



GENDER DIFFERENCE IN HAPPINESS

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ABSTRACT Happiness is a complex emotional state that includes components of life satisfaction, positive affect, and overall perceived well-being. It has been recognized as one of the important indicators of mental health and also plays a significant role in influencing various aspects of an individual's development, particularly the social interactions he or she has during adolescence. This study attempts to explore whether high school students in Kerala experience different levels of happiness based on their gender. The present study has two broad objectives: to assess the level of happiness among students and to determine if there is a significant difference between the mean scores of students' happiness levels based on gender. A survey method was adopted for the study. The sample comprised 170 high school students selected from various schools in Kerala. A Happiness Questionnaire, developed by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University, served as the tool for data collection. The questionnaire is acknowledged for its reliability and validity in measuring levels of happiness. The study results show that students experience different levels of happiness. More importantly, it shows that there is a significant gender difference in the happiness scores of the students. Boys were found to be more homogeneous than girls in their levels of happiness. This finding implies that gender-related factors may be involved in the emotional well-being of adolescents and indicates an intervention-focused approach to support adolescents in general and particularly female students to gain more happiness and mental health improvement. The study points out the need for further consideration of gender differences in emotional development while continuing education.

KEYWORDS : Gender difference, Happiness, High School Students**INTRODUCTION**

Happiness is something that everyone in the world seeks, regardless of culture, age, or background. It forms one of the core aspects of human existence and affects not only mental well-being but also personal relations, effectiveness at work, and societal peace (Ermiş, 2023). Although notions of happiness differ from person to person, it generally involves experiencing positive emotions, life satisfaction, and a sense of purpose or meaning in one's life (Farmer, 2022). The study of happiness as a subject was only recently taken out of the philosophical realm and made into an important field of study within psychology and social sciences (Inam, 2021). Current researchers aim to determine not only what makes people happy but also how different variables such as age, gender, culture, and socio-economic conditions affect the experience of being happy (Aydınbakar, 2024). Happiness is most commonly defined as a state of well-being characterized by feelings ranging from contentment to ecstatic joy (Khawar, 2023). Well, according to Martin Seligman, one of the founding fathers of positive psychology, happiness comprises three dimensions; the pleasant life that involves an experience of pleasure, the engaged life which takes part in involvement and the meaningful life that contributes to purpose (Puspitawati, 2023). In addition, Daniel Kahneman, the eminent psychologist who won a Nobel Prize, makes a distinction between experienced happiness (the moment-to-moment emotions) and remembered happiness (the evaluation of life as a whole). The two definitions above show that while happiness is much more than just an ephemeral emotion, it also represents a sense-of-state well-being over time.

On an international scale, happiness is increasingly being quantified and reported on an annual basis in the World Happiness Report, which ranks nations in terms of a number of important indicators including income, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, trust, and generosity (Namazi, 2024). India is placed 126th among 146 nations in the World Happiness Report 2024, indicating a large disparity in accomplishing peak levels of national happiness (Sanin, 2018). Even though India is one of the fastest-growing economies and has a rich cultural heritage, its low ranking in terms of happiness is a cause for concern regarding the quality of life, mental health, and social well-being of its citizens (Mert, 2022). Poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, and lack of access to mental health services are some of the factors that lead to this low ranking.

Happiness is not only a personal or societal aspiration but also a critical part of education and classroom settings (Aldahadha, 2022). In recent years, psychologists and educators alike have highlighted the need to

create happiness and well-being in schools. A happy student is likely to be engaged, motivated, and productive (Sen, 2019). Emotional well-being impacts not just academic achievement but also creativity, critical thinking, and relationships. Research has indicated that students who enjoy positive feelings in the classroom have improved attention spans, greater levels of intrinsic motivation, and better academic performance. Happiness in school must not be understood as the absence of worry or anxiety, but as the presence of positive relationships, caring teachers, deep learning, and scope for self-expression. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has aptly identified the requirement for integral education that goes beyond emotional and mental well-being of children. Establishing a happy and stress-free learning culture can be central to this objective.

Gender is among the most important socio-demographic factors that affect happiness. Studies in diverse cultures and across age groups have identified varying trends in males' and females' perceptions and reporting of happiness (Xiong, 2021). Certain studies indicate women report stronger positive and negative feelings than men. Some have discovered that men tend to rate themselves as more happy owing to greater independence, less emotional work, or sociocultural advantages (Maulidina, 2025). The results are not universally the same and can depend on context, age, and socio-economic status. For societies such as those in India, there may be substantial roles and expectations of gender that shape happiness as experienced and expressed.

It is particularly significant to understand gender differences in happiness among secondary school students since adolescence is an adolescent critical period of emotional development. At this age, students experience considerable physical, psychological, and social growth (Mousavi, 2021). They start to define their identities, establish interpersonal relationships, and plan their future. At the same time, they are exposed to stress, peer pressure, academic stress, and emotional vulnerabilities. Gender-specific problems—such as body satisfaction problems, social expectations, and role conflicts—can in different ways influence the levels of happiness for boys and girls (Namazi, 2022).

