



Happiness Relates To Education: A Literature Review

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Abstract

The relationship between education and happiness is complex and multifaceted, with education serving as a crucial component in fostering individual and societal well-being. This paper explores various perspectives on happiness and education, focusing on philosophical, psychological, economic, religious, biological, and educational aspects. It highlights the interconnectedness of happiness with virtue, success markers, religious traditions and genetics. The paper reveals theoretical frameworks that shed light on the beneficial impact of happiness on educational outcomes and experiences. Furthermore, it advocates for models that promote a paradigm shift towards prioritizing the emotional and social development of children alongside their academic learning. Additionally the paper highlights critical summary and future research should explore the long-term impacts of happiness interventions, the effectiveness of pedagogical approaches in promoting well-being, and the role of technology in supporting socio-emotional development in virtual learning environments. Ultimately, continued research in this area can inform evidence-based practices that enhance both educational outcomes and individual well-being across diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

Keywords: Happiness, well-being, perspectives, virtual learning and socio-emotional development.

1. Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental pillar of societal development, shaping individuals' lives and fostering progress on multiple fronts. It not only imparts knowledge but also cultivates critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and social skills. Amidst its multifaceted impacts, education's relationship with happiness has garnered significant attention. Happiness, a subjective state encompassing emotional well-being and life satisfaction, is a vital indicator of societal progress and individual fulfillment. Education serves as a cornerstone for individual happiness, offering pathways to personal growth, fulfillment, and self-actualization. Through education, individuals acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue their passions, realize their potential, and lead meaningful lives (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). Nel Noddings (2003: 1) remarked that there is a profound connection between happiness and education. Education ought to prioritize fostering happiness, and a quality education should play a substantial role in enhancing both individual and communal well-being.

The pursuit of education provides a sense of purpose and direction, instilling confidence and empowerment. Moreover, education equips individuals with the tools to navigate life's challenges effectively, enhancing resilience and psychological well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2004). By fostering intellectual curiosity and a thirst for learning, education nurtures a positive mindset and a sense of accomplishment, both of which are integral components of happiness. Access to quality education correlates with various indicators of societal progress, including economic development, social cohesion, and health outcomes (Helliwell et al., 2019). By promoting literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills, education empowers individuals to contribute meaningfully to their communities, engage in civic participation, and pursue opportunities for personal and collective advancement. It serves as a catalyst for social mobility, breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality and creating pathways to a brighter future for successive generations (Di Tella & MacCulloch, 2006). Cultivating a culture of happy learning involves embracing a variety of educational approaches beyond conventional classroom settings, encouraging curiosity and yielding enduring advantages. As such, investments in education are not only investments in human capital but also investments in societal well-being and happiness. This paper extensively explores the correlation between happiness and education. Several perspectives, theories and models suggest that individuals with higher levels of education tend to report greater levels of happiness and life satisfaction. This relationship is

believed to be influenced by various factors, including increased economic opportunities, access to resources, and better coping mechanisms for life's challenges. Therefore, while education may play a significant role in fostering happiness, it is just one piece of the puzzle in understanding overall well-being as follows;

2. Perspectives on happiness and education

2.1. Philosophical perspective

Happiness had been conceptualized by philosophers as both a state of well-being and a result of living a good life. Plato, in "The Republic," argued that moral individuals were truly happy, emphasizing the importance of understanding virtues like justice. Through the Ring of Gyges thought experiment, Plato suggested that abusing power led to enslavement to one's desires, while self-control led to true happiness. Philosophers and religious thinkers had transitioned from emphasizing happiness as a result of virtue to seeing virtue as essential for happiness, particularly in the eudaimonic tradition. The human flourishing approach, endorsed by Sen, Seligman, and Diener, highlighted the vital link between happiness and education. It emphasized holistic learning to cultivate emotional intelligence, resilience, and social responsibility, fostering individuals' overall well-being and fulfillment. By prioritizing these aspects, education became a pathway not just to academic achievement but to a flourishing life.

