perfect, underlining his teaching style, knowing his students, and showing interest and care. He emphasized that his teacher differentiates himself from others as he considers the different needs of each student and acts according to their capabilities. He feels his teacher's enthusiasm not just for teaching the material but also for being together with them. His interest, engagement, and enjoyment of learning greatly increase when he perceives that his teacher is delighted with his work rather than simply fulfilling an obligation.

“Bize olan şeyi, hani bize olan, bizi tanınması, tam anlamıyla bize adam kafa yoruyordu. Adamın derdi ders işlemek değildi, adamın derdi bizimle eğlenmekti. Altıncı sınıftayken hocam baya bildiğiniz bize yazılım mazılım öğretiyordu. Benim tabii yatkınlığım vardı. Ama hocam ondan hariç iyiydik. Yani mükemmel bir... bütün sınıfla mükemmel bir şeyi vardı. Hani çoğu hocadan daha iyiydi. [...] Her anlamıyla mükemmel. Bize olan ilgisiyle mükemmel. Ders anlatımıyla mükemmel. Hani gösterdiği özenle mükemmel. Bizi tam anlamıyla algıliyordu bu adam. Hani diyordu ki, “Bu öğrenci bu, bu öğrenci bu.” Hani bunu biliyordu. Bize ona karşı yaklaşıyordu. Bana kalırsa o hocaların çok çok daha iyi yerlere gelmesi gerekiyor. Bana kalırsa hocam müdür olması gerekiyor.” (Kerem)

“The way he treated us, how he got to know us, he really cared about us. His concern wasn't just teaching the lesson, his concern was having fun with us.

When we were in sixth grade, he was actually teaching us programming and stuff. Of course, I had an aptitude for it. But besides that, we were good. I mean, it was perfect... he had an amazing rapport with the whole class. He was better than most teachers. [...] Perfect in every way. Perfect in his attention to us. Perfect in his teaching style. Perfect in the care he showed. This guy really understood us. He would say, 'This student is this, this student is that.' He knew us. He approached us accordingly. In my opinion, that teacher should definitely be in a much higher position. In my opinion, he should be a principal.” (Kerem)

The extract from Elif indicates the importance she gave to being appreciated, noticed, and chosen by the teacher.

“Benim matematik hocam ve Türkçe hocam, ikisi de gitti bu yıl. Begüm hoca ve Hüseyin hocam. Onlar hep, matematik hocam, bana derdi ki “Zarıfsın, çok akıllısın, çok güzelsin. Sen bu sınıftaki aranmayan, kimse de bulunmayan bir kızsın” dedi. Benim çok hoşuma gidiyordu. Yani “Çok zarıfsın” diyordu. “Çok akıllısın, hiç sana bağırdığımı da hatırlamıyorum” diyordu. “Sınıftaki en güzel... tamam hepinizi ayrı seviyorum ama sen daha zarıfsın sen daha çok şeysin.” (diyordu). Hüseyin hocam da beni çok seviyordu. O da Romanları çok seviyordu ya. Ondan sonra o da diyordu ki “Sen çok akıllı bir kızsın. O yüzden sen bunu hak ettin. Başkan seçtim seni.” dedi. “Sen bunu hak eden bir kızsın” dedi, “O yüzden seni seçiyorum.”” (Elif)

“My math teacher and my Turkish teacher both left this year. Begüm teacher and Hüseyin teacher. They both always told me things like, 'You're graceful, very smart, very beautiful. You're the girl in this class who's sought after, the one no one else can compare to.' I really liked it. He would say, 'You're very graceful.' 'You're very smart, I don't even remember ever raising my voice at you.' 'You're the most beautiful... okay, I love all of you equally, but you're more graceful, you're more special.' Hüseyin's teacher also really liked me. He loved Roma people a lot. Then, he said, 'You're a very smart girl. That's why you deserve this. I chose you as the president.' He said, 'You're the kind of girl who deserves this,' and 'That's why I'm choosing you.'” (Elif)

Eylül, like Elif, expressed that being chosen by her teachers holds significant meaning for her when discussing her relationship with them. The moments shared with her teachers contribute to her need for recognition. Positive experiences with her teachers enable closer and warmer relationships, where she feels valued and loved.

“Hocalarımı çok seviyorum, iyi ki varlar yani. Beni de onlar seviyor gibi gözüküyor ama seviyorlar mı sevmiyorlar mı ben bilemem. Ben onları çok

seviyorum. Gerçekten. [...] Yani böyle... İşte ne bileyim. Sınıfı almıyor, tek beni alıyor. İşte beni davet ediyor... Beni bir yere götürüyor, bir şey rica ediyor. Çok mutlu oluyorum yani. [...] Artı atmaları, yıldız koymaları... demin dediğim gibi. Yani beni sevmeleri, bana ilgi göstermeleri, bana böyle bilgiler öğretmeleri... Yani bana gülümsüyorlar. Yani işte ne bileyim iyi davranıyorlar. [...] Yani beni bunlar çok mutlu ediyor.” (Eylül)

“I really love my teachers, I’m so glad they’re here. They seem to love me too, but whether they actually love me or not, I don’t know. I really love them. Truly. [...] Like... I don’t know. S/he doesn’t take the others in the class; s/he takes me. They invite me... they take me somewhere, ask me for something. It makes me so happy. [...] The extra points, the stars... like I said earlier. I mean, them liking me, showing interest in me, teaching me new things... They smile at me. I mean, they treat me well. [...] These things make me really happy.” (Eylül)

4.1.3.2. They need teachers to understand their academic needs and provide guidance

Five participants’ narratives underlined that receiving support and guidance for learning shapes their experiences of school-related subjective well-being. They expressed a need for their teachers to show empathy and patience when they struggle to comprehend course material. Their experiences point out that they like teachers who are willing to explain the missing points repeatedly until they grasp them fully. They highlighted the importance of teachers understanding the challenges they face in meeting academic responsibilities and caring about their learning. Given that these participants struggle with low academic achievement, such treatment from their teachers is particularly meaningful, as it helps them feel comfortable and safe in their learning environment.

The extract from Melis illustrates that she values her teachers showing understanding and respect when she struggles to comprehend the material. Receiving support in challenging situations, such as exams or difficult subjects, helps her build more genuine and trusting relationships with her teachers. It is not just about explaining the material again to enhance understanding; her teachers’ positive behaviors, like smiling and making jokes, enhance a learning environment where students feel unafraid and comfortable. Additionally, it seems that she values her teachers’ care about whether students comprehend the subject.

“Sınavlara giriyoruz, şey yapıyorlar, yani şey, yardımcı oluyorlar. Fazla şey yapmıyorlar böyle. Nasıl desem?... Soğuk değiller yani. Bazı hocalar böyle hep zıt oluyorlar, şey yapıyorlar. Bizimkiler öyle değil yani. Hep ne bileyim, güleç yüzlüler. [...] İngilizce fazla anlamıyorum ama Ömer hoca şey yapıyor mesela Türkçesini de söylüyor. Ne bileyim hocam hep şakalar yapıyor bizimkilere falan. Ömer hoca da böyle şey, yani şakacı biri, güldürüyor insanı. O özelliği şey (iyi) onun öyle. Matematik hocası da hep şey yapıyor... ee... dersleri anlatmasını çok seviyorum onun. Çok güzel şey yapıyor. Misal anlamadığımızda soruyor. Diyor ki, “Anlamadıysanız gösterin.” falan. Böyle hocam yani. Öğretmenlerimle sıkıntım yok. Hepsi iyi davranıyorlar. Ben de şey yani kötü davranmak istemiyorum, şey, saygılı, şey yapmak istemiyorum onlara karşı.” (Melis)

“We take exams, and they help us. They don't do much, how should I say?... They're not cold, you know? Some teachers are always the opposite, they act differently. But ours are not like that. They're always, you know, smiling. [...] I don't understand much English, but for example, Ömer teacher, explains it in Turkish too. You know, my teacher always makes jokes with us. Ömer teacher, is like that; he's a funny person and makes people laugh. That's a good quality of his. The math teacher also does... uh... I really love the way she teaches. She does it really well. For instance, when we don't understand, she asks, 'If you don't understand, show me.' That's how she is. I have no problems with my teachers. They all treat me well. I don't want to act badly, I want to be respectful towards them.” (Melis)

The extract from Kerem shows that he appreciates that his teacher notices his needs and shows empathy and patience when he struggles to comprehend the subject. Other teachers did not get angry when a task was not completed, but they also did not provide the students with the necessary support. However, this teacher's approach highlighted the importance of recognizing students' needs and offering them the necessary support with patience until they understood.

“Mesela bir şey işliyoruz hani bir şey yapmamasına kızmıyordu. Eyvallah diğer hocalarım da kızmıyordu ama hani daha çok öğretme noktasındaydı. Hani bakıyordu, olmuyor mu? Bir daha gösteriyordu. Olmuyor mu? Bir daha gösteriyordu. Sinirlenmek gibi bir şeyi yoktu. Hoca bir türlü sinirlenmiyordu. Çok sakindi, hani pozitif. Hoca her zaman gülüyordu. Mesela bir şey yapamadığımız yanımıza geliyordu. Direkt her şeyi baştan anlatıyordu. Hani. Bana kalsa hoca elinden gelse daha çok bir şeyler yapardı bize.” (Kerem)

“For example, when we were working on something, he didn't get angry if we didn't do it right. I mean, my other teachers didn't get angry either, but he was more focused on teaching. He would look and say, 'Is it not working? Let me show you again.' If it still didn't work, he would show us again. He never got angry, there was no such thing. The teacher was always calm and

positive. He was always smiling. If we couldn't do something, he would come to us and explain everything from the beginning. I think, if the teacher could, he would have done more for us." (Kerem)

Yusuf explained how important it is for him to receive understanding from his teacher when he encounters difficulties fulfilling his course-related responsibilities in a different way. He expects his teachers will recognize the challenges he faces and provide the support and guidance he needs for the related task. However, his negative experiences with his teachers, who scold him, bring about feelings of sadness and anger. At the same time, it hinders him from expressing his difficulties to his teachers. His saying "since they are teachers" suggests that he views his classroom environment as one where the teacher holds authority, creating an unequal relationship between the teacher and student. As a child, he feels powerless in the presence of his teachers. It discourages him from expressing his needs and receiving the support he requires.

"Öğretmenlerimle aram iyi. Ama yani bazı öğretmenlerim... nasıl desem? Sevmiyorum. Çünkü bazı öğretmenlerim niye yapmadın, niye etmedin, böyle bağıra bağıra konuşuyorlar. O yüzden bazı öğretmenlerimi sevmiyorum. Yapmadıysam mesela diyeceksin ki "bu böyle olur." Ama bazı hocalar, yani hocalarımız bağırarak... ee... hatta bazıları kabarıyor bir anda. "Sen niye yapmıyorsun, sen niye etmiyorsun?" falan diyorlar. Üzüliyorum hocam. Nasıl desem? Bazen ağlayasım bile geliyor. O an aklımdan vurasım geliyor ama büyüğüm olduğu için, saygı için vuramıyorum. Bir de hocam olduğu için." (Yusuf)

"My relationship with my teachers is good. But, I mean, there are some teachers... how should I say it? I don't like them. Because some teachers shout at us, asking, 'Why didn't you do this? Why didn't you do that?' That's why I don't like some of my teachers. If I didn't do something, they should say, 'This is how it should be done.' But some teachers shout... and some even get angry suddenly. 'Why aren't you doing this? Why didn't you do that?' It makes me upset. How should I say it? Sometimes I even feel like crying. At that moment, I feel like hitting them, but since they are older than me and they are teachers, I can't do that, out of respect." (Yusuf)

4.1.3.3. They need teacher support to handle challenging situations

Five participants expressed the need for support from their teachers to cope with challenging situations. Their experiences showed that if teachers fail to recognize

and address their needs for social support, the students feel sadness, anger, and disappointment. Some participants noted that receiving support from their teachers helps them manage their anxiety and feel better. They feel more comfortable participating in lessons when they trust their teachers and receive this support. These students believe their teachers can protect them from disruptive behaviors exhibited by their classmates. Additionally, some participants emphasized the importance of having their teachers support and trust them during difficult times, highlighting their desire to be allowed to express themselves. When this support is lacking, they experience feelings of sadness, anger, and disappointment. For some participants, their classroom teachers serve as a crucial support system, particularly financial support from teachers strengthens their relationships.

According to Defne's narratives, it appears that she has experienced social bullying from her classmates. As a result, she does not feel safe around them, fearing they might tease her at any moment. Therefore, she feels more comfortable in environments where a teacher is present, such as in class. This suggests that the teacher's presence serves as a supportive mechanism for her. However, the lack of sufficient support regarding her situation, along with her hesitancy to share her experiences with anyone at school, seems to lead to her coping with feelings of unhappiness and unsafety alone.

"İyi hissediyorum. O zaman bir şey yapamıyorlar. Hoca var diye. Hani benim gülmemle dalga geçiyor bizim sınıftaki çocuk. O zaman." (Defne)

"I feel good. At that time, they can't do anything because there's a teacher. Like, the kids in my class make fun of my laughing. That's when it happens." (Defne)

İrem stated that she felt anxious about how her friends would react when she performed in class. The teacher appears to play a crucial role in helping her manage these emotions. Her emphasis and smile while saying, "Because Aslı teacher's class," highlighted the significance of the encouragement and support she receives from her teacher. She believes her teacher will prevent her from being placed in a difficult situation. This allows her to experience new things and engage in classroom activities.

“Aslı hocayla yapmıştım bu arada. Yedinci sınıfta. Yani böyle bir isim, ismi araştıracaktık, onları araştırdık, ezberledik, okuduk. Biraz heyecanlı hissettim. Ben çok heyecanlıyım. Yani böyle bir şey olduğu zaman acaba ne olacak? Bir şey olacak mı? Birisi gelecek mi? Bir şey diyecek mi? Çok tedirginim böyle, çok heyecanlıyım. Çok heyecanlı hissediyorum proje verdikleri zaman. Acaba okuyabilecek miyim? Arkadaşlarım nasıl tepki verecek? Öyle. Heyecanlı geçti benim için. Arkadaşlarım da güzel tepki verdi. Çünkü Aslı hoca’nın dersi (gülerek). Yani iyi geçti. Aslı hoca yani benimle dalga geçerseler, Aslı hoca hiçbir şekilde onlara söyletmez, dalga geçirtmez. “Demeyin kıza!” falan diye, “Aynı durumu siz de yaşarsınız.” diye söyler.” (İrem)

“I did it with Aslı teacher, by the way. In the seventh grade. We were supposed to research a name, and we researched, memorized, and read about it. I felt a bit anxious. I get really anxious. Like, when something like this happens, I wonder, what's going to happen? Will something happen? Will someone come? Will they say something? I'm really anxious and excited. I feel very anxious when they give me a project. I wonder if I'll be able to read it. How will my friends react? It was an exciting time for me. My friends gave good reactions too, because it was Aslı teacher's class (laughing). It went well. Aslı teacher, if anyone tries to make fun of me, she never lets them. She says, 'Don't say that to her!' and 'You'll be in the same situation too.'” (İrem)

Similarly, the extract from Elif shows she and her classmates believe their teachers can help them resolve conflicts when they are unable to do so themselves. The teachers act as a social support system during challenging situations. It appears that the students have developed a connection between receiving support from their teachers and feeling loved by them.

“Bana şimdi küfrediyorlar. Ondan sonra arkadaşlarım birden toplandı. Ben de onlara derdimi anlatıyorum. “Of Gamze!” dedi. “Boş ver!” dedi. “Döveriz onları ya.” dedi. “Boş ver!” dedi. “Sen yine uslu kalacaksın, yine güçlü kalmaya çalışacaksın.” dedi. “Bırak onları, boş ver, takma kafana ya.” dedi. “Hocamız var.” dedi. “Müdür yardımcımız var.” dedi. “Gidersin, disipline yollarsın onları, onlar da akıllanır. Bir daha demezler.” dedi. “Hiç ağlamana gerek yok bence.” dedi. “Hem seni sınıfta öğretmenlerin seviyor, sana yardımcı olurlar.” dedi.” (Elif)

“They're cursing at me right now. Then my friends suddenly gathered around. I started telling them about my problem. 'Oh Gamze!' she said. 'Forget about it!' she said. 'We'll beat them up.,' she said. 'Forget about it!' she said. 'You'll stay calm, you'll try to stay strong.,' she said. 'Let them go, don't stress about it.,' she said. 'We have our teacher,' she said. 'We have the vice-principal,' she said. 'You can go and send them to discipline, and they'll learn their lesson. They won't say it again.,' she said. 'There's no need to

cry,' she said. 'Besides, your teachers in the class love you, they'll help you.'"
(Elif)

The extract from Efe indicates that he struggles to receive the social support he needs from his teachers. He feels judged based on what his classmates say. The fact that his classmates exaggerate all the situations to his teachers, that his teachers believe those classmates instead of him, and that he is not allowed to express himself makes him feel frustrated about his relationship with the class. This situation has reached a point where he wants to change his class.

"Sınıfımın değişmesini isterdim. Ya sınıfımızda herkes bir şey olduğunda çok abartarak her şeyi şey yapıyor. [...] Sınıfımın iyi olmasını isterdim. Biri, mesela, burada işte benim ayağım kaydı, düştüm. Diyorlar ki "Hocam şurada şununla kavga ettiler, şununla şöyle yaptılar" diyorlar. O beni çok kötü etkiliyor. Bir tane arkadaşım ile birbirimizle şakalaşıyorduk. Sonra hocaya gittiler dediler ki kavga ettiler. Hoca da bize ceza verdi." (Efe)

"I would want my class to change. In our class, when something happens, everyone exaggerates everything. [...] I wish my class was better. For example, if I slip and fall, they'll say, 'Teacher, they fought with this person over there, they did this and that.' It really affects me badly. One time, I was joking with a friend, and then they went to the teacher and said we fought. The teacher then gave us a punishment." (Efe)

4.1.4. The limited parental involvement leads to feelings of loneliness and despair in addressing school-related issues

The fourth personal experiential theme captures how Roma early adolescents perceive their parents' involvement and communication with the school in influencing their experience of subjective well-being at school. Two subthemes identified in the participants' narratives are: minimal parental involvement leaves them to manage school matters alone; and they struggle to obtain parental supervision for schoolwork.

4.1.4.1. Minimal parental involvement leaves them to manage school matters alone

To gain a deeper understanding of Roma early adolescents' school-related subjective well-being, it is essential to examine the interactions between their parents and

schools. When asked about their parents' relationships with their teachers, all participants stated that these interactions are limited. All parents communicate only with classroom teachers, primarily through phone calls rather than face-to-face meetings. Communication between parents and the teacher is usually initiated by the school. This suggests that parents are not actively involved in their children's school lives, and their interactions tend to focus mainly on addressing behavioral problems and issues related to absenteeism. Additionally, they perceive that their parents' obstacles, like living far from the schools, caring for siblings, having health-related issues, and working, prevent their parents from being involving in school life. Although participants show an understanding of their parents' limited involvement in school, most of them seem dissatisfied with this issue. It seems they are left alone to deal with school-related issues.

