

**A Conceptual Model: Happiness for Kids in Schools**

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**Abstract**

It is common knowledge that being happy has many positive effects on one's life, including boosting motivation, alertness, creativity, and social connections. This research set out to propose a conceptual model for fostering joy in primary schools in different countries by analyzing existing research and literature on the topic. In this context, four broad classes were identified: physical, social-emotional, individual, and educational. The goal of this research was to provide a theoretical framework for improving student well-being in different countries primary schools by analyzing existing research. Physical, emotional, personal, and educational elements were the four broad groups identified. The results show that kids' happiness is boosted when they look forward to coming to school, make friends easily, spend time with them, feel secure there, and have a healthy sense of self-esteem. An important recommendation that may raise student satisfaction has been made.

**Keywords:** Happiness, Educational, Learning, Environment, Scholars

**Introduction**

A school's function is not limited to teaching pupils and helping them improve their academic abilities. Students benefit from school because it teaches them how to overcome challenges, set lofty goals, build meaningful connections, and find their place in the world. Thus, a school serves as both a place of education and a place for students to make friends. There, kids get a taste of the real world, and the lessons they learn and the experiences they have will shape who they become and how they behave for the rest of their lives. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the school, the government, and all other levels of governance to create the best possible conditions and atmosphere for learning. Having access to quality education is a major factor in how fulfilled one feels. The past ten years have seen a rise in interest in this topic. The OECD has looked at the concept of "subjective well-being," which is closely related to happiness.

Most of a kid's day is spent in a classroom. Consequently, factors such as what makes students and teachers satisfied at school are important considerations for shaping programs and policies. Better and higher-paying occupations, work and skills appraisal, personal freedom and social interactions, lower chance of unemployment, and improved likelihood of well-being are all individual benefits of education. The benefits of schooling extend beyond academic success and include the generation of better health choices, the promotion of civic engagement, and the mitigation of the likelihood that a person would engage in dangerous or criminal activity. If young individuals are unable to find fulfillment in life, they may turn to questionable means such as substance abuse.

More time spent in education is associated with greater happiness, suggesting that it does more than just prepare students for success in the workplace. Happiness and success in school go hand in hand; contented pupils do better academically. Many studies have examined happiness as an end point; indeed, achieving happiness should be the primary goal of education, and receiving a quality education should significantly increase both individual and societal levels of contentment.

Subjective well-being is often referred to as "happiness" in the field of psychology. To reframe the concept, one might say that happiness is the subjective state achieved when a person's pleasant feelings much outweigh his negative ones and his level of life satisfaction is high. Many people think that joy plays a crucial part in students' health and motivation at school. Children have a lot to deal with at school, and that may have negative impacts and cause them to act out in inappropriate ways. Students' intellect, thinking abilities, creativity, and academic performance may all be negatively impacted by their lack of pleasure and joy. It is important to examine and efficiently utilize data on students' levels of satisfaction in school.

Unhappiness in the classroom is a serious issue in many educational systems but is seldom given any consideration. Given the significance of the cognitive, emotional, personality, and social

development aspects and abilities that occur throughout this time period, it is important to emphasize a focus on happiness as early in childhood as feasible, but certainly no later than puberty. Most intervention programs emphasize the power of teachers to help children develop positive resources early on, since this sets a solid foundation for future happiness. Because of this, the importance of having a supportive network of family and friends cannot be overstated.

Because of the positive effects it has on so many other aspects of life, the pursuit of happiness has also become a focal point in the realm of education. Educators, policymakers, and academics in the field of education are paying close attention to the topic of children's happiness because of its significance in the children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. There are several motivations for the widespread focus on kid happiness. Multiple studies have shown that childhood happiness has a significant impact on children's intellectual, social, and emotional growth, and that these outcomes may be carried into adulthood. Many studies also found that students' motivation and academic success were greatly influenced by their level of happiness in the classroom.

As such, it's important to remember that schools should be working toward making students happy, and that a well-designed school system should be structured to help kids flourish. The importance of schools as one of the locations that promote pleasure must be recognized if we are to guarantee that educational systems achieve this aim. Because children spend so much time in school and because schools are among the first places where children learn the social skills they'll need throughout their lives, schools play a pivotal role in shaping the experiences, emotional growth, and ultimately the paths their lives take.

