

A Study on the Effect of the Happiness Curriculum on Emotional Well-Being and Academic Performance of Primary School Students

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of Delhi Government's 2018 Happiness Curriculum on the emotional well-being and academic performance among primary school students. A quantitative design utilising purposive sampling was utilised involving 60 students and 13 teachers from one Delhi semi-government school. Data were collected through a self-designed Yes/No questionnaire and descriptive statistics to analyse the data. Results indicate that the curriculum positively impacted students' emotional health, with all subjects indicating greater happiness during activity, 97% indicating enhanced anger management, and 95% enhanced stress management using mindfulness techniques. Teachers also reported more empathy, conflict resolution, and resilience in students. Academic achievement supported these results, as 97% indicated enhanced school performance and 93% increased motivation. However, 67% of students indicated that they felt pressured to be happy, and 37% struggled to apply learning to actual life. Teachers reported occasional time diversion from essential subjects. Overall, the Happiness Curriculum is highly likely to contribute to holistic development, but refinement and teacher training are critical to make it work. The research reveals that there needs to be continuous observation, teacher readiness, and embedding in academic subjects to achieve long-term benefits.

Keywords

Happiness Curriculum, Emotional Well-being, Academic Performance, Primary Education, Mindfulness, Social Emotional Learning (SEL).

Introduction:

Over the past few years, education reforms have moved from an academically focused approach towards holistic development incorporating emotional and social aspects of learning. Emotional well-being is no longer a neglected aspect but a key element in academic achievement, social functioning, and mental wellness (Seligman, 2011). The Delhi Government's Happiness Curriculum for students from Nursery to Grade VIII, launched in 2018, reflects this shift in paradigm. The program aims to develop mindfulness, empathy, and self-awareness through narrative, reflective conversations, and meditation. It is based on principles of social-emotional learning (SEL), which maintains that emotional regulation, resilience, and academic success are interconnected (Durlak et al., 2011).

Across the world, nations such as Finland, Canada, and the United States have adopted SEL-based curricula focused on happiness and character growth as an integral part of learning. In India, systematic emotional education is yet in its nascent stages. The Happiness Curriculum steps in to fill this vacuum by enabling students to cultivate self-regulation, empathy, and optimism-capacities critical for mental wellness as well as productive learning.

This study investigates the influence of this curriculum on the emotional well-being and academic

performance of primary students. It also assesses its role from the teacher's point of view in terms of classroom climate and how well students internalize mindfulness and emotional literacy. This study emphasizes the increasing significance of incorporating emotional education into regular schooling and its long-term promise in developing emotionally stable and intellectually capable citizens.

Review of Related Literature:

Collen McLaughlin (2008) probed the intersection of emotional well-being and school settings, contending that good teacher-student relationships and positive classroom climates are key to developing emotional growth. The study insisted that emotional education is to be integrated within normal pedagogy instead of being addressed as an add-on intervention. Stephen Scoffham (2011) in *Happiness Matters: Towards a Pedagogy of Happiness and Well-being* stressed that emotions are at the heart of learning and that happiness increases creativity, engagement, and motivation among learners. His study promoted happiness-inspired methodologies in pedagogy to promote harmonious learning environments. Margaret M. Barry (2017) critically examined international evidence on social and emotional well-being promotion in schools, stressing the difficulties of