Eylül's narrative highlights the significance of the relationship and communication between her teachers and parents. She repeatedly emphasized that her teachers had not contacted her mother, indicating how strongly she feels uncomfortable about this. When she expressed these thoughts, her tone of voice was noticeably sad. Her saying that "she never saw it either" reveals that her mother is unfamiliar with the environment she is in. It can point out her feelings of loneliness about her school life.

"İyi yani kötü değil, yani ne bileyim. Ne yalan söyleyeyim, benim annemle öğretmenlerim hiç konuşmadılar. Hatırlamıyorum daha doğrusu. Mesela hiç, ne bileyim, annem hiç bu okula gelmedi. Yani görmedi de. Bilmiyorum ki hiç aramadılar, öğretmenlerim işte. Bir kişi olsun aramadılar. Hiç aramadılar işte. Ne bileyim bilmiyorum. Belki konuşuyorlardı ama belki ben görmüyordumdur. Yani herkes olsa herkes de bunu söyler ben yani annem öğretmenimle işte konuşmalarını isterim. Ama işte..." (Eylül)

"It's fine, not bad, I don't know. Honestly, my mom and teachers never talked to each other. I don't remember, actually. For example, my mom never came to this school. She never saw it either. I don't know, they never called. Not even one person called. I don't know. Maybe they were talking, but maybe I didn't see it. I mean, everyone would say that, too. I would like my mom to talk to my teacher. But you know..." (Eylül)

Elif mentioned that not attending parent-teacher meetings is a common rule in Roma families, and she perceives this is related to a lesser importance placed on girls

compared to boys in her culture. While she highlights that her mother does not share this viewpoint, she often hears from those around her that school and parental meetings are insignificant. It appears that viewing herself as less valuable because she is a girl, along with hearing from those around her that she will marry by the end of middle school, no matter what, may negatively impact her relationship with the school. At this point, it is crucial for the school to communicate to her that a different future is possible and to provide support in achieving that future by interacting with her parents.

“Biliyorsunuz bizim erkek öğrencilere daha çok önem verirler ama kız öğrencilere daha önem vermez ama benim annem böyle değil. Benim annem çok gelmek istedi ama benim kardeşim var. Küçük. O yüzden gelemedi. “Kızım” dedi “çok özür diliyorum ama” dedi “gelemem.” dedi. “Biliyorsunuz kardeşlerin var.” dedi. Ama bazı anneler bizim Romanlarda, onlar diyor ki “Boş ver ya zaten evleneceksiniz. Niye geliyorsunuz ki? Öf! Gitmeyin okula.” diyorlar. Ama benim annem öyle birisi değil. “Öf! Veli toplantısı ne?” diyorlar. “Ne yapacağız? Hocayla konuşacak mı?” diyorlar. “Öf! Boş ver!” diyorlar.” (Elif)

“You know, they give more importance to the male students, but they don't give as much attention to the female students. But my mom is not like that. My mom really wanted to come, but I have a younger sibling, so she couldn't come. She said, 'My dear, I'm so sorry, but I can't come. You know, you have siblings.' But some moms in our Roma community say, 'Forget it, you're going to get married anyway. Why are you even going to school? Ugh! Don't go to school.' But my mom is not like that. 'Ugh! What's a parent meeting?' they say. 'What are we going to do? Are they going to talk to the teacher?' they say. 'Ugh! Forget it!' they say.” (Elif)

Can stated that his parents have limited interactions with his teachers due to their work. Their communication primarily revolves around his problem behaviors and financial support. While describing the relationship between his parents and teachers, he had difficulty articulating it and stated that he initially did not know about this relationship. Although his teachers and parents do communicate, this interaction does not seem to have a positive impact on his experiences at school. The fact that they are in contact does not indicate that he feels supported, as he does not have positive experiences regarding their interactions.

“Telefonla ara sıra konuşuyorlar. Ama ben dinlemiyorum tabi. Bilmiyorum valla. Mesela Ramazan ayında hoca “Size gıda yardımı edeceğim.” dedi. O

zaman aradı. Öyle dedi. Bir de böyle kavga ediyorum falan, yaramazlık ediyorum, hoca arıyor. [...] Ya gelemiyor. Çünkü işe gidiyor ailem. O yüzden gelemiyor.” (Can)

“They talk on the phone sometimes, but I don’t listen, of course. I really don’t know. For example, during Ramadan, the teacher said, ‘I will give you food aid.’ Then she called. She said that. And when I fight or misbehave, the teacher calls. [...] Well, she can’t come because my family goes to work. That’s why she can’t come.” (Can)

4.1.4.2. They struggle to obtain parental supervision for schoolwork

Seven participants mentioned that they do not receive enough parental supervision, even though their parents show interest in their academic achievement. For example, Emre stated that his father controls and follows his academic achievement. His father places great importance on Emre completing his school-related tasks and setting academic expectations for him. However, despite this involvement, Emre does not receive the guidance he needs to handle the challenges he faces or to develop academically. His saying that he did not receive a certificate of appreciation or gratitude points out his need for support to understand the lessons and increase his academic success. While his father desires for him to pass his classes, he does not provide the support to help him achieve this. Instead, he resorts to punishment and intimidation in an attempt to improve Emre’s academic performance. It seems, therefore, that Emre considers just passing the class to be an acceptable goal and achievement for himself.

“(WhatsApp veli grubunda) Babamın telefon numarası var hocam. (WhatsApp veli grubuna) Bir-iki kere giriyor. Bakıyor böyle derslerimi yapmış mıyım diye. Ondan sonra... (ödev kontrolünde) bayağı bir artı böyle yapıyorlar ya. En sevdiği o hocam. Mutlu oluyor. “Yaptı!” diyor. Bayağı mutlu oluyor hocam.” (Emre)

“My dad’s phone number is there (in the WhatsApp parent group). He checks it once or twice. He looks to see if I’ve done my homework. Then... (when checking homework) they usually give me a lot of pluses. That’s his favorite teacher. He is happy. He says, ‘He did it!’ He gets really happy.” (Emre)

“Böyle hiç takdir, teşekkür benden görmemişlerdir ama bütün okulları geçtim yani hocam. Hiç okulda kalmadım. Kalmayı da düşünmüyorum (gülerek).

Babam dedi, "Kalırsan seni çalıştırırım." Ama babamın içinde bir melek var yani." (Emre)

"They've never seen me get a certificate of appreciation or gratitude, but I've passed all the schools, teacher. I've never stayed in school. I don't plan to either (laughing). My dad said, 'If you stay, I'll make you work.' But there's an angel inside my dad." (Emre)

In alignment with Emre's experience, Yusuf's extract illustrates his difficulty in meeting both his parents' academic expectations and the school's requirements to pass his class. It sounds like he struggles with the pressure of academic expectations without sufficient support. Although his parents set academic expectations for him, he appeared to be left alone to meet them.

"Mesela "Çalış oğlum. Yap oğlum. Onu yap oğlum. Bir sınıfı bitir oğlum." Ben sınıfta kalmıştım. O yüzden yani biraz kızdılar bana. "Daha çok çalış!" diyorlar, işte zorluyorlar bazen. Ben de çalışıyorum." (Yusuf)

"For example, 'Work, son. Do it, son. Finish this class, son.' I had to repeat a grade. That's why they got a little upset with me. 'Work harder!' they say, and sometimes they push me. I'm working on it." (Yusuf)

Elif's statement illustrates how challenging it is for her to attain the success she desires. Although her mother approaches this issue with understanding and compassion, she is unable to provide the necessary guidance on how to overcome it. It seems she feels despair about finding a way to increase her success.

"Bugün nasıl gitti? Bugün nasıl, iyi mi? Takdir getirirsin inşallah! Teşekkür..." "Anne" diyorum, "ben de elimden geleni getirmeye, yapmaya çalışıyorum ama olmuyor işte" dedim. "Ne yapayım?" (dedim.) O da dedi "Bir şey olmaz" dedi. "Bu sene olmazsa öbür sene olur. Öbür sene olmazsa ille olur." dedi. "Hiç" dedi "kafana takma." "Sen" dedi "güçlü ol ve derslerini iyi yap." (dedi.) "Tamam anne." dedim. Söz verdim. İnşallah bu sene teşekkür getireceğim." (Elif)

"How did it go today? How was today? Was it good? I hope you bring a certificate of appreciation! Certificate of gratitude..." I said, "Mom, I'm doing my best, trying to do it, but it's not working." She said, "It's okay. If it doesn't work this year, it will be next year. If it doesn't work next year, it will eventually." She said, "Don't worry about it." "You," she said, "be strong and do well in your lessons." "Okay, Mom," I said. I promised. I hope I'll bring a certificate of gratitude this year." (Elif)

4.2. Middle school is the last opportunity to engage with the educational system

The second group experiential theme is about understanding the influence of academic learning experiences on Roma early adolescents' school-related subjective well-being. Additionally, it captures how Roma early adolescents perceive what is waiting for them after middle school. In this group experiential theme, two personal experiential themes emerged: "They strive to be part of the school system to the extent it allows" and "Middle school is the final destination not only for education but also for childhood".

4.2.1. They strive to be part of the school system to the extent it allows

This personal experiential theme highlights the impact of learning experiences on the schooling and self-perception of Roma early adolescents. Five subthemes emerged from their narratives: avoiding disruption in school, striving to stay engaged with school-related responsibilities, participating more easily in extracurricular activities, facing struggles to fit into the mainstream curriculum, and experiencing negative consequences from falling behind the mainstream curriculum.

4.2.1.1. Behavioral engagement is characterized by avoiding disruption in school

Five participants mentioned that they avoid disruptive behaviors in school. When asked to describe themselves as students, two participants mentioned that they are strict with the school rules, like not fighting, not being late for class, and not swearing. Three participants highlighted that they do not disrupt the classroom environment. They consider themselves good students because they refrain from exhibiting disruptive behaviors. Despite facing challenges in following and understanding the subject matter, as well as difficulties in actively participating in class, they are cautious about sticking to the classroom rules. This may suggest they want to be part of the classroom environment despite facing different challenges. Although they may struggle with learning and participating in lessons, demonstrating positive behavioral characteristics might be important for them to perceive

themselves as good students. While they may not be able to engage in the lesson cognitively on their own, they can more easily manage their behavioral development. For example, Arda experiences feelings of boredom and being overwhelmed when it comes to understanding lessons and performing well on exams. Although he finds classes boring, his defining characteristics include not disrupting the classroom order, following the rules in class, and not harming others. Arda sees himself as other students because he avoids behaviors that disrupt the classroom environment. In this case, behavioral engagement allows him to feel similar to his other classmates.

“Normal. Herkes gibi. İşte hocam dersin huzurunu bozmayan. Dersin huzurunu bozmayarak. İşte kötülük yapmayan. Çevresine kötülük vermeyen. Bu kadar.” (Arda)

“Normal. Like everyone else. Well, someone who doesn't disturb the peace of the lesson. By not disturbing the peace of the lesson. Someone who doesn't do bad things. Someone who doesn't bring harm to those around them. That's all.” (Arda)

Like Arda, Kerem sees himself as a student who avoids disruptive behaviors that could negatively impact the flow of the lesson and disrupt the classroom order. His use of “average” may suggest that even though he believes he may not be meeting his teachers’ academic expectations, recognizing his positive behaviors helps him maintain a more positive view of himself.

“Dersi bozmak anlamında değilimdir. Dersi bozmam, işleyişine karışmam. Ama kalkar mıyım? Kalkmam. İşler miyim? İşlemem. Sınavlara doğru düzgün çalışır mıyım? Çalışmam. Ama yani sınıfın rahatını bozmam. Orta bir öğrenciyimdir. Hani çoğu kişiyi dövmem. Arkadaşlığım da iyidir. Kolay kolay kimseyi şikayet etmem. Öyle hocam.” (Kerem)

“I don't mean to disrupt the class. I don't disturb the lesson; I don't interfere with the flow. But would I participate? I wouldn't. Would I work? I wouldn't. Would I study properly for exams? I wouldn't. But I wouldn't disturb the comfort of the class. I'm an average student. I don't fight with most people. My friendships are good. I don't easily complain about anyone. That's it, teacher.” (Kerem)

Elif mentioned that she viewed herself as an intelligent and graceful student because she does not anger her teachers and avoids behaviors that could disrupt the lesson, such as talking to classmates or getting involved in distracting activities.

“Akıllı, uslu, zarif bir öğrenci olduğumu düşünüyorum. Nasıl zarif? Böyle hocalarımı bağırıttırmıyorum, hocalarım bana ikide bir kızmıyorlar, hocalarım bana iyi davranıyorlar.” (Elif)

“I think I'm a smart, well-behaved, and elegant student. How elegant? I don't make my teachers yell, they don't get angry with me often, and they treat me well.” (Elif)

“(Beni akıllı bir öğrenci yapan özelliklerim) Konuşmamam, başka başka işlerle uğraşmamam, hocamı kızdırmamam...” (Elif)

“(The qualities that make me a smart student) Not talking too much, not getting involved in other things, not making my teacher angry...” (Elif)

Melis stated that she is afraid that her teachers will be angry with her if she breaks school rules. Following the rules seems important to her as a student. She also added that she views herself as a respectful and non-rude student.

“Ebru falan hep derslere şey yapıyor, diyor ki “Geç girelim ya. Olmaz bir şey.” falan. Ben de diyorum ki “Sınavlar var, biliyorsun. Bak kızarlar falan filan. Ürküp korkuyorum yani.” (Melis)

“Ebru always says things like, 'Let's go classes in late, it's no big deal.' But I tell her, 'There are exams, you know. They might get mad.' I get scared and worried.” (Melis)

4.2.1.2. Despite facing obstacles, they strive to stay engaged in school-related responsibilities

Four participants highlighted that they face challenges in meeting course-related responsibilities, such as following and understanding lessons, completing homework, and obtaining required materials. Some participants expressed feelings of inadequacy regarding their academic capabilities, yet they continued to put in effort to complete tasks. For some participants, this creates difficulties in being engaged during lessons. However, when they realize their potential for success in a particular task, they experience excitement and joy, which makes them more inclined to participate actively in the lesson. As a result, they experience greater satisfaction with these courses. Additionally, some participants mentioned that their limited financial resources serve as a barrier, preventing them from fulfilling course-related

requirements because they cannot afford the materials their teachers requested, leading to feelings of shame.

İrem expressed that she finds it challenging to answer her teachers' questions during class. However, she listens to her teachers, follows their instructions, and makes an effort to respond when asked. Her emphasis on the low grades she got might indicate how much she struggles to understand the material being taught and feels inadequate as a student. In this context, seeking help from her close friends helps her engage with the lessons and maintain her interest. Although she does not study regularly at home, she tries to capture the subjects while at school. One reason for her limited study at home may be related to her statement that she is the only girl in her household, where she helps her mother with housework and cooking.

"Yani ders (not) konusunda birazcık zayıf olabilirim. Karnem de zayıf olabilir. Ama ders içlerim (derse katılımım) çok iyi. Ama sınavlarda biraz kötü olabiliyorum. Çünkü bazı çalışıyorum, bazı çalışmıyorum. Çalışmadığım zaman da okula gidip ya İlaf'tan ya da Sydra'dan böyle çalışma şeyini alıyorum. Derste not alıyor onlar. Oradan çalışıyoruz beraber." (İrem)

"I might be a bit weak in terms of grades. My report card might not be great. But my class participation is very good. However, I can sometimes do poorly in exams because I sometimes study and sometimes cannot. When I don't study, I go to school and get help from either İlaf or Sydra. They take notes in class, and we study together from there." (İrem)

When she talked about a regular day, she described how she spent her time after school as:

"Evde şu anda tek kız olduğum için anneme bakıyorum hem de evin işlerine bakıyorum. Öyle vaktim geçiyor. Annem yemek yapmadığı zaman ben yemekleri yapıyorum. Öyle vakit geçiyor işte." (İrem)

"Right now, I'm the only girl at home, so I take care of my mom and the housework. That's how my time goes by. When my mom doesn't cook, I cook the meals. That's how my time is spent." (İrem)

When asked to share a memory in which he had a hard time and needed support, Emre stated that he felt bad in art class because he thought he was not good at drawing. However, he does not give up trying until he gets a result.

“(Resim derslerinde) Kötü hissediyorum hocam. Ama becerdiğimde, yaptığımda çok güzel hissediyorum kendimi. Heyecanlı hissediyorum hocam. Beceremediğimde yapmaya çalışıyorum. Yapamadığımda tekrar yapmaya çalışıyorum. Siliyorum, tekrar yapıyorum. Böyle iki-üç kere. Ondan sonra yaptığım zaman güzel oluyor. Arabalar falan çiziyorum. Arabalar yamuk oluyor.” (Emre)

“I feel bad (in art class), but when I succeed and complete it, I feel great. I feel excited. When I can't do it, I will try again. If I still can't do it, I erase it and try again. I do this two or three times. Then, when I finish it, it turns out well. I draw cars, but the cars are crooked.” (Emre)

Elif struggles to provide the necessary school materials due to her family's financial condition. This financial difficulty leads her to feel ashamed and to perceive herself negatively, as she later expressed, “What is missing for me?” Despite these challenges, she continues to make efforts to overcome this deficiency.

“Böyle malzemeyi getiremediğim için hocama çok utandım söyleyemedim. Ama bak ben getirmeye çalıştım. Arkadaşlarımdan almaya çalıştım. Yine arkadaşla bağlanacak ama arkadaşlarımdan almaya çalıştım. Mesela onlarda var. Onlar verdi bana. Ama her zaman da veremiyorlar işte. Anneme söylüyorum, annem alamıyor. O yüzden hocam diyor “Niye getirmedi?” Ben de diyorum ki “Durumum yok. O yüzden.”” (Elif)

“I felt really embarrassed because I couldn't bring the materials and couldn't say to my teacher, but I tried to. I tried to borrow them from my friends. It will come to the topic of the friend again, but I tried to borrow from my friends. They had them, and they gave them to me. But they can't always give them to me. I tell my mom, but she can't buy them either. That's why when the teacher asks, 'Why didn't you bring it?' I say, 'I didn't have the means, that's why.'” (Elif)

4.2.1.3. Extracurricular activities that require no cognitive skills facilitate their participation in school

The participants' narratives showed that engaging in extracurricular activities and getting together with teachers and friends in these activities gives them great pleasure and allows them to feel happy at school. When asked to share moments when they felt the happiest at school, seven participants mentioned how happy they were to be involved in extracurricular activities. While they struggle with cognitive engagement in class, they show a strong willingness to participate in extracurricular activities that require no cognitive skills.

Arda, who feels bored and overwhelmed during class, finds it challenging to stay focused for the entire duration of a lesson. In contrast, he finds meaning in participating in extracurricular activities, which helps him maintain his connection to the school. The happiest moment he experienced at school was when he took part in the inter-class football tournament and his team won the game.

“Turnuva vardı hocam, futbol turnuvası. O maçı kazanmıştık. Orada kendimi mutlu hissetmişim. Esra hocamız bize çikolata aldı. Yedik.” (Arda)

“There was a tournament, a football tournament. We won that game. I felt happy there. Esra teacher bought us chocolate. We ate it.” (Arda)

Like Arda, Efe also enjoys participating in activities held between classes and has fun in these activities.