### Literature Review

Schiller and Hinton (2015) investigated the correlation between student satisfaction and performance in the classroom. Data was gathered from 435 students or around 94% of the total student body across all grade levels. Students who reported positive connections with their professors and peers were also more likely to report being pleased overall, as shown in the research.

Taeksoo Kim et al (2017) Learning to automatically uncover links between data from diverse domains is often quite tough and requires numerous ground-truth pairs that exemplify the linkages, while people quickly perceive such relations without any supervision. We focus on the problem of uncovering cross-domain relations using unpaired data to circumvent the expense of pairing. We suggest a generative adversarial network-based approach to discovering cross-domain

relationships (DiscoGAN). Our suggested network uses the observed connections to effectively transfer a style from one domain to another, while maintaining critical properties like orientation and face identification.

Farida Kurniawati et al (2014) Teachers in inclusive classrooms face new obstacles as they adapt their instruction to the requirements of children with and without SEN. According to the findings of this study, the level of preparation and motivation of instructors to meet the requirements of children with SEN is directly related to the quality of their training. Though there has been a lot of study on teacher education and inclusive education over the past two decades, little is known about the components and efficacy of effective training programs.

K. RAMASWAMY (2023) the pursuit of happiness has long been interesting to researchers. All of our children deserve to be happy at school, and all of us, who develop policies, run schools, teach classes, and are parents want that for them. When people are joyful, they make learning easier and more fun for everyone involved. The purpose of this study is to determine what aspects of school life most positively affect students' dispositions. Relationships (human component), self-assurance and personal safety (personality factor), school-related activities and facilities, individual and group successes, and extracurricular involvement are all explored. The study found that children's happiness was most impacted by their relationships with family, friends, and teachers, followed by their academic performance, their involvement in extracurricular activities, their own sense of accomplishment and recognition, their perception of school safety, and their use of school facilities. Results will help management and educators understand the significance of students' satisfaction and focus on what matters most to them as they strive to achieve education's overarching goals.

Şenol SEZER et al (2020) The purpose of this research was to construct a theory of school satisfaction by analyzing responses from educators, school leaders, parents, and students. The qualitative grounded theory methodology was used to develop this research. Eighteen educators, fourteen school officials, thirteen parents, and twenty students participated in the research. The research groups were selected using the snowball sampling approach. There are 12 primary criteria that contribute to school satisfaction. These primary criteria included such factors as physical facilities, learning environments, communication and cooperation, education policies, extracurricular, school administration, faculty credentials, school identity, pedagogical approaches, student-centered instruction, and assessment. The findings showed that the importance of the primary requirements varied between groups of participants. The instructors place a premium on the school's infrastructure, administration, and

resources. However, school administrators place a greater emphasis on the school's physical setting, its physical resources, and its educational policy in order to ensure student success. When it comes to their children's educational success, parents place a premium on things like facilities, atmosphere, community, and dialogue. In addition, pupils place a higher value on the school's physical facilities, study space, and instructional materials. Conclusions that can be drawn from these findings include the need for improved cooperation and communication among members of the school society, coordinated physical equipment for talent education, and an organized learning environment that takes into account the students' overall growth and development.

### The Concept of Happiness in Children

The concept of happiness is open to interpretation. From a scientific point of view, there are two schools of thought on what constitutes happiness: the hedonic approach, which sees joy or personal well-being as a reassuring influence and source of fulfillment, and the eudemonic approach, which sees contentment in terms of wisdom, self-actualization, and personal growth. Multiple studies have found that young people's conceptions of happiness are more concrete and specific than previous generations.

Evidence from studies of adolescent and child happiness in Portugal, Brazil, and Spain reveals that students in these countries place a high value on their educational experiences. However, there are variations in the samples' conceptualization of the domain. Specifically, young Portuguese people and Brazilian children associate happiness with school as a place of learning, while young people in Spain associate it with academic success and social recognition. It's important for kids to hang out with their pals, enjoy themselves, feel confident in themselves, and know they're secure at school. On the other hand, they are unhappy because of exhaustion, bewilderment, anxiety, and bullying. These reasons are summed up in Table 1.