2.2. Psychological perspective

Positive psychology highlighted the importance of individual happiness, suggesting its benefits for society as a whole. Researchers like Cummins et al. (2009) proposed that happier individuals contributed to better functioning societies. Happiness, often defined as positive subjective experiences, encompassed various factors such as life satisfaction and well-being. Empirical evidence supported the notion that happiness was associated with frequent mild to moderate positive moods and emotions, rather than intense ones (Diener et al., 1985; Diener et al., 1995). Consistency in positive affect was crucial in defining happiness. Increased happiness correlated with numerous advantages across life domains, including better mental and physical health (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Positive health behaviors such as improved diet, maintenance of normal body weight, better oral health practices, and increased physical activity were linked to happiness (Chang & Nayga, 2010; Piqueras et al., 2011; Dumitrescu et al., 2010). Martin Seligman emphasized that happiness

wasn't solely derived from external pleasures but encompassed factors represented by the acronym PERMA, summarizing Positive Psychology's findings. It suggested that cultivating happiness not only enhanced personal fulfillment but also contributed to better health outcomes and positive behaviors, aligning with the broader goals of education centered around holistic development and well-being. Humans seem happiest when they have;

1. *Pleasure* (tasty food, warm baths, etc.),
2. *Engagement* (or flow, the absorption of an enjoyed yet challenging activity),
3. *Relationships* (social ties have turned out to be extremely reliable indicator of happiness),
4. *Meaning* (a perceived quest or belonging to something bigger), and
5. *Accomplishments* (having realized tangible goals).

Martin Seligman (2000) gave the positive psychological definition of happiness as consisting of both positive emotions (like comfort) and positive activities (like absorption). He presents three categories of positive emotions.

- a) **Past:** feeling of satisfaction, contentment, pride and serenity.
- b) **Present:** (e.g.) enjoying the taste of food, glee at listening to music, absorption in reading.
- c) **Future:** feeling of optimism, hope, trust, faith and confidence.

These are three categories of present positive emotions:

- a) Bodily pleasure, e.g. enjoying the taste of food.
- b) Higher pleasure, e.g. glee at listening to music.
- c) Gratification, e.g. absorption in reading

2.3. Economic perspective

Research in industrial-organizational psychology suggested a positive correlation between happiness and various markers of success, including productivity, higher salaries, and overall workplace achievement (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Additionally, happiness was associated with increased energy, sociability, altruism, creativity, and better quality of relationships, leading to a longer and more fulfilling life (Martin, 2005; Norrish & Vella-Brodrick, 2008). These individual benefits contributed to societal gains, as happy individuals were more likely to contribute positively to their communities and achieve societal goals. While many societies prioritized intelligence and academic achievement, the relationship between happiness and intellectual ability among university students varied in research findings. Some studies reported a positive association (Diener & Fujita, 1995; Fox & Spector, 2000; Kashdan & Yuen, 2007), while others suggested a negative correlation (Block & Kremen, 1996), and some found no significant relationship at all. Despite this variability, it remained evident that fostering happiness within educational settings was crucial, not only for individual student well-being but also for facilitating positive contributions to society.

2.4. Religious perspective

In the quest for true happiness and peace, various religious traditions offered distinct perspectives and paths. In Buddhism, suffering arose from the inability to attain true peace, which could only be achieved through Nirvana, a state free from desire. The teachings emphasized compassion and altruism, guiding individuals to seek the well-being of others. Similarly, the Bhagavad Gita addressed the pursuit of happiness amidst challenges, highlighting the importance of inner contentment and alignment with divine principles. Islam emphasized gratitude as essential for enduring happiness, encouraging acceptance of all circumstances as part of God's plan. In contrast, the Bible accentuated a self-contained happiness, independent of external conditions, rooted in seeking God's kingdom and righteousness. Across these diverse teachings, the common thread lay in the pursuit of inner fulfillment through spiritual alignment and service to others, transcending fleeting worldly pleasures for enduring peace and contentment. They taught that enduring happiness was found not in fleeting worldly pleasures but in transcending desire, aligning oneself with divine principles, and practicing compassion and altruism. Education played a crucial role in understanding and internalizing these teachings, providing individuals with the knowledge and tools to cultivate inner fulfillment and pursue a path of service and spiritual growth. Through education, individuals could deepen their understanding of

themselves, their beliefs, and their connection to something greater, ultimately leading to a more meaningful and fulfilling life.

