An investigation on how library professionals of the Swiss Group of International Schools perceive, support, and promote the holistic well-being of their students: a qualitative study.

Anne Labussiere

Abstract

The aim of the present study is to explore how the library staff of the Swiss Group of International schools perceive, promote, and foster the holistic well-being of their students. The research niche is identified by the need of expand the body of research on the role of school libraries on students' well-being in international schools. A qualitative study based on an interpretive approach and phenomenological analysis was designed to collect the perceptions and experiences of the library staff belonging to the SGIS Librarians' group in Switzerland. Semi-structured individual interviews (N=12) were conducted. The results show that the participants qualify their individual well-being as happiness and contentment. They transfer these positive attributes to their professional practices with the aim of providing safe and stable environments for school communities largely populated by Third Cultural Kids (TCK). The TCK paradigm has an impact on the pastoral role of the library staff who put a significant effort on maintaining positive relationships and designing a library space supporting of all the diversity. Fostering well-being is inherent to their role and an intrinsic value of being an educator beyond the curriculum.

Keywords: international school libraries, Swiss Group of International Schools, students' well-being, Third Culture Kid, school library design

1 Introduction

1.1 Research niche

The abundance of research topics focusing on student reading engagement and academic achievement (Merga 2019, Farmer 2006) or students' literacy (Lance et al. 2018, AASL n.d.) contrasts with the lack of research on well-being in school libraries. The Guardian (Australia) featured a tribute by author Nova Weetman (2023) that underscored the crucial need of school libraries, deploring their lack of visibility and the misunderstandings regarding their significance in the educational landscape. Beforehand Canter (2011) had argued that school libraries were "the forgotten partners". For example, the analytical report published by the European Commission "A systemic, whole school approach to mental health and well-being in schools in the EU" (2021) did not mention the role of school libraries in supporting well-being. Moreover, in the September 2021 edition of the International School Magazine, while a comprehensive exploration of well-being in international schools was featured, the role of the school library was not addressed. Finally, although the "International Conference on Well-being in Education Systems" (CIRSE Switzerland 2017) covered a variety of themes of research and intervention focusing on the relationship between students' school experience and well-being, none referred to the role school libraries might play. In the field of education and mainly since the COVID-19 Pandemic, educational institutions have acknowledged the need of integrating and putting well-being policies and practices at the forefront to support the well-being of students of all age ranges (Carter and Andersen 2019; Frenk et al. 2022; Hascher et al. 2021). Although Merga (2020) highlights the benefits that school libraries can offer beyond academic achievement, they point out that the role of school libraries is not celebrated enough and that little is known about them being supportive spaces of students' well-being.

1.2   Significance of the present study

The role of school libraries in promoting students' well-being is a contemporary and emerging topic which needs further investigation in the field of international school libraries as well. Indeed, the focus on current research has been on public libraries (Wexelbaum 2016) or academic libraries (Holder and Lannon 2020, Cox 2020). Most literature on students' well-being and school libraries has mainly been published in the UK, Australia, and the US but does not address international schools' libraries. International schools deliver a comprehensive educational curriculum designed to meet the needs of an international student population and cater to expatriate families and local residents alike. There is a multinational and multilingual student body and English is the main or bilingual language (IASL 2019).

The schools belonging to the Swiss Group of International Schools (SGIS), which constitute a small community in Switzerland, are a first point of contact to explore this field. The country hosts 54 schools that belong to SGIS and offer internationally recognised qualifications including the International Baccalaureate, the French Baccalaureate, Advanced Placement, A Levels, Swiss Matura, and US High School Diploma. Furthermore, SGIS provides an online platform that facilitates Collaborative Learning Groups fostering collaboration and connection between the teachers, staff, educators, and administrators of the group. The existence of a SGIS Librarians' group is advertised, and it is briefly indicated that the group meets twice a year in an informal setting and "discuss topics of mutual interest and undertake co-operative initiatives (...)".

1.3   Aim and objectives

This research explores how the SGIS library professionals perceive, support, and promote students' well-being in their respective school setting across Primary School, Middle School, and High School. In addition, it examines how the whole SGIS librarians' group collectively addresses students' well-being. This investigation will follow two objectives:

1. To explore whether and how the personal perceptions of well-being among the library staff influence their professional conduct.
2. To examine how SGIS library professionals foster and support well-being through their role.

This research aims to bring valuable insights to the role and practices of the library staff belonging to the SGIS librarians' group with a holistic approach to education that prioritises the social, emotional, and physical needs of children and young people with well-being and mental health as primary learning objectives (EEA 2021). Furthermore, there is also hope to engage that topic in regard to the broader community of international schools' libraries.

2   Literature review

A general literature review was chosen in which the sources are organised thematically. First, well-being is examined as a broad concept and within an educational context with the focus on well-being. Second, the ways well-being can be integrated in the school curriculum and supported by the school library are reviewed. Third, the specific landscape of international school is explained followed by the discussion of the impact of library design on students' well-being.

2.1   Well-being as broad concept

In the literature the term "well-being" is different from the term "wellness" (c.f. glossary) and encompasses multi-dimensional aspects (Carter 2019) that involve affective, psychological, physical, and social variables (Crawford and Henry 2004, Pilgrim 2017). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, well-being and mental health have become a "global priority" (United Nations 2023a) which echoes with SDG #3 adopted by all United Nations Member States (2015) and which mission statement is to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages".

There are diverse approaches to discussing well-being, and each involves unique concepts and thoughts on its achievement (Wistoft 2021). In fact, well-being is often poorly defined and undertheorized (Streuli et al. 2009). For this reason, it is problematic to find a consensus on how "quality well-being can be achieved and sustained" (Carter and Andersen 2019 p.16). Currently, two conceptual approaches of well-being are prominent in the field of research. Objective well-being theories typically focus on objective, external, and universally applicable indicators of quality of life. These encompass various social attributes, including health, education, social networks, and material resources (WHO 2021, Watson et al. 2012). Subjective well-being comprises three main components, which are the affect (feelings, emotions, and mood), the life satisfaction (school, work, family), and negative affect (Diener and Ryan 2009).

Overall, there is a general agreement that well-being is characterized by the existence of positive emotions and moods (such as contentment, happiness), the non-existence of negative emotions (such as depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfilment, and positive functioning (Diener and Ryan 2009; Diener 2000; Frey 2002). Child (2018 p.2) argues that "well-being is difficult to define as it is different for each person, but there are commonalities".

2.2 Well-being in an educational environment

2.2.1 Students' well-being

Currently, student's well-being is often addressed with a health-professional approach closely linked to mental health, mental illness, and medication (Wistoft 2021). However, a greater understanding is emerging that students' well-being is not solely defined by the absence of physical and mental health conditions (Bladek 2021). In the "health pedagogical approach" presented by Wistoft (2021 p.2), the holistic well-being of the students is positively addressed with factors that contribute to thriving and flourishing (Keyes 2002; Norozi 2023 fig.1).

In this context, subjective well-being (Watson et al. 2012) is a valuable tool to understand as it facilitates and describes the emotional and social well-being of students and staff. At school, this means feeling safe, valued, and respected, being actively and meaningfully engaged in academic and social activities, having positive self-esteem, self-efficacy, and a sense of autonomy, having positive and supportive relationships with teachers and peers (social well-being), feeling a sense of belonging to the classroom and school, feeling happy and satisfied with school life (European Education Area 2023; Rees et al. 2020). Additionally, although well-being has become a bit of "buzzword" (Wistoft 2021 p.7), it's worth considering the well-being of the students regarding their self-image, their learning and development competences that they need "to live a happy and fulfilling life" (OECD 2015).

Finally, well-being is an indicator of the quality of scholastic life and is strongly related to learning. Indeed, social well-being is reflected in academic well-being and vice versa (Banksak and Starr 2021; Merga 2022; Wistoft 2021). Academic achievement is also higher among students who exhibit a better well-being and can cope better with daily life stress factors (Kaya and Erdem 2021; McLellan and Steward 2015).

