



# Factors Affecting Children's Happiness In School: A Study Of Select Schools In Telangana.

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## Abstract

Happiness has always been a fascinating subject of enquiry. We, as policymakers, administrators, teachers and parents want all our children to be happy in the school and the learning environment. Being happy makes the learning process efficient and creates an enjoyable climate. This research study aims to identify the major factors which contribute towards children's happiness at school. The factors examined in this research are: relationships (human factor), self-confidence and personal safety (personality factor), school activities and facilities, personal and academic achievements and extra-curricular activities. The results of the study revealed that the factors which affected children's happiness in order of importance were: the relationship with family members, friends and teachers, followed by academic achievement, participating in extra-curricular activities, personal achievements and awards, the feeling of safety in school and using the school facilities. The results will enlighten the management and the teachers on the importance of children's happiness and enable them to improve those areas that are more important to students besides fulfilling the major aims of education.

**Key terms:** Children's Happiness, Happy schools, Happiness, Positive psychology

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings long for happiness and desire it to be the goal in life. According to Aristotle, Happiness is the ultimate goal and meaning of life (Crisp, 2000). Through addition to being something that can be learnt, happiness can also be found in learning. The goal of education for pupils should be their happiness. Education involves directing those who receive it in a direction that will enable them to find happiness. (Kumagai, 2000).

Once upon a time in the school system when children found themselves happy, learned and played with friends in a pleasant environment and build beautiful relationships with teachers and peers has now changed to increasingly complex in learning process, relationships in schools and at homes, quantitative learning and economic domination of educational system. The elements of happiness for students have diminished and

replaced by stress, overburdening and swallowing up all the leisure time. A student goes home exhausted and comes to school not thrilled. The educational policies at local and national level are not gearing up to happiness of students. As a result, the learning system has become uninteresting, stressful and burdensome rather than joyous and enthusiastic for learning.

### 1.1 What is Happiness?

Happiness can be defined as being in a positive emotional state or state of positive effect, whereas well-being refers to a value, or what can be considered as good for a person. In this article happiness and well-being which contributes to happiness are used frequently together. Pestalozzi who explored how education could ultimately bring happiness and improvement of the human condition by focusing on the ‘whole child’; aspiring beyond academic outcomes, to promote physical, mental and psychological development. Schools that can promote happiness, referred as ‘happy schools’ (UNESCO Report, 2016), are key to ensuring better well-being, health, and achievement as well as success in learning, future life and work. The Happy Schools Project (UNESCO, 2016) focuses on “happiness in terms of the quality of education. It emphasizes the psycho-social and emotional dimensions of learning to promote happiness within the school context, focusing on the contribution of the schooling experience to learner well-being, growth and development”.

Promoting learner happiness and well-being in schools does not mean that learning should be made easier but rather, that such approaches could help fuel a genuine love of learning. According to the *World Happiness Report 2015*, “schools that prioritize learner well-being have the potential to be more effective, with better learning outcomes and greater achievements in learners' lives” (Layard & Hagel, 2015). To enhance happiness and well-being, school systems need to value learners’ unique strengths and talents, recognizing that there are ‘multiple intelligences’ and that each of these has equal importance (Gardner, 1993).

Happiness is to promote psycho-social and emotional dimensions of learning, development of physical, mental and psychological aspects of a person, to value learners’ unique strengths and talents, to recognize ‘multiple intelligences’ and finally quality of education.

This study aims to find out the perception of students about happiness and the factors affecting their happiness in school or at learning process.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many studies indicate that happy students perform better and achieve better results. Furthermore, they show that emotions significantly influence students learning strategies, cognitive resources, motivation, and academic achievement.

Nasoohi (2009) mentions that working towards creating a happy climate in schools will encourage students to attend school, reflecting positively on the academic achievements of students and on other values such as associated with relationships in school and society.

Talebzadeha and Samkanb (2011) persuade that importance be given to improve students' happiness in the educational system. Happy students are more motivated to be actively involved in school programs. Happiness enhances creativity and promotes positive social relationship among students. It has been proven that positive and negative relationships between children and others, such as parents and friends, have a significant impact on the level of happiness in children.

Schiller and Hinton (2015) conducted a study about student happiness and academic achievement. The researchers collected data from 435 students who make up 94% of the school including: elementary, middle and upper school. The study showed that social relationships are essential to students' happiness and students who had good relationships with their teachers and classmates were more likely to be happy.

According to a study conducted by Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) lecturer Christina Hinton in grades K-12, happiness is positively correlated with motivation and academic achievement. Her analysis found the following:

- Happiness is positively associated with intrinsic motivation (a personal drive to learn) for all students, and with extrinsic motivation (outside sources like rewards, praise, or avoiding punishment) for students;
- Happiness is also positively associated with GPA for students in grades 4–12;
- Happiness is predicted by students' satisfaction with school culture and relationships with teachers and peers;

Zarei (2013) stated that different factors had influence on students feeling happy in schools. Child centred, Activity based, Joyful learning, and pedagogical approaches will make children happy at school.