**Table 1. Happiness at school.**

Parents' Perspective	Children's Perspective
school physical equipment	having free time
learning environment	helping and being helped in their difficulties
school environment	being with their friends
teachers' qualifications	being praised
communication and collaboration	having self-esteem
learning activities	having autonomy
social activities	having a positive relationship with teachers
school management	feeling safe
education policy	not being bullied
	not feeling tired, confused, or nervous

### Theories & Models

According to Ben-Shahar, joy is "the end toward which all other ends lead," placing it at the pinnacle of the "hierarchy of goals." Ben-Shahar's Happiness Model, often called "The Hamburger Model," posits four distinct personality types that may be seen in real life. Specifically, these are:

**1. Nihilism** - Nihilists no longer take pleasure in anything. They take no joy in whatever they do now or in the future, and they have no hopes or expectations for either. They're at the point of having "given up."

**2. Hedonism** - Those who subscribe to hedonism value pleasure beyond everything else. They care only about the here and now, prioritizing pleasure and convenience above everything else.

**3. Rat Racing** - "Rat Racing," foregoes immediate gratification in favor of long-term gain.

**4. Happiness** - fulfillment comes from a harmony between immediate gratification and the promise of future gain.

Anchor describes the latest findings from the positive psychology study he and his team have performed. The findings are really interesting:

- 1) When our minds are "happy," we do more.
- 2) We can literally make our brains "happier" by doing certain activities.
- 3) We may force ourselves to stop putting off doing these things and start doing them immediately.
- 4) When our minds are in a "happy" place, that energy spreads to others around us, which in turn may boost productivity.

Marin Seligman, a positive psychologist, came up with the PERMA Model to study and explain what makes people happy. It lays forth the five cornerstones of happiness.

1. Optimistic feelings come in at number one (P).
2. Participation (E) - 2.
3. Healthy connections (R).
4. Content, or M.
5. Success or a job well done (A).

We may achieve success and fulfillment in life by prioritizing these five areas. Thus, PERMA provides the basis for a fantastic existence. According to (Seligman, 2011b).

Bitá, (2011) writes that she has gained valuable insight about herself and life in general along the road.

1. Make plans for your future.
2. Just do what you want to do.
3. Retain your concentration
4. Pursue your passions
5. It's never too late to go for your goals

### Elements of Happiness

**1. Happiness:** Happiness, freedom, and assurance are the results. One may find fulfillment in a variety of ways. High levels of excitement are associated with a certain kind of pleasure (Argyle, 2001). Those affected will find solace in the company of pleasant voices and exciting social mishaps. Alternatively, people can find contentment in a state of calm and the pursuit of their own interests. When participating in extreme sports, there is another kind of joy. Potential participants in these activities have a high need for adrenaline (Zuckerman, 1979).

**2. Satisfaction:** Contentment is a key component of joy. Mental appraisal, judgment, and the way in which an activity was performed in the present or the past are all effective variables in enjoyment. How individuals approach challenges and set objectives has a significant impact on their level of satisfaction. However, any difficulty in identifying a goal has the potential to be transformed into an unhappiness generator. According to Franken (1994), fulfillment comes from seeing one's efforts pay off. Therefore, any drive to succeed may

result in increased contentment. If a person's aim is to build a resume of intellectual accomplishments, then any such accomplishments may be enough to make that person happy. Emotions, in turn, may be powerful tools for fostering contentment in one's life. When a person's emotional alarm bells are ringing, it's a sign that he needs to reevaluate his priorities and make some adjustments.

**3. Lack of negative affections:** It is the last component of newness. Happiness has its opposites, which might be thought of as unpleasant emotions or excitements. Depression and anxiety are two of its many forms. It goes without saying that increasing exposure to positive influences may help mitigate these effects.

UNESCO's study (2016) on the 'Happy school project' identifies the following as among the elements that contribute to students' positive school experiences and result in better academic outcomes:

- Relationships and friendships among the student body
- Favorable traits and characteristics of educators
- Attitudes and methods that foster cooperation and positivity
- Honoring variety and individuality
- Cooperation and a willingness to work together
- Learning material that is practical, interesting, and motivating
- Student autonomy, inventiveness, and participation
- Safe and welcoming classroom setting

Experiential education, including field excursions and extracurricular activities, has been shown to improve students' mental health and lower stress levels.

The literature study suggests the following elements will help make kids happy: happy, helpful, relevant, and engaging learning content and learning; student activity based; positive and collaborative values, spirit, and practices; learner freedom of expression, creativity, and security; and positive relationships with teachers and peers.