2.2.2 Well-being models

Well-being is now fully incorporated into the school curriculum in Europe and overseas (Child 2018). However, the integration of evidence-based methods or models that support the social-emotional well-being of young children and adolescents needs to be sustainable and embedded in the everyday practices of the educational setting (Barry et al. 2017). Therefore, when devising a whole school well-being policy for the community, it's necessary to clearly define the concept in accordance with the needs. The well-being of students relies on the outcome of how well programs, processes, policies enact and promote well-being (Carter and Anderson 2019).

In this section, two well-being models that foster a positive and proactive approach to the promotion of well-being in an educational setting are examined for their holistic approach, as explored in this present study.

First, a well-being education model that places the student at the centre and highlights the significance of well-being education in facilitating academic learning and achievement is suggested by McCallum and Price (2016). They contend that a holistic approach adequately depicts the interactions between the welfare of students, teachers, and the community. This model works toward what Maslow (1954) called the "self-actualisation" of the child by helping them to be the best version of themselves. Although Maslow presents a theory that rather focuses on motivation than well-being, it gives relevant aspects that echo with the six essential principles and six major strategies for fostering well-being in school suggested by McCallum and Price (2016 p.144): "Positive relationships, positive strengths, positive communication, positive behaviour, positive emotion, positive leadership". These principles align with the holistic approach of Kirkland (2021) similar to Norozi (2023 Fig.1) who looks at well-being as thriving socially, emotionally, cognitively, culturally, and physically. However, the model proposed by McCallum and Price does not deliver any tangible framework or methodology to assess the well-being of students.
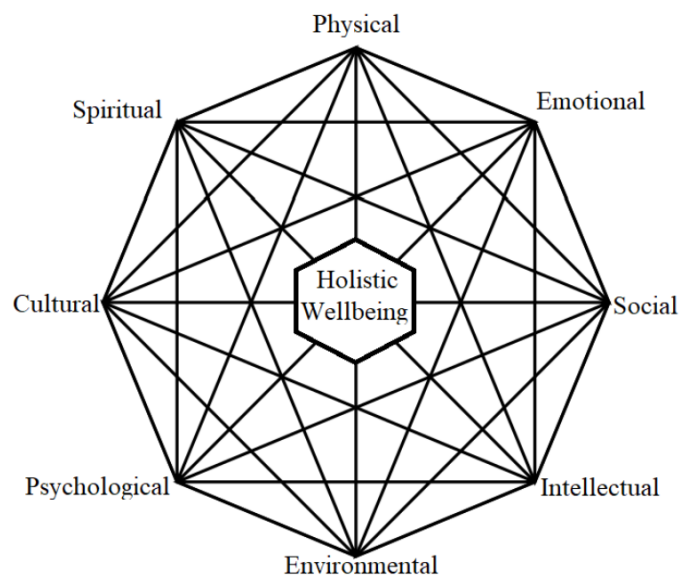

Figure 1. Holistic well-being model for school education – Reprinted from Norozi (2023).

By contrast, the PERMA model (Seligman 2011; PERMA 2018 fig.2) offers a "relatable, tangible, and measurable" way of assessing well-being in schools (Allen et al. 2016). It proposes five essential elements to well-being to enable to increase and measure it: Positive emotions (P), Engagement (E), Relationships (R), Meaning(M), Achievement (A). Each dimension operates in harmony to generate an elevated construct that predicts the flourishing of groups, communities, organisations, and nations (Seligman et al. 2011). Au and Kennedy (2018) evaluated the effective implementation of the Flourishing Life program based on the PERMA model in a local secondary school in Hong Kong. The methodology was based on a mixed method of surveys and of two focus groups interviews. The program adopted a strength-based positive education approach that combined formal and informal curricula to create a holistic environment. The results showed that, when implemented in the framework of an existing curriculum, the program is an effective tool to enhance the students' problem-solving skills and their resilience to overcome challenges. The findings also show that the students learn positive values and attitude through the role model provided by their teachers.

2.2.3 School libraries and well-being

Well-being has become a part of the strategic plans of school, public and academic libraries in the UK and overseas. WHO (2020) underscored that educational institutions are key to promote well-being and mental health among young people. The most recent results of OECD and PISA (Schleicher 2023) regarding well-being in schools of the European Union highlight a concerning widespread problem of (cyber)bullying and the fact that the children's sense of belonging at school is declining (Allen et al. 2016). The 2022 Council Recommendation of the EEA Commission published "Pathways to School Success" to promote a systemic change to address mental health and well-being in schools and build positive learning environments for all learners. In a context of emerging well-being issues triggered by the COVID-19 Pandemic

Figure 2. Well-being with the PERMA model – Reprinted from PERMA (2018)

amongst the children and young people, Roche (2022) claims that school libraries are "a powerful weapon in the battle for well-being" as they play a crucial role of "health information gatekeepers" (Immroth and Lukenbill 2009 p. 3). The National Strategy for School Libraries in Scotland (2018-2023) places health literacy at their fourth strategic aim and all school libraries should provide a "nurturing space to foster well-being".
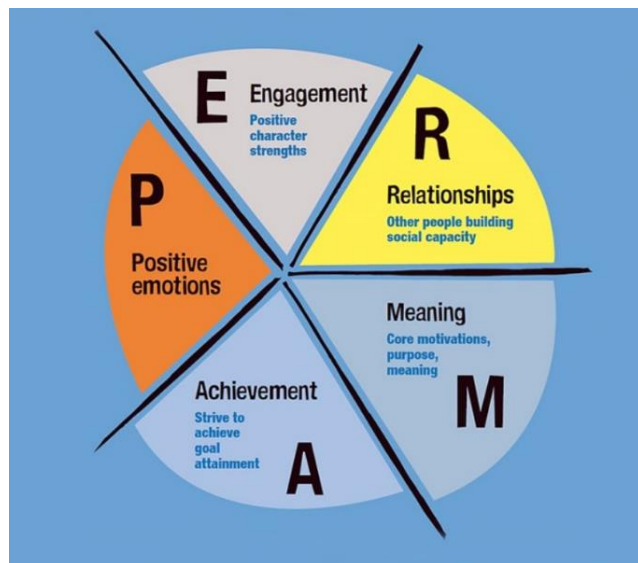
Moreover, students who make use of the school library exhibit higher mental well-being scores. Teravainen-Goff and Clark drew that conclusion by using data from 45,523 children and young people who took part in their Annual Literacy Survey from November 2017 to January 2018 (UK). The Great School Libraries campaign run by CILIP (UK) includes in their phase one report (2021) best practice examples from schools and presents a toolkit for creating a school library which supports students' well-being. This report, based on interviews with ten school librarians and a literature review, confirms that the school library is key to supporting the well-being of the students in terms of space, pastoral role and reading resources. In addition, The Task and Finish Group of the M25 Consortium of Academic Libraries (UK) created a toolkit for line managers to help promote the well-being of its staff and its students.

Finally, school libraries may support well-being in a safe and inclusive place that gives open access to the entire community (David 2020; Child 2018; Merga 2020). According to Merga (2019) and Todd and Kuhlthau (2005), school librarians not only have a positive influence on children's literacy attainment, but they also build a positive relationship with their students who can trust an adult outside their home and their classrooms (Child 2018; Korodaj 2019). However, school librarians must constantly advocate for their library's mission to gain understanding and visibility from their colleagues (Canter et al. 2011, Spear 2018).

2.3 Well-being in the curriculum

2.3.1 Health and Mental Health Literacy

Schools offer an optimal setting to implement curriculum-based mental health literacy programs (WHO 2020). Health and Mental Health Literacy refers to the extent to which people can access, assimilate, and understand essential health information and services necessary to make right health choices (Dunn and Hazzard 2019). Mental Health Literacy (MHL) is an integral component of health literacy

(Kutcher et al. 2015) and is the essential foundation for the facilitation of mental health promotion, prevention, and care (Jorm 2015; Kutcher et al. 2015). Mental health literacy plays a crucial role in promoting mental health prevention, reducing stigma, and improving the ability of children and adolescents to seek help (Simkiss et al. 2020). McLuckie et al. (2014) examined the impact of mental health curriculum on Secondary School students at a high-school level in Canadian schools. Surveys were addressed to 409 students to evaluate their mental health literacy taught by their teachers before and after the course. The results revealed positive improvement in mental health knowledge.