At school, it has commonly been found that girls are more expressive emotionally, socially attached, and compassionate, but at the same time could suffer more due to pressure in studies and social settings. Boys, however, can be helped by social expectations that enable them to be independent and assertive but might also be limited in their ability to express emotions. These gendered patterns of behavior and emotion

regulation have important implications for their subjective well-being. Understanding these patterns within the Indian context is important to evolving gender-sensitive interventions within education. A lack of empirical research on gender differences in school students' happiness, specifically within regional contexts like Kerala, exists even though there is growing interest in the psychology of happiness. Kerala, a state with a high literacy rate and progressive education system, offers an interesting context to study how happiness is experienced among adolescents in a relatively developed educational setting. Yet, even in Kerala, social expectations and conventional gender roles persist, which can subtly affect the mental health and emotional well-being of students. Happiness is an essential aspect of student life and education. Understanding how gender influences happiness can provide valuable insights into student psychology and help create more inclusive, supportive, and emotionally healthy educational environments. In a time when mental health concerns among students are on the rise, studies like this are crucial in shaping a future where schools not only promote academic excellence but also nurture happy and emotionally resilient individuals.

Recent Studies

Henry H. (2020) conducted a study on happiness levels and psychological well-being among secondary school students in America. The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between happiness and psychological well-being among high school students. Higher happiness scores were found to correlate with better emotional stability and academic performance.

Sharma, R. (2019) investigated gender differences in subjective well-being among adolescents in India. The findings showed that boys reported higher levels of happiness compared to girls, and that family support and self-esteem were major predictors of happiness for both genders.

Li, J. & Chen, Y. (2021) conducted a comparative study in China on the influence of gender and socio-cultural roles on happiness levels among adolescents. Their research concluded that boys generally reported higher happiness due to greater freedom and lower emotional burden, while girls reported more anxiety and social pressure, which negatively impacted their well-being.

Kumar, S. (2018) studied the role of school environment in promoting happiness among secondary school students. His research found that happiness levels were higher among students in co-educational and activity-oriented schools. Interestingly, boys were found to benefit more from competitive academic environments, while girls responded better to collaborative learning settings.

Objectives Of The Study

- To find out the different levels of happiness among high school students
- To find out the significant difference in Happiness among high school Students with respect to gender

Hypothesis Of The Study

- High school students possess different level of psychological wellbeing
- There is a significant difference in happiness among high school Students with respect to gender

Methodology

In order to accomplish the objectives of the study normative survey method was adopted. Sample for the study. The present study was carried out on a sample of 160 high school students in Kerala, drawn by stratified sampling method used for data collection. Happiness Questionnaire, developed by Michael Argyle and Peter Hills at Oxford University, served as the tool for data collection

Analysis And Discussion

Classification of high school students according to their psychological wellbeing is given in Table-1. The table also contains the number and Percentage of high school students with different levels of Happiness.

Table 1 Data And Results Happiness For The Total Sample

| Variable | Category | Sample size | Percentage |
|-----------|----------|-------------|------------|
| Happiness | High | 15 | 08.82 |
| | Average | 135 | 79.71 |
| | Low | 20 | 11.76 |

The data presented in the table highlights the distribution of happiness levels among secondary school students based on three categories: High, Average, and Low. Out of the total sample of 170 students, the majority—135 students (79.71%)—fall into the average happiness category. This suggests that most students maintain a moderate sense of well-being and satisfaction in their daily lives, which may reflect a balanced school and social environment.

A smaller proportion, 20 students (11.76%), reported low levels of happiness. This is a significant figure, indicating that over one in ten students may be struggling with emotional well-being, stress, or dissatisfaction. These students may be experiencing academic pressure, family-related challenges, peer issues, or personal emotional difficulties that lower their happiness levels. This segment deserves focused attention from educators, counselors, and parents to provide timely psychological and emotional support.

Interestingly, only 15 students (8.82%) reported high levels of happiness. This relatively small percentage suggests that few students experience consistent, strong positive emotions or a deep sense of fulfillment and life satisfaction. This may point to the need for more happiness-enhancing strategies within the school system, such as mindfulness programs, positive reinforcement, engaging activities, and emotional support systems.

Overall, the data shows that while the majority of students are functioning at an average level of happiness, there is a pressing need to understand and support those at the lower end and to find ways to help more students achieve higher happiness levels. Interventions tailored to students' emotional and psychological needs could enhance their well-being and academic performance.

Gender Difference In Happiness

Table-2 represents the data and results of the test of significance of difference between the mean score of psychological wellbeing for boys and girls high school students.