## Happy Schools

Recent studies have examined the relationship between student happiness and school factors. These findings imply that all children prefer classroom settings where bullying is uncommon, making new friends is simple, and students have open, positive connections with their instructors. When administration, faculty, and students are all receptive to new ideas, when students prioritize lifelong learning and develop marketable skills, and when teachers are respected for their expertise, responsiveness to students' needs, willingness to challenge them, and clear explanations of course material, everyone in the school benefits.

In reality, a positive school environment benefits everyone involved. A positive school climate is one in which kids look forward to attending classes and learning from their instructors.

According to Mahfooz and Normén-Smith:

“Happy schools can be sites or spaces to support social cohesion, creating communities across differences. Happy schools, too, can foster a lifelong love of learning through joyful engagement, rather than pressuring academic performance overall else to the detriment of personal well-being, which will in turn undermine learners’ engagement in learning. In short, happy schools can provide the safety, support, and positive social interactivity engagement that is needed for students to learn.”

Teachers' enthusiasm and contact with students, course material, physical learning environments, and school atmosphere are all factors that contribute to a positive educational environment. Schools may help reduce economic and social stratification by fostering a welcoming environment for all students.

Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education, as defined by the United Nations Resolution, 2022, might benefit from a deeper understanding of what factors contribute to students' positive school experiences. This objective is to provide access to high-quality education for everybody and expand people's horizons for the rest of their lives. However, there are discrepancies in terms of socioeconomic status. Therefore, in order for countries to become high performers and to achieve Sustainable Development Goal Four and its targets, it is essential to improve the performance of all students.

A positive school seeks to enhance students' educational opportunities. With this goal in mind, UNESCO set out to undertake research under the banner of the Happy School Project (HSP). The data for this study came from an online survey administered to students, teachers, support staff, parents, the general public, and school principals, as well as a review of the existing literature on happiness and well-being.

Based on their findings, the researchers devised a framework that includes the following three components: People (referring to interpersonal connections), Process (referring to instructional strategies), and Place (referring to physical surroundings). The project claims these elements are the result of twenty-two independent variables (Table 2). The HSP also elucidates the causes of student discontent: they have (1) a hostile setting and school climate, (2) a high student workload and stress motivated by tests and grades, (3) a negative teacher's attitude and (4) unpleasant student interactions.

**Table 2. Factors and variables for studying happy schools**



Factors	Variables
People	1. Friendship and relationships in the school community
	2. Positive teacher attitudes and attributes
	3. Respect for diversity and differences
	4. Positive and collaborative values and practices
	5. Teacher working conditions and well-being
	6. Teacher skills and competencies
Process	7. Reasonable and fair workload
	8. Teamwork and collaborative spirit
	9. Fun and engaging teaching and learning approaches
	10. Learner freedom, creativity and engagement
	11. Sense of achievement and accomplishment
	12. Extracurricular activities and school events
	13. Learning as a team between students and teachers
	14. Useful, relevant, and engaging learning content
	15. Mental well-being and stress management
Place	16. Warm and friendly learning environment
	17. Secure environment free from bullying
	18. Open and green learning and playing spaces
	19. School vision and leadership
	20. Positive discipline
	21. Good health, sanitation, and nutrition
	22. Democratic school management

Policymakers may learn what steps to take and what to avoid in order decreasing dissatisfaction and negative sentiments by combining happy and unhappy school characteristics.

### The Practical and Theoretical Meanings of the Study for Happy Schools

Theoretically speaking, happy school research results will aid in the development of sustainable societies and nations by providing leaders, educational managers, and research experts with the scientific background they need to propose models, criteria, contents, and orientation for creating happy schools that are safe, healthy, high-quality, and effective. Findings from studies on positive school climates will undoubtedly provide leaders, education managers, and educational practitioners both inside and outside of schools with a theoretical and scientific foundation for applying these findings in practice, thereby improving education systems and providing students and faculty with a place to learn and grow in an atmosphere of safety and peace.