Moreover, the school libraries can support health and mental health literacy (Adkins et al. 2019) and equip their school community by curating current resources, accurate database, and research materials with the support of the counsellor or the school nurse if available. Merga (2022) argues that strategies to promote well-being should happen through an enjoyable learning experience as engaging the students with fiction that raises a health issue and convoys health messaging. Merga also insists on the need to build digital health literacy skills, mainly since the Pandemic and the misconceptions of information that circulated (Okan 2023).

However, in a quantitative study by Adkins et al. (2019) involving the Missouri Association of School Librarians (US), the surveys so as the interview results revealed that the school librarians (K-12) do not feel trained enough in mental health and that they lack the knowledge to promote resources for mental health and well-being (Lowry et al. 2022). This demonstrates the need of training that involves collaboration and partnerships, such as with local healthcare providers, to enrich health literacy initiatives in schools. Finally, Barr-Walker (2016) argues that very little is known in the literature about how school libraries can promote and curate such resources.

2.3.2 The Social Emotional Learning approach

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is widely integrated in school curricula to foster well-being and create positive learning environments (The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional 2023). SEL is the process of "developing self-awareness, self-control, and inter-personal skills that are vital for schoolwork, and life success" (Committee for Children 2023). The International Social Emotional Learning (ISEL) is a specific framework for international schools and aligns with the International Baccalaureate. CASEL has identified five key areas of SEL (CASEL 2019 fig.3) usually taught by classroom teachers, psychologists, school counsellors. However, as the population of international schools is characterised as transient, it is common for students to have not being exposed to a linear SEL program. Moreover, teaching SEL in an international school without any mental expert available may be challenging for the teaching staff in charge. Finally, if international schools are obligated to follow the well-being and mental health mandatory programmes of their national government, the introduction of SEL may become even more arduous (CASEL 2023).

The CASEL framework does not mention the school library as designated place for SEL lessons. Todd, Gordon et al. (2011) examined the role of school libraries in New Jersey in facilitating SEL student's learning. Their study was based on interviews with focus groups from thirteen elementary, middle, and high schools and consisted in principals, teachers, and school librarians. The findings revealed that school libraries provide a welcoming and supportive environment suitable for SEL as they constitute a more flexible setting than a classical classroom. Gordon (2019) argues that school libraries not only support the teaching faculty and the counsellors to find, purchase and curate SEL reading materials, but that they also have the teaching tools and expertise to integrate SEL in their library programs. Fitzpatrick (2022) suggests different types of SEL led by the librarian and supported by a school counsellor to build school library culture to reduce stress and improve students' well-being, such as water colouring, Origami worry boxes, colouring pages, bullet journaling.

Figure 3. Five key concepts of Social-Emotional Learning – Adapted from CASEL (2023)

2.3.3 Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy is designed to enhance mental wellbeing and enjoyment of life through reading and storytelling. It is defined as "healing through books" (Harvey 2010 p.29) and is the literary approach to address social-emotional challenges (Zins and Elias 2007, Durlak et al. 2011). Bibliotherapy can provide children and adolescents with a valuable tool to navigate the challenges of everyday life by normalizing dilemmas and presenting alternative approaches. It offers a fruitful, rewarding, and healthy way for young individuals to cope with their issues (Hayes 2023). Sigy (2023 p.1) champions developmental bibliotherapy in school libraries as a "powerful tool for promoting well-being and mental health" that enables students to explore their feelings and have access to self-help information. Jurkowski (2006) argues that the school library holds a significant role in shaping the cultural values of children and teenagers. It also provides an ideal setting where bibliotherapy can contribute to their social emotional development from a humanistic point of view.

However, it is only recently that there has been a growing interest to explore how school libraries can contribute to promoting bibliotherapeutic practices as a valid strategy to support mental health and well-being initiatives (Merga 2022). Hayes (2023) claims that the role of the librarians is crucial to the implementation of bibliotherapy in terms of collection development, collaboration with teachers and the provision of resources and advice. Nevertheless, school library staff should be trained and supported by a health professional. Additionally, Merga (2020) highlights that the perceptions of school-aged children regarding how reading impacts their overall well-being and related emotional states have not been extensively investigated, and that there is very little data available.

2.3.4 Reading for Pleasure

Reading for Pleasure, also referred to as independent, leisure or recreational reading plays a critical role on the students social and emotional well-being. A report from National Literacy Trust (2018), based on a survey of 49,047 UK school children aged eight to eighteen, reveals that children who enjoy reading have a better mental well-being than their peers. Moreover, Mak and Fancourt (2020) similar to Merga, (2020) have been investigating the educational and socio-emotional advantages of Reading for Pleasure (RfP). They consider that reading engagement and student well-being have some interesting "intersections" (Merga 2020 p.84). They suggest that beyond literacy, RfP may have several other advantages than fostering literature learning and literacy (Pihl et al. 2017, Merga 2019), such as good behaviours that are related to one's health (Teravainen-Goff 2018). It can also be a helpful way

to reduce distress in college students (Levine et al. 2020). Morgan (2023) encourages school librarians to promote "readaxation", which is relaxing with a book to beat the daily stress students may experience at school.

Moreover, Reading for Pleasure aligns with the silent reading program Just Read, which was launched in 2020 as an action research project at Queenwood School for Girls' Junior School, an independent school on Sydney's Lower North Shore. The aim of this research which happened over twelve months was to build a school reading culture and to explore, through surveys, the impacts on vocabulary development and reading comprehension. Daily, the students from grades 4 to 10 were allocated a period to read silently. Despite the Pandemic, long-term results show positive improvements in students' outcomes and well-being. The teachers also participated in this reading experience and modelled a positive attitude towards reading. They noticed a great impact on students' well-being; "in fact, some teachers said the wellbeing effects were just as great, if not greater than the literacy effects" (Russell 2022). A decrease in students' stress levels as well as a readiness to learn were directly linked to the reading program. This study shows that the positive impact of RfP on the holistic well-being of the students was not the primary objective but a part of the outcome of this reading experience. Besides, Merga (2020) highlighted that reading literacy skills are seen as a school achievement in the first place and not as a catalyst of well-being. However, school libraries can take an active role on the promotion of RfP with activities such as book clubs, reading competitions, book displays or author visits.
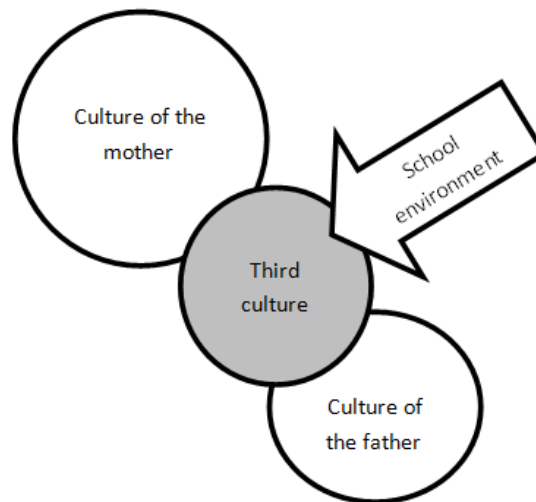
2.4 School library environments

2.4.1 The Third(s) in international school settings

International schools are multicultural learning environments which provide services at a multicultural level, supporting students from many different countries and from many cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Indeed, the population of international school communities includes local residents who have lived in the country for years and global migrants (i.e. expatriate families) whom children are called "Third Culture Kids" (TCK) (Venterova 2018 fig 4.). They are "children who accompany their parents into another society (Useem 1967)," and grow-up in a cross-cultural environment until they reach the age of 18 years old. In the context of international school, Boelens (2021 p.1) recommends that the school library staff showcase "international-mindedness" in their professional practice and think about the meaning of diversity and difference of the school community. As Avery (2014) explains in their article on the role of school libraries in an intercultural context in Sweden, school libraries must support intercultural (see glossary) and multicultural educational values by taking great care of the individual needs of the students. Thus, the school library staff along with the teaching staff should work on increasing students' literacy and information literacy skills in different languages.

