RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to bridge the knowledge gap of the relationship between extracurricular activities and happiness among high school students and the variance of well-being among types of schools and genders.

Methods: Using a cross-sectional field survey, data were obtained from 503 high school students of co-educational, boys-only, and girls-only schools. Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale is used for measuring well-being. ANOVA, t-test and correlation study are employed.

Results: Among students, 32.0% had low well-being, 66.2% had moderate well-being, and only 1.8% had high well-being. A statistically significant difference in mean happiness scores between the types of schools was observed through ANOVA. Independent t-test shows that subjective well-being among boys was higher than the girls.

Conclusions: The findings from this study suggest that extracurricular activities can significantly positively impact subjective well-being. Boys-only school has a significantly higher mean score of well-being than types of school. Additionally, gender differences in subjective well-being require further exploration with additional variables.

Research Implications: Such findings contribute to our better understanding of the relationship between well-being and extracurricular activities. Also, it can have implications for policymakers and teachers in developing pedagogy and for family members and other stakeholders in bringing about the holistic development of students.

Originality/value: This study addresses the gap in the body of knowledge regarding the significance of extracurricular activities and subjective well-being among high school students in India.

Keywords: happiness, subjective well-being, extracurricular activities, mental health, positive psychology.

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RELAÇÃO ENTRE FELICIDADE E ATIVIDADES EXTRACURRICULARES ENTRE ALUNOS DO ENSINO MÉDIO

RESUMO

Objetivo: Este estudo teve como objetivo preencher a lacuna de conhecimento sobre a relação entre atividades extracurriculares e felicidade entre estudantes do ensino médio e a variação do bem-estar entre tipos de escolas e gêneros.

Métodos: Utilizando uma pesquisa de campo transversal, foram obtidos dados de 503 estudantes do ensino médio de escolas mistas, somente para meninos e somente para meninas. A Escala de Bem-estar Mental Warwick-Edinburgh é usada para medir o bem-estar. ANOVA, teste t e estudo de correlação são empregados.

Resultados: Entre os estudantes, 32,0% apresentavam bem-estar baixo, 66,2% apresentavam bem-estar moderado e apenas 1,8% apresentavam bem-estar elevado. Uma diferença estatisticamente significativa nas pontuações médias de felicidade entre os tipos de escolas foi observada através da ANOVA. O teste t independente mostra que o bem-estar subjetivo entre os meninos foi maior que o das meninas.

Conclusões: Os resultados deste estudo sugerem que as atividades extracurriculares podem impactar significativamente e positivamente o bem-estar subjetivo. As escolas exclusivas para rapazes têm uma pontuação média de bem-estar significativamente mais elevada do que os tipos de escola. Além disso, as diferenças de gênero no bem-estar subjetivo requerem uma exploração mais aprofundada com variáveis adicionais.

Implicações de pesquisa: Tais descobertas contribuem para a nossa melhor compreensão da relação entre bem-estar e atividades extracurriculares. Além disso, pode ter implicações para os decisores políticos e professores no desenvolvimento da pedagogia e para os familiares e outras partes interessadas na promoção do desenvolvimento holístico dos alunos.

Originalidade/valor: Este estudo aborda a lacuna no corpo de conhecimento sobre a importância das atividades extracurriculares e do bem-estar subjetivo entre estudantes do ensino médio na Índia.

Palavras-chave: felicidade, bem-estar subjetivo, atividades extracurriculares, saúde mental, psicologia positiva.

1 INTRODUCTION

Our education system has usually neglected mental health, with priorities towards academic achievement only. In this regard, the new understanding of positive psychology can significantly help bring a better holistic education system. Positive psychology and other positive experiences improve the quality of life and can prevent various pathologies that may arise under challenging situations that life brings (Seligman et al.; M.,2014). In the last two decades, a new positive psychology movement emerged (Luthan,2002). Various studies have been done on positive psychology and its impact in other areas. Happiness/ mental well-being is one of the areas of interest for many researchers. Although the relationship between happiness and academic performance has been studied
in various papers, there is less literature available to explore the relationship between happiness and extracurricular activities. In many of the studies, it has been found that extracurricular activities are an important factor among other essential influences like social relationships, resources, educational environment, and personal goal achieving on students' satisfaction levels (E Mangeloja & T Hirvonen, 2007). Also, other studies have shown that happiness and academic performance are positively related (PD et al., 2007).