2.5. Biological perspective

Neuroscience studies suggested that certain regions of the brain, such as the amygdala, hippocampus, and limbic system, as well as neurotransmitters like dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine, and endorphins, played key roles in regulating happiness. Additionally, hormones such as cortisol, adrenaline, and oxytocin, produced by glands like the adrenal and pituitary glands, had been implicated in controlling happiness. Biological factors, including genetics, brain function, hormones, and physical health, played crucial roles in underlying happiness. Understanding these factors could provide valuable insights into promoting happiness and well-being. Moreover, integrating this knowledge into education could help individuals adopt healthier lifestyles and coping strategies to enhance their overall happiness and quality of life (Dariush Dfarhud, Maryam Malmir, & Mohammad Khanahmadi, 2014).

2.6. Educational perspective

The education system of the past was focused on nurturing quality students who could evolve into well-rounded, mentally and physically healthy citizens capable of harmonious coexistence with others. Central to achieving this goal were teachers, who played a pivotal role in cultivating the desired attributes in students. They had to foster an environment conducive to "happiness learning," characterized by a relaxed atmosphere where students felt comfortable engaging in classroom activities. Embracing and accommodating the diversity among students was essential for unlocking their full learning potential. Creating such an atmosphere not only benefited students in their current academic pursuits but also laid a foundation for their future success.

1. Enhancing students' mental and physical well-being can contribute to their overall happiness and harmonious interactions with others.
2. Encouraging an environment where students find joy in learning and are empowered to express their opinions fosters self-directed and lifelong learning.
3. Students immersed in a positive and joyful atmosphere are likely to develop kindness and empathy, becoming supportive individuals.

4. Fostering high self-esteem and a proactive mindset among students instills a determination to pursue positive endeavors.
5. Through their educational journey, students can cultivate acceptance, understanding, and empathy towards those with differing backgrounds and perspectives, fostering a sense of community and inclusion.

Happiness learning prioritized student interests, encouraging joyful engagement through activities such as learning by doing, integrating movement, music, and arts into the process. This approach fostered the release of dopamine, enhancing eagerness and enjoyment in learning, leading to better retention and recall. External factors like supportive teachers and parents, alongside internal factors such as students' intrinsic happiness, shaped the effectiveness of happiness learning. Education played a pivotal role in overall well-being, offering problem-solving skills, better job opportunities, safer environments, healthier lifestyles, and reduced stress levels, thus influencing individuals' susceptibility to illness.

3. Theoretical Framework

Happiness and education are intricately intertwined, with each influencing the other in complex ways. This paper delves into the reciprocal relationship between happiness and education. Drawing upon theoretical frameworks from psychology and education, the paper explores how happiness impacts learning outcomes and educational experiences. Through this exploration, it gains insight into the mechanisms through which happiness influences education and vice versa.

3.1 Seligman's Positive Psychology

Martin Seligman's positive psychology highlighted the significance of nurturing well-being and happiness to attain optimal human functioning (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). According to Seligman, positive emotions weren't solely consequences of success; they also served as pivotal catalysts in fostering learning and academic accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). Positive emotions, as illustrated by Fredrickson (2001), not only resulted from triumphs but also crucially expanded individuals' attention and cognitive capacities, thus fostering heightened creativity, resilience, and problem-solving acumen.

3.2 Influence of Happiness on Learning

Happiness has been demonstrated to have a positive influence on numerous facets of the learning process. Individuals who are happy tend to display higher levels of engagement, motivation, and perseverance in their educational endeavors (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Furthermore, positive emotions have been shown to improve the consolidation and retrieval of memories, thus aiding in effective learning and retention of knowledge (Fredrickson, 2004). Students who experience elevated levels of well-being are also more inclined to seek out challenging tasks and demonstrate a growth mindset, both of which are crucial for academic achievement (Dweck, 2006).