According to UNESCO's report (2016) on 'Happy school project' some of the factors which affect student's happiness and promote good learning are:

- Friendships and relationships in the school community
- positive teacher attitudes and attributes
- positive and collaborative values and practices
- Respect for diversity and difference
- Team work and collaborative spirit
- Useful, relevant and engaging learning content
- learner freedom, creativity and engagement
- secure, warm, and friendly learning environment

- mental wellbeing and stress management
- experiential learning within and outside the classroom, field trips and extracurricular activities.

From the review of literature, it can be drawn that the following factors will contribute for the students to be happy: pleasant relationships with teachers and peers; positive teacher attitudes; academic achievement and culture of the school; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; joyful, useful, relevant and engaging learning content and leaning; student activity based; positive and collaborative values, spirit and practices; learner freedom, creativity, secure, and friendly learning environment;

Reviews reveal that overall performance of happy students is better in various areas: attendance of students, on the academic achievements, relationships in school and society and active involvement in school programs;

The study on happiness of students is important in the context of Indian Educational system. In India, classrooms have become more about the weighty school-bags, filling the class rooms to maximum and commit to memory irrelevant subject. This study proposes various approaches to improve students' happiness index and their overall performance.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Based on the review of literature done, the following research objectives and research questions were formulated.

#### **3.1 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The main objectives of this present study are

- To identify what makes school students happy.
- To identify the more important factors that have a bigger impact on overall happiness.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What makes students happy in school?
- What are the more important factors that have a bigger impact on overall happiness of children?

#### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This research utilized a quantitative method (survey method) to collect data needed from the targeted sample of the research.

#### **3.4 PARTICIPANTS**

The research sample consists of 304 students, boys and girls of grades 6 and 7 (age group of 12-14) from two schools in Hyderabad city.

### 3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

For the purpose of data collection, the researcher used the validated questionnaire prepared by Elayyan (2017) for his work on factors associated with the student's happiness. The questions were in a closed-end style, suitable for the students of grade 6 and 7 to understand and respond to. The PART I has two questions aimed at finding out how the students felt at the time of the survey. Two choices happy – unhappy were given to select one. The PART II has questions in Table 1 to 6 and were designed on a 5-point scale starting from disagree strongly to agree strongly. The five topics of the survey questions are: (i) Relationship/human factor (questions 3–9); (ii) Self-confidence/personal achievement (questions 10–15); (iii) School activities and facilities (questions 16–21); (iv) Personal and academic achievements (questions 22 – 26); and (v) Extra circular activities (questions 28–32).

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

The data obtained were analysed to answer the research questions.

### RQ1: What makes students happy in school?

#### PART I:

Statement 1. The survey tests whether the students feel happy or not. The findings show that 296 students (97.37%) stated that they consider themselves happy students. While only 08 students (2.63 %) said they feel unhappy.

Statement 2. The students were asked to compare their feelings to their friends or classmates. 281 students (92.43%) said they are happy compared to their friends, while the percentage of the students who felt unhappy compared to their friends increased to 23 students (7.57 %).

#### PART II:

##### I. Relationships, Human Factor (statements: 3-9)

The effects of relationships of students with their teachers, management, peers and family.

##### Level of Happiness with Love and Care of Teachers and School Management

Statement 3. 87% of the students feel happy when their teachers love and care for them.

Statement 4. 83% the students feel happy when their school management love and care for them.

##### Level of Happiness with friends and classmates

Statement 5. 89% of the students feel happy when they have a lot of friends.

Statement 6. 72% of the students feel happy when they get along well with their classmates.

Statement 7. 58% of the students feel happy when they get along with their small group of close friends.

Statement 9. 42 % of students feel happy when they hang out with their friends during break time.

## Level of Happiness with parents and siblings

Statement 8. 96.38% of the students feel happy when they are loved at home from their parents and siblings.

## II. Personal Factor (statements: 10-15)

The personal factor includes self-confidence, personal achievement and the feeling of being safe in school.

### Level of happiness and participation in school activities

Statement 10. 76% of students said they feel happy when given the opportunity to participate in the morning assembly.

Statement 11. 84% of students said that they feel happy when given the opportunity to represent their class in competitions.

Statement 12. 86% of when students said that they feel happy when chosen to play for school teams.

### Level of happiness in relationship to teachers and parents concerning activities

Statement 13. 82% of students said that they feel happy when parents pick them up from school.

Statement 14. 82% of students said that they feel happy when teachers complement their work.

### Level of happiness and school environment

Statement 15. 77% of students said that they feel happy when they feel safe in school.

## III. School Activities and Facilities: (statements: 16-21)

School activities and facilities are: sports, library, ICT lab, Art room, canteen and school bus to commute.

Statement 16. 86% of students said that they feel happy when they use sports facilities.

Statement 17. 80% of students said that they feel happy when they use library.

Statement 18. 72% of students said that they feel happy when they use the ICT lab.

Statement 19. 75% of students said that they feel happy when they use Art room.

Statement 20. 64% of students said that they feel happy when they go to eat from the school canteen.

Statement 21. 55% of students said that they feel happy when they use school bus to commute.