Furthermore, the school library is a unique and essential part of the school community (AASL) considered as a Third Place. It is a place where people get to know one another, where there is diversity in the community, where people can have fun and entertainment, and where people can have thoughtful conversations (Oldenburg 1982, Harris 2007, Korodaj 2019). Oldenburg used the term "Third Place" to refer to a social environment that is distinct both from home ("first place") and work ("second place"). According to Buchanan (2012), Weeks et al. (2017) and IFLA (2015), school libraries are inclusive hubs for active, social learning and personal development. They nurture prosocial cultures and positive learning environments and make the bridge between home and school.

Figure 4. The Third Culture Kid – Reprinted from Venterova (2018)

2.4.2 Design of the library space

School libraries intentionally foster supportive environments (Merga 2020). Hughes et al. (2019 p. 123) observe that "the physical environment is an enabling well-being factor"; this is why school libraries should create environments that foster student's needs, safety, and comfort. It's worth mentioning the online platform ALiVE (2022) where school administrators, Boards of Education, teachers, parents, and librarians can explore the valuable contributions that a 21st-century school library and Library Learning Commons can make to enhance teaching and learning within and beyond the school environment. The standards of practice for school library commons published by the Canadian School Libraries journal (2023) highlight that the design of LLC plays a role in supporting participatory learning and constitute the collaborative learning hub of a school. However, it is necessary to have differentiated spaces that support diverse needs such as individual learning, interactions, information seeking.

Furthermore, school libraries nurture students' sense of safety (Merga 2021). In a multicultural context, learning environments that are inclusive, safe, and peaceful are requisite conditions to enhance students' well-being (UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education 2006). Bosch (2018 p.13) presents a progressive and innovative theory for the design of learning spaces based on six key concepts (Appendix IV) and claims that "the buildings where we live, work, and learn [to] have a direct influence on our health, well-being, relation to other people, and our ability to learn". Moreover, Basye et al. (2015) name six learning spaces that a school including a school library should have for an engaging environment: small groups area, large groups area, community area, technology-rich area, quiet areas, makerspaces. The four spaces model of Jochumsen et al. (2012) have been also used in the Nordic public library-world in their designs: inspiration spaces, learning spaces, meeting spaces, and performance spaces. These areas are not specifically designed as rooms, but rather as potential options within the library.

Wittmann and Fisher-Allison (2020 p.42) consider the library a "refuge" and suggest that "school librarians can shape an environment that beckons to children and inspires them to become partners in protecting the unique space where everyone is welcome". Hughes (2019) confirms that the design of the library space can support student well-being. They conducted a qualitative study that involved 44 interviewed Australian students who had to imagine their ideal library space and reflect on their existing library. The goals were linked to a national framework for fostering student well-being through the school library. The results showed that space planning can improve social and emotional well-being by addressing leisure, peace, fun, choice, and inclusion needs. Palmer (2022 p.83) argues that "a well-

designed library serves community learning, creativity, and personal growth, as well as a physical repository for information".

Finally, Merga (2021) dedicated a short study case to investigate the role of library environments and spaces, and how they contribute to student well-being. Qualitative data was based on semi-structured interviews from three Western Australian schools: three Library Managers (LMs), and twelve middle-year students. The study takes into consideration the school librarians' perspective and investigates "the behind-the-scenes considerations and investments they made to create safe and supportive environments for student well-being" (Merga 2021 p.119). However, the data collected must be interpreted with caution as the schools presented themselves as "effective at using school libraries to promote well-being" (Merga 2021 p.104). To process the data recurring themes were identified by using a process of constant comparative analysis. The results show that library managers design supportive environments with decoration and that furnishing support all kinds of social activities of any purpose and offer a quiet and safe space where physical comfort and social relationships can be achieved.

2.4.3 Use of the library space

The library space needs to be adaptive and able to accommodate diverse activities beyond the planned agenda (Magnini et al. 2015). Kirkland (2021) reviewed the new practices and innovations in Canadian school libraries where the diverse needs of the students (cultural diversity, learning needs, and personal issues) are addressed. They mentioned initiatives like the creation of zones for quiet and mindfulness, the provision of toys as stress balls, or even the provision of light therapy lamps against Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Makerspaces are a classic example of fostering well-being beyond the collections (Willis et al. 2009). They feature a various of resources that support hands-on learning and creativity and are a main component of public libraries (Gahagan and Calvert 2020), academic libraries (Nagle 2021), and school libraries (Moorefield-Lang and Dubrijakovic 2020). In addition, school libraries facilitate STE(A)M programs (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics). The STEM toolkit for school libraries (ALA 2017) does praise activities that enhance creativity, student engagement school connectedness, self-esteem and improve relationships with peer and adults. Finally, Maxwell (2022) advocates for passive programming or self-directed library programs that involve all informal and interactive activities (games, bulletin board, book in a jar, etc.) as it gives a sense of ownership over the space.

2.5 Summary and hypothesis

In a nutshell, the literature review demonstrates how well-being is closely linked to positive emotions and that students' well-being can be effectively approached with holistic educational models. School libraries are inspiring and safe environments shaped to support the diversity of the school community such as in international schools, of formal and informal learning. The school library staff plays a crucial role on fostering the holistic students' well-being by supporting the curriculum, the well-being model in place, and by offering diverse initiatives to bond with their patrons beyond academic achievement. In this present research it is assumed that:

- the attributes that qualify the individual well-being of the participants are reflected in their professional practice.
- the SGIS library staff intentionally promote and foster well-being through collaborative learning activities and the integration of SEL lessons.
- comfortable and stimulating spaces are designed and regularly reviewed to support students' well-being.

3 Methodology and design

3.1 Philosophy of research

This research is exploratory and relies on an interpretive approach. A phenomenological analysis was designed and based on interviews (Appendix I) to grasp an in-depth understanding of the respondent's thoughts and perceptions. This study examines the library staff's perception and understandings of their professional environment, this is why a subjective epistemology applies. Lorrie (2016 p.58) states that "phenomenology values other people's experiences". The goal of this study is to "make sense or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln 2005 p.3).

Initially, observations were part of the methodology, but unexpected variables prevented them from taking place. First, this research is regarded as a personal undertaking, so the researcher was not permitted to travel during their working hours. Second, obtaining institutional ethics approval would have required a significant amount of administration time from each respondent and did not guarantee a favourable response. Additionally, the institution's data protection policy would have required scheduling a visit during the absence of students. If that were the case, the observations would have occurred in a sterile setting without any tangible displays of well-being. However, some participants were willing to share pictures of their library space. These pictures are also anonymous, and students do not clearly appear on them.

3.2 Choice of methodological approach

There is little a priori theory and research about well-being in school libraries (Merga 2020) and international school libraries. This study aims to bring more insights to this body of research and to make recommendations around this topic (Trochim 2006). A qualitative method based on semi-structured interviews was deemed the most appropriate to explore the perception of well-being through the lens of SGIS librarians and to investigate how it is supported through their role. Indeed, this method is "to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of human experience through the intensive study of particular cases" (Polit 2010 p.2452). However, combining qualitative research with a generalisability method as surveys was not considered; the study only explores a small sample size in a narrow field of international school libraries. In addition, surveys would add to the risk of redundancy and require time from respondents who had already committed to the interviews.

