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A Comparative Study of Happiness among Secondary School Students with Reference to Gender and Types of School

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Abstract

The present research was carried out to investigate the happiness level of secondary school students in terms of gender and type of school. Happiness is conducive to students' psychological health, academic adaptability, emotional adjustment and healthy development. For students at the secondary level in India, academics is a source of stress and social acceptance or rejection could also be a factor to reckon with resulting them facing difficulty feeling happy. The research employed descriptive survey design to examine gender and school types (government/private) differences of happiness among male and female students. The sample for the study consisted of 600 secondary school students drawn from four districts of Haryana, employing a stratified random sampling method to bring in proportionate representation on lineaments like sex and type of schools. The research tool selected for the measure of students' happiness was The Happiness Scale by Bhardwaj and Das (2017). Descriptive analysis was the first step in understanding general levels of happiness by comparing means for gender and type of school with independent t-tests. The results show that there was no significant difference in overall happiness between male and female high school students. The female students had a little bit better mean score, however this difference is not statistically significant. Equivalent results were seen for students attending government versus private schools with mean (of happiness scores) very close to each other. Such findings show that gender and type of school themselves are not too important in happiness among secondary school students. The findings suggest that psychological well-being in general and happiness in particular is a personal trait with a relatively stable rate over time, which, according to the results of this study, appears to be more influenced by psychosocial factors (school climate, social relations or emotional support) than personal data or institutional data. The results underscore the importance of implementing universal well-being and happiness-based interventions across all schools that foster students' integrated development.



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Introduction

Happiness is now considered a more important measure of students' mental health and general welfare, especially in adolescence. In recent educational discussion, happiness has been reconsidered from a state of mood to a stable trait that can protect the individual psyche as well as subjective wellness, which includes life satisfaction, positive effect, and emotional equilibrium. According to education psychology studies, those students are good at optimizing Academic Engagement, build stronger social relationships, maintain high motivation and less sensitive to the stress. In the Indian educational scenario, where students experience extreme academic stress due to competitive examinations and societal expectations, the concept of happiness among secondary school students has acquired greater significance (Deb, 2016; Prabu, 2015).

For many people secondary education is a transitional period when physical, cognitive, and emotional development change rapidly. Adolescents have to balance academic demands with identity development, relations with peers and the expectations of family and society. Research conducted in India showed that at this stage well-being of students is directly related to school atmosphere, teacher's support, peer approval and perception of academic competencies (Avasthi, Chakravarty and Jha, 2022, Raj and Tiwari 2019). As such, schools are increasingly recognised as sites for the creation of emotional health and happy well-being.

Gender has been one of the most studied variables on student happiness. Historically, it has been assumed that the emotional experiences of male and female students are divergent because of physiological, psychological, and sociocultural reasons. Some scholars have hypothesized that female students would report higher emotional awareness and social connectedness, whereas others contend that girls may experience higher academic and social pressures that might adversely influence their happiness. However, the empirical evidence in the Indian case is not yet very clear. Some other studies have found that there are not gender differences in happiness when a number of environmental and contextual causes are controlled (Deb, 2016; Park et al., 2023 Wasil & Gillespie, 2023). The results imply that happiness among students could be influenced more by common educational experiences than gender.

A third dimension has a significant impact on children's happiness: the school type they go to. In India, the educational system is basically two-tier-- government and non-government, the latter comprising education in private schools that varies by infrastructure facilities, resources for teaching, class size or parental orientation. The former is seen to provide better educational facilities and academic performance, and share a more affluent students while the latter typically provide free education for children who hail from non-affluent families. However, even though



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such structural differences exist, a recent series of studies from India suggests that subjective well-being and mental health of students do not vary drastically with respect to these institutions (Thapliyal, 2023; Kumar and Sahoo, 2024). This contradicts the common assumption that institutional strengths would necessarily result in greater student happiness.

Recent research has also emphasized that happiness is a multifaceted construct influenced by individual, familial, and school-related factors rather than by demographic variables alone. Supportive teacher–student relationships, peer interaction, school climate, and opportunities for emotional expression have been found to play a more decisive role in shaping students' happiness than gender or school management type (Mahipalan and Sheena, 2019; Alam and Mohanty, 2023). The growing emphasis on happiness education and life-skills programs in Indian schools further reflects this shift toward holistic development.

In this context, the present study seeks to examine happiness among secondary school students with reference to gender (male and female) and type of school (government and private). By employing an independent *t*-test to analyze differences in happiness levels, the study aims to contribute empirical evidence to the ongoing debate regarding demographic and institutional influences on student well-being. The findings are expected to provide meaningful insights for educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals concerned with promoting happiness and psychological well-being in secondary education.