3.3 Happiness and Educational Attainment

Beyond the immediate learning process, happiness also influences long-term educational outcomes. Studies suggested that subjective well-being predicted educational attainment, with happier individuals more likely to attain higher levels of education and professional success (Diener & Seligman, 2004). Moreover, positive emotions fostered a supportive learning environment, characterized by stronger social connections, teacher-student rapport, and collaborative learning experiences (Diener et al., 2017).

3.4 Educational Interventions to Foster Happiness

Recognizing the pivotal role of happiness in education, interventions were developed to promote well-being within educational settings. These interventions drew upon principles of positive psychology and aimed to cultivate positive emotions, strengths, and meaningful engagement among students (Layous et al., 2013). Strategies such as gratitude exercises, mindfulness practices, and character education programs were shown to enhance students' well-being and academic performance (Weber, Ruch, & Littman-Ovadia, 2013).

3.5 Understanding the Happiness-Education

Several theoretical frameworks provided insights into the interplay between happiness and education. Self-determination theory highlighted the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in promoting intrinsic motivation and well-being within educational contexts (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Social cognitive theory underscored the role of self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations in shaping students' academic behaviors and emotional experiences (Bandura, 1997). Additionally, the socio-ecological model

emphasized the influence of social and environmental factors on individuals' well-being and educational outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

4. Models related to happiness and education

4.1. Happiness Triad Model

“The Triad for Happiness,” proposed by A. Nagraj (1999). The model addresses four dimensions of human life: mind, emotions, learning, and consciousness, resulting in happiness, peace, and satisfaction, as depicted in Figure 1.1.