3.3 Sampling and participants

A non-probability sampling technique with purposive sampling was chosen and expert sampling was required as "there is currently a lack of observational evidence" (Etikan et al. 2017 p.3) regarding well-being in the sector of international schools' libraries. During the recruitment process, the former coordinator of the SGIS librarians' group was approached to obtain a current list of active members. The sample consisted of a volunteers' mix of ten school librarians and two Senior library assistants located in Switzerland. All participants have library qualifications or library training, more than 5 years' experience in an educational institution and have been at least 3 years in their school, work full-time, and have daily contact time with the students. Participant descriptions are collected in a table (Table 1.) which gives their initials, the title given in their job description and the grade levels they work with. Furthermore, the library staffing in each SGIS school varies, resulting in some Primary librarians also being responsible for students in their first year of middle school, while some middle school librarians handle the first year of high school or the last year of Primary school. Thus, it was found irrelevant to classify the participants into grade year level categories due to the diverse and intricate staffing arrangements. Overall, it is expected that the SGIS library staff are proficient, well-informed, and experienced.

Table 1. List of participants

Interviewee	Role	Grade Level
CR	Primary School Senior Library Assistant	Kindergarten - Grade 5

IM	Primary School Librarian	Kindergarten-Grade 5
JB	Primary School Senior Library assistant	Kindergarten-Grade 5
JK	Primary School Librarian	Kindergarten – Grade 5
MR	Primary School Librarian	Kindergarten - Grade 5
OR	Middle-School Librarian	Kindergarten - Grade 6
MB	Primary + Middle School	Grade 5-8
ED	Middle-School Librarian	Grade 6-8
GW	Middle-School + High School Librarian	Grade 6-12
SW	Middle School + High School Librarian	Grade 6-12
AMT	Middle School + High School	Grades 8-12
ZH	High School Librarian	Grade 10-12

3.4   Procedure

To ensure thematic saturation and make the data collection robust and valid (O'Reilly and Parker 2013), the researcher proceeded with twelve individual interviews "with relatively homogenous study populations and narrowly defined objectives" (Hennink 2022 p.9). The interviews were conducted virtually on the Teams platform, primarily scheduled out of regular working hours, and were documented through recordings. A full-verbatim transcription (see Appendix III) was privileged to maintain the reliability and the intention of what the participants said. Indeed, the "interactive nature of semi-structured interviews provides room for free responses from the interviewee" (Kakilla 2021 p.1). The interview was preceded by the collection of a consent form (see Appendix II). The time allocated was between 45 minutes and one hour.

Moreover, to foster in-depth interactions with more elaborate narrative, the questions were shared beforehand in an interview guide (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015) (see Appendix I). The semi-structured interview revolved around a set of pre-established open-ended questions, while other questions might arise from both parts during the interview (DiCicco-Bloom 2006). This kind of interview allowed the collection of open-ended data and "to delve deeply into personal and sometimes sensitive issues" (DeJonckheere 2019 p.1). This procedure enabled to maintain the flow of the conversation and to go back and forth through the sequence of questions.

The first questions were introductory and about the professional background of the participants. Then, questions were organised in sections according to thematic headings: perception of well-being, well-being in the curriculum, the school library as Third Place, initiatives and promotion of well-being, the SGIS librarians' group. Some questions about the library space were influenced by a study carried out by Merga (2020) and titled "Insights from the Project on How Students Value the Library Environment".

3.5   Data analysis

The collection of data happened between October 2023 and December 2023. Prior to analysis, the transcripts were checked, and spelling errors were corrected. Furthermore, an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al. 2022) was applied to gain insights on how the individual perception of the SGIS librarians reflect on their professional practice, how they evaluate their space, and what their contribution is to both the SGIS librarians' group and the Well-being's group. Deductive coding, commonly referred to as concept-driven coding, was used after pre-determining the themes based on the objectives of this study; a pre-defined set of codes was assigned to the qualitative data. Recurring sub-themes were identified by using a process of constant comparative analysis (Boeije 2002, Kolb 2012, Merga 2021). Still, similarities or conflicting themes were identified with axial coding (Strauss & Corbin 1998). In the findings, integration combined the researcher's interpretations and quotes from the participants' interviews (Roller 2017). In addition, anecdotal conversations or "after-

the-interview interactional strip" (Warren et al. 2003 p.107) gave a way "to get nearer to the reality of individuals' experiences, values and perceptions" (Swain and King 2022 p.10).

3.6   Ethical issues

3.6.1   Positionality and professional identity

The researcher has been working for six years as library staff in one of the 54 SGIS schools. This raised the risk of confirmation bias (Metzgar 2013). To limit them, the researcher consistently challenged her own perspectives and preconceptions with the data. To maintain her professional identity (Neary 2014) and in terms of positionality (Savin-Baden and Major 2013), great care was given to adopt a neutral attitude during the interviews. The researcher did reflect consciously on the admissibility of the results and did examine the risks of personal and reputational damage these latest might cause to SGIS and their members from the bottom-up.

3.6.2   Interviews

An Ethical Review form was handed to Robert Gordon University for approval. The participants signed a consent form (Appendix II) beforehand where they were informed of the purpose, the objectives, the procedures, and the outcome of this research. Their participation was voluntary and anonymous: neither the name of the school nor of the participants would be revealed in the research. Participants could at any time withdraw from this project or refuse to answer any questions.

The transcription of the interviews was shared with the participants for their approval. The interviews were audio-recorded and stored on the researcher's Drive. Only the researcher can access the recordings. The participants have the choice to want recordings destroyed five years after their making or to allow the recordings to be archived for future research on the same topic (University of Massachusetts Amherst).

3.6.3   Trustworthiness

To establish the credibility of this research, the validation technique of member checking was used: data, interpretations, and conclusions were shared with the participants (Buchbinder 2011; Bloor 1997; Rodwell 1998). Buchbinder (2011 p.107) privileges the term "validation interview" as it involves a constructive conversation between the participants and the researcher to "confirm, substantiate, verify or correct the findings".

3.7   Limitations and risks

The whole research occurred from September 2023 to March 2024 and did not require any funding. The interviews happened according to the availability of both parties. The practical outcome was uncertain as it depended on the cooperation of the participants as well as their willingness to share their practices (Etikan et al. 2017). Saturation in the interviews with informational redundancy (Francis et al. 2010) could rise, which would limit the outcome of this study by not bringing any new insights and by affecting its credibility. Besides the anonymity of the participants, the risk of reputational harm was very low as the participants were fully acknowledged of the purposes and expectations of the research.

To ensure that the interview process would be conducted smoothly, a pilot interview was conducted with a colleague. The pre-testing of the interview structure is useful to detect any limitations related to the design of the interview (Turner 2010), to ensure its suitability for the study and to ensure a positive level of engagement from the participants (Benlahcene and Ramdani 2021).

Moreover, there was a risk of acquiescence bias (Lelkes et al. 2015) as both parties belong to SGIS; in this case, great care in the questions' framing was given. As for example, the question regarding the library space needed to be adjusted after the pre-testing. Indeed, the researcher stated that the library

was a safe place and asked the respondents to confirm this preconception. It is important to acknowledge that safety concerns are not solely determined by the physical space, but also by the individuals responsible for maintaining it. In this case, the original question did not allow for any opposing viewpoints, which would have limited the accuracy of the data collected and increased the risk of redundancy. As a result, the potential bias in the question's framing was recognised and the participants were simply asked to provide their own descriptions and evaluations of the library space. This example echoes the risk inherent to deductive coding, which can aggravate the risk of bias. Finally, in case the outcome of the research failed for any unknown reason, the researcher did not adjust the data to fit their expectations. In case of technology failure, the researcher agreed with the participants at another time.

As a conclusion, the flexibility of a qualitative approach based on an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis will allow the researcher to gain deep and contextualized insights into the experiences and initiatives of the SGIS library staff on the holistic well-being of their students in an international school community.

4   Results and discussion

Three main themes were identified in the findings: perceptions of well-being, well-being in the curriculum, and the Third Place.