“Beşinci sınıfta. Pano yarışmasında... Panoyu süslemiştik. Eğlenceliydi. Sonsuzluk işareti yapmıştık kuşlardan. Bir de ne yapmıştık ya? Bir de Atatürk yapmıştık.” (Efe)

“In fifth grade, during the bulletin board competition... we decorated the board. It was fun. We made an infinity sign with birds. And what else did we do? We also made Atatürk’s figure.” (Efe)

Defne stated that being involved in extracurricular activities with the supervision of her classroom teacher increases her happiness. As a student who often feels excluded from her peers, she finds it easier to engage in activities when her teacher is present, helping her fears about being teased or ignored by her classmates. Rather than saying, “I have fun when playing with my friends,” she notes, “I have fun when we play games with Serkan teacher,” highlighting the importance of her teacher’s presence. In this way, in-class activities with the supervision of teachers help her engage in activities with her classmates.

“Serkan hocayla birlikte oyun oynadığımızda eğleniyorum. Bir ara aşağı inmiştik. Oyun oynamıştık. O zaman çok mutlu olmuştum. İki takım oluyordu. Ebelemeye çalışıyorduk birbirimizi. Çok kişi ebeleyince de o takım kazanıyordu. Buydu.” (Defne)

“I have fun when we play games with Serkan teacher. We had gone downstairs once. We played a game. I was really happy at that time. There were two teams. We tried to tag each other. When many people were tagged, that team won. That was it.” (Defne)

In addition to competitions and in-class activities, playing volleyball and football during physical education classes also contributes to their happiness, enabling closer relationships among classmates. For example, Emre mentioned that he sometimes plays with his classmates and that these times are in physical education classes.

“Yani (sınıf arkadaşlarımla) bazen oynuyorum. Beden var hocam. Bedende maç yapıyoruz. Voleybol oynuyoruz. Her bir şeyi yapıyoruz beden dersinde arkadaşlarımla.” (Emre)

“I sometimes play (with my classmates). We have P.E. We play matches, we play volleyball, we do everything in P.E. class with my friends.”

4.2.1.4. They struggle to fit into the curriculum, affecting their participation and ability to meet course standards

Seven participants noted difficulties in following and understanding the lessons. They struggle to fit into the curriculum, which leads them to fall further behind as they move to higher grade levels. The curriculum appears to lack the necessary support to meet their needs. As a result, they find it challenging to adapt to the school’s expectations and fulfill the demands of their coursework. For some, this leads to boredom, making it hard to stay focused during classes, follow the instructions, and even attend class. For others, this leads to feeling overwhelmed by the demands of completing course-related tasks and managing their daily schedules. Others express a lack of interest in participating in these tasks. Additionally, some participants remain passive listeners during lessons.

The extract from Yusuf shows the difficulty he faced in fulfilling the requirements of the Turkish lesson. For him, understanding the subject and completing his homework is very challenging. He finds this lesson boring probably because of the challenge he encountered to understand the subject. It seems the assigned homework was very far beyond his level of functioning and did not fit his needs.

“Benim için bazı dersler sıkıcı geçiyor. Mesela... ee... Türkçe, hiç sevmiyorum. Bir ödev veriyor var ya, ödev çok zor oluyor. O yüzden yani Türkçe dersinde genellikle konuşuyorum.” (Yusuf)

“Some lessons are boring for me. For example... uh... I don’t like Turkish at all. Whenever we get homework, it’s really hard. That’s why I usually talk during Turkish lessons.” (Yusuf)

Can stated that he did not like his science teacher because s/he made him write a lot and asked too many questions. This suggests that his teacher’s approach to teaching does not meet his needs and negatively affects his interest and participation in the lesson. To cope with this difficulty, he talks in class, making the lesson slightly more enjoyable for him. However, his teacher does not seem to realize that a passive learning environment is not suitable for him.

“Feni yani az çok olsa da seviyorum. Ama hocayı sevmiyorum. O hoca da çok yazı yazdırıyor, aşırı yazı yazdırıyor. Çok soru soruyor. (Fen dersini) Ben de anlamıyorum. Konuşuyorum. Bu kadar hocam. Dinlemiyorum ki. Feni o yüzden seviyorum yani.” (Can)

“I kind of like Science, but I don’t like the teacher. That teacher makes us write a lot, asks too many questions. I don’t understand it. I talk. That’s all, I don’t listen. That’s why I like Science.” (Can)

The extract from Arda shows it is challenging for him to actively participate in the lesson and show interest without feeling overwhelmed. He believes this issue significantly impacts students’ absenteeism. He perceives that a relationship with the school based solely on lessons negatively affects his overall engagement. Therefore, adjusting the lessons to better meet these needs will have a positive impact on his participation in school.

“Dersler 25 dakika, teneffüsler 20 dakika (olsa)... okulu daha çok severler. Okula daha çok gelirler. İşte Enes gibi (çok sık devamsızlık yapan) öğrenciler, onlar gelir. Böyle hocam. Psikolojik açıdan (dersi anlamamıza yardımcı olur). Hani 25 dakika ders, 20 dakika teneffüs. Bunu kafaya soktun mu zaten psikolojik açıdan dersi dinlemiş olurduk.” (Arda)

“If the lessons were 25 minutes and the breaks were 20 minutes... they would like school more. They would come to school more. Students like Enes (who skips class a lot) would come. (It helps with understanding the lesson) Psychologically. If you get used to 25-minute lessons and 20-minute breaks, we would already be mentally prepared to listen to the lesson.” (Arda)

The current lesson hours mean boredom and overwhelm for him due to the challenges of understanding the material.

“Sıkılmak, hocam bunalmak. [...] Dersi anlamak zorunda kalmak. Çünkü anlamazsam, sınavda yapamıyorum.” (Arda)

“To get bored, to feel overwhelmed, teacher... To have to understand the lesson. Because if I don't understand, I can't do well on the exam.” (Arda)

4.2.1.5. The perception of falling behind the mainstream curriculum leads to a negative sense of self

Seven participants mentioned that they struggle to see themselves as good students due to difficulties in listening to and understanding lessons, as well as completing assignments. They develop a negative self-concept when they cannot meet the responsibilities associated with the curriculum. When they compare themselves to their classmates, they feel inadequate and tend to speak negatively about themselves. It is particularly upsetting for them to think that their classmates can do it, and they cannot.

The extract from Eylül illustrates that she feels incapable, which brings along feelings of worthlessness. She views herself as lagging behind her classmates and has a strong desire to achieve the same level as them. Not being able to complete assignments like her classmates leads her to question herself and view herself as less valuable than them. For example, when the teacher assigns a project, no matter how hard she tries, she feels she cannot do it as well as her peers. When she says they “make it as if they have received training,” she may be expressing how inadequate she feels as a student and how she struggles to benefit from the education they all receive, despite sharing the same classroom. Additionally, her financial situation makes her feel limited in her capability to match her peers’ work, reinforcing her feelings of insufficiency.

“İşte bir arkadaşım proje hazırlıyor diyelim. Ben de hazırlayacağım. Ona bakıyorum. O daha böyle renkli, güzel yapıyor. Ben ise yani... bir de, o bazı kişiler zengin oluyor, ayıp olmasın da yani zengin oluyor. Biz o kadar zengin değiliz. Yapıyoruz. Boyama yapıyoruz falan filan. O daha böyle güzel yapıyor, eğitim almış gibi yapıyor. İşte ben, mesela benim sınıfımda bazı özel eğitimden gelen arkadaşlarım var. Onlar daha böyle güzel yapıyor, ben onlara özeniyorum. Hani ben de öyle yapayım. Hani ben de öyle güzel yapayım, özeniyorum ama olmuyor ya. Böyle işte “O güzel yapıyor. Ben niye yapamıyorum?” (diyorum). Hani kendimi içimden böyle sorguluyorum.

Diyorum işte “O niye o kadar güzel yapıyor? Ben niye yapmıyorum? Ben de onun gibi üstün olabilirim. Ben de yapayım. Ben niye alçağım? Ben de yapayım.” Yani işte böyle kuru boyalarla, keçeli boyalarla yapıyorum ama işte olmuyor. Yani o gün böyle kendimi çok mutsuz hissediyorum, bitmiş hissediyorum. Halsiz hissediyorum nedense.” (Eylül)

“Let's say a friend is preparing a project. I will prepare mine too. I look at theirs, and it looks more colorful and beautiful. As for me... well, some people are rich, not to be rude, but they are rich. We are not that rich. We do it, we paint, and so on. But they do it more beautifully as if they've received training. For example, I have friends in my class who come from special education, and they do it more beautifully. I admire them. I want to do it like them. I want to make mine beautiful too, but it doesn't work out. So I say, 'They do it beautifully, why can't I do it?' I question myself inside. I think, 'Why do they do it so beautifully? Why can't I do it? Why can't I be as good as them? Why can't I do it?' I use dry paints and felt-tip pens, but it just doesn't work out. That day, I felt very sad, like I was exhausted. I feel exhausted for some reason.” (Eylül)

Melis shared a memory where she had a hard time and needed support and talked about the situation she experienced during the speaking exam in her language class. It seems like she feels inadequate when her classmates can understand and answer the questions, but she cannot. She talks negatively to herself. And it seems like she feels inadequate not because she cannot do something difficult, but because she cannot do something that seems easy.

“İngilizce dersi hocam. Fazla şey yapamıyorum, konuşamıyorum ya. O yüzden hocam yani. Herkes anlıyor falan. Diyorsun ki “Ben niye anlayamıyorum?” Öyle hocam yani. Hocam misal konuşma sınavına çağırıyor. Hoca meğerse kolay bir şey soruyormuş ama sen anlamıyorsun, cevap veremiyorsun. Hocam böyle şey oluyor, yani değişik oluyor. Konuşamıyorsun falan. Anlamıyorsun öyle.” (Melis)

“It's the English lesson. I can't do much, I can't speak. That's why. Everyone understands, but you're thinking, 'Why can't I understand?' That's how it is. For example, the teacher calls me for the speaking exam. It turns out the teacher was asking an easy question, but I don't understand, so I can't answer. It's like that, it's different. You can't speak, you can't understand like that.” (Melis)

According to Efe, he is not a good student. Because he has difficulty listening to and understanding the lesson. He cannot get the grades he desires and perceives himself as an academically unsuccessful student. The tone of his voice when he says this sounds sad.

“İyi değilim. Dersi dinlediğimde fazla bir şey anlayamıyorum. Sınavlarımın notları düşük. Ortalamalarının düşük. Dersi fazla iyi dinleyemiyorum. Bu kadar.” (Efe)

“I'm not doing well. When I listen to the lesson, I can't understand much. My exam grades are low. My averages are low. I can't listen to the lesson very well. That's all.” (Efe)

4.2.2. Middle school is the final destination not only for education but also for childhood

This personal experiential theme explores how Roma early adolescents perceive their transition from middle school to high school and what awaits them in this next stage. From their narratives, two subthemes emerged: the unfamiliarity of high school and its inaccessibility for many, and the gendered paths they are likely to follow after completing middle school.

4.2.2.1. Attending high school feels new and unfamiliar, and many do not have access to it

The participants' narratives show that finishing middle school means that they have to decide whether to go to high school. It seems that continuing to high school after middle school is expressed as a situation that needs to be thought out and decided upon, rather than a situation that happens in the natural flow of education for them. These concerns were expressed in different ways by four girls, Selin, Melis, İrem, and Elif. Some participants mentioned that absenteeism is a common issue for Roma girls in high school, as many do not get the opportunity to enroll or attend. Others expressed feelings of hopelessness about continuing their education, noting the long distance between their homes and the schools as a major barrier. Additionally, some explained that enrolling in open high schools is common in their community, but many girls who do so end up not attending and instead get married. Another concern raised was fear and anxiety about the violence they had heard about in high school.

Selin stated that attending high school is not very common in their culture. Fathers play a crucial role in deciding whether their children continue to high school, while

mothers do not have a say in this matter. If the father supports education, the child is allowed to continue. However, if the child is hesitant about attending high school, the family does not seem to provide sufficient guidance or encouragement to ensure their enrollment and attendance.

“Bizimkiler yani çok okumuyor. Babası, annesi (okumasını) istedikleri kişiler okuyor. Sadece ama annesi (istedi mi) sadece babası istemedi mi okumuyorlar yani. Ortaokulu bitirip okumuyorlar. Ama ablam... annemle babam istemişti. O okumadı mesela. Yani hocam ben okuyacağım.” (Selin)

“Our people don’t go to school much. They continue their education if their moms and dads want them to, but if their dads don’t want to, they don’t continue their education. They finish middle school but don’t continue studying. But my sister... my mom and dad wanted her to study, but she didn’t. For example, she didn’t. But, teacher, I will study.” (Selin)

Similarly, Melis mentioned that many of them do not continue high school because none of their peers do. The extract from Melis highlighted that high school is unfamiliar to them; it feels like a foreign environment.

“Ama bizimkiler (okula) fazla gitmiyor. Diyorlar ki “Ya hep şeyler (Roman olmayanlar) dolu falan.” Bizimkilerden olmuyor ya, giden olmuyor. O yüzden diyorlar ki “Ya tek başıma ne yapacağım falan ben orada.”” (Melis)

“But our people don’t go (to school) much. They say, ‘Oh, it’s always full of others (non-Roma).’ No one from our community goes. That’s why they say, ‘What will I do there alone?’” (Melis)

İrem expressed her worries and fears about continuing high school. She feels worried due to rumors about violence at the school, as she perceives this as a threat to her safety.

“İşte “Git git” diyorlar. (Annem) “Oku” diyor. “Oku” diyor. Bir ara annem dedi ki, “Git. Liseye de git.” dedi. “Ehliyetini öyle alabilirsin belki.” dedi. Anne dedim, “Belki liseye gittiğim zaman hangi öğretmenlerle karşılaşacağımı bilmiyorum. Biraz ondan tedirgin oluyorum.” dedim. Benim abim Ayhan dokuzuncu sınıfa geçti. Yani o da okulu bıraktı. Çalışmak zorunda kaldı. Şu an her gün çalışıyor. Ama okul, gittiği okul kötü diyor. Arkadaşları olsun, öğretmenleri olsun çok kötü diyor. Zorluyorlarmış. Ondan biraz tedirginim.” (İrem)

“They say, ‘Go, go.’ (My mom) says, ‘Study.’ She says, ‘Study.’ Once my mom said, ‘Go. Go to high school.’ She said, ‘Maybe you can get your driver’s

license like that.' I told my mom, 'Maybe when I go to high school, I don't know which teachers I'll encounter. I'm a bit anxious about that.' My brother Ayhan went to ninth grade. He also dropped out. He had to start working. Now he works every day. But he says the school he went to was bad. He says his friends and teachers were really bad. They were pressuring him. I'm a little anxious about that." (İrem)

Additionally, she mentioned that having her close friends by her side in high school is important for her, as their presence makes her feel safe. It seems that having trusted friends with her as she enters high school will provide her with the support she needs.

"Yani öbür arkadaşlarımdan duyduğuma göre bazı okullar çok şeymiş, kavgalı. Biraz kötüymüş. Ondan biraz korkuyorum. Belki bana denk gelir diye. O yüzden arkadaşlarımdan ayrılmak istemiyorum. Her teneffüs yanımda olsunlar yeter bana." (İrem)

"From what I've heard from my other friends, some schools are very... like, full of fights. They're a bit bad. I'm a bit scared because it might happen to me. That's why I don't want to be separated from my friends. I just want them to be with me every recess time." (İrem)

The extract from Elif indicates that she feels hopeless about being able to attend high school due to the distance between her home and the school. She views the location of her neighborhood as a barrier to accessing high school education. Therefore, this distance seems to make high school almost impossible for her to access, making her feel hopeless about being able to get there, too. Like Selin, her extract highlights the significance of seeking support from the father, suggesting that the mother alone may not be seen as enough to provide this assistance.

"Lisemi okumak istiyorum. Liseye düzenli gitmek ve gelmek istiyorum. Ama bence okuyamayacağım. Niye dersiniz? Lise uzak. Nasıl gideceğim ki? O yüzden. Bir de benim babam yok ya. Arabayla hani... babam olsa yine arabayla beş dakika bırakıp gelirdi. Ama benim babam da yok. Kim götürecektir? Ama, eğer ki siz illa bir şey dersiniz, lisemi gidip düzenli derslerim, iyi çalışmak isterdim. Ama eğer ki o olmazsa annemin yanında duracağım. Güzel arkadaşım ile oynayacağım." (Elif)

"I want to go to high school. I want to go and come regularly. But I don't think I will be able to. Why? Because high school is far. How will I get there? That's why. Also, I don't have my father. If my father were here, he would

drop me off in five minutes by car. But since I don't have my father, who will take me? But if you want me to say something, I would like to go to high school and attend classes regularly, and study well. But if that doesn't happen, I'll stay with my mom. I'll play with my friend.” (Elif)

4.2.2.2. Completing middle school often leads to different paths, influenced by gender

All girl participants except Eylül stated that in their culture, girls get married after finishing middle school. Among the boy participants, except for Efe and Arda, all expressed a desire to start working right after middle school. This contrast highlights a gender-based distinction in future expectations, with girls being guided toward marriage and most boys toward employment. In this sense, middle school seems like a farewell not only to their education but also to their childhood.

Defne mentioned that none of them went to high school because they got married after the eighth grade. However, she expressed in a confident and determined tone that she does not want to be like them and that she will continue high school. She also added that she wants to continue her education and take care of her family. As she said this, her eyes filled with tears. It might indicate her strong desire to break this cycle and achieve the future she hopes for.

“Okuyacağım. Sekizinci sınıftan sonra direkt evleniyorlar... Ama ben öyle olmayacağım.” (Defne)

“I will study. After eighth grade, they get married right away... But I won't be like that.” (Defne)

When asked what children who do not attend middle school do, Selin stated that “they are married off anyway.” Her statement suggests that marriage after middle school is viewed as an inevitable situation.

“Hocam bizde zaten evlendiriyorlar. Ama zorla değil tabii. Yaşını bekliyorlar ya da istediği kişi varsa evlendiriyorlar, yani sözlendiriyorlar. Yani hocam bizde öyle. Ama başka, sizde nasıl bilmiyorum tabi hocam yani.” (Selin)

“They are married off anyway in our community. But not by force, of course. They wait for the right age, or if there's someone we want, they marry us off, I

mean, they are getting us engaged. That's how it is in our community. But as for yours, I don't know how it is, of course, teacher." (Selin)

The extract from İrem shows that not pursuing education after middle school and getting married is a common situation they face. This becomes a topic of discussion when she talks about her future with her family. On one hand, her parents seem to fear that she will marry young and have children, following in the footsteps of her older sisters. There is also a sentiment that suggests she can get married if she wants, leaving the decision up to her. Her parents, by advising her not to marry and to focus on her studies, appear to be sending a mixed message, implying that marriage is still an option.