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sustainable implementation of SEL programs. The research suggested a “common elements” approach to integrating emotional education into regular curricula for facilitating long-term well-being outcomes. Sima Zareiyani (2017) investigated the contribution of components of happiness to academic achievement and self-esteem among female students in Shiraz. Results indicated a strong correlation between happiness, academic performance, and self-esteem, indicating that emotionally happy learners express greater confidence and motivation in learning. Andres S. Lombas (2019) examined the Happy Classrooms Programme in Spain and reported notable improvements in students' emotional regulation, self-esteem, and classroom behavior after mindfulness-based SEL interventions. The study proved that regular emotional education decreases school aggression and strengthens student-teacher relationships. Elia López-Cassà (2021) studied the progress of emotional skills in primary school and established that there was a good correlation between emotional intelligence and academic achievement. The study concluded that pupils with greater emotional awareness were more academically successful and adapted more successfully socially, supporting the inclusion of emotional education in primary school curricula. Kayhan Bozgun (2021) investigated the influence of social-emotional development and academic perseverance on motivation in elementary students, affirming that emotional maturity enhances learning motivation and perseverance, especially on reading and writing assignments. Ashraf Alam (2022) explored sustainable education and positive psychology interventions and pointed out that incorporating happiness and well-being into pedagogy is a source of long-term sustainability and satisfaction with life. The paper suggested that happiness is to be regarded as a primary educational objective, rather than merely a by-product of success. Anita Beniwal (2023) examined the effects of the Happiness Curriculum in Delhi and reported that it raised empathy, cooperation, and mindfulness in primary-level students. Educators indicated higher emotional expression and class harmony, although issues related to teacher preparedness and time management remained. Ina Grasmann (2023) examined a psycho-pedagogical intervention in Latvia and showed that spiritual and emotional development courses substantially enhanced happiness and self-consciousness among children, justifying the integration of moral and emotional education in preschools. Poonam Rani (2024) researched the Happiness Curriculum implementation in Delhi schools, where she observed improvement in the emotional quotient and social conduct of students but also pointed out the necessity for improved teacher training as well as structural coordination within academic timetables. Karla Karina Ruiz Mendoza

(2024) carried out a mixed-methods evaluation of the Happy Program in Latin America, with 76% of observed teachers reporting notable improvement in children's emotional awareness, self-control, and empathy. It also stressed the necessity for increased family participation and teacher support to maintain gains. Hernan Hochschild (2024) examined the correlation between happiness and school achievement through Chile's large-scale data and concluded that students who were happier performed better at school, especially among economically disadvantaged groups. The research reaffirmed that happiness buffers the ill effects of socioeconomic disadvantage on student learning. To conclude, the literature review repeatedly asserts the inclusion of happiness and social-emotional learning in school curricula. In all settings, results indicate that emotional education enhances self-perception, coping with stress, empathy, and academic achievement. Nevertheless, studies also stress the importance of long-term teacher training, curriculum integration, and cultural sensitivity for maximum realization of the potential of programs such as the Happiness Curriculum in promoting holistic student development.

Objectives:

To study the effect of the Happiness Curriculum on Student's Emotional Well-being. • To examine the effect of the Happiness Curriculum on Student's Academic Performance.

Methodology:

Research Design

The current research employed a quantitative, descriptive research design in an attempt to evaluate the effect of the Delhi Government's Happiness Curriculum on primary school students' emotional well-being and learning outcomes. It was picked due to its ability to allow systematic data collection in numerical form, making it easier to conduct statistical comparison and objective interpretation. Quantitative approaches are especially applicable to educational research wherein observable behavioral and emotional results like stress management, motivation, and concentration are being measured. The descriptive method was best suited because it was used to observe without manipulating factors, hence giving a true picture of how the curriculum operated in a natural setting of a real school.

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of primary school students and teachers from a semi-government school in Delhi where the Happiness Curriculum has been implemented since 2018. The research included 60 students from Grade IV and 13 teachers who were directly involved in teaching and facilitating Happiness Curriculum sessions. The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, as participants were specifically selected based on their

active participation and familiarity with the program. This method ensured that the data collected reflected the genuine experiences of those engaged with the curriculum.

Research Tool

The main instrument for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire, which was prepared independently for students and teachers. Both questionnaires were reviewed and revised by multiple experts on several occasions to establish their validity and reliability.