4.1   Perceptions of well-being

4.1.1   The happy individual

The participants defined their individual well-being with positive attributes that relate to subjective well-being (Diener 2000). They all used terms referring to their mood and emotions such as "satisfaction", "contentment" and "happiness". They also find important to have "comfort", which echoes with life satisfaction. These are the "keywords of well-being" (JK) and points of commonalities (Child 2019) between the participants. The majority expressed their desire of taking great care of their well-being in a holistic way, such as "doing something that makes [me] happy" (JB), "being satisfied and at peace with yourself" (JK), "taking care of yourself" (IM). None of the participants mentioned any negative affect that could challenge their well-being.

However, most of the interviewees highlighted the importance of "being rooted and stable". This is a significant aspect to consider as this indicates that the interviewees, who are all expatriates, should be aware of and able to identify in their professional practice the challenges SGIS expatriate students encounter by living in Switzerland. Overall, the results are in accord with recent studies showing that well-being is a multi-dimensional construct that involves multiple descriptions and manifestations of a positive state of mind (Carter 2019).

4.1.2   The nature of the job

The participants were asked to express their understanding of the concept of well-being in their role. The findings showcase their commitment to offer the best service as possible to their community such as digital and information literacy, access to the collection, reading recommendations. As JB said, she feels well if she is able "to provide [their] students what they need" without any kind of judgement. AMT explained that "facilitating users access is linked to the well-being of the patrons because it increases the independence and confidence of students (...)."

Additionally, the term "respect" was mentioned several times when speaking about the mutual interactions between the library staff and the students. One interviewee compared the service the library provides with the services provided in a shop: "I believe that the library is somewhat of a service to the community and it's the same when you go to a shop, if you walk into a shop and (...) the shop

assistant is not happy and somewhat cranky, [then] you have that feeling of not being welcome (JK)". If the librarian makes the patrons feel well, the students will feel "happy", "welcome", and inclined to come back. Additionally, if the students are happy in their school community, they will probably enter the library with the same feeling (JK, CR, JB). The library staff create positive conditions adopting a positive behaviour that model good conditions for well-being. This confirms the theory of Tolle (2004 p.177) who states that "happiness depends on conditions being perceived as positive".

This assumption that well-being initiatives happen intentionally has been disproved. Although the data shows that the SGIS library staff adopt the six essential principles for fostering well-being in school suggested by McCallum and Price (2016), the participants all argue that they naturally implement their individual soft skills, which are essential skills for the job, in their professional practice as they do in their private life without any deliberate strategic intention. Well-being happens "unintentionally" and is "anecdotal" (IM), "it's more like by nature of the job" (JK, IM) by being responsive and adaptive educators. They see themselves as "educators beyond the curriculum" (IM) expressing the crucial need to foster a high-quality learning environment characterized by a positive school culture and climate (Barth 2001) that generate well-being. This reinforces the observations from Harper (2017 p.41) that "[...] many school librarians offer multiple anecdotal accounts of touching a child one heart at a time and of creating a safe, enriching environment based on understanding the needs of the whole child and not just for the purpose of supporting the curriculum". Well-being cannot be measured, and the actions intended cannot be quantified and displayed as effectively as for a school assessment.

Overall, the data confirm that the library staff prioritize the emotional and social well-being of the children at school by fostering feelings of safety, esteem, and respect (ACU 2008, EEA 2023, Rees et al. 2017). Their perception of well-being in the profession aligns with the holistic well-being model for school education drawn by Norozi (2023. fig1.).

4.1.3   Inclusivity and belonging

Fostering a sense of inclusivity and belonging, which is protective for the students' mental health, is another common point that confirms the multicultural sensitivity of the participants. Indeed, they all highlighted the importance of "creating an environment that is welcoming and supportive of the communities, of their diversity" (ED). At this stage of the interview, "diversity" refers to the multilingualism and the multiculturalism of the population of the international schools. Indeed, most students are "Third Culture Kids (TCK)" (Useem 1967). The International Business Kids (Biz Kids), a category of TCK, are a majority in the SGIS schools. The parents of this group are typically employed by multinational corporations and their children relocate frequently due to the demands of their parents' work in various branches of the corporation. They reside in expatriate communities, study at international schools, and tend to form close bonds primarily within their expat social circles. The other category represented in the SGIS is the Educational TCKs, who are from the local culture but attend an international school in their city.

The interviewees demonstrate a deep understanding and "international-mindedness"(Boelens 2021) of the needs of such a specific young population in terms of stability. Indeed, the TCKs may face difficult transitions from a country to another, identity development challenges and negative social-emotional issues (Miller 2020). As JB says, her role is "(...) make them feel secure, (…), [they] want you to be secure in what you are doing. They don't want uncertainty". In contrast to grade level homeroom teachers who rotate every year, the library staff can maintain a regular and reassuring presence throughout a child's school journey. Indeed, even if there may be a staff turnover every two or three years, the library staff is able to create a bound and a sense of safety with their patrons.

4.2 Well-being in the curriculum

4.2.1 Well-being as a library goal

The participants do not consider well-being as a strategic goal for their library, as articulated in the school curriculum. GW explains that "[well-being] is such an essential part of what [they] do, that not having it as an explicit goal does not mean that it is not important, and it is not addressed." Only three interviewees said that they had to submit library goals to their Leadership for each academic year and well-being is none of them. In the chapter about the mission and the purposes of a school library, IFLA (2015 p.17) recommends "an explicit plan for ongoing growth and development of the school library". The fact that most participants are not expected to set any strategic goals for their library department, in contrast to other departments in the faculty, may suggest that the school library may be a department disconnected from the others. If it's the case, the lack of a clear vision and mission within the school community may decrease the visibility and the significance of the role it should hold. In addition, not being treated like a teaching faculty may hinder the role that the school library can play as partner of the teaching staff. This also confirms that school libraries are often "forgotten partners" (Canter 2011). However, during anecdotal conversations after the interview, all the respondents agreed that well-being could be and should be a goal.

4.2.2 Integration of Social Emotional Learning

Each SGIS school tailors their well-being curriculum according to the needs of their unique school community. AM said that "well-being started to be a big topic the last two years", which raised after the Pandemic "as a wakeup call from parents, faculty and administration that something needs to be done about well-being". For example, a participant explained that their well-being curriculum is now built around respect: "through that [the school tries] to instil into the community a sense of respect for all human beings" (JK).

In SGIS Primary and Secondary Schools, the broad concept of well-being is addressed through the teaching of Social Emotional Skills (SEL). The lessons happen in Physical Education classes, Personal Development Programs lead by the homeroom's tutors and SEL workshops. From grade 6 to 11, mental health and mental health literacy are also taught through platforms dedicated to well-being, such as the platform Flourishing or PERMA at School. The Senior students do not really value SEL sessions as it's not "graded" (SW) and there is no reward as for an assessment. It's worth noticing that well-being in Physical Education is limited to the fitness and physical health, such "as nutrition or musculation" (OR).

Primary, Middle-School and High School library staff collaborate with the counsellor to tailor and curate SEL resources accordingly to the needs, but they all claim that they are not mental health experts. The Primary library staff usually participate in the planning of SEL lessons with the teachers. Sometimes "the lessons on SEL are co-taught by the teacher-librarian with the counsellor", but the role of the librarians is only supportive as they "only deliver a story" (IM) referring to relatively simple issues such as "positive behaviour", "being a good friend", and "having social manners". As for the Middle and High School, the library staff play a pivotal role by curating resources around well-being and by ensuring that the collection serves the needs of the students, but they do not teach any SEL lessons. Middle and High school librarians only teach on demand (grades 6-12) and mostly by interventions in the classrooms on more academic topics related to digital and information literacy, and research skills.