Review of Literature

Prabu (2015) investigated academic stress of higher secondary school students in India, examining its impact on emotional well-being and happiness. The results showed that there was no between-gender difference in academic stress related to examination, parental pressure, and syllabus. This stress was observed to have equal implications on emotional alignment and happiness among both gender students. The study demonstrated that academic stress is a universal experience and not gender specific.

Deb (2016) investigated the psychosocial well-being of Indian high-school students in an attempt to identify gender-related differences. The researchers looked at academic stress, parental support and peer relationships, among other factors and discovered that when they factored these in, there was not much difference between boys' and girls' happiness. The study highlighted that gender is less significant when it comes to students' happiness than environmental and family support systems.

Kelly, Krishna and Bhabha (2016) contrasted government and private schools in Rajasthan to explore the variations in learning experiences and well-being of learners. While some variations were discovered in facilities and academic provision, the researchers found only small differences between the level of happiness reported by students. The results indicated that material resources did not necessarily enhance student emotional well-being.



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Raj and Tiwari (2019) explored happiness in relation to gender and the nature of school organization. Their findings indicated that a supportive and inclusive school climate contributed more to students' happiness than gender or institutional type. The study stressed the importance of emotional safety, peer cooperation, and teacher support in fostering happiness.

Mahipalan and Sheena (2019) investigated subjective happiness in relation to institutional culture, focusing primarily on Indian schoolteachers but with implications for student environments. The study found that positive organizational culture, respect, and supportive relationships significantly enhanced happiness levels, regardless of whether the institution was government or private.

Avasthi, Chakravarty, and Jha (2022) studied happiness and child-friendly environments in secondary schools of Lucknow city. The findings revealed no significant gender differences in happiness levels among students studying in supportive and inclusive school settings. The study emphasized that child-friendly policies reduce emotional disparities among students.

Kumar, Aruna, and Biradar (2022) examined mental health indicators such as stress, anxiety, and happiness among students from public and private schools. The results showed no meaningful differences in overall well-being between the two groups. The study highlighted that adolescents across school types face similar psychological challenges.

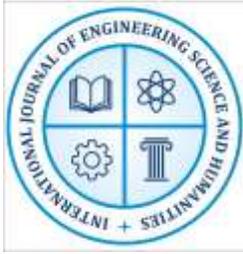
Alam and Mohanty (2023) focused on happiness education initiatives in Indian schools and assessed their impact across gender and school types. The findings suggested that structured happiness and life-skills programs positively influenced students' well-being, with similar outcomes for boys and girls as well as government and private school students.

Thapliyal (2023) conducted a comparative study on psychological well-being among government and private secondary school students. The results showed nearly identical happiness scores for both groups, indicating that institutional affiliation alone does not determine well-being. The study reinforced the role of psychosocial factors over school management.

Park, Wasil, and Gillespie (2023), studied subjective well-being as well as depression, anxiety and happiness in Indian high school students. They found that the gender gap in happiness disappeared when context specific stressors, like academic expectations and family pressure, were taken into account.

Kumar and Sahoo (2024) studied the relation between happiness and academic performance of higher secondary students. The study lends support to the conclusion that students' subjective well-being is not dependent on institutional governance as happiness did not appear to vary significantly by school type.

Nanda, Patel, Nath, and Ravindranath (2025) investigated how the students perceived happiness in India's government schools. The results suggest that peer relationships, teacher support and



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participative classroom practices among other factors influenced happiness. Institutional matters emerged as peripheral to personal relationships.

The results of the literature review can be summarized as follows: in all cases listed above, gender and type of school are insignificant factors that influence a secondary student's happiness. Rather, academic pressure, school atmosphere, human relation, teacher support and child-friendly environment likely play a more important role. Soft value and happiness in Indian studies There is a growing body of research in India on happiness, particularly, that underscores that it is universal construct; influenced by psycho-social and environmental circumstances rather than demographic or institutional ones. The findings above have greatly justified the justification of this research and established an empirical base for happiness among high school students.

Relevance of the Study

The present study holds significant relevance for educators, policymakers, school administrators, and mental health professionals. By establishing that happiness does not significantly differ based on gender or type of school, the study highlights the need for **universal well-being programs** rather than targeted interventions based on demographic categories. The findings support the integration of life-skills education, emotional literacy, and happiness-oriented curricula across all schools. For policymakers, the results provide empirical evidence that government and private schools are equally capable of fostering student happiness, emphasizing the importance of quality educational practices over institutional labels. For teachers and counselors, the study underscores the need to focus on classroom climate, student–teacher relationships, and stress management strategies. Ultimately, the study contributes to the growing Indian literature on student happiness and supports a holistic approach to secondary education.