- **Student Questionnaire:** Had 15 items, with 10 of them assessing emotional well-being (e.g., happiness, anger management, empathy, stress control, and friendship) and 5 items assessing academic performance (motivation, concentration, confidence, problem-solving, and school engagement).
- **Teacher Questionnaire:** Consisted of 15 questions centered on teachers' observations of students' emotional display, mindfulness, participation in class, and academic performance.

All the questions had a Yes/No (1/0) response format for easy comprehension by the young learners and simple quantitative analysis. The questionnaire was expert validated by professors and education experts to ensure that it matched the study's goals and construct relevance.

Tool Validation and Reliability

The content validity of the tool was maintained through expert review, accuracy, relevance, and alignment with research constructs of emotional well-being and performance. A pilot test was performed with 2 teachers and 10 students to ensure understanding and reliability. Feedback led to revision of unclear or negatively framed items. The final tool obtained adequate internal consistency for a small-scale descriptive study.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered during the internship period of the researcher in collaboration with the school management. Once formal authorization was acquired from the principal, informed consent was obtained from parents and teachers of participating students. The objective of the study was clearly stated to participants, including an emphasis on voluntary participation and confidentiality. Questionnaires were completed in person in classroom environments to provide clarity and completeness in answers. Teachers were also provided with their own set of questionnaires to complete based on their overall observation of students throughout the semester.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was preserved throughout the research process. Voluntary participation only was

sought, and respondents were made aware that they would not be named in any way. The data gathered were utilized solely for academic reasons. The study was in accordance with institutional ethical standards and protected participants from any kind of emotional or psychological harm. Respondents were assured that their answers would not influence grades or teacher assessment.

Statistical Technique

Data analysis used descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentages to quantify the distribution of "Yes" and "No" answers for every item. This facilitated identification of prevailing trends concerning the emotional and academic impact of the Happiness Curriculum. The scoring process gave 1 point for "Yes" and 0 for "No", and mean scores were calculated for every domain—emotional well-being and academic achievement. The results were presented in tabular and graphical format to make them clear and interpretable.

Data Analysis and Findings:

Table 1: Students' Emotional Well-being

Emotional Indicators	% of students responding "Yes"
Felt happy during activities	100%
Managed anger better	97%
Handled stress effectively through mindfulness	95%
Built stronger friendships	100%
Felt pressured to remain happy	67%
Found it difficult to apply lessons in daily life	37%

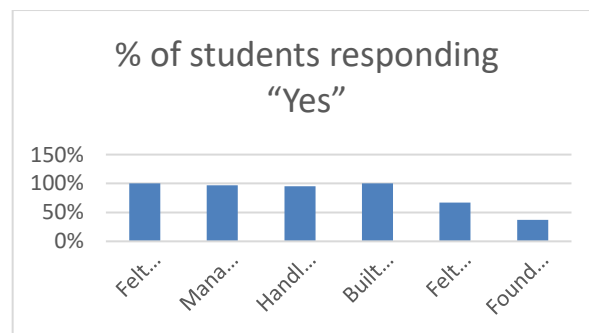


Figure 1: Emotional Well-being Outcomes (Students)

A bar graph shows that most of the students indicated enhanced emotional stability, anger control, and stress management, although two-thirds felt pressured to be happy.

Table 2: Teachers' View on Emotional Development

Observed Changes in Emotions	% of Teachers Agreeing
Increased empathy and conflict resolution	86.7%
Increased resilience and coping	73.3%
Better classroom climate	80%
Sustained anger management problems	53.3%

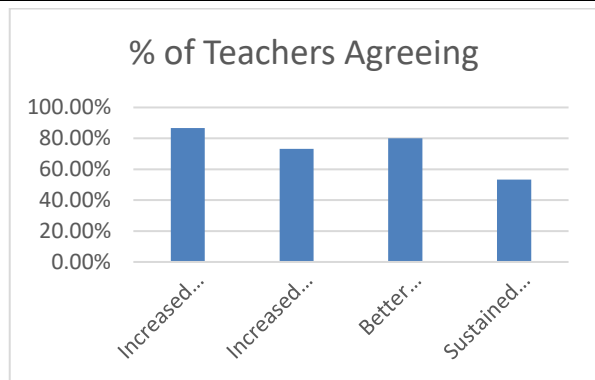


Figure 2: Teachers' View on Emotional Development

The bar graph shows that the majority of teachers observed increased empathy, resilience, and class climate for students, while more than half noted continuing anger management issues.