"İşte (ailem) "Oku. Öbür ablaların gibi yapma. Bak onlar gittiler, evlendiler. Kaç tane çocuk yaptılar. Sen yapma. Oku. Polis ol. Bir yere gel." öyle diyorlar. Ben de diyorum "Tamam okuyacağım, yapacağım sizin dediklerinizi" diyorum. Yani öyle." (İrem)

"My family says, 'Study. Don't do like your other sisters. Look, they got married and had several children. Don't do that. Study. Become a police officer. Get somewhere.' I say, 'Okay, I will study, I will do what you say.' That's how it is." (İrem)

After graduating from middle school, Yusuf decided not to continue his education, as he saw an alternative career path through his father's capital. He believes that this financial preparation allows him to obtain a driver's license and work in school transportation. For Yusuf, this makes high school unnecessary, as he already has a career pathway available through his family's business.

"Ortaokulu bitirdikten sonra bir şey yapmayacağım. Yani okula gitmek istemiyorum. Biz de şey var... nasıl desem? Baba sermayesi var. O sermayeyle ortaokulu bitirdin mi o şeyle ehliyet alıp okul taşıtları falan var ya onlarla çalışabiliyoruz. Baba mesleği." (Yusuf)

"After finishing middle school, I won't do anything. I don't want to go to school. We have... how should I say it? There is the father's capital. With that capital, once you finish middle school, you can get a driver's license and work with school transportation and things like that. It's my father's profession." (Yusuf)

After completing ninth grade, Emre stated that he was considering dropping out of high school in the tenth grade and running a grocery store. However, he also

expressed that he did not share with his parents that he is thinking about attending high school for at least one year. His hesitation to inform them suggests that they may expect him to leave school after middle school. His statements also reveal his confusion. While he considers working after ninth grade, he also considers the potential benefits of high school, such as making new friends and possibly pursuing a different profession.

“Liseye gitmek istiyorum artık. Böyle bir liseye gittikten sonra da bırakmak istiyorum, çalışmak istiyorum. Dükkanda çalışmak istiyorum. Böyle dükkân (bakkal dükkânı) almak istiyorum. [...] Lise... bayağı bir arkadaşlarım olur. Mesela belki öğretmen olurum gibi de hissediyorum hocam. Belki de olamam. Böyle hocam.” (Emre)

“I want to go to high school now. After going to a high school like this, I want to drop out and start working. I want to work at the shop. I want to open a shop (a grocery store). [...] High school... I would have a lot of friends. For example, I feel like I might become a teacher. But maybe I can't. Something like that, teacher.” (Emre)

“Onlara (Aileme) daha söylemedim. Onlar sanıyor ortaokulu bitirip dokuza geçtikten sonra bırakacak gibi düşünüyor ama bırakmak istemiyorum yani. Liseye gitmek istiyorum. Onlara hiçbir şey söylemedim daha. Onuncu sınıfa kadar gitmek istiyorum.” (Emre)

“I haven't told them (my family) yet. They think I'll drop out after finishing middle school and moving on to ninth grade, but I don't want to drop out. I want to go to high school. I haven't told them anything yet. I want to go until tenth grade.” (Emre)

4.3. Summary of the Results

This study revealed that Roma early adolescents had experienced challenges in adapting to the school system. When their complex and interconnected relationships with diverse systems, including their schools, peers, teachers, and parents, were investigated, it was observed that interactions with these systems were valuable to understanding the subjective well-being experiences of Roma early adolescents at school.

Initially, Roma early adolescents' relationships with schools were shaped by the opportunities schools provided and connections formed within the school

environment. Schools contributed to the positive subjective well-being experiences of Roma early adolescents to the extent they could serve a significant pathway to achieving a better life, present an opportunity to break from the burden and boredom at home, which help them experience their childhood fully, and lastly provide a social space where they could have fun and build new and meaningful relationships with their peers.

The findings showed that although Roma early adolescents could establish positive relationships with their classmates and engage in some activities with them, there seems to be an invisible barrier hindering them from forming closer relationships. Experiences of differences in interpersonal relationship patterns and segregated neighborhoods likely impacted these invisible barriers. When Roma early adolescents and their classmates come together and maintain their relationships, Roma early adolescents experience social exclusion mostly resulting in feeling uncertain about being in or out of peer groups. In that sense, there were power inequalities in their relationships regarding deciding who would be included in the group, and when. Besides that, experiences of physical and verbal violence at school presented as a threat to the experiences of subjective well-being of Roma early adolescents. However, despite the negative experiences in relationships with their classmates, peer social support and peer guidance for learning made a valuable contribution to the feeling of safety at school, and coping with challenges faced at school.

Results related to Roma early adolescents' relationships with teachers showed that when they were valued, accepted, and felt understood by their teachers, they experienced more positive feelings at school and handled difficulties more easily. In that sense, teachers' social support and guidance had an impact on enhancing their subjective well-being experience at school. Otherwise, they felt disappointed, angry, and sad.

It was also observed that parents of Roma early adolescents showed minimal participation and attendance in school activities and could not provide parental supervision for schoolwork. As a result, this situation left them dealing with school-

related issues on their own and presented an important disadvantage for them in adapting to the school system.

Lastly, the findings of the present study showed that Roma early adolescents had experienced difficulties in fitting into the mainstream curriculum, which led them to develop a negative sense of self, questioning themselves and feeling inferior, and incapable. Despite these barriers, they strive to stay engaged with schoolwork and fulfill academic responsibilities. Engaging in behavioral participation and taking part in extracurricular activities that require no cognitive skills emerged as coping mechanisms for dealing with the challenges associated with the curriculum.

Results also highlighted the potential risks for Roma early adolescents pursuing their education after graduating from middle school. One of the barriers to pursuing their education was observed as the issue of child marriage and child labor. Girls were more likely to face early marriage, while boys were typically directed toward the workforce. Another barrier was that attending high school was something new, and most Roma students were unfamiliar with high schools, resulting in feelings of fear, unsafe, and hopelessness towards pursuing a high school education.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the findings of the study were discussed in light of the relevant literature. At the end of this chapter, implications for practice and recommendations for further research were provided.

5.1. Discussion of the Findings

This study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of Roma early adolescents' experiences of subjective well-being in public middle schools. Additionally, this study emphasized how they made meaning of their current circumstances by listening to their narratives and allowing them to raise their voices.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 Roma early adolescents attending public secondary schools, and after transcription of audio recordings, the data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. As a result, two group experiential themes emerged from the analysis: (1) They face challenges in adapting to the school system and (2) Middle school is the last opportunity to engage with the educational system. Each group experiential theme was discussed based on the related literature in the following sections.

5.1.1. They face challenges in adapting to the school system

The first group experiential theme focused on the complex and interconnected relationships that influence the subjective well-being experiences of Roma early adolescents in school. It illustrated how Roma early adolescents build and develop relationships within various systems, including their schools, friends, teachers, and

parents, and how these relationships impact their subjective well-being at school. In addition to analyzing their direct interactions with teachers, friends, and parents, this theme emphasized the crucial role of the interaction between the school and parents in shaping their school-related subjective well-being.

The first personal experiential theme examined how Roma early adolescents make sense of their schools. The analysis revealed that school serves as an important pathway to a better life, allows them to enjoy their childhood, and provides a social space for interacting with peers.

The result of the analysis revealed that Roma early adolescents perceive school as a crucial institution that prepares them for the future. They view education as an opportunity to obtain a good job and income, which can ultimately enhance their family's living conditions. Consistent with these findings, Sixsmith et al. (2005) found that students viewed school as essential for getting an education and achieving their career aspirations, reinforcing its role in future preparedness. In the current study, it seems that Roma early adolescents perceive education as a means of breaking the cycle of poverty and accessing better life opportunities. In this sense, school, as one of their immediate environments, providing a social resource, plays a key role in shaping their sense of safety for the future and their perception of poverty (Uyan-Semerci et al., 2012). This perspective aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), which highlights the influence of multiple systems, such as schools and the financial situation of adolescents' parents, on adolescents' development. Within this framework, the family's financial situation is part of the exosystem. Exosystem indicators include issues such as the financial situation of parents, unemployment rates of parents, and working conditions of parents (Uyan-Semerci et al., 2012). In this context, the way Roma early adolescents engage with their schools may shape their perceptions of their parents' financial struggles and their socioeconomic conditions.

Furthermore, for some Roma students, this pursuit of education involves challenging certain cultural norms that traditionally prioritize early marriages or school dropout. In this sense, the school provides an alternative pathway that allows them to

reimagine their future beyond established cultural expectations. This aspect aligns with Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem, which includes the influence of cultural norms on child development and well-being. The findings suggest that school serves as a means of resisting cultural constraints, thereby increasing students' sense of autonomy and hope for a different future. By envisioning a brighter future, students experience higher subjective well-being, as school encourages aspirations and hope.

Another finding of the current study discussed how the school serves as a break from the burden of adult responsibilities at home, allowing them to engage in activities they enjoy, develop friendships, and avoid the boredom often associated with their home environment. Similar to this finding, Akkan et al. (2019) reported that in an interview, a 12-year-old girl described school as a space of freedom and independence. The school provides her with the opportunity to spend time with friends, have good relationships with teachers, and have the freedom to pursue her interests. For her, school is a safe place where she can socialize without restrictions. This study also highlighted the limitations that girls face when it comes to playing outside once they reach a certain age (Akkan et al., 2019). In alignment with these findings, Müderrisoğlu et al. (2023) and Uyan Semerci et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of schools, particularly for children and adolescents from low socioeconomic backgrounds and those with limited opportunities to socialize outside of school. For girls, in particular, school represents a place of freedom, a space free from parental pressure (Akkan et al., 2011).

The narratives of six participants highlighted that school is a social space where they can build and develop relationships with peers. For some participants, this meant establishing fulfilling connections at school that they could not form in their neighborhoods, while for others, it provided an opportunity to cope with the loneliness they experienced at home. Previous research indicated that spending time with peers motivated students to attend school (Ayan, 2019; Engels, 2004). Like the findings of the current study, the study by Uyan Semerci et al. (2012) revealed that school was a social space where adolescents could spend time with their friends. The adolescents who participated in their study viewed school as a social space where they established their social relationships and had fun. In this context, the school

offers spatiality to them with the relationship networks it provides, beyond education (Uyan Semerci et al., 2012).

The second personal experiential theme explored how Roma early adolescents make meaning of their social relationships with classmates in influencing their experience of school-related subjective well-being. When asked to describe their relationships with classmates and share a special moment they experienced together, it was seen that the lack of strong interpersonal connections hinders the formation of meaningful relationships. In other words, while they engage with their classmates, they often feel unsure about the closeness of these relationships or the circumstances under which they will be included. Nonetheless, they seem comfortable seeking social support and identifying sources of assistance during challenging times.

The result of the analysis revealed that although Roma early adolescents maintain relationships at school, they experience an invisible barrier in their friendships with classmates, preventing them from forming close bonds. Engaging in activities such as playing games or chatting with peers does not necessarily mean a sense of closeness or fulfillment in these relationships. For example, Kerem expressed that he was happy with his friendships in the school environment, but that these relationships were limited to school. His statement suggests that while he is socially accepted in the classroom, his friendships do not extend beyond school, preventing him from developing closer relationships. This highlights the difference between peer acceptance and genuine friendship. Peer acceptance points out an adolescent's likeability, support from their peers, and positive connections (Plenty & la Roi, 2024). Unlike peer acceptance, friendships are characterized by strong emotional bonds between peers who share relatively equal power (Beazidou & Botsoglou, 2016). Friends actively seek one another out, adjust and coordinate their behaviors, and engage in dynamic interactions that promote a sense of connection, while also, at times, leading to conflict (Rotheram-Fuller et al., 2022). Beyond simply feeling accepted or being seen as popular among peers, adolescents spend a significant amount of time building and sustaining close, intimate friendships (Sullivan, 1953). While Roma early adolescents in this study achieve a degree of peer acceptance, their lack of close and intimate friendships may limit the positive effects of

friendships on their subjective well-being. As Chen et al. (2021) noted, adolescents with high-quality friendships experience the greatest subjective well-being, followed by adolescents who are socially accepted by their peers, while socially isolated or rejected adolescents experience the lowest levels of positive affect. These findings suggest that peer acceptance alone is not sufficient for enhancing a sense of belonging among Roma students.

They struggle with a sense of belonging within their peer groups while maintaining their relationships, highlighting the challenges they face in establishing meaningful and inclusive social relationships. This struggle can be understood through the study by Bigelow (1977). According to the findings of the study, between the ages of 10 and 11, children begin to value shared understanding and loyalty in friendships. By ages 11 to 13, their expectations evolve, emphasizing shared interests, mutual efforts to understand one another, and self-disclosure. However, Roma early adolescents in this study appear to face barriers in this progression, possibly due to cultural differences, social exclusion, or uncertainty about their friendship within non-Roma peer groups. In alignment with these results, Selin's experience with her classmates showed the value of shared interests and mutual understanding. When comparing her interactions with Roma and non-Roma classmates, she emphasized feeling a stronger connection with her Roma friends, highlighting shared experiences and a mutual understanding of friendship dynamics. This sense of familiarity and commonality allowed her to feel more joyful and included.

Seven participants reported experiencing uncertainty about their inclusion in peer groups, which created challenges in engaging with their classmates. While some described power imbalances in their relationships with classmates, others experienced inconsistencies in their social interactions. These difficulties can be understood through the lens of social exclusion, which, as the findings suggest, poses a significant challenge for Roma early adolescents. Consistent with the literature, the results of the present study indicated that social exclusion brought along negative emotions, difficulties in school engagement, and lower levels of subjective well-being. Adolescents who are ignored or excluded by their peers often experience loneliness (Büyükebeci & Deniz, 2017), helplessness, depression, and

feelings of unworthiness (Williams & Nida, 2022). Eylül, one of the participants, described feeling sad and lonely when her classmates refused to include her in their games. She perceives that to be included in peer groups, one must be more academically successful and become a member of that group. This exclusion led her to question her self-worth, asking herself, “Am I inferior?” Similarly, Defne expressed that her exclusion from group activities not only caused sadness but also shame, as she was denied participation by her classmates. Similar to the results of the current study, the study by Genç et al. (2015) found that Roma children attending schools with a low percentage of Roma students were often hesitant to openly share their Roma identity. This reluctance stemmed from their desire to avoid exclusion, humiliation, and teasing, further illustrating the prevalence of social exclusion and its impact on Roma adolescents’ subjective well-being.

When discussing moments of adversity at school and their need for support, five participants highlighted the impact of physical and verbal aggression. Boys reported experiencing both forms of aggression, whereas girls mentioned being subjected only to verbal aggression. These findings underscore a gender difference in experiences of school violence. Consistent with the present study, previous research suggests that boys are more frequently exposed to direct, overt forms of bullying, such as hitting, pushing, and other acts of physical violence. In contrast, girls are more likely to encounter verbal aggression, which embodies teasing or verbal insults (Felix & McMahon, 2006; Iossi et al., 2013; Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2017). However, the result of this study also highlights the risk of verbal aggression among boys. Although Kerem and Can shared the adversity of physical aggression, Efe mentioned that he struggles with verbal aggression from his classmates, like teasing, which brings along feelings of anger and shame. These findings suggest that verbal aggression can be equally distressing for boys, influencing their school-related subjective well-being. In alignment with the findings of the current study, Alcantara et al. (2016) found that victimization and aggressive behaviors have a negative impact on the quality of life and subjective well-being of children and adolescents. Across all groups studied, namely victims, perpetrators, and perpetrator-victims, lower scores were reported for subjective well-being. Among these groups, victims were the most adversely affected. Similarly, previous research indicated that school

violence negatively impacts subjective well-being (Varela et al., 2022) and is associated with increased anxiety, stress, sadness and depressive symptoms (Patias et al., 2017; Schmidt et al., 2020). This is reflected in Irem's experience, as she expressed reluctance to attend school due to fear of being teased by her classmates. Her hesitation underscores the significant challenge of coping with verbal aggression and its devastating impact on school life.

Previous studies revealed that peer social support and peer support for learning had a significant impact on high-level subjective well-being (Brolin-Låftman et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2013) and school engagement (Lardier et al., 2019). Adolescents who feel confident seeking help from their peers during times of adversity tend to experience more positive peer relationships (Corominas et al., 2022). These supportive relationships contribute to their well-being by helping them better cope with challenges, offering protection against psychological distress, and reducing overall stress levels (Blaskova & McLellan, 2018; Corominas et al., 2022; Graham et al., 2016). Consistent with these findings, eight participants mentioned that they felt confident in getting support from their classmates to cope with challenges in daily school life. This sense of peer support enhanced feelings of safety and comfort within the school environment. For some participants, getting support for learning from classmates allows them to manage academic difficulties and confusion, like difficulty understanding or following the subject. For others, their classmates being volunteers to guide and support them in coping with social challenges contributes to a sense of safety and comfort at school. The protective role of peer support in adolescents' subjective well-being can be further understood through the lens of Cohen and Wills' (1985) stress-buffering model. This model posits that social support from various sources, including peers, reduces the negative effects of stress-inducing life events. In the present study, Can expressed that receiving support from his classmates helped him cope with the tension associated with understanding and completing his assignments. His experience aligns with the stress-buffering model, highlighting how peer support serves as a critical resource in managing academic challenges and emotional distress.

The third personal experiential theme explored how Roma early adolescents made meaning of their social relationships with teachers in shaping their school-related

subjective well-being. All participants, except for Efe, described feeling recognized, accepted, and valued in their relationships with teachers. For instance, Kerem perceived his teacher as highly supportive, acknowledging the diverse needs and abilities of students while demonstrating genuine interest and care. Similarly, Eylül and Elif expressed feeling loved, appreciated, and noticed by their teachers, which contributed to their happiness within the school environment. These findings align with self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which emphasizes the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as essential for well-being and social development. The need for relatedness, in particular, refers to the desire to feel connected, valued, warm, and cared for within a social environment (Vansteenkiste & Ryan, 2020). Research suggests that warm and supportive teacher-student relationships enhance students' relatedness (Zhou et al., 2023), thereby promoting engagement and well-being.

In line with previous studies, the current findings reinforce the importance of teacher support in shaping students' school experiences. Supportive teacher relationships have been shown to significantly enhance early adolescents' positive perceptions of school and overall satisfaction (Wang & Eccles, 2012). Notably, research indicates that the association between school belonging and supportive teacher relationships was particularly strong for immigrant students compared to their majority peers (den Brok et al., 2010). The present study is consistent with these findings, as participants emphasized the importance of receiving both academic guidance and social support from their teachers. Five participants specifically highlighted the need for teachers to understand their academic struggles and provide guidance for learning, while five expressed the need for teacher support in coping with social challenges. When students received such support they felt acknowledged and safe when facing adversity in class or school. Furthermore, they did not feel alone and helpless in adverse situations in class or school. For instance, the narratives of Defne and Irem revealed that the presence of a supportive teacher serves as a protective mechanism against the feeling of unsafe, fear, or worry experienced in relationships with their classmates. This finding aligns with research by Varela et al. (2019), which highlighted that teacher-student relationships play a crucial role in preventing bullying and peer victimization. Similarly, Flaspohler et al. (2009) found that when

students felt support from their teachers, the negative effects of being bullied were decreased. However, the present study also revealed that the absence of teacher support led to feelings of disappointment, anger, and sadness, underscoring the critical role of teachers in enhancing a positive school experience. Efe's experiences highlighted this struggle; lacking support from his teacher and feeling unable to express himself, he found it difficult to cope with conflicts in his classroom, which eventually led him to wish for a change of class.