Table 2 Represent The Data And Results Of The Test Of Significance Of Difference Between The Mean Score Happiness For Boys And Girls High School Students

| Variable | Gender | N | Mean | SD | t value |
|-----------|--------|----|-------|------|---------|
| Happiness | boys | 82 | 64.54 | 2.10 | 9.37* |
| | girls | 88 | 60.21 | 2.07 | |

The table presents a comparison of happiness levels between boys and girls based on the mean scores, standard deviations, and t-value from a sample of secondary school students.

The mean happiness score for boys is 64.54, with a standard deviation (SD) of 2.10, while the mean score for girls is 60.21, with an SD of 2.07. This indicates that, on average, boys report higher levels of happiness compared to girls. The relatively low standard deviations in both groups suggest that the responses are consistently close to the mean within each gender group.

The t-value of 9.37, marked as significant, confirms that the difference in mean happiness scores between boys and girls is statistically significant. This means the observed difference is unlikely due to chance and reflects a real variation in happiness levels based on gender in the population studied.

This result aligns with several existing research findings that suggest boys often report higher happiness or life satisfaction levels than girls during adolescence. Possible explanations may include differences in emotional expression, social expectations, coping strategies, and the types of stressors encountered. Girls, especially during adolescence, often face more emotional and societal pressures related to body image, peer acceptance, academic performance, and gender roles, which may negatively affect their happiness.

The findings highlight the importance of gender-sensitive mental health and well-being programs in schools. Interventions such as emotional resilience training, counseling, and inclusive school environments can be instrumental in improving happiness levels among girls and maintaining high levels among boys.

Findings Of The Study

Distribution Of Happiness Levels:

- Among the total sample of secondary school students, 8.82% of

students exhibited high levels of happiness, while a majority, 79.71%, showed average levels of happiness.

- 11.76% of the students were found to have low levels of happiness, indicating that a small but notable portion of the student population may require psychological or emotional support.

Gender-Wise Comparison Of Happiness:

- The mean happiness score of boys was 64.54, which is significantly higher than that of girls, who had a mean score of 60.21.
- The t-value calculated was 9.37, which is statistically significant. This indicates that there is a significant difference in the happiness levels of boys and girls, with boys being significantly happier than girls in the sample studied.

Variability Within Gender Groups:

- The standard deviation of happiness scores was similar for both boys ($SD = 2.10$) and girls ($SD = 2.07$), suggesting that the spread or variability in happiness scores within each gender group was minimal and consistent.

Overall, Gender-Based Trends:

- The findings suggest a gender gap in happiness among secondary school students, with boys demonstrating a higher average level of happiness.
- These differences may be attributed to various psychological, social, and environmental factors affecting boys and girls differently during adolescence.

Suggestion

Maintaining happiness in schools is essential for fostering a healthy and productive learning environment. One of the key ways to enhance happiness is by promoting a positive school climate where students feel safe, respected, and included. Encouraging friendly relationships among peers and maintaining a zero-tolerance policy for bullying can create a sense of belonging and emotional security. Schools should also integrate mental health and well-being programs into their regular curriculum. This includes organizing awareness sessions on emotional health, stress management workshops, and providing access to trained counselors who can guide students through personal or academic challenges. It is especially important to implement gender-sensitive support systems that recognize the unique pressures faced by boys and girls during adolescence. Special attention should be given to girls, who often report lower happiness levels, by creating empowering and supportive spaces where they can express themselves freely and confidently. Physical activity plays a crucial role in maintaining happiness. Schools should encourage regular participation in sports, yoga, or other forms of exercise. Physical movement not only improves health but also boosts mood and reduces stress, contributing to students' overall well-being. Additionally, incorporating mindfulness practices such as meditation or deep breathing into the daily routine can help students remain calm, focused, and emotionally balanced.

CONCLUSION

The study on gender differences in happiness among secondary school students reveals significant insights into the emotional well-being of adolescents. It was found that the majority of students fall into the average category of happiness, with a small percentage experiencing high or low levels. Importantly, the study identified a statistically significant difference in happiness between boys and girls, with boys reporting higher mean happiness scores than girls. This highlights the need for a gender-sensitive approach in promoting student well-being. Happiness plays a crucial role in students' academic performance, interpersonal relationships, and overall development. A positive emotional state enhances motivation, learning, and resilience, while low happiness levels may contribute to stress, disengagement, and emotional difficulties. Therefore, fostering happiness in schools is not just desirable—it is essential.

Based on the findings, it is evident that schools must take proactive steps to understand the emotional needs of students and create supportive environments that promote happiness for all. By integrating mental health awareness, encouraging physical activity, building supportive relationships, and recognizing student achievements, educational institutions can play a transformative role in shaping happier, healthier, and more successful individuals. Promoting happiness in education is fundamental for nurturing emotionally

balanced and confident learners. Recognizing the emotional differences across genders and addressing them with thoughtful interventions will contribute to a more inclusive, empathetic, and empowering school culture.

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