## IV. Personal and Academic Achievements: (Statements: 22-27)

The academic and personal achievements consist of: scoring high marks, receiving awards and certificates, practical experiments and positive comments by teachers.

Statement 22. 98 % of students said that they feel happy when they score high marks in all subjects.

Statement 23. 97% of students said that they feel happy when they score high marks in the subjects they like.

Statement 24. 81% of students said that they feel happy when they are rewarded in presence of students.

Statement 25. 86% of students said that they feel happy when they receive awards or certificates.

Statement 26. 80% of students said that they feel happy when they do practical experiments.

Statement 27. 78% of students said that they feel happy when teachers write positive comments in the diary to the parents.

#### **V. Extra circular activities: (Statements: 28-32)**

The school activities consist of school trips, stay over after school, overnight camps, to read stories and books not related to curriculum and participate in different activities.

Statement 28. 89% of students said that they feel happy when they go on school trips.

Statement 29. 71% of students said that they feel happy when they stay for after school activities.

Statement 30. 62% of students said that they feel happy when they stay for overnight camps.

Statement 31. 76% of students said that they feel happy when they can read stories and books not related to the curriculum.

Statement 32. 88% of students said that they feel happy when they participate in have different activities.

#### **RQ2: What are the more important factors that have a bigger impact on overall happiness of children?**

##### **Analysis of the Factors of Happiness by its Importance to Students (statement: 33)**

Students were asked to put the factors that have an influence on their happiness in order of importance.

From student's point view, what is the most important thing that makes them happy:

30.92% of students said relationship with Teachers, Peers and Family makes them feel happy.

26.32% of students expressed that Academic Achievement makes them happy.

17.76% of students expressed that extra-curricular activities gives them happy feelings.

12.50% of students said that awards and recognitions contribute to their happiness.

Very insignificant 8.88% and 3.62 % of students said that security and facilities in the school gives them happiness.

## **5. FINDINGS**

The findings show that 97.37% of students stated that they consider themselves happy students and 92.43% said they are happier than their friends. With confidence, students have seen themselves happy. From the survey conducted, the factors contributing to happiness of students are examined.

**Relationships:**

Relationships are important for their happiness as students indicated in the survey.

- a). Level of Happiness with parents and siblings is highest as a natural phenomenon. 96.38% of the students feel happy when they are loved at home by their parents and siblings.
- b). Level of Happiness with Teachers and School Management is next highest which must be cultivated by the Institution. With their teachers 87% and with their school management 83% of students feel happy when loved and cared for.
- c). Level of Happiness with friends and classmates is high. 89% feel happy when they have a lot of friends. 72% feel happy when they get along well with their classmates. It is an atmosphere a teacher creates for the class to keep students happy and encourage friendships among students. Since students spend most part of the day in the school, teacher has opportunity and responsibility to contribute to the level of happiness of students in building up relationships.

**School Activities:**

86% when chosen to play for school teams and 84% when given the opportunity to represent their class in competitions feel happy. Giving lots of opportunities to students to participate in school and inter school sports and other extracurricular activities contribute to the happiness of students.

82% said that they feel happy when teachers complement their work or parents pick them up from school. What is easily possible is that teachers respond positively to the good performance of student with written compliments to increase the level of happiness.

**School Facilities:**

86% of students when they use sports facilities, 80% when they use library, 72% when they use the ICT lab and 75 % when they use Art room, they said they feel happy. Providing infrastructure and various facilities enhances the happiness of students. The management can express their care and concern through lots of innovative and relevant facilities in the school.

**Academic Achievements:**

When students score high marks in all subjects (98%), the subjects they like (97%), awards or certificates they receive (86%), rewarded in presence of students (81%), do practical experiments (80%) and teachers write positive comments in the diary to the parents (78%) they feel happy. The academic standards of a school must be high to make students experience high level of happiness.



### Extracurricular activities:

School trips (89% students), participation in different activities (88% students), read stories and books (76% students), stay for after school activities (71% students), overnight camps (62% students) are some of the activities that students said make them feel happy. Class teachers with the management should plan out various activities and make students participate actively in them with incentives. Lots of enthusiasm in reading books and sharing it with others should be encouraged.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The results of this study recommend on how to increase student happiness in the school, which will reflect positively on the overall school effectiveness and academic achievements.

In any teaching learning context, learner is most important. The entire objective of education is to facilitate the learner and to produce a human resource which is going to be productive for any country. Therefore, Schools need to nurture an enabling learning environment. It is well known that the quality and extent of learner achievement are determined primarily by teacher competence, sensitivity and teacher motivation (NCFTE, 2009). Teachers play a crucial role in children's development, not only academically, but also emotionally and socially. It is very important for teachers to know how children think and feel, and what makes them happy or sad. Teacher plays an important role in building up relationships with students and among students, encouraging students to participate in intellectual, sports, music, dance, art, leadership, talent training and extracurricular activities to make students happy and potential people. Teachers need to maintain high levels of happiness in the class room. It should be a happy class room and joyful students. Then the academic performance and output in other activities will excel.

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