Objectives of the Study

1. To compare the level of happiness between male and female secondary school students.
2. To compare the level of happiness between secondary school students studying in government and private schools.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the level of happiness between male and female secondary school students.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of happiness between secondary school students studying in government and private schools.

Research Design

The present study adopted a **descriptive survey research design** to investigate the level of happiness among secondary school students with reference to gender and type of school.



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Study Area

The study was conducted in the state of Haryana, located in the northern region of India. Haryana comprises 22 districts, out of which four districts were selected for the present investigation. The selection of districts was carried out using a stratified sampling approach to ensure adequate representation of geographical, educational, and demographic diversity within the state. This approach enhanced the representativeness and generalizability of the findings.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study consisted of 600 secondary school students drawn from the selected four districts of Haryana. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the participants. The sample was stratified on the basis of gender (male and female) and type of school (government and private) to ensure proportionate representation from each category.

Tool Used

To assess the level of happiness among secondary school students, the Happiness Scale developed by Bhardwaj and Das (2017) was used. The scale is a standardized tool designed to measure happiness in educational settings and has been widely used in Indian studies. It was administered to the selected students following the prescribed instructions, and the responses were scored according to the manual provided by the authors.

Statistical Techniques Used

The collected data were systematically tabulated and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. **Independent *t*-tests** were employed to examine differences in happiness levels based on **gender** and **type of school**.

Data Analysis

➤ Comparison of Happiness between Male and Female Students

The following table 1 uses an independent *t*-test to examine gender differences in happiness among secondary school students. The analysis is presented in table 1 below:

Table 1: Comparison of Happiness between Male and Female Students

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	't' Value
Happiness	Male students	300	103.89	17.855	0.858 ^{NS}
	Female students	300	105.18	19.035	

NS=Not Significant

Table 1 provides a comparative analysis of level of happiness between male and female students. The sample includes 300 male and 300 female students. The mean happiness score for male students is 103.89 with SD of 17.855, while female students have a slightly higher mean score of 105.18 with SD of 19.035. The resulting "*t*" value is 0.858, is not significant. This indicates that the difference in mean happiness scores between male and female students is not statistically



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significant at any level of significance. Therefore, it can be concluded that male and female students do not differ significantly in their levels of happiness based on this sample.

➤ Comparison of Happiness between Government and Private School Students

The following table 2 uses an independent t-test to examine types of school differences in happiness among secondary school students in relation to their type of schools. The analysis is given in table 2:

Table 2: Comparison of Happiness between Government and Private School Students

Variable	Types of school	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	't' Value
Happiness	Government school students	300	104.55	18.450	0.022 ^{NS}
	Private school students	300	104.52	18.482	

NS=Not Significant

Table 2 presents a comparison of happiness levels between students from government and private schools. The study includes an equal number of participants from each school type, with 300 students in both the government and private school groups. The mean happiness score for government school students is 104.55 (standard deviation = 18.450), while private school students have a nearly identical mean score of 104.52 (standard deviation = 18.482). A *t*-test was performed to assess whether the difference in mean happiness scores between the two groups is statistically significant. The obtained *t* value is 0.022, which is marked as **NS** (Not Significant). This extremely small *t* value confirms that there is no meaningful difference in happiness between government and private school students. Therefore, based on this data, the type of school (government or private) does not significantly influence students' happiness levels.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the present study reveal that there is no significant difference in happiness between male and female secondary school students. Although female students obtained a slightly higher mean happiness score than male students, the obtained *t* value (0.858) was not statistically significant. This suggests that gender does not play a decisive role in determining happiness levels among secondary school students. These results align with earlier Indian studies (Deb, 2016; Avasthi et al., 2022; Park, 2023), which emphasize that psychosocial and environmental factors are more influential than gender alone.

Similarly, the comparison between government and private school students indicates an almost identical mean happiness score for both groups. The *t* value (0.022) clearly demonstrates that the difference is statistically insignificant. This finding challenges the common perception that private school students are happier due to better facilities or academic advantages. Instead, it



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supports the view that happiness is shaped by factors such as peer relationships, teacher support, family environment, and personal coping skills rather than institutional management (Thapliyal, 2023; Kumar & Sahoo, 2024).

Overall, the findings suggest that happiness among secondary school students is a relatively stable psychological construct that transcends gender and school type. The results reinforce the idea that educational policies should focus on creating emotionally supportive and inclusive school environments rather than emphasizing demographic or institutional distinctions.

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