4.2.3 Bibliotherapy

Although eleven participants said that they were unfamiliar with bibliotherapy and needed an explanation of the term, they naturally practice it through SEL and the curation of resources on well-being. JK, who majored in this subject, said that "through books, we meet all these characters that have so many different issues and then which we try and practice what we preach through the literature". There is an obvious lack of training in the field of bibliotherapy, but JK, the only respondent

familiar with it, affirmed that it would not be possible to implement it anyway as the focus in SGIS schools is on SEL. However, all the respondents agree on the healing power of the books. Additionally, although LibGuides (curation platform for libraries) focusing on the topic of well-being for the benefit of students and parents are created and maintained, they are frequently overlooked due to lack of promotion.

4.2.4   Reading for Pleasure

Reading for Pleasure is championed by the SGIS library staff to promote well-being with a different approach according to the grade level. In Primary, Reading for Pleasure is practiced daily in the classroom and the children have weekly library lessons when they borrow new books for the week. The goal is to create a habit of reading and to develop the pleasure of it. Giving the excitement for reading involves being creative and pro-active, this is why IM highlighted the role that the library staff plays in promoting their collection, "how [they] market [their] collection, about how [they] present it and share it with [their] students and teachers."

In Middle-School and High School, the habit of reading is not as pregnant as there are no library lessons. The students also have free access to digital books on Overdrive. ZH mentioned an experimental one period a week of Just Read for grade 6 to 9 in the library and supervised by their English teacher. The outcome has not been evaluated yet. Moreover, initiatives such as interscholastic voluntary reading competitions (e.g. The Battle of the Books), regional reading contest (The Cowbell Golden Award) or book clubs in Middle-School are strategies that create emulation even if they do not involve the whole cohort. At all age, the freedom to choose what the students want to read is crucial in installing pleasure and habits of reading. JK and AMT said that some teachers imposed a certain level of Lexile to their students which "hinder their freedom for reading whatever they would like (JK)". In this case, the school librarian can play a significant role to help the students to make bounded choices (Gambrell 2011). However, it is essential for the teacher to acknowledge and recognise the valuable role of the library staff in enabling this collaboration.

4.2.5   A sanctuary

The positive attitude of the library staff contributes to create a safe and welcoming environment. The redundancy of the word "safety" at this point of the study underscores its significance as a common thread running through the interviews and validates that the SGIS library staff have a sound understanding of the endeavours that the students must face in a third culture school setting. The library space, while meticulously designed and catering to the community's requirements in terms of collection and technology, is unable to reach its maximum potential without the welcoming attitude of the responsible staff members. Many interviewees all spontaneously recalled one "horrible", "shush", "frightening", "strict" school librarian in their childhood who was the reason why they avoided the school library. JB said, "in our library, kids know that they will be treated well" [...] and that there is a solution to their problems" (JB). As CR added, the students know "that someone is available close by needed". The students received "individual care without any judgment (GW)" and do not need to perform academically.

Moreover, the library is "a place for all (ED)" in terms of social emotional and learning profiles. The example of special needs students who come to take a time out and "switch off" was mentioned many times. The library space also gives an outlet for students who look for "decompression time (CR)" in general or "while they're making some adjustments (GW)" when they arrive to their new school environment. In international schools, English is not the first language of most students, which is why reading a book in their language makes them feel "more confident about themselves" (JB); this highlights the importance of having a collection that celebrate the diversity in different languages.

Finally, the term sanctuary deems to be the most appropriate to define the SGIS library spaces where students can find multipurposed goals to it. The library is completely free from academic pressure;

thus, the students feel enabled and safe to take "ownership" (CR) of the place and of the resources at disposal, which contributes to build up their confidence. At any age, the students can navigate in the space to get what they need without the need or the obligation to ask an adult although they are aware that the boundaries are the same for all places at school. This kind of freedom refers to the concept of movement (Bosch 2018) that energises the learning process. For example, the students can enhance non-academic skills such as social and cognitive skills by playing games of any sorts according to their age (construction games, board games, cards). They also have access to sensory items and can develop their creativity thanks to crafts activities (colouring, sewing, canvas, etc.).

4.2.6 **Pastoral care**

None of the respondents had received any sort of training about well-being and mental health during their library studies. Two respondents remembered that well-being was vaguely approached only in terms of providing good library services. Like all the participants, CR said "the well-being training that I've had has happened much more on a day to day on the job level." The SGIS library staff benefit from internal trainings in their school as they are expected to implement and apply the school policies in the library environment. However, AMT deplores that those issues around the well-being of a student "is something between the counsellor and the admin team, but not the library", unless they're a homeroom tutor. Although they understand the student's disclosure and confidentiality policy, participants of Middle and High School agreed to say that they often lack crucial information about regular patrons' mental or social-emotional issues.

Furthermore, all the respondents agree that they have a pastoral role although they are only equipped to "manage basic behaviour issues". Nevertheless, they welcome diverse students with diverse needs for which they would require a deeper understanding to be able to respond appropriately. That leads to the question of inclusion of the library staff in pastoral meetings. Furthermore, a common feeling of frustration did emerge as all the respondents felt that the positive impact they have on the well-being of the students was not "understood" or "acknowledged by the community". GW said, "this is not unique to our school, (…) it is unique to our profession". The majority of respondents felt that their community did not recognise their active contribution to the holistic well-being of the students because their actions are "not visible". GW explained that "[the library] is not mainstream academic and therefore it's not in the spotlight. It does not mean that it is not valuable, and it does not add value, but (…) very often the beat to which the school runs are its curriculum and its timetable, and the library and its functions are not a direct cog in that wheel." In fact, the library staff are in one space all day and do not perform academically, so the management "don't see"(CH) what they do.

4.2.7 **Impact of the Pandemic**

During the Pandemic, the school library was effectively closed for two years, which had an impact on the school community. In Secondary School, the participants agreed that the students, mainly the junior ones, needed time "to come back to the library" at break times but the use of the space has now returned to normal. All participants acknowledged the expected rise of behavioural issues due to the lack of socialisation during two years of remote learning, but they do not see this as the main impact. They all rather emphasized and deplored the disappearance of parents from the library environment, mainly in Primary school. The Third Place is a shared space by the whole school community and losing key members has visible consequences on the Primary students' reading habits. JB observed that before the Pandemic, parents would come and read with their children. The positive attitude of the parents to reading has an impact on children's ability to access texts and their subsequent engagement with reading (Ho and Lau 2018, OECD 2021). All respondents agreed that "[families] are out of the habit of reading". CR and ED made the same comparison:" less parents, less readers".

The trend of having parents in and as volunteers has not come back yet. To explain this phenomenon, all respondents mentioned an increase of safeguarding and security policies that involves "a big process" (JK), which "limits the parents" who don't want to go through the hassle. Having lost a crucial partner who contributed to give "a sense of community", the library staff feel that they let the parents down and cannot support them as they used to. They also feel that their inability to connect in person with them hinders their capacity to fully enhance and contribute to the students' well-being. To maintain the contact, JK reminded the importance of being "visible" and to have "a slot in the parents' newsletter every week", for example. To re-gain parents' engagement, another participant organises since last year a "Library Night" for Primary students and parents offering storytelling in multiple languages, colouring activities, a family quiz, and boarding games. It is planned to involve Secondary students in this event next school year.

4.3 The library space
4.3.1 An adaptive place

The students look for a space where they can find "comfort and a corner to hide" (JB). An interviewee mentioned a tent (pic.1) at disposal for their Primary students where they can isolate themselves. Another praised the little holes (pic.2a and 2b) where the students can read and relax peacefully. This refers to the concept of cave (Bosch 2018) which provides a space for individual concentration, focus, and reflection. It is characterized by quietness but not necessarily isolation. As highlights ED, school libraries "have always been a refuge" but they are not necessarily "the less quiet places" as they are traditionally known in public or academic libraries. However, it provides flexibility and freedom in terms of movement (Bosch 2018) which enhances cognitive skills and energises the learning process. Despite the certain level of noise or circulation, the students find a space where they "belong". Indeed, the library offers a free-flowing space that facilitates informal exchanges, what Bosch (2018) calls the watering hole (pic.3a and 3b) and common or individual study spaces (pic.6a and 6b). The library also offers a space for extra-curricular activities such Homework clubs, Service as Action clubs, parent's workshops, various meetings.