Table 3: Academic Achievement (Students and Teachers)

Academic Indicator	Students	Teachers
Better school performance	97%	86.7%
Increased motivation	93%	80%
Improved concentration and problem-solving	87%	73.3%
Activities interfere with academic work (concern)	-	53.3%

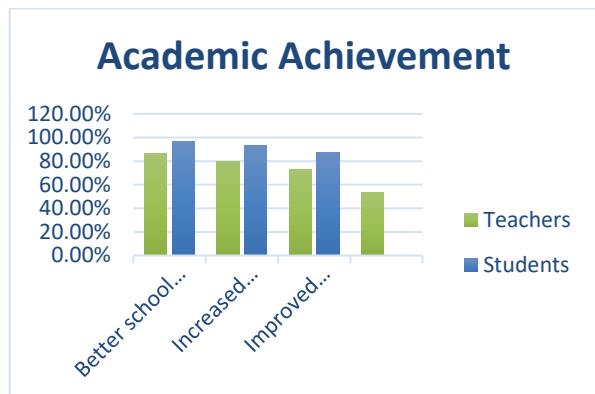


Figure 3: Academic Achievement (Students and Teachers)

The bar graph shows that both groups reported improved performance, motivation, and focus, but half of the teachers reported that sometimes emotional activities interfered with academics.

These findings support a robust positive trend in both academic and emotional areas, validating the positive function of emotional education and mindfulness. Minor concerns among teachers regarding time constraints underscore implementation issues rather than design errors.

Discussion:

The results confirm that the Happiness Curriculum notably increased students' emotional health and academic engagement. The results are consistent with international research showing the success of SEL programs (Durlak et al., 2011; Lombas et al., 2019). Combining mindfulness and reflective storytelling has enhanced students' empathy, tolerance of stress,

and behavior in the classroom-crucial markers of social-emotional maturity.

Teachers' reports of enhanced resilience and classroom cohesion further substantiate the efficacy of the program. Nevertheless, the issues-i.e., time management, cursory student engagement, and minimal application of learning to everyday life-signify systemic problems in curriculum implementation as opposed to conceptual flaws. These are congruent with issues flagged by Goel (2018) and Rani (2024), wherein regular teacher training and organized reflection exercises will be required for long-term success.

Pedagogically, the Happiness Curriculum is a revolutionary education concept that seeks to pursue both emotional and intellectual development. It promotes the growth of self-knowledge, understanding, and motivation among learners, leading to academic as well as life success.

Limitation and Future Directions:

Limitations of this study include its small sample size and exclusive focus on one semi-government school, limiting generalizability. The Yes/No binary questionnaire constrained responses to depth and statistical analysis. Future studies must use valid multi-dimensional scales, larger and more diverse samples, and longitudinal designs to assess long-term impacts. Mixed-methods studies using interviews and classroom observations would enrich understanding of the lived realities of students and teachers.

Conclusion:

The research finds that the Happiness Curriculum has a positive impact on primary students' emotional lives and academic achievement. Though its advantages in bringing about happiness, empathy, and motivation are apparent, challenges of implementation like time management, transference of lessons, and teacher training need to be tackled. With enhanced teacher training, curriculum development, and systematic assessment, the program can be used as a model to integrate social-emotional learning in schooling in India and other countries.

Educational Implications:

- Incorporating mindfulness and SEL in daily curricula can foster comprehensive development.
- Teacher training is needed for successful implementation.
- Policymakers must consider scaling the Happiness Curriculum to varied contexts while considering cultural and institutional variations.

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