Additionally, Thomas et al. (2016) found that students perceived teacher yelling as the most disrespectful way of giving negative feedback and a primary source of irritation and pain. This aligns with the narratives of Yusuf, who emphasized the importance of understanding and constructive feedback from teachers. He expects his teachers to recognize the challenges he faces and provide the support and guidance he needs for the related task. However, when teachers criticized him for yelling, he felt angry and deeply disturbed. By clearly conveying the expectations, achievement criteria, and goals, teachers can improve clarity and help students gain a better understanding of what is expected of them (Saxer et al., 2024). Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which highlights competence as one of the three basic psychological needs, can provide further explanation. As emphasized in the theory, students' need for competence is met when they understand how to achieve desired outcomes effectively (Wang & Eccles, 2012).

The fourth personal experiential theme captured how Roma early adolescents perceive their parents' involvement and communication with the school in influencing their experience of subjective well-being at schools. Previous research emphasized the significant impact of parent-school communication on students' subjective well-being and overall satisfaction with school (Dettmers et al., 2019; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). During discussions about their parents' interactions with school, all participants noted that the relationship between their parents and teachers was limited. As highlighted in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), the interaction between different parts of the microsystem surrounding the adolescents' immediate environment, like school and parents, influences their development and well-being. The analysis revealed that interactions

between these two systems were mostly restricted to phone calls, which were primarily initiated by teachers and focused on addressing behavioral problems and issues related to absenteeism. Although some interaction occurred, its limited nature did not yield positive outcomes for Roma early adolescents. Consequently, it appears that communication between parents and schools does not enhance the school-related subjective well-being of these students.

Similar to the current study's findings, Konaklı and Göktürk (2018) found that Roma mothers were unwilling to attend parental meetings. Their semi-structured interviews with 13 Roma mothers living in Kocaeli revealed that discrimination and negative perceptions from school administrators, teachers, other children, and the parents of other children were key reasons for this reluctance. The mothers expressed a desire for attention, support, and understanding from teachers and school administration to encourage their participation in school activities. However, this study diverged from previous findings in terms of the barriers to attending parental meetings. From the viewpoint of Roma early adolescents, the main reasons cited for their parents' absence at these meetings included living far from schools, childcare responsibilities, health issues, and work commitments.

Another finding of the present study underlined the influence of parental support and guidance in Roma early adolescents' school-related subjective well-being. Existing research indicates that parental support significantly affects students' subjective well-being. When students perceive their parents as supportive, they experience increased well-being (Hoferichter, 2021), better emotional and mental health (Layupan & Guhao, 2024), and higher school satisfaction (Jiang et al., 2013). Results of the current study indicated that despite providing parental control, showing interest in their school-related work, and setting academic expectations for them, many parents could not provide meaningful support and guidance. Consequently, for instance, Elif and Yusuf were feeling helpless and under pressure to meet both their parents' and school's expectations. This left them alone when facing academic challenges. This can be explained by the findings of Tunkkari et al. (2014) showing that psychological control from parents can decrease motivation and lead to lower school satisfaction. However, adolescents with higher autonomy support from their mothers exhibit less school-related stress (Tunkkari et al., 2024).

A review of the relevant literature reveals that parental support can help students overcome academic challenges (Jin et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023; Yildirim & Kaya, 2024). For example, Santos et al. (2016) found that parental support and encouragement in school-related works enable students to achieve better academic performance. Given that Roma parents in this study struggled to provide such support, their children faced greater difficulties in overcoming academic challenges, which negatively impacted their school-related well-being.

5.1.2. Middle school is the last opportunity to engage with the educational system

The second group experiential theme that emerged as a result of the analysis was “middle school is the last opportunity to engage with the educational system”. While participants were talking about their perceptions of themselves as students and their dreams about the future, two personal experiential themes emerged: (1) they strive to be part of the school system to the extent it allows, and (2) middle school is the final destination not only for education but also for childhood.

The first experiential theme captured how Roma early adolescents perceive their learning experiences influencing their experience of subjective well-being at schools. The analysis revealed that they tend to avoid being disruptive, make an effort to stay engaged with school-related responsibilities, and actively participate in extracurricular activities. However, they also face struggles to fit into the mainstream curriculum and experience negative consequences when falling behind. While the first three subthemes focused on their behavioral engagement in learning, the last two highlighted aspects of cognitive engagement.

The related literature on school engagement can shed light on these findings. Student engagement refers to the extent of a student’s active involvement in school, encompassing their thoughts, emotions, and actions. Skinner et al. (2016) identified three key dimensions of student engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. These aspects are particularly important during middle school, as they align with early adolescents’ developmental needs for autonomy, relatedness, and

competence (Fredricks et al., 2004). On the one hand, cognitive engagement involves a self-regulated learning approach and the use of metacognitive strategies (Wang & Eccles, 2012). It is characterized by goal setting, personal investment in learning, the use of cognitive strategies, and the effort a student puts into their studies (Fredricks et al., 2004; Greene, 2015). On the other hand, behavioral engagement refers to students' active participation in school activities, including class discussions, extracurricular involvement, and academic tasks such as completing homework and assignments (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Skinner et al., 2008). It also encompasses positive classroom conduct, which includes following school rules and sticking to classroom norms (Fredricks et al., 2004). Overall, engagement plays a crucial role in facilitating effective learning. It not only predicts academic success but also significantly impacts students' overall satisfaction with school life (Jiang et al., 2022).

Consistent with the school engagement literature, the findings of this study indicated that Roma early adolescents primarily engage with school behaviorally; they strive to avoid being disruptive, make an effort to fulfill school-related tasks, and actively participate in extracurricular activities. However, their challenges adapting to the mainstream curriculum highlighted the need for further support in enhancing their cognitive engagement.

Five participants described themselves as good students, adhering strictly to school rules such as avoiding fights, being punctual for class, and refraining from swearing. They emphasized their commitment to maintaining a positive classroom environment. Four participants highlighted that, despite facing various obstacles, they worked hard to stay engaged in their school responsibilities, like completing assignments. Many of participants experienced excitement and joy when they recognized their potential for success in a particular task, which motivated them to participate actively in lessons. Additionally, seven participants noted that engaging in extracurricular activities and socializing with teachers and friends during these activities brought them great pleasure and contributed to their happiness at school. This can be understood in light of the need for competence, one of the three basic psychological needs. When Roma early adolescents felt successful in completing

assignments and recognized their potential, they became more engaged, happy, and joyful. This sense of competence not only enhanced their affective well-being, making them feel happy, joyful, and excited but also positively influenced their cognitive perceptions. They began to see themselves as good students who did not disrupt the classroom environment, maintained positive relationships with teachers and peers and could achieve success. In addition to the need for competence, engagement in extracurricular activities with their teachers and classmates can also be explained by the need for relatedness. This form of behavioral engagement seemed to contribute to their school-related subjective well-being by helping them feel connected to their teachers and peers.

These findings suggested that enhancing a sense of competence and relatedness through behavioral engagement may play a crucial role in improving Roma early adolescents' schooling experiences. By providing supportive learning environments, schools can help strengthen students' self-perception, motivation, and overall well-being, ultimately contributing to their academic persistence and success.

Previous research also revealed that there was an association between teacher and peer support and behavioral engagement. For example, Bru et al. (2021) found that when students perceive their teachers as supportive, they display higher levels of behavioral engagement. Consistent with these findings, the study by Wang and Eccles (2013) revealed that peer emotional support plays a crucial role in enhancing students' behavioral engagement. This connection was likely driven by the sense of support and care received from peers, which met the need for relatedness and contributed to a greater sense of satisfaction in school (Wang & Peck, 2013). The results of the present study align with previous findings by emphasizing the importance of peer and teacher support in promoting behavioral engagement and school-related subjective well-being. Participants in the study noted the social support and guidance they received from peers and teachers, which positively impacted their well-being related to school. Therefore, the motivation to engage behaviorally in the classroom environment can be explained and supported by these supportive relationships with teachers and peers.

The findings of this study highlighted the significant challenges Roma early adolescents face in cognitively engaging in their lessons. Despite their efforts to stay engaged, seven participants reported that they struggle to fit into the school's expectations and meet the demands of their coursework, which brings along negative feelings such as boredom, being overwhelmed, and loss of interest. These challenges in cognitive engagement align with previous research emphasizing its impact on students' subjective well-being and life satisfaction (Levis et al., 2011; Pietarinen et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2024). The struggle to fit into the mainstream curriculum can be explained by the fact that the current educational framework does not sufficiently accommodate their learning needs, causing them to fall further behind as they progress through grade levels.

The experiences shared by participants indicated that the structure of the curriculum, including teaching methods, lesson duration, and homework expectations, may not be suitable for Roma students. For example, Arda suggested that reducing lesson times could help ease the heavy burden that school places on them, by emphasizing its effect on absenteeism. Similarly, Yusuf highlighted the difficulty he faced in managing his homework on his own. These concerns raised questions about whether the current curriculum is appropriate for their level of understanding, considering the homework assigned, the teaching methods used, and the duration of lessons. In alignment with these findings, the study by Çalışkan et al. (2017) highlighted the impact of transforming the school for the benefit of Roma children by adapting the formal curriculum to meet their needs and making adjustments to daily school life. According to their results, the principal, one of the participants, emphasized the importance of assisting students in discovering subjects that align with their skills and interests, rather than concentrating solely on areas where they struggled, such as math and science. The principal believed that focusing on social activities, like poetry reading days, debates, and various competitions, while enriching the school's offerings could help reduce absenteeism and prevent dropouts. These promising changes had a significant impact on their school and helped break the cycle of disadvantage (Çalışkan et al., 2017).

Lastly, the results of the current study also revealed that they struggled to see themselves as good students due to difficulties in listening to and understanding

lessons. When they compare themselves to their classmates, they feel inadequate and tend to speak negatively about themselves. It is particularly upsetting for them to think that their classmates can do it, and they cannot. This can be explained by Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977). Academic self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed and accomplish in school-related situations (Bandura, 2012). Academic self-efficacy has had an impact on students' motivation to utilize their personal and cognitive resources when faced with challenging tasks. Higher levels of academic self-efficacy were associated with setting more ambitious goals, greater personal aspirations, and increased academic engagement (Bassi et al., 2007; Salanova et al., 2005). These findings highlighted the importance of promoting students' academic self-efficacy to enhance their school experience and well-being (Castelli & Morcionetti, 2024). Furthermore, the study by Park et al. (2011) indicated that students with high academic self-efficacy experienced lower levels of stress stemming from academic demands. The participants' feelings of inadequacy and frustration can be explained by that low academic self-efficacy may be a key factor affecting their cognitive engagement and overall school experience. Therefore, interventions aimed at enhancing academic self-efficacy, such as providing academic support, implementing more inclusive teaching strategies, and recognizing students' strengths, could play a crucial role in enhancing their well-being and cognitive engagement in school.

The second personal experiential theme revealed that middle school was not only the end of formal education but also the end of childhood. For many Roma students, continuing education beyond middle school was often considered unrealistic. Early entry into the workforce or the expectation of early marriage placed responsibilities on them that prevented them from fully experiencing their childhood. Besides that, the transition to high school was something that felt new and unfamiliar, which many of them did not have access to. As a result, middle school was seen as a threshold marking both the end of their academic journey and the beginning of adult responsibilities. These findings provided an insight into the barriers Roma students encountered in their educational pathways and their perceptions of the future.

In Türkiye, the high school enrollment rate is 78% for girls and 77% for boys. However, these rates drop drastically for Roma adolescents, falling to 15% for Roma

girls and 8% for Roma boys (Koç et al., 2024). Supporting these findings, the results of the current study revealed that the experience of attending high school was something new and unfamiliar, which many of Roma early adolescents did not have access to. Some participants highlighted that absenteeism was a common issue among Roma girls in high school, as many lacked the opportunity to enroll. For some participants, the long distance between their homes and schools was a significant obstacle, bringing along a sense of hopelessness about continuing their education. For some, rumors about violence in high schools led to feelings of fear and anxiety.

Previous research highlighted the significance of parental involvement in schools, especially for students from minority and vulnerable groups, including those from Roma backgrounds (Flecha & Soler, 2013). Active parental involvement means contributing to important decisions within the educational environment, such as choosing a pathway at the end of compulsory middle school (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018). Discussions between students and their parents about school play a vital role in shaping the students' academic paths (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018). However, in the current study, it was found that Roma early adolescents often lacked this support from their parents. Therefore, the lack of parental involvement can have an impact on the unfamiliarity with high school education and the negative emotions stemming from it. Roma early adolescents who were unable to discuss high school with their parents and did not receive support in addressing their concerns may have feelings of isolation when planning for their future. This finding highlighted the significance of identifying the barriers to parental involvement.

The study by Lauritzen and Nodeland (2018) emphasized that knowing other Roma individuals who successfully pursued their academic goals can empower students to view the possibility of attending university as a realistic achievement. The students felt a connection to these role models because they shared the same cultural background and faced similar social realities. This identification allowed them to view themselves as mirrored in these experiences, encouraging them to envision new opportunities for their futures (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018). Similarly, Diktaş et al. (2016) found that the presence of role models, even if they are limited in number, positively influences the motivation of Roma children. For instance, one participant

from their study aspired to become a lawyer like a relative, while another felt connected to a national figure who represented their community. Their study suggested that increasing the number of such role models would help shape the future of Roma students (Diktaş et al., 2016). The fact that high school was a new and foreign place for them can be explained, in parallel with these findings, by the absence of examples in the lives of students who attended high school and graduated successfully. Consistent with these findings, the current study underlined the importance of a role model to encourage Roma early adolescents to attend high schools, as high schools were foreign environments for them. It seemed that the negative rumors spread about high school discouraged them and led them to feel anxiety and fear. However, the presence of someone who they trust and get support from could help them cope with these negative feelings and open them a space for new experiences.

In discussions about how Roma early adolescents made meaning of their schools, it was found that school represented an escape from adult responsibilities at home. It was a space where they could have fun and build relationships with their peers. At the same time, school was also seen as a means of resisting cultural constraints, such as early marriage, imposed by their community, and it allowed them to dream of a different future. Although school was considered an important stepping stone toward a better future, the findings revealed that Roma early adolescents who initially entered school with such hopes no longer carried the same optimism upon graduation. Completing middle school marked a turning point, as it left them to face the adult responsibilities awaiting them at home. While they recognized the potential of education to alter their future, the narratives of participants, particularly girls, highlighted their doubt about achieving this desired change.

Similar to the results of the current study, the report by Education Reform Initiative (2017) underlined that the early school dropout rate, the fact that girls are often not sent to school due to early marriage, and the high number of girls married off at an early age were some of the most significant issues. In line with this, Akkan et al. (2019) found that one of the reasons linked to the weakness of the relationship established with schools in Roma neighborhoods was the prevalence of early

marriage among Roma children. Field research conducted for their study revealed that the average age of marriage was around 15-16, coinciding with middle or high school years. This was consistent with the findings of the current study, in which graduating from middle school corresponded to these ages. Roma children who married at an early age were often compelled to support their families rather than continue their education. Additionally, their study pointed out the lack of motivation among girls to pursue their education as they were expected to marry by the age of 13-14 (Akkan et al., 2019). Similar statements were found in the narratives of the participants in the current study. For example, Selin mentioned that “they (girls) are married off anyway” after graduating from middle school. She added that parents typically waited until their daughters reached a certain age to marry them off, and until then, they were not allowed to attend high school. Defne also noted that girls were married off after eighth grade, which she identified as a reason for not attending high school. It appears that marriage after middle school was viewed as an inevitable situation for these girls.

The results of the analysis revealed a notable difference between boys and girls regarding their post-middle school plans. Unlike girls, boys expressed a desire to enter the workforce after middle school. Two participants, Yusuf and Kerem, specifically mentioned wanting to obtain a driver’s license and work in school transportation. They believed attending high school was unnecessary, as they would already become shuttle drivers. For them, this career path was seen as a continuation of a family tradition. Yusuf further explained that his father’s capital had been invested in preparing them to work as shuttle drivers, which highlights the parents’ approach to their children’s educational futures. In contrast, Emre expressed a desire to attend high school for at least one year but planned to drop out by tenth grade. However, he was hesitant to share this plan with his parents. His reluctance to inform them suggested that his parents might expect him to leave school after middle school, similar to the paths chosen by other boys in the study. Consistent with these findings, Çalışkan et al. (2017) found that many significant figures in the Roma students’ lives, such as parents, siblings, and relatives, lacked education and did not see the value in pursuing it. These significant figures often encouraged the students to seek jobs that provided quick financial returns instead. As a result, there was little interest

in higher education, as there were no role models within their community who pursued it. As a teacher, one of the participants of their study stated, “Students desired to graduate from middle school to get a driving license.”

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979) offers a valuable framework for understanding these findings. According to this theory, the macrosystem, which includes cultural norms and values, indirectly influences the way individuals interact with their environment. In this context, the cultural norms and values within the Roma community, especially those related to early marriage and child labor, shape how Roma early adolescents perceive their relationship with school. These cultural norms continue to play a significant role in shaping the educational pathways of Roma early adolescents. However, it is important to recognize that the relationship can also work in the opposite direction. While acknowledging the macrosystem’s influence, there is a need to understand their interaction with the microsystem, which directly affects their experiences. How Roma early adolescents perceive and engage with school, along with their interactions with teachers and peers, plays a crucial role in interpreting the impact of culture on their lives, as well as the mesosystem, including the interaction between the school and their parents. Although these adolescents view education as a means to prepare for a better future and to challenge certain cultural values, it is thought-provoking that they ultimately find themselves facing a future they both fear and wish to avoid. If schools could provide meaningful opportunities that support their academic and social needs, it raises the question of how post-middle school plans might change over time. Therefore, rather than assuming that Roma early adolescents’ transitions into the workforce and early marriages are fixed and unchangeable aspects of their culture, it is essential to examine their school experiences leading up to these outcomes.

5.2. Implications for Practice

The results of the current study revealed that school was not only a place for learning but also an opportunity where Roma early adolescents could break from the burden of responsibilities at home and enjoy time with their peers. As stated in the study by Konu and Rimpelä (2002), the physical conditions of the school have a role in

affecting the well-being of the students. The relationship between the school environment, available resources, and student social interactions is significant (Horton et al., 2023). The design of school spaces and the distribution of resources can shape the development of social relationships among students. Conversely, competition for limited resources may have an adverse impact on these interactions (Horton et al., 2023). In this context, designing school environments that enable social interaction, provide enjoyable experiences, and offer opportunities for personal growth becomes essential for enhancing students' well-being. Creating spaces where they can connect, share experiences, and address the limitations they face at home can greatly enhance their experiences of subjective well-being at school. Moreover, incorporating students' ideas into the design of these environments ensures that schools truly meet their social and emotional needs.