Picture 1. A corner to hide. 2024 JB

Picture 2a. "cave". 2024 Author

Picture 2b. "cave". 2024 Author

Picture 3a. "watering hole". 2024 IM

Picture 3b. "watering hole". 2024 AMT

4.3.2 Impact of design on well-being

The question of design and the impact on the well-being of the students revealed that the interviewees are mostly critical of their library space. Four respondents argue that the configuration of the space had a bad impact on the well-being of the students in terms of "privacy and capacity". They are two factors: the lack of space available in the school building and the poor design of it (few and uncomfortable furniture). For example, MR does not own a proper library, which is just "a part of the corridor" (pic.4a and 4b.) and "affects significantly" the quality of services. In this case, the lack of flexibility systematically excludes the library to be a welcoming and adaptive space. Unlike the teaching staff, the library staff do not have as many interactions with the students daily. This is why it is crucial to provide an inviting environment to attract students and encourage them to visit. For example, GW deplores the location of the High School library outside the campus which is a hindrance to the visibility and use of the library.

However, most respondents feel that they have a "reasonable control over the space" (GM) in terms of arrangement of the furniture. As also claimed by Magnini et al. (2015), a judge of the ALIA Library Design (2023) said that "well-designed spaces enable you to provide the best possible service; [the library space] acts as a barrier if it's badly designed". Indeed, if physical comfort, as noted by Merga (2021), cannot be achieved, the sense of ownership of the space emphasized by Wittman and Fischer-Allison (2020) cannot happen, thus the children cannot become partners in protecting the unique space where everyone is welcome.

Picture 4a. School library in the corridor. 2024 MR

Picture 4b. School library in the corridor. 2024 MR

In addition, five respondents mentioned the future extension of their school, none of whom was involved in the design process of the new library. None had a say in strategic decisions that could potentially affect their service to their community and the well-being of their end users. One

respondent has recently been moved to a new building where the library was "simply forgotten" (AMT) and ended-up in a classroom. This demonstrates a lack of thorough understanding of the necessity of a school library as a strategic space.

Finally, the interviewees were asked to qualify their library space which was mostly described as "adaptive" and as "a flexible space with multi-purposes." They all mention the Learning Commons (Pic.5a and 5b) or campfire (Bosch 2018) but deplores the lack of space for quiet as study spaces (pic. 6a and 6b.) and makerspace, which are sometimes located in another classroom or even in the corridor. However, two relevant and distinct opinions regarding the function of the library were extracted from the data: one suggests that the library is used for "everything", albeit not always in an ideal manner. For example, AMT deplored that the librarians were the "the baby-sitter" (AMT) when a class needs supervision if the teacher is absent. The second one does highlight the invaluable role of the school library as "community space". All participants agree to say that their library is as "the heart of school". Six participants pointed out that it is "always visited by potential families" and systematically presented as a positive and valuable attribute to the school.

Picture 5a. Learning Commons Primary. 2024 JB
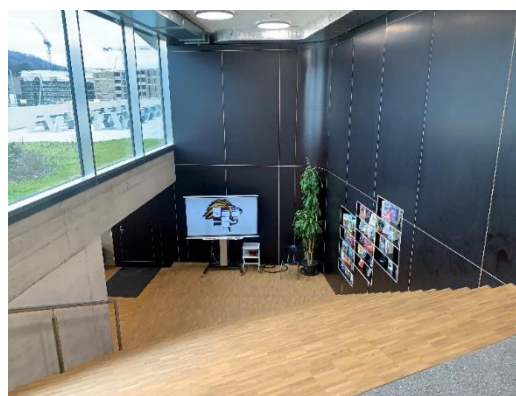
Picture 5b. Learning Commons Middle School. 2024 Author

4.3.3 Visibility and budget

The results revealed that the library staff associate the allotment of their budget with their level of exposure in their school community. SGIS schools are all private, so the budget allocated to the libraries depends on each school's Executive. Most interviewees said during informal conversations that the library would always be the first department to face budget shortage.

Again, the feeling of not being acknowledged causes frustration when it comes to the budget regarding the space. Indeed, most interviewees contend that their budget is substantial to extend the collection for the needs of the community but is restricted in terms of the acquisition of furniture (new cushions, comfortable seats, new shelves) or other craft supplies. The budget for books is seen as detriment of the budget for furnishings and decorations although the participants highlighted that the students often seek the activities (crafts, jigsaws, boardgames, colouring) before the books. This shows that academic achievement is prioritised and that the understanding of what the library can offer is not there yet. Every academic school year, the budget is revised, and the library staff must advocate for it. Overall, as SGIS library staff are not directly linked with academic achievement, they feel that their work is not as visible as the teaching staff's. This is problematic because they play a crucial role in supporting their students' well-being. Unfortunately, it is worth noticing that the lack of acknowledgement and the work overload are common in all fields of the profession.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Summary of research

This research based on a qualitative method and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis explores the ways SGIS library professionals perceive, promote, and foster the holistic well-being of their students in an international school setting. The research was guided by two main objectives.

The first objective explored whether and how the personal perceptions of well-being among the library staff influence their professional conduct. It was found that the participants commonly qualify their individual well-being as happiness and contentment. The SGIS library professionals naturally transfer their own perception of well-being to their professional practices with the aim of providing safe and stable environments for school communities largely populated by Third Cultural Kids (TCK). Their priority is to serve their students' needs the best they can, which will create a feeling of natural satisfaction on both sides.

The second objective examined how SGIS library professionals foster and support well-being through their role. The results showed that the interventions of the library staff to support well-being are not intentional or measured, and well-being is not a goal of their mission statement if they have one. However, the TCK paradigm has an impact on the pastoral role of the library staff who put a significant effort on maintaining positive relationships and designing a library space supporting of all the diversity. Moreover, the library space needs to be constantly reshaped to serve the needs of the students and the lack of space and means in terms of furniture or decoration creates frustration amongst all interviewees. They also all agree that the primary objective of the students is to seek a safe and welcoming environment rather than simply engaging in reading books.

Overall, the methodological approach enabled the researcher to actively engage with the participants, to explore their lived experiences and to extract rich and contextual data. The interview guide facilitated fluid conversations when responding to objective one and two, although the interviews were online. The participants gave examples that could be used as relevant data to explore their perception of well-being in their personal life and in their work. Saturation happened after the seventh interview, which demonstrates that the sample was adequate to collect deep and valuable insights (O'Reilly and Parker 2013). It also confirms the validity and robustness of the data collected (Francis et al. 2010).

5.2 Limitations

The use of the validation technique aimed to mitigate potential reputational damage or controversial issues. Although the results on objectives one and two are not biased as they primarily focus on the topic of well-being in an international school setting, the extent to which this study can be generalised is questionable.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

Firstly, the findings of this study at a micro level could open an avenue for further research on well-being in the landscape of worldwide international school libraries. A mixed-method approach with focus groups should include students and parents whom engagement in the communities of international schools is particularly important. Secondly, the creation of a digital toolkit for international school libraries, regardless of curriculum, based on worldwide collaboration, with the support of the International Association of School Librarianship (IASL) for example, could also provide strategies to supports students' well-being and be integrated in the schools' handbook.

School libraries have the potential to be significant allies in the pastoral care of students. It is necessary to make the role of school library staff sounder in their school communities to acknowledge their

engagement in facilitating the student's well-being. However, as Canter (2011), Merga (2021) or Weetman (2023) pointed out, the school administration often fails to recognise the great possibilities and significance of their roles. This is why it is recommended to share the studies done in the school library field with colleagues of one's own school, and with other educators out of the Library and Information Science arena, such as the Educational Collaborative for International Schools (ECIS) or in a future European Conference for Education (ECE). This would enable a better comprehension of the role that (international) school libraries play in the holistic well-being of the students.

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