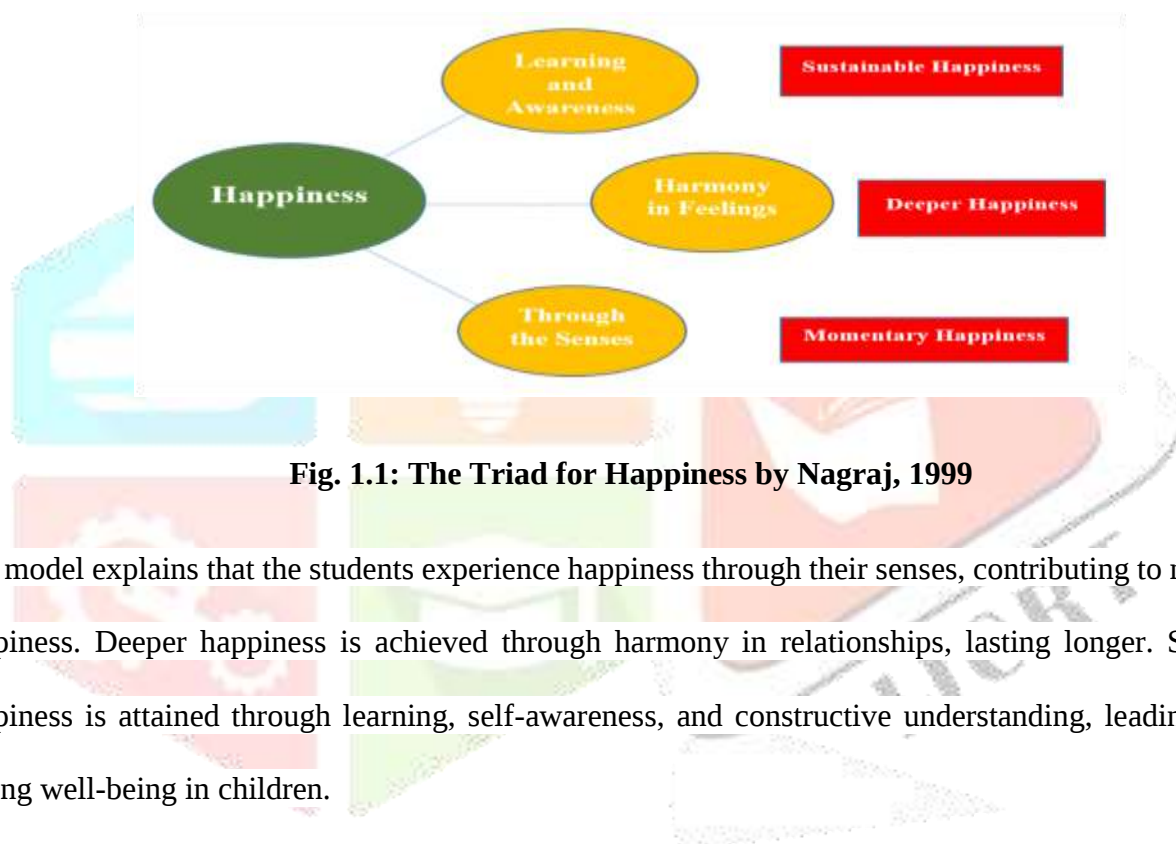


Fig. 1.1: The Triad for Happiness by Nagraj, 1999

The model explains that the students experience happiness through their senses, contributing to momentary happiness. Deeper happiness is achieved through harmony in relationships, lasting longer. Sustainable happiness is attained through learning, self-awareness, and constructive understanding, leading to long-lasting well-being in children.

4.2. Model of happiness in preschool children

The National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy in India emphasizes the significance of early childhood development, rooted in immersive pedagogies, acknowledging the contributions of pioneers like Gijubhai Badheka and Rabindranath Tagore (Government of India, 2013). The recent National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 underscores the integration of ECCE into formal schooling, aiming for universal access by 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2020). It recognizes the impact of cultural and linguistic contexts on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development, highlighting the role of schools in fostering happiness and social-emotional competence (Jha & Parvati, 2020). The NEP aligns with global trends, where countries like the US, UK, and Australia prioritize frameworks promoting happiness and

emotional well-being in education (Yoder, 2014). Amidst changing socio-emotional dynamics, the focus on holistic development remains crucial for preparing children for the future (Luking et al., 2011; Tyrka et al., 2013).

4.3. Model of conceptual ECCE happiness framework for preschool children

The conceptual Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) framework's primary objective is to aid young children in achieving happiness and enhancing their social and emotional competence. The proposed curriculum for preschools introduces a happiness intervention program focusing on social engagement, sharing and caring, and mindfulness. These practices aim to cultivate emotional and social competence in preschoolers, fostering skills such as empathy, self-awareness, and cooperation. Through active participation and guided activities, children learn to manage emotions, develop positive relationships, and enhance their overall well-being. By incorporating elements of mindfulness, the program also promotes concentration, self-control, and respect for others. Ultimately, this initiative seeks to instill a deeper and more sustainable understanding of happiness from within, shaping children's ethical development from an early age. In the context of Indian preschools, this framework aims to shift the focus from external sources of happiness to internal exploration and awareness.

5. Conclusion and future research directions

The intricate relationship between happiness and education emphasizes the multifaceted nature of human development. The perspectives explored, spanning philosophical, psychological, economic, religious, biological, and educational dimensions, highlight the importance of fostering well-being alongside academic achievement. Integrating these perspectives into educational practices can nurture happier, more fulfilled individuals capable of contributing positively to society. The theoretical frameworks discussed, including Seligman's Positive Psychology, Self-Determination Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and the Socio outcomes and -Ecological Model, provide valuable insights into how happiness influences learning educational experiences. Moreover, the models and frameworks presented, such as A. Nagraj's "Triad for Happiness," the Model of Happiness in Preschool Children, and the Conceptual ECCE Happiness Framework, emphasize the significance of holistic development, particularly in early childhood. These models advocate for a paradigm shift towards nurturing children's emotional and social development alongside academic learning, preparing them for future challenges with resilience and well-being.

Future research directions in this field could explore the long-term impacts of happiness interventions in educational settings, examining how sustained well-being influences academic achievement, career success, and overall life satisfaction. Additionally, investigating the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches in promoting happiness and well-being among diverse student populations could provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers. Furthermore, exploring the role of technology in delivering happiness interventions and supporting students' socio-emotional development in virtual learning environments could be an area of interest. Overall, continued research in this area has the potential to inform evidence-based practices that optimize both educational outcomes and individual well-being in diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

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