Another key finding of the study revealed that while Roma early adolescents establish relationships with their classmates based on academic and social support, these relationships often remain limited to peer acceptance rather than developing into genuine friendships. This highlights the challenges they face in forming deeper social connections. To enhance a stronger sense of belonging and encourage meaningful relationships, schools should create opportunities for students to engage in activities that promote mutual understanding and social bonding. During middle school, students begin to shift their focus from seeking approval from teachers to being more influenced by their peers. At this stage, social acceptance becomes increasingly important, and students try to avoid exclusion (Foulkes & Blakemore, 2016). This transition into adolescence is a critical period that greatly impacts students' social and emotional development, underscoring the need for consistent support from adults (Pérez-Clark et al., 2023). Teachers can play a crucial role by incorporating classroom activities that facilitate student integration and by encouraging participation in extracurricular activities. These initiatives can help strengthen peer connections and contribute positively to students' subjective well-being. To help students build and maintain friendships, school counselors can organize group guidance sessions or classroom activities that enhance social skills. Strengthening friendships can be supported by focusing on essential skills such as cooperation, respect for differences, kindness, and empathy. These sessions can provide students

with a safe space to explore and practice these skills. Providing adolescents with knowledge and opportunities to practice essential skills in safe environments can enhance their ability to make positive choices (Pérez-Clark et al., 2023). In addition, school counselors can work closely with teachers to create and implement school-wide projects that raise awareness about the importance of friendship.

The findings of this study also revealed that Roma early adolescents experience social exclusion in their peer relationships, leading to various negative emotions. Therefore, the results of this study reveal the importance of the work that school counselors will do on this issue. To enhance their subjective well-being, it is crucial to implement effective anti-bullying programs and establish a comprehensive school policy addressing peer bullying. Raising awareness among students, parents, teachers, and school administrators about peer bullying, along with developing clear guidelines for intervention, can help create a more peaceful school environment. Enhancing a positive school climate and integrating social-emotional learning programs can play a key role in reducing bullying. Similarly, both verbal and physical aggression among peers, which is another finding of the present study, highlights the need for stronger school policies to ensure a safe learning environment. In this regard, implementing conflict resolution programs and providing training in communication and problem-solving skills can empower students and contribute to a more harmonious school culture. The study by Soto-García et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of implementing structured prevention programs, such as the TEI (Peer Tutoring) program, to develop safe, healthy, and positive learning environments. The results of the study highlighted the effectiveness of the TEI program as a valuable strategy in fighting bullying, which is a global issue that negatively impacts students' well-being. Findings indicated that students in schools utilizing the TEI program exhibited higher levels of social skills, empathy, assertiveness, and conflict resolution skills. Furthermore, these schools reported a larger ratio of students who were not involved in bullying and a lower percentage of victims of bullying (Soto-García et al., 2024).

The findings of this study emphasize the important role of peer support in improving school-related subjective well-being and school engagement of Roma early

adolescents. Since peer social support acts as a protective buffer against negative feelings and enhances a sense of safety and belonging, schools might promote structured peer support projects. For instance, peer mentoring programs, where students are paired with supportive classmates to help them adapt academically and socially, can be implemented. Mentoring programs have been implemented to reduce school dropout rates and are widely regarded as a key component of broader youth development strategies. These programs support adolescents in developing the competencies necessary to cope with the difficulties (Foster, 2001). In alignment, teachers can incorporate collaborative learning strategies into their lesson plans, such as peer tutoring and group activities, to enhance supportive interactions among students.

The study's findings emphasize the significant impact of parent-school relationships on the subjective well-being and educational outcomes of Roma students. To enhance stronger parent involvement, schools might implement parent involvement programs that encourage collaboration between parents, teachers, and administrators. Regular parent meetings, home visits, and school-based activities designed specifically for parents with the involvement of school counselors can help bridge the gap between home and school environments, ensuring that parents feel more connected to their children's education. For example, Sottie et al. (2013) developed a model aimed at empowering parents to take an active role in their children's school life. In this model, schools initiate dialogue with parents, recognize their insights as valuable expertise regarding their children's needs, and invite them to express their concerns within the school. This inclusive approach allows parents to become essential members of a collaborative effort to create a better future for both their children and families.

Sottie et al. (2013) also emphasized the importance of providing parents with strategies to engage meaningfully with their children at home, encouraging continued interest and participation in school activities. Therefore, school counselors can develop parent seminars to provide parents with essential knowledge on parenting skills, child development, and strategies to support their children's learning at home. Psychoeducation workshops on topics such as conflict resolution, study habits, and

emotional well-being can empower parents to play a more active role in their development. Moreover, individual counseling sessions may be conducted with Roma parents to address their needs and guide them on how to support their children's academic and social development. Since fathers are marked as key decision-makers in Roma community regarding their children's education, special efforts might be made to encourage their participation in school-related responsibilities and meetings.

Additionally, support for career development for both parents and students are crucial. School counselors can organize seminars or counseling sessions that provide parents and students with information about educational pathways, vocational training, and post-secondary opportunities. By equipping both parents and students with knowledge about future academic and career options, schools can contribute to reducing dropout rates and increasing educational continuity. Offering individual or group career counseling for students can further support them in making informed decisions about their futures. By strengthening parent-school collaboration and equipping families with the necessary resources, schools can create a more supportive environment that enhances both the subjective well-being and academic success of Roma students.

The findings of this study emphasize the need for interventions that support Roma early adolescents and their parents in overcoming obstacles to school participation and well-being. A significant challenge identified is that parents are responsible for caring for their younger children, which limits their involvement in school-related activities and meetings. To address this issue, establishing accessible nurseries in Roma neighborhoods can provide essential childcare services, enabling parents to participate more effectively in school meetings and activities. Local governments can guide parents toward these nurseries, ensuring that they are free of charge. Additionally, to address the challenge of accessing the high school due to its location, free transportation can be provided for students, particularly for girls, with the support of local governments.

Additionally, financial difficulties emerged as a recurring theme affecting Roma early adolescents' school-related subjective well-being. Implementing free meal

programs in schools can contribute not only to students' physical health but also to their regular school attendance. Ensuring that every child has access to nutritious meals at school may enhance their attention, learning experience, and subjective well-being. For example, a government-funded healthy school lunch program was implemented in a quarter of New Zealand schools, specifically selected due to high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. To assess the program's impact from the perspectives of families, students, and school principals, McKelvie-Sebileau et al. (2023) conducted a study involving both primary and secondary schools. The results revealed several positive outcomes of the school lunch program, including improved equity, increased student appreciation for healthy foods, enhanced well-being, and decreased financial stress for families.

Beyond school-based interventions, the establishment of community centers in Roma neighborhoods can provide essential resources and support for both children and their parents. By creating safe and supportive environments outside of school, community centers can help strengthen Roma students' educational experiences and enhance their subjective well-being outside of school.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the need for a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for Roma early adolescents. Students who struggle academically are at risk of developing a low academic self-concept (Kyttälä et al., 2025). Therefore, schools need to balance expectations in a way that allows all students to realize their full potential and experience success (Woodcock, 2021). Adjusting the curriculum to meet their learning needs, incorporating alternative instructional methods, and encouraging a sense of academic self-efficacy could help improve their school experience. Additionally, school counselors can play a crucial role in this process by providing individual counseling to support academic growth, and helping students develop effective study habits and goal-setting skills. It can enhance students' academic confidence and motivation. By addressing these challenges, educators and policymakers can contribute to reducing absenteeism, enhancing student engagement, and finally improving Roma students' school-related subjective well-being.

5.3. Recommendations for Further Research

First, considering the significant impact of parents and home living conditions on Roma early adolescents' experiences of school-related subjective well-being, future research might explore their subjective well-being experiences at home and in their neighborhoods. Understanding the broader factors affecting their subjective well-being outside of school may offer deeper insights into how these experiences shape their school-related well-being.

Second, future studies could adopt a comparative approach, examining the school-related subjective well-being of both Roma and non-Roma early adolescents. Such research could help highlight the social-contextual nature of school-related well-being and identify factors that are different and similar.

Lastly, future studies could consider designing interview questions that incorporate more neutral, open-ended questions. This approach could encourage participants to reflect on a wider range of feelings related to their school experiences.

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APPENDICES

A. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (TURKISH)

Bölüm 1: Okulla İlişkiler

1. Okulun senin için ne anlam ifade ediyor? Okulunu bir şeye benzetmen gerekse bu ne olur? Biraz anlatabilir misin?
2. Okulla ilgili olarak bana bir günün nasıl geçtiğini anlatabilir misin?
 - a. (Eğer yalnızca derslerden bahsediyorsa) Dersler dışında neler yapıyorsun? Örneğin; teneffüsler, sosyal etkinlik...
3. Şöyle bir düşündüğünde okulda veya sınıfta kendini çok mutlu hissettiğin bir an var mı? Bana biraz anlatabilir misin?
4. Peki, şöyle bir düşündüğünde okulda veya sınıfta kendini mutsuz hissettiğin bir an var mı? Bana biraz anlatabilir misin?
5. Okulunla ilgili iyi ki böyle, hep böyle kalsın dediğin şey/şeyler var mı? Varsa, bunlar ne/ler?
6. Okulunla ilgili keşke değişse, şöyle olsa dediğin şey/şeyler var mı? Varsa, bunlar ne/ler?

Bölüm 2: Arkadaşlarla İlişkiler

7. Sınıftaki arkadaşlarınla aran nasıldır? Biraz anlatabilir misin?
 - a. Sınıftaki arkadaşlarının senin için önemi nedir?
 - b. Sınıftaki arkadaşlarınla ilişkilerini nasıl tanımlarsın?
 - c. Sınıftaki arkadaşlarınla beraber oyun oynarken veya bir etkinlik yaparken kendini nasıl hissedersin? Biraz anlatabilir misin?

Bölüm 3: Öğretmenlerle İlişkiler

8. Öğretmenlerinle aran nasıldır? Biraz anlatabilir misin?
9. Öğretmeninle beraber yaptığınız özel bir etkinlik veya çalışmayı hatırlayabilir misin? Bu anlarda kendini nasıl hissettin? Bu anları anlatabilir misin?

Bölüm 4: Ailenin Okulla İlişkileri

10. Ailenin öğretmenleriyle ilişkileri nasıldır?
11. Ailen okul başarıyla ilgili seninle konuşurlar mı? Konuşuyorlarsa sana neler söylüyorlar?

Bölüm 5: Kendiyle İlişkisi

12. Nasıl bir öğrenci olduğunu düşünüyorsun? Biraz anlatabilir misin?
13. Bir öğrenci olarak en çok zorlandığın, desteğe ihtiyaç duyduğun bir an var mı? Bu anı hatırlayabilir misin? Bu durumda nasıl hissetmiştin, neler yaşamıştın? Bu durumla nasıl başa çıkmaya çalışmıştın?
14. Ortaokulu bitirdikten sonra ne yapmayı düşünüyorsun?
 - a. Senin için liseye gitmek ne anlam ifade ediyor?
 - b. Ailen geleceğinle ilgili neler söylüyor? Lise için mesela...
15. Geleceğini nasıl hayal ediyorsun?

Bölüm 6: Demografik Bilgiler

- Görüşülen çocuğun cinsiyeti
- Görüşülen çocuğun kayıtlı olduğu okulun adı
- Öncelikle hangi yıl doğduğunu öğrenebilir miyim?
- Şu an kaçınıcı sınıfa devam ediyorsun?
- Kaç yıldır bu okulda eğitim görmektesin?
- Haziran'da aldığın karnendeki karne ortalaman kaçtı?
- Hiç sınıfta kaldığın oldu mu?
- Ailen kaç kişiden oluşuyor?
- Annen-baban sağ mı? Öz mü?
- Kaç kardeşin var? (Üveyler de dahil) Okuyorlar mı? Çalışıyorlar mı? ...
- Annen bir işte çalışıyor mu? Ne iş yapıyor?
- Baban bir işte çalışıyor mu? Ne iş yapıyor?
- Evinizde seninle beraber kaç kişi yaşıyor?

B. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



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16 AĞUSTOS 2023

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Zeynep Hatipoğlu SÜMER

Danışmanlığımı yürüttüğünüz Dicle Söylemez Kırdemir'in "*Roman Ön-Ergenlerin Okul Ortamlarındaki Öznel İyi Olma Halinin İncelenmesi*" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek 0363-ODTÜİAEK-2023 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof. Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre Turgut
Üye

Doç. Dr. Şerife SEVİNÇ
Üye

Doç. Dr. / Murat Perit ÇAKIR
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Süreyya ÖZCAN KABASAKAL
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

**C. KOCAELİ DIRECTORATE OF NATIONAL EDUCATION PERMISSION
FORM**



T.C.
KOCAELİ VALİLİĞİ
İl Millî Eğitim Müdürlüğü



Sayı : E-99332089-605.01-91074651
Konu : Araştırma İzni
(Dicle SÖYLEMEZ KIRDEMİR)

01/12/2023

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜNE
(Öğrenci İşleri Daire Başkanlığı)

İlgi : 08/11/2023 tarih ve 54850036-602.04.01-E.101 sayılı yazınız.

Üniversiteniz Eğitim Bilimleri Anabilim Dalı Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmalık Yüksek Lisans öğrencisi Dicle SÖYLEMEZ KIRDEMİR'in "*Roman Ön-Ergenlerin Okul Ortamlarındaki Öznel İyi Olma Halinin İncelenmesi*" konulu çalışmasını İlimiz Ortaokullarında uygulama talebi komisyonumuzca uygun görülmüş olup, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası, Millî Eğitim Temel Kanunu ile Türk Millî Eğitiminin genel amaçlarına uygun olarak, 6698 sayılı Kişisel Verilerin Korunması Kanununa ve yürürlükteki diğer tüm düzenlemelerde belirtilen hüküm, esas ve amaçlara aykırılık teşkil etmeyecek şekilde, denetimleri ilgili okul, ilçe millî eğitim müdürlükleri tarafından gerçekleştirilmek üzere, gönüllülük esasına göre, anket çalışmasının İlçe Millî Eğitim Müdürlükleri ve Okul Müdürlüklerinin denetimi, gözetimi ve sorumluluğunda yapmasının uygun görüldüğüne ilişkin, 29/11/2023 tarih ve E-99332089-605.01-90842189 sayılı Valilik Onayı ekte gönderilmiştir.

Gereğini rica ederim.

Mustafa AYHAN
Vali a.
Vali Yardımcısı

D. PARENT APPROVAL FORM (TURKISH)

Sevgili Anne/Baba,

Bu çalışma, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü- Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Programı yüksek lisans öğrencisi Dicle Söylemez Kırdemir tarafından, Prof. Dr. Zeynep Hatipoğlu Sümer danışmanlığında yürütülmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı nedir? Körfez ilçesinde yaşayan Roman öğrencilerin okullarındaki mevcut durumlarını nasıl değerlendirdiklerini ve olumlu/olumsuz duyguları nasıl deneyimlediklerini anlamaktır.

Sizin ve çocuğunuzun katılımcı olarak ne yapmasını istiyoruz? Çocuğunuzun araştırmaya katılmasını kabul ederseniz, araştırmacı çocuğunuzla okulda ders esnasında bireysel görüşme düzenleyerek bazı açık uçlu sorular soracaktır. Yaklaşık 45-50 dakika sürecek bu görüşmede çocuğunuza okula devam ve katılımı, okuldaki kaynaklara erişimi, öğretmenleriyle ve arkadaşlarıyla ilişkileri, ailesinin okulla ilişkisi, okulda kendini nasıl hissettiği gibi konuları kapsayan sorular yöneltilecektir. Görüşme esnasında cevaplar araştırmacı tarafından ses kaydına alınacaktır. Sizden çocuğunuzun katılımcı olmasıyla ilgili izin istediğimiz gibi, çalışmaya başlamadan çocuğunuzdan da sözlü olarak katılımıyla ilgili rızası mutlaka alınacaktır.

Çocuğunuzdan alınan bilgiler ne amaçla ve nasıl kullanılacak? Bireysel görüşmeler esnasında çocuğunuzun verdiği cevaplar kesinlikle gizli tutulacak ve bu cevaplar sadece bilimsel araştırma amacıyla kullanılacaktır. Alınan ses kaydı tamamıyla gizli tutulacak ve cevaplarınız sadece araştırmacı tarafından değerlendirilecektir. Çocuğunuzun ya da sizin isim ve kimlik bilgileriniz, hiçbir şekilde kimseyle paylaşılmayacaktır.

Çocuğunuz ya da siz çalışmayı yarıda kesmek isterseniz ne yapmalısınız? Katılım sırasında sorulan sorulardan ya da herhangi bir uygulama ile ilgili başka bir nedenden ötürü çocuğunuz kendisini rahatsız hissettiğini belirtirse, ya da kendi

belirtmese de arařtırmacı ocuęun rahatsız olduęunu ngrrse, alıřmaya sorular tamamlanmadan ve derhal son verilecektir.

Bu alıřmayla ilgili daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz: alıřmaya katılımınızın sonrasında, bu alıřmayla ilgili sorularınız yazılı biimde cevaplandırılacaktır. alıřma hakkında daha fazla bilgi almak iin arařtırmacı Dicle Sylermez Kırdemir ile (e-posta:) iletiřim kurabilirsiniz. Bu alıřmaya katılımınız ve desteęiniz iin řimdiden teřekkr ederiz.

Yukarıdaki bilgileri okudum ve ocuęumun bu alıřmada yer almasını onaylıyorum (Ltfen alttaki iki seenekten birini iřaretleyiniz.

Evet onaylıyorum_____

Hayır, onaylamıyorum_____

Ebeveynin adı-soyadı: _____ Bugnn tarihi: _____

ocuęun adı soyadı ve doęum tarihi: _____

(Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra arařtırmacıya ulařtırınız).

E. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

DEVLET ORTAOKULLARINDAKİ ROMAN N ERGENLERİN ZNEL İYİ OLUŞ DENEYİMLERİ ZERİNE YORUMLAYICI FENOMENOLOJİK BİR ALIŞMA

1. GİRİŞ

Bazı lkelerde eğitim, ğrencilerin znel iyi oluşundan ziyade akademik başarıya ncelik verme eğilimindedir ve sıklıkla onların duygusal deneyimlerini ve kişisel gelişimlerini göz ardı eder (Dello-Iacovo, 2009; Noddings, 2003). Sonuç olarak, eğitim sıklıkla mesleki başarıya bir hazırlık olarak çerçevenlenmekte, bu da ğrencilerin mevcut sosyal ve duygusal ihtiyaçlarını ikinci plana atabilmektedir. ğrenciler ğretmenlerin, ebeveynlerin ve okul yneticilerinin akademik beklentileri karřılamakta zorlandıklarında, gçsz yanlarına odaklanırlar ve bu da kişisel gelişimleri iin ok az alan bırakabilir (Gordon ve Crabtree, 2006; Noddings, 2003).