The lack of human and authentic behavior on the part of some educators and students has tarnished many of today's most treasured educational traditions. Some educators, influenced by market forces, have adopted abusive pedagogical practices such as bullying, intimidating, or physically harming their students in response to poor academic performance or student misbehavior. Others have even implemented commercialized educational strategies such as requiring students to take additional classes. According to historical accounts, a male instructor once drank water from the blackboard sponge as a kind of punishment for his pupils.

The kids in one high school math class were subjected to a semester of emotional silence from their instructor, who "wrote everything on the board" instead of speaking to them as a kind of punishment. Even worse, some educators have resorted to "hitting their students by kicks and fists." However, there have also been a number of disheartening educational phenomena involving the conduct of students, who have displayed apathy, dishonesty, and a lack of appreciation for the "truth-goodness-beauty" values that should guide their daily lives. Although these trends are not widespread in classrooms, society as a whole is understandably concerned about them

due to the potential harm that inadequate teacher and student behavior poses to the larger community

A happy school is one where the staff, kids, and parents all get along and show genuine affection for one another, which allows for optimal learning and teaching conditions. Both children and educators look forward to another day of school. In order to help shed light on these issues, the writers of "Happy Schools: Perspectives and Matters of Organization and Pedagogy in their Building and Development" undertook extensive study.

### Synthesis and Analysis of Documents

The authors synthesized and analyzed the achievements by the previous researchers, who have provided initial ideas about perspectives, organization and pedagogy activities for a model of "happy schools" in the context of education innovation, including

(i) Confucius with "Hanh Dan" being considered the first happy school of mankind.

(ii) Raja Roy Singh – a teacher.

(iii) Nguyen Khac Vien with the model of personality development.

(iv) Virtue teachings by Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, Ho Chi Minh, Nelson Mandela, Dalai Lama in term of the functions, responsibilities of the school, the roles of the teachers and the teacher-student relationship in teaching and educating activities.

(v) Pham Van Dong for the constructive ideas regarding to "a happy school"

(vi) Nguyen Canh Toan and Nguyen Khac Vien on the issue of "organization-pedagogy" for school's sustainable development.

(vii) Set of criteria for a happy school by UNESCO.

(viii) Sect oral documents on the reality of school violence and students' stress and pressure in Vietnam setting context.

### The World Perspectives on Happy Schools

The first human being's happy school to be mentioned here is that of Confucius (551–479), a Chinese philosopher and teacher in the ancient time. Confucius has been known as "vạn thế sư biểu" (a model teacher of all times) by many Eastern countries for his great teachings and thoughts. It is recorded in ancient books that Confucius went to Qufu forest and sat under an old Malahar almond tree on a hill named Hanban. As Confucius was playing and singing, he enlightened his disciples (followers) of the Six Arts.

His followers played and sang along with him and bore in their minds what the teacher conveyed about the "self-improvement - behavior", and then they were encouraged with ambition to contribute their work for the country's prosperity and peace. This institution was operated by the teaching objectives: "uneducated - unreasonable", with the teaching content being a set of five values: "humanity - faithfulness - courtousness - intellect - prestige", and the teaching methods being: "scholarly in study – profound in enquiring – deep in thinking – cohesive in comparing and contrasting – involved in acting."

The second person to mention the happiness in schools is Abraham Lincoln (1809 – 1865), one of the greatest US

presidents, who sent the principal where his son studied a letter that was worth cogitating. In the letter, he recommended his son to the teacher with all faith and hopes that the teacher would teach his son good and right things. The letter ended with a humane message: "Teacher, I know this is a big order. However, please try your best. If so, then my son is indeed a happy and lucky boy". His message implies that students will be happy when they are in a happy school with good teachers.

## Conclusion

The important subject heading of this paper was the importance of happiness and happy making factors in schools. We considered real meaning of happiness, its effects, its different elements, effective factors in happiness and happy schools. Finally, we presented a conceptual model for happiness of students at schools including four factors namely: physical, social-emotional, individual and instructional. The mentioned factors are based upon four parts of philosophy and goals, theoretical Foundations, conceptual framework and executive procedures. Conducting research toward building a school which is a safe, healthy and developing place for each member of the school and is a place to build up and give support to the community members, the society to their higher and further growth, to the students to their personality perfection are the wishes and efforts of researchers, leaders, managers and each person and are of practical demand at the quite early age in the society's development process. It is important to know that understanding the relationship of happiness in schools to contexts is important. There is limited understanding of contextual influences on happiness.

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