Ancak, Noddings'in (2003) belirttiđi gibi eğitim ile mutluluk arasında gçl bir ilişki vardır. Kapsamlı bir eğitim yaklaşımı hem akademik başarıyı hem de ğrencinin iyi oluşunu iermelidir (Tian vd., 2016). Okullar yalnızca akademik bilgi iin deđil, aynı zamanda ğrencilerin sosyal deneyimlerini řekillendirmek ve onların topluma aktif katılımını sađlamak iin nemli bir rol oynamaktadır (Bcker vd., 2018; Gray ve Hackling, 2009). Bu nedenle, eğitimin niteliđini ve onun iyi oluş zerindeki etkisini deđerlendirirken yalnızca akademik başarıyla sınırlı kalmadan konuyu ele almak gereklidir (Morinaj ve Hascher, 2022).

İyi oluş, bireylerin deneyimlediđi yaşam kalitesini ifade eder ve bireyin yaşantısının olumlu olduđu ya da ne kadar iyi gittiđi fikrini kapsar (Cho vd., 2018; Rees vd., 2013; Veenhoven, 2007). İyi oluş, bireyin arzularını gerekleřtirmesi, acı ve haz arasındaki dengenin sađlanması ve kişisel gelişim ile kendini gerekleřtirme

olanaklarının varlığı ile ilişkilidir (Ben-Arieh vd., 2014). Öte yandan, öznel iyi oluş literatürü esas olarak bireylerin hayatlarını olumlu deneyimlemeleri ile bunun nasıl ve neden gerçekleştiği üzerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu durum, bilişsel ve duygusal alanlardan oluşur (Diener, 2009). Öznel iyi oluşun en yaygın kabul gören modeli, Diener (1984) tarafından geliştirilmiştir ve daha yüksek öznel iyi oluş seviyelerine sahip bireylerin sık sık olumlu duygular yaşadığını, nadiren olumsuz duygular hissettiğini ve genel olarak yüksek yaşam doyumuna sahip olduğunu öne sürmektedir (Huebner vd., 2014).

Araştırmacılar, öğrencilerin iyi oluşlarını okul bağlamında ele alarak, okul ortamında öznel iyi oluşun belirli göstergelerini tanımlamaya çalışmışlardır (Renshaw vd., 2024). Tian (2008), öznel iyi oluş modeline dayanarak okul ile ilgili öznel iyi oluşu üç bileşenden oluşan bir yapı olarak kavramsallaştırmıştır: okul doyumunu, olumlu duygular ve olumsuz duygular. Başka bir bakış açısıyla, Hascher (2003), öğrencinin okulda iyi oluşunu, öğrencilerin okula, okul ortamına ve okul içindeki bireylere yönelik olumlu duygu ve düşüncelerinin okul yaşamına ilişkin olumsuz duygu ve düşüncelerinden baskın olması durumu olarak tanımlamıştır. Ayrıca, okulu öğrencilerin iyi oluşlarını anlamak için belirgin bir alan olarak ele alan iki model daha bulunmaktadır: EPOCH-S Modeli (Buerger vd., 2023) ve Okul İyi Oluş Modeli (Konu ve Rimpelä, 2002). Bu iki modelin okul temelli öznel iyi oluşa katkıları, öğrencilerin okul deneyimlerini şekillendiren temel psikolojik ve sosyal faktörleri vurguluyor olmalarıdır. Akademik görevlere katılım, okul etkinliklerine katılım, akranlar ve öğretmenlerle kurulan ilişkiler, zorluklar karşısında azim gösterme ve genel mutluluk duyguları gibi unsurlara odaklanarak, bu modeller öğrencilerin öğrenme ortamlarını nasıl deneyimlediklerini, sosyal bağlarını nasıl geliştirdiklerini ve okulda olumlu duygularını nasıl deneyimlediklerini anlamak için kapsamlı bir çerçeve sunmaktadır.

Roman topluluğu, genellikle toplumda en fazla sosyal dışlanmaya maruz kalan gruplardan biri olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Kesik vd., 2018). Avrupa Komisyonu'na (2013) göre, Roman çocuklar eğitim sürecinde barınma yetersizliği, dışlanma, ayrımcılık ve şiddet gibi çeşitli risklerle karşı karşıya kalmaktadır. Bu sosyal

dışlanma, eğitim uygulamalarına da yansımakta ve Roman öğrencilerin okul deneyimlerini önemli ölçüde etkilemektedir (Kesik vd., 2018).

Roman öğrenciler, genellikle eğitim haklarına erişim konusunda büyük engellerle karşılaşmaktadırlar. Roman öğrencilerin yoğun olarak bulunduğu okullar, temel ihtiyaçlarının devlet tarafından karşılanmaması nedeniyle dezavantajlarla mücadele etmektedirler ve okul yöneticileri finansal destek için velilere başvurmak zorunda kalmaktadırlar (Kesik vd., 2018). Ancak, Roman aileler ekonomik olarak daha dezavantajlı oldukları için okullara yeterli bağışta bulunamamaktadır ve bu durum, Roman öğrencilerin gittiği okulların diğer okullara kıyasla daha yetersiz koşullara sahip olmasına yol açmaktadır (Karan, 2017). Ayrıca, Roman öğrenciler sıklıkla ayrımcılığa maruz kalmaktadır. Bu durum, Roman öğrencilerin eğitim sürecine uyum sağlamasını zorlaştırmakta ve yüksek okul terk oranlarına, devamsızlığa ve düşük okuryazarlık seviyelerine yol açmaktadır (Akkan vd., 2011). Bu bağlamda, Roman ön ergenlerin okullarındaki öznel iyi oluşlarını anlamak ve okul hayatlarını nasıl anlamlandırdıklarını incelemek bu çalışmanın temel amacıdır.

1.1. Araştırmanın Amacı

Bu çalışmanın amacı, devlet ortaokullarına devam eden Roman ön ergenlerin öznel iyi oluş deneyimlerini derinlemesine anlamaktır. Ayrıca bu çalışmada, Roman ön ergenlerin hikayelerini dinleyerek ve seslerini duyurmalarına fırsat tanıyarak okuldaki mevcut durumlarını nasıl anlamlandırdıkları vurgulanmıştır.

1.2. Araştırma Soruları

Bu çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda araştırma soruları aşağıdaki şekilde belirlenmiştir:

1. Roman ön ergenler, devlet ortaokullarında yaşadıkları deneyimleri öznel iyi oluş bağlamında nasıl anlamlandırmaktadır?
 - a. Roman ön ergenler, okuldaki öznel iyi oluş deneyimlerine etkisi açısından okullarının rolünü nasıl algılamaktadır?

- b. Roman ön ergenler, okuldaki öznel iyi oluş deneyimlerine etkisi açısından akranları ve öğretmenleriyle olan sosyal ilişkilerini nasıl algılamaktadır?
- c. Roman ön ergenler, okuldaki öznel iyi oluş deneyimlerine etkisi açısından ailelerinin okula katılımını ve okulla iletişimini nasıl algılamaktadır?
- d. Roman ön ergenler, okuldaki öznel iyi oluş deneyimlerine etkisi açısından akademik öğrenme deneyimlerini nasıl algılamaktadır?

1.3. Araştırmanın Önemi

Okullar, yalnızca akademik eğitimin verildiği bir alan olmanın ötesinde, ergenlerin arkadaşlarıyla vakit geçirebileceği, eğlenebileceği, anlamlı ilişkiler kurabileceği ve aidiyet duygusu geliştirebileceği sosyal bir alan sunar (Akkan vd., 2011; Stefes, 2024). Ayrıca, düşük sosyo-ekonomik seviyeye sahip ve okul dışında sosyalleşme olanakları kısıtlı olan ve aile içinde sorun yaşayan ergenler için okullar büyük önem taşımaktadır (Akkan vd., 2011; Müderrisoğlu vd., 2023; Uyan Semerci vd., 2012).

Bazı araştırmacılar, okul deneyimlerinin öğrencilerin öznel iyi oluşuna nasıl katkıda bulunduğunu incelemiştir. Örneğin, Corominas vd. (2022) tarafından yapılan araştırma, öğrencilerin öğretmenlerinden ilgi ve destek gördüklerinde ve onların kendilerini aktif bir şekilde dinlediklerini düşündüklerinde öğrenme deneyimlerinden daha fazla memnuniyet duyduklarını göstermiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, akranlarla olan sosyal etkileşimler, öğrencilerin iyi oluşlarını şekillendirmede önemli bir rol oynamaktadır (Rudolph vd., 2005). Örneğin, Oberle vd. (2011) tarafından yapılan bir araştırma, akranlarla olumlu ilişkiler kurmanın ve okulda güçlü bir aidiyet hissine sahip olmanın, ergenlik döneminin başlarında yaşam memnuniyeti üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Bu sonuçlar, okulların mutluluğun teşvik edilmesi açısından büyük bir öneme sahip olduğunu göstermektedir.

Bu çalışma, Roman ön ergenlerin okul bağlamındaki öznel iyi oluş deneyimlerini keşfetmenin yanı sıra, ön ergenlik dönemi deneyimleri hakkında da önemli bilgiler sağlamaktadır. Ergenlerin öznel iyi oluşundaki değişiklikleri zaman içinde inceleyen çalışmalar, ön, orta ve geç ergenlik arasında ayırım yapmanın önemini vurgulamaktadır. Örneğin, orta ve geç ergenlerle yapılan boylamsal çalışmalar, bu

dönemlerde öznel iyi oluşun arttığını göstermiştir (Salmela-Aro ve Tuominen-Soini, 2010; Steinmayr vd., 2019). Buna karşılık, González-Carrasco vd. (2017), öznel iyi oluşun 11-12 yaşlarında azalmaya başladığını belirterek ön ergenlik döneminin başlangıcına işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca, ön ergenlik dönemi birçok ülkede ilkokuldan ortaokula geçişle örtüşmektedir. Ortaokula başlayan öğrenciler, daha karmaşık akran ilişkileriyle karşılaşmakta ve öğretmenleriyle daha az etkileşim kurmaktadır (Wang ve Eccles, 2012). Bu gibi değişimler, öğrencilerin olumsuz deneyimlerini ve stres seviyelerini artırarak öznel iyi oluşlarını olumsuz yönde etkileyebilir (Borman vd., 2019; Wu vd., 2023).

Türkiye’de Roman ergenler üzerine öznel iyi oluşlarını inceleyen çalışmalar oldukça sınırlıdır. Mevcut literatür incelendiğinde, Roman ergenlerle yapılan çalışmaların çoğunun devamsızlık veya okul terki gibi sorunlu alanlara odaklandığı görülmektedir. Roman ergenlerin okul deneyimlerini onların bakış açılarından anlamak, öğretmenlerin, okul psikolojik danışmanlarının ve okul yöneticilerinin onların farklı ihtiyaçlarını destekleyecek önleme ve müdahale programları geliştirmelerini sağlayabilir.

Son olarak, bu çalışma, ergenleri yalnızca yetişkinliğe hazırlanan bireyler olarak değil, toplumun gerçek üyeleri olarak ele almaktadır (Ben-Arieh vd., 2001). Ergenlik, sadece bir geçiş aşaması değil, kendi başına anlam taşıyan bir dönemdir (Akkan vd., 2018; Fattore vd., 2007). Ergenlerin okul deneyimlerinin yalnızca okul terki veya devamsızlık gibi olumsuz yönlerle odaklanarak değil, okul yaşam kalitesini de içerecek şekilde değerlendirilmesi önemlidir.

2. YÖNTEM

2.1. Araştırmanın Deseni

Bu çalışmada nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan Yorumlayıcı Fenomenolojik Analiz (YFA) yöntemi kullanılmıştır (Smith ve Osborn, 2003). YFA’nın temel özellikleri doğrultusunda, bu çalışma Roman ön ergenlerin okullarındaki yaşam koşullarını nasıl anlamlandırdıklarını, onları kendi deneyimlerinin uzmanları olarak

konumlandırarak anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma için en uygun yaklaşım olarak YFA tercih edilmiştir.

2.2. Katılımcılar

Bu çalışmada, katılımcıların belirlenmesi için amaçlı örneklem yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Katılımcılar, Kocaeli'nin Körfez ilçesinde bulunan devlet ortaokullarına devam eden Roman ön ergenlerden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcı seçim kriterleri şu şekilde belirlenmiştir: (1) ön ergenlik dönemini kapsayan 11-14 yaş aralığında olmak ve (2) okula düzenli devam etmek. Örneklemen homojenliğini sağlamak amacıyla farklı özellikler gösteren İmam Hatip ortaokulları ve özel eğitim uygulama okullarına devam eden Roman ön ergenler çalışma kapsamına alınmamıştır. Ayrıca, kaynaştırma eğitimi alan Roman ön ergenler araştırmaya dahil edilmemiştir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma, yaşları 11 ile 14 arasında değişen, Kocaeli'nin Körfez ilçesindeki dört farklı devlet ortaokuluna devam eden, 12 Roman ön ergenle yürütülmüştür.

2.3. Veri Toplama Aracı

Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme soruları aracılığıyla veriler toplanmıştır. İlgili literatür incelenerek görüşme sorularını geliştirmek için bir taslak oluşturulmuştur. İlk soru seti tez danışmanı ile değerlendirilmiş ve ardından öznel iyi oluş alanında ve ön ergenlik dönemindeki bireylerle çalışma deneyimi olan iki uzmanın görüşüne başvurulmuştur. Uzmanların geri bildirimleri doğrultusunda görüşme protokolünde bazı değişiklikler yapılmıştır. Son versiyon, tez danışmanının rehberliğinde belirlenmiştir. Görüşme sorularının yeniden yapılandırılmasının ardından, Körfez ilçesindeki bir devlet ortaokuluna devam eden bir Roman öğrenci ile pilot çalışma gerçekleştirilmiştir. Böylece görüşme sorularının son hali oluşturulmuştur.

2.4. Veri Toplama Süreci ve Verilerin Analizi

Veri toplamaya başlamadan önce, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'ndan gerekli onay alınmıştır. Daha sonra, Kocaeli İl Milli Eğitim

Müdürlüğü'ne başvuru yapılmıştır. Ocak 2024 ile Nisan 2024 tarihleri arasında 12 Roman ön ergenle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. En kısa görüşme 30 dakika, en uzun görüşme ise 50 dakika sürmüştür.

Veri toplama süreci tamamlandıktan sonra, tüm görüşmeler Mayıs 2024 itibarıyla deşifre edilmiştir. Verilerin analizi sürecinde Smith vd. (2022) Yorumlayıcı Fenomenolojik Analiz (YFA) adımları takip edilmiştir. Deşifrenin sağ sütununa notlar alınmış ve sonraki okumalar sırasında ek yorumlar eklenmiştir. Daha sonra, bu notlara dayanarak, ilk vaka için deneyimsel ifadeler oluşturulmuş ve bunlar deşifrenin sol sütununa yazılmıştır. İlk vaka için kişisel deneyimsel temalar ve deneyimsel alt temalar belirlenmiştir. Bu süreç her vaka için tekrar edildikten sonra grup deneyimsel temaları, kişisel deneyimsel temalar ve kişisel deneyimsel alt temalar oluşturulmuştur.

2.5. Araştırmanın Sınırlılıkları

Çalışmanın bir sınırlaması, görüşme sorularının nasıl ifade edildiğiyle ilgilidir. Sorular esas olarak mutluluk ve mutsuzluk deneyimlerine odaklanmıştır. Bu yapı, katılımcıların yanıtlarının duygusal aralığını kısıtlamış ve çeşitli duygusal deneyimlerin ifade edilmesini engellemiş olabilir.

Bu çalışmanın bir diğer sınırlaması hem görüşme sürecini hem de katılımcıların deneyimlerinin yorumlanmasını etkilemiş olabilecek dil ve kültürel farklılıklarla ilgilidir. Veri toplama ve analizi sırasında katılımcılara özgü belirli ifadelerin tam olarak anlaşılamamış olma olasılığı vardır. Bu ifadeler araştırmacının kendi kültürel bakış açısıyla yorumlanabilir ve bu da potansiyel olarak katılımcıların deneyimlerinin yanlış yorumlanmasına veya eksik anlaşılmasına yol açabilir.

3. BULGULAR

Analiz sonuçlarına göre iki grup deneyimsel tema ortaya çıkmıştır: (1) Okul sistemine uyum sağlamada zorluklarla karşılaşmaktadırlar, (2) Ortaokul, eğitim sistemiyle etkileşim kurmak için son bir fırsattır.

3.1. Okul sistemine uyum sağlamada zorluklarla karşılaşmaktadırlar

İlk grup deneyimsel tema, Roman ön ergenlerin okulda yaşadığı öznel iyi oluş deneyimlerini etkileyen karmaşık ve birbirine bağlı ilişkileri ele almaktadır. Bu tema, onların okulları, arkadaşları, öğretmenleri ve ebeveynleri gibi farklı sistemler içinde nasıl ilişkiler kurup geliştirdiklerini ve bu ilişkilerin okulda iyi oluşlarını nasıl etkilediğini tartışmaktadır. Ayrıca, okullar ve ebeveynler arasındaki etkileşimin, ergenlerin okul ile ilgili iyi oluşlarını şekillendirmedeki önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu temada, dört kişisel deneyimsel tema ortaya çıkmıştır: (1) Okul, anlamlı bağlar kurmayı teşvik eder ve genel yaşam kalitesini artırır, (2) Güçlü kişilerarası ilişkilerin eksikliği anlamlı arkadaşlık ilişkilerinin kurulmasını engeller, (3) Kapsayıcı öğretmenler öğrencilerin okuldaki iyi oluşlarını artırmada önemli bir rol oynar, (4) Sınırlı ebeveyn katılımı, okul sorunlarıyla başa çıkmada yalnızlık ve çaresizlik duygusunu artırır.

3.1.1. Okul, anlamlı bağlar kurmayı teşvik eder ve genel yaşam kalitesini artırır

Okula atfettikleri anlamları tartışırken katılımcıların anlatılarında üç alt tema ortaya çıkmıştır: (1) Okul, daha iyi bir yaşama giden önemli bir yoldur, (2) Okul çocukluklarını tam anlamıyla yaşayabilmelerine olanak tanır ve (3) Okul, arkadaşlarıyla etkileşim kurdukları sosyal bir alandır.

3.1.2. Güçlü kişilerarası ilişkilerin eksikliği anlamlı arkadaşlık ilişkilerinin kurulmasını engeller

Katılımcıların anlatılarında dört alt tema ortaya çıkmıştır: (1) Arkadaşlıklarındaki görünmez sınırlar sınıf arkadaşlarıyla yakın bağlar kurmalarını engeller, (2) Akran gruplarına dahil edilip edilmedikleri konusunda belirsizlik yaşamaktadırlar, (3) Okulda yaşanan şiddet güvenlik ve emniyet duygusuna ciddi bir tehdit oluşturmaktadır ve (4) Zorluklarla başa çıkmak ve okulda kendilerini güvende hissetmek için sınıf arkadaşlarından destek almak onlar için önemlidir.

3.1.3. Kapsayıcı öğretmenler öğrencilerin okuldaki iyi oluşlarını artırmada önemli bir rol oynar

Katılımcıların anlatıları sonucunda üç alt tema ortaya çıkmıştır: (1) Sıcak bir tutum sergileyen öğretmenler, öğrencilerin değerli ve kabul edilmiş hissetmelerine

yardımcı olur, (2) Roman ön ergenler, akademik ihtiyaçlarını anlayıp onlara rehberlik edecek öğretmenlere ihtiyaç duyarlar ve (3) Roman ön ergenler, zorlayıcı durumlarla başa çıkabilmek için öğretmen desteğine ihtiyaç duyarlar.

3.1.4. Sınırlı ebeveyn katılımı, okul sorunlarıyla başa çıkmada yalnızlık ve çaresizlik duygusunu artırır

Katılımcıların anlatıları doğrultusunda iki alt tema ortaya çıkmıştır: (1) Ebeveyn katılımının yetersiz olması, Roman ön ergenlerin okulla ilgili konularda yalnız kalmasına yol açar ve (2) Roman ön ergenler okul ödevleri konusunda ebeveyn gözetimi almakta zorluk çekerler.

3.2 Ortaokul, eğitim sistemiyle etkileşim kurmak için son bir fırsattır

İkinci grup deneyimsel tema, akademik öğrenme deneyimlerinin Roman ön ergenlerin okula dayalı öznel iyi oluşları üzerindeki etkisini anlamaya odaklanmaktadır. Ayrıca, Roman ön ergenlerin ortaokuldan sonra onları neyin beklediğini nasıl algıladığını da ele almaktadır. Bu tema altında iki kişisel deneyimsel tema ortaya çıkmıştır: (1) Okul sisteminin izin verdiği ölçüde okulun bir parçası olmaya çalışıyorlar ve (2) Ortaokul sadece eğitim için değil, aynı zamanda çocukluk için de son duraktır.

3.2.1. Okul sisteminin izin verdiği ölçüde okulun bir parçası olmaya çalışıyorlar

Katılımcıların anlatılarından beş alt tema ortaya çıkmıştır: (1) Davranışsal katılım, okulda huzursuzluk çıkarmamakla kendini gösterir, (2) Engellerle karşılaşmalarına rağmen, okul ile ilgili sorumluluklara katılmak için çok çalışırlar, (3) Bilişsel beceri gerektirmeyen ders dışı etkinlikler, okul ortamına katılımı kolaylaştırır, (4) Müfredata uyum sağlamakta zorlanırlar; bu durum, derslere katılımlarını ve ders standartlarını karşılayabilmelerini olumsuz etkiler ve (5) Müfredatta geride kaldıklarına inanmak, olumsuz bir benlik algısı yaratır.

3.2.2. Ortaokul sadece eğitim için değil, aynı zamanda çocukluk için de son duraktır

Katılımcıların anlatılarından iki alt tema ortaya çıkmıştır: (1) Lise eğitimi, yeni ve tanıdık olmayan bir deneyim gibi gelir ve pek çoğu buna erişim sağlayamaz ve (2) Ortaokuldan bitirmek, genellikle cinsiyete dayalı farklı yollara yönlendirir.

4. TARTIŞMA

Bu bölümde, çalışmanın bulguları ilgili literatür ışığında tartışılmıştır. Bölümün sonunda ise uygulamaya yönelik çıkarımlar ve gelecekteki araştırmalar için öneriler sunulmuştur.

4.1. Okul sistemine uyum sağlamada zorluklarla karşılaşmaktadırlar

Bulgulara göre Roman ön ergenler okulu, onları geleceğe hazırlayan önemli bir kurum olarak algılamaktadırlar. Alanyazına paralel olarak (Sixsmith vd., 2005), bu çalışmada Roman ön ergenler eğitimi iyi bir iş ve gelir elde etme fırsatı olarak görmektedir. Ayrıca, okul, Roman ön ergenlere keyif aldıkları aktivitelere katılmak, arkadaşlıklar geliştirmek ve sıkıntıdan uzaklaşmak için fırsat sunmaktadır. Bu bulguya benzer şekilde, Akkan vd. (2019) tarafından yürütülen bir araştırmada, 12 yaşındaki bir kız çocuğunun okulu özgürlük ve bağımsızlık alanı olarak tanımladığı rapor edilmiştir. Alanyazına tutarlı olarak (Uyan Semerci vd., 2012) Roman ön ergenler okulu akranlarla ilişkiler kurup geliştirebilecekleri bir sosyal alan olarak görmektedir.

Bulgular, Roman ön ergenlerin okulda ilişkilerini sürdürmelerine rağmen, sınıf arkadaşlarıyla kurdukları arkadaşlıklarda görünmez bir sınır yaşadıklarını ve bu durumun yakınlık kurmalarını engellediğini ortaya koymuştur. Akranlarıyla oyun oynamaları veya sohbet etmeleri, bu ilişkilerde her zaman bir yakınlık veya tatmin duygusu hissettikleri anlamına gelmemektedir. Bu durum, akran kabulü ile gerçek dostluk arasındaki farkı gözler önüne sermektedir. Akran kabulü, bir ergenin akranları tarafından beğenilmesini, desteklenmesini ve olumlu bağlantılar kurmasını

ifade eder (Plenty ve la Roi, 2024). Oysaki, yüksek nitelikli arkadaşlıklara sahip ergenler en yüksek düzeyde öznel iyi oluş deneyimlerken, akranları tarafından kabul görenler ikinci sırada yer almaktadır (Chen vd., 2021).

Alanyazınla tutarlı olarak, sosyal dışlanmanın olumsuz duygular, okula bağlılıkta güçlükler ve daha düşük öznel iyi oluş seviyeleri ile ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Akranları tarafından görmezden gelinen veya dışlanan ergenler, sıklıkla yalnızlık (Büyükcebeci ve Deniz, 2017), çaresizlik, depresyon ve değersizlik duyguları yaşamaktadır (Williams ve Nida, 2022).

Mevcut araştırmaya katılan erkek öğrenciler hem fiziksel hem de sözel saldırganlığa maruz kaldıklarını bildirirken, kız öğrenciler yalnızca sözel saldırganlık yaşadıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Önceki araştırmalar, erkek öğrencilerin fiziksel saldırganlığa daha sık maruz kaldıklarını, kız öğrencilerin ise genellikle sözel saldırganlık yaşadıklarını göstermektedir (Felix ve McMahon, 2006; Iossi vd., 2013; Stubs-Richardson vd., 2017). Fakat bu bulgular, sözel saldırganlığın erkekler için de aynı derecede üzücü olabileceğini ve okul ile ilgili öznel iyi oluşlarını etkileyebileceğini göstermektedir.

Roman ön ergenlerin öğretmenleriyle kurdukları sosyal ilişkilere dair bulgular Ryan ve Deci'nin (2000) öz belirleme teorisi ile uyumludur. Alanyazına paralel olarak, öğretmenlerin destekleyici ilişkiler kurmasının öğrencilerin okula aidiyet hislerini artırdığını ve iyi oluşlarını olumlu yönde etkilediğini göstermektedir (Zhou vd., 2023). Benzer şekilde, ebeveynlerin okulla olan iletişiminin Roman ön ergenlerin okul deneyimlerini nasıl etkilediği de ele alınmıştır. Önceki araştırmalar, ebeveyn-okul iletişiminin öğrencilerin öznel iyi oluşu ve genel okul memnuniyeti üzerinde önemli bir etkisi olduğunu göstermektedir (Dettmers vd., 2019; Hampden-Thompson ve Galindo, 2017). Bu çalışmada, Roman ailelerin öğretmenlerle olan iletişiminin genellikle sınırlı olduğu bulunmuştur. Bu durum, Roman ön ergenlerin akademik ve sosyal zorluklarla başa çıkmasını zorlaştırarak okul ile ilgili öznel iyi oluşlarını olumsuz etkilemektedir.

4.2. Ortaokul, eğitim sistemiyle etkileşim kurmak için son bir fırsattır

Bulgular, Roman ön ergenlerin genellikle sınıfta düzen bozucu davranışlar sergilemekten kaçındıklarını, okul ile ilgili sorumluluklarını yerine getirmeye

çalıştıklarını ve ders dışı etkinliklere aktif olarak katıldıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Ancak, Roman ön ergenler müfredata uyum sağlamakta zorlanmakta ve bunun sonucunda da olumsuzluklarla karşılaşmaktadırlar. İlk üç alt tema, öğrenmeye yönelik davranışsal katılımlarına odaklanırken, son iki alt tema bilişsel katılımın yönlerini vurgulamaktadır.

Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre, Roman ön ergenler, verilen görevleri başarıyla tamamladıklarında ve kendi potansiyellerini fark ettiklerinde, okula daha fazla katılım göstererek mutlu ve neşeli hissetmektedir. Bu yeterlik duygusu, yalnızca duygusal iyi oluşlarını artırarak onların mutlu, neşeli ve heyecanlı hissetmelerine olanak tanımakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda bilişsel iyi oluşlarını da olumlu yönde etkilemektedir. Bu durum, kendilerini sınıf ortamını bozmayan, öğretmenleri ve akranlarıyla olumlu ilişkiler sürdüren ve başarılı iyi öğrenciler olarak görmelerine katkı sağlamaktadır. Ayrıca, davranışsal katılım, öğretmenleri ve akranlarıyla bağ kurmalarına yardımcı olarak okul ile ilgili öznel iyi oluşlarına katkıda bulunduğunu düşündürmektedir. Bu bulgular, Ryan ve Deci'nin (2000) öz belirleme teorisi ile uyumludur.

Bu çalışmanın bulguları, Roman ön ergenlerin derslerine bilişsel olarak katılım sağlamada önemli zorluklarla karşılaştığını ortaya koymuştur. Bu durum, sıkılma, bunalmış hissetme ve ilgi kaybı gibi olumsuz duyguları beraberinde getirmektedir. Bilişsel katılım konusundaki zorlulukların onlar üzerindeki olumsuz etkisi alanyazınla tutarlıdır (Levis vd., 2011; Pietarinen vd., 2014; Wong vd., 2024). Müfredata uyum sağlamadaki bu güçlük, mevcut eğitim sisteminin onların öğrenme ihtiyaçlarını yeterince karşılamamasından kaynaklanabilir.

Roman ön ergenler dersleri dinleme ve anlama konusunda yaşadıkları güçlükler nedeniyle kendilerini iyi bir öğrenci olarak görmekte zorlandıklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Kendilerini sınıf arkadaşlarıyla kıyasladıklarında yetersiz hissetmekte ve kendileri hakkında olumsuz konuşma eğilimi göstermektedirler. Özellikle, sınıf arkadaşlarının başarabileceğini, ancak kendilerinin başaramayacağını düşünmek onlar için üzücü olmaktadır. Bu durum, Bandura'nın öz-yeterlik teorisi (1977) ile açıklanabilir. Akademik öz-yeterlik, öğrencilerin zorlu görevlerle karşılaştıklarında

kişisel ve bilişsel kaynaklarını kullanma motivasyonları üzerinde etkili olmaktadır. Daha yüksek akademik öz-yeterlik seviyeleri, daha yüksek hedefler belirleme, daha büyük kişisel beklentiler ve artan akademik katılım ile ilişkilendirilmektedir (Bassi vd., 2007; Salanova vd., 2005). Bu bulgular, öğrencilerin okul deneyimlerini ve iyi oluşlarını geliştirmek için akademik öz-yeterliklerinin desteklenmesinin önemini vurgulamaktadır (Castelli ve Morcionetti, 2024).

Bu çalışmada, Roman ön ergenlerin ebeveynlerinden yeterince akademik ve sosyal destek alamadıkları gözlenmiştir. Önceki araştırmalar, ebeveyn katılımının azınlık ve dezavantajlı gruplardan gelen öğrenciler için önemli bir rol oynadığını vurgulamaktadır (Flecha ve Soler, 2013). Öğrenciler ile ebeveynleri arasındaki okul hakkında yapılan konuşmalar, öğrencinin akademik geleceğinin şekillenmesinde rol oynar (Lauritzen ve Nodeland, 2018). Dolayısıyla, ebeveyn katılımının eksikliği, Roman öğrencilerin lise hayatına yabancılaşmasına ve bu yabancılaşmadan kaynaklı olumsuz duygulara yol açabilir. Lise hakkında ebeveynleriyle konuşamayan ve kaygılarıyla başa çıkmak için destek alamayan Roman ön ergenler, geleceklerini planlarken yalnızlık hissine kapılabilirler. Alanyazınla tutarlı olarak (Lauritzen ve Nodeland, 2018), bu çalışmada Roman ön ergenlerin liseye devam etmesini teşvik edecek bir rol modelin olmasının önemini vurgulamıştır. Lise hakkında yayılan olumsuz söylentilerin onların cesaretini kırdığı, kaygı ve korku hissetmelerine yol açtığı görülmüştür. Ancak güvendikleri ve destek aldıkları birinin varlığı, bu olumsuz duygularla başa çıkmalarına yardımcı olabilir.

Son olarak, Roman toplumundaki kültürel normlar ve değerler, özellikle erken yaşta evlilik ve çocuk işçiliği, Roman ön ergenlerin okul ile ilişkilerini şekillendirmektedir. Ancak, bu ilişkinin ters yönde de işleyebileceğini kabul etmek önemlidir. Roman ön ergenlerin okulu nasıl algıladığı, öğretmenleri ve akranları ile nasıl ilişkiler geliştirdiği kültürün onların hayatlarındaki etkisini yorumlamada kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Her ne kadar onlar okulu daha iyi bir geleceğe hazırlanmanın ve bazı kültürel değerleri sorgulamanın bir yolu olarak görseler de sonunda hem korktukları hem de kaçmak istedikleri bir gelecek ile karşı karşıya kalmaları düşündürücüdür.

4.3. Uygulamaya Yönelik Çıkarımlar

Sosyal etkileşimi mümkün kılan, keyifli deneyimler sunan ve kişisel gelişim fırsatları sağlayan okul ortamlarının tasarlanması, öğrencilerin iyi oluşlarını artırmak için önemli gözükmeaktadır. Onların bağ kurabilecekleri, deneyimlerini paylaşabilecekleri ve evde karşılaştıkları sınırlamaları aşabilecekleri alanlar yaratmak, okuldaki öznel iyi oluşlarını önemli ölçüde artırabilir.

Okulda daha güçlü bir aidiyet duygusunu teşvik etmek ve anlamlı ilişkiler geliştirmelerine yardımcı olmak için öğretmenler, sınıfta öğrencilerin kaynaşmasını sağlayacak aktiviteler planlayarak ve öğrencileri ders dışı etkinliklere katılmaya teşvik ederek bu sürece önemli bir katkı sunabilirler. Okul psikolojik danışmanları, öğrencilerin arkadaşlık kurma ve sürdürme becerilerini geliştirmeye yönelik grup rehberliği oturumları düzenleyebilir ve sosyal becerileri geliştiren sınıf etkinlikleri gerçekleştirebilirler.

Öğrencilerin öznel iyi oluşlarını artırmak için etkili akran zorbalığı karşıtı programların uygulanması ve akran zorbalığını ele alan kapsamlı bir okul politikasının oluşturulması gerekmektedir. Öğrenciler, veliler, öğretmenler ve okul yöneticileri arasında farkındalık yaratmak, müdahale süreçlerini belirlemek ve net yaklaşımlar geliştirmek, daha huzurlu bir okul ortamının oluşmasına katkı sağlayabilir. Olumlu bir okul ikliminin güçlendirilmesi ve sosyal-duygusal öğrenme programlarının müfredata entegre edilmesi de zorbalığın azaltılmasında önemli bir rol oynayabilir. Çatışma çözme programları uygulanabilir, öğrencilere iletişim ve problem çözme becerileri kazandıracak eğitimler verilebilir.

Ayrıca, Roman ön ergenlerin okullarındaki iyi oluşlarını desteklemek amacıyla okullar akran destek projelerini teşvik edebilir. Örneğin, öğrencilerin akademik ve sosyal uyumlarını desteklemek amacıyla akran mentorluk programları uygulanabilir. Ek olarak, öğretmenler ders planlarına akran öğretimi ve grup çalışmaları gibi iş birlikçi öğrenme stratejilerini entegre ederek öğrenciler arasındaki etkileşimleri artırabilirler.

Ebeveynlerin daha güçlü bir şekilde okula dahil olmalarını sağlamak için, okul ile ebeveynler arasındaki iş birliğini teşvik eden programlar uygulanabilir. Ayrıca, okul

psikolojik danışmanları, ebeveynlere yönelik seminerler düzenleyerek, ebeveynlik becerileri, çocuk gelişimi ve çocuklarının eğitime nasıl destek olabilecekleri konusunda bilgi sağlayabilirler. Roman topluluğunda babaların çocuklarının eğitimiyle ilgili karar süreçlerinde kilit rol oynadığı göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, onların okul ile ilgili sorumluluklara ve toplantılara katılımını teşvik edecek özel çabalar gösterilebilir. Bunun yanı sıra, okul psikolojik danışmanları, ebeveynler ve öğrencilere kariyer planlama bilgisi sağlayacak seminerler veya danışmanlık oturumları düzenleyebilirler.

Roman mahallelerinde erişilebilir kreşler kurulabilir ve böylece ebeveynlerin okul etkinliklerine daha aktif katılım göstermeleri sağlanabilir. Ayrıca, liseye ulaşım konusunda yaşanan zorlukları gidermek için, özellikle kız öğrenciler için yerel yönetimlerin desteğiyle ücretsiz ulaşım hizmetleri sunulabilir. Okullarda ücretsiz yemek programlarının uygulanması, öğrencilerin sadece fiziksel sağlıklarını değil, aynı zamanda okula düzenli devam etmelerini de olumlu yönde etkileyebilir. Son olarak, Roman mahallelerinde toplum merkezlerinin kurulması hem çocuklar hem de ebeveynler için önemli kaynaklar ve destekler sunabilir.

4.4. Gelecekteki Araştırmalar İçin Öneriler

Bu çalışma, devlet ortaokullarına devam eden Roman ön ergenlerinin okula temelli öznel iyi oluşlarını incelemiştir. Ancak, bu bulguları derinleştirmek ve genişletmek adına gelecekteki araştırmalar için birkaç alan hâlâ açıktır. İlk olarak, ebeveynlerin ve ev ortamının Roman öğrencilerin öznel iyi oluşları üzerindeki belirgin etkisi göz önüne alındığında, gelecekteki çalışmalar onların evdeki ve mahallelerindeki öznel iyi oluş deneyimlerini inceleyebilir. Okul dışındaki sosyal ve çevresel faktörlerin öğrencilerin yaşamlarını nasıl şekillendirdiğini anlamak, okul temelli öznel iyi oluşlarının arka planını daha iyi kavramaya katkı sağlayabilir. İkinci olarak, Roman ve Roman olmayan öğrencilerin okul temelli öznel iyi oluşlarının karşılaştırmalı olarak ele alındığı çalışmalar yapılabilir. Bu tür araştırmalar, okul bağlamında öznel iyi oluşun sosyal ve bağlamsal doğasını ortaya koyarak benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları belirlemede faydalı olabilir. Son olarak, gelecekteki araştırmalarda daha fazla açık uçlu sorular içeren görüşme formlarının kullanılması yararlı olabilir. Bu tür bir

yaklaşım, katılımcıların okul deneyimlerine ilişkin daha geniş bir duygu yelpazesiyle kendilerini ifade etmelerine olanak tanıyabilir.



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