The area of this study, i.e., well-being among students, is also crucial as it comes under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) like good health and well-being and quality education. Such a study will help address the imbalanced attitude in imparting education at the cost of mental well-being and move towards the holistic development of students.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The role of school in adolescent students' lives is of immense importance as they spend their time in school or school-related activities. Also, the early years in schools are the formative stage for various behaviours, beliefs and attitudes apart from the classroom learning of knowledge and skills. Engaging students in such a way to help them achieve success in the later part of life is essential at this stage. In this regard, positive schooling, which may be associated with positive psychology, may be defined as an approach to education that draws on positive psychology and emphasizes individual strengths and personal motivation to promote learning (Deb, 2018). Various indicators of the performance of students, like attendance, academic performance and learning, have all improved with increased levels of engagement or activities at school (Reyes et al. (2012), Park et al. (2012)).

It has also been seen that school engagement was strongly related to low levels of health-compromising behaviours such as cigarette smoking, alcohol and illicit drug use, risky dieting methods, early sexual activity, and physical aggression. Also, it was strongly related to high levels of health-promoting behaviours like being physically active, eating well, using safe sexual practices, using sun protection, and wearing safety equipment such as bicycle helmets Carter et al. (2007). Academic burnout has also been associated with engagement levels in school (Estrada-Araoz et al., 2023).

One of the theories related to activity and SWB is the theory of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990)), where an individual is completely absorbed and enjoys the activity, Flow is achieved. It brings a higher level of happiness and well-being. Also,
other theories like Biopsychosocial Model, Mind-Body Connection, and Wellness Wheel all highlight the importance of physical activities in improving the happiness and well-being of a person.

Subjective well-being (SWB), which consists of three constructs, i.e., happiness, life satisfaction and positive affect, is directly affected by health, social contact, activity and personality (Diener, 1984). SWB is subjective as it depends on the individual's experience, and it has been of much interest in Positive psychology. It has been linked with positive outcomes like better health, social relationships, resilience, job satisfaction, etc. Also, SWB includes or measures positive constructs, giving an all-round assessment of a person's life in the area. Happiness is a crucial area of study in positive psychology, and it touches various major areas of study such as organizational behaviour, human psychology, education, sociology and more. Various terminology has been used for happiness interchangeably, like subjective well-being, well-being, life satisfaction, and quality of life. Happiness has been defined as the experience of high-frequent positive affect, low-frequent negative affect, and overall life satisfaction (Myers & Diener, 1995).

In a study (Orkibi et al.; N.,2014), researchers used a between-subjects design to investigate whether there were differences in SWB(Subjective well-being) indicators of life satisfaction and positivity ratio among adolescents studying in sports, arts, or regular classes. The study found that students in elective sports and arts classes reported significantly higher life satisfaction than those in regular classes. Additionally, students in elective sports classes reported significantly higher self-control and positivity ratio levels than students in regular classes. Furthermore, structural equation modelling revealed that self-control and perceived social support had a significant direct impact on all students' subjective well-being (SWB), regardless of their class affiliation. One study examined whether a psychoeducational course improved well-being in three groups (Hood et al.; L. R.,2021). In Study 1, it was found that mental well-being was significantly higher in first-year undergraduates who had taken the course compared to a waiting-list control. Study 2 found no increase in mental well-being among students who took such courses at the onset of COVID-19 restriction, but was significantly higher than a third matched group. Study 3 showed that mental well-being in University students and staff increased from an online course during a COVID-19 lockdown. Such findings are in support of the benefit of psychoeducational courses even in times of uncertainty. The mean SWB(Subjective well-being) response was found above neutral in 86% in a study
consisting of 43 nations, and cross-national data suggest the positive level of SWB around the world in general, with the possible exception of very poor societies (Diener & Diener, 1996). Well-being and performance is also negatively affected by stress at workplace which may have correlation with studies in academic setting (Hien, Huyen, & Hoang, 2023).

Extracurricular activities (ECA) are associated positively with various positive outcomes like higher grades, positive attitudes toward school and higher academic aspirations (Darling, N. et al. (2015)). In another study (Danish et al., 2003), it is even highlighted that a correlation between performing well in sports and or some other leisure activities and other positive outcomes like academic performance or attendance may be due to transference of learning of discipline and commitment skills from sports. Also, persistence exercise is found to be closely related to affect the subjective well-being of college students (Diener, 2000), Chen et al., (2013).

In recent years, due to COVID-19, the prevalence of depression and its various forms has been higher (Edmond et al. et al., 2020). In such a situation, an approach towards positive psychology is essential. In another study, a cross-sectional study was conducted among 742 adolescents in Gujarat for common mental disorders (CMDs) such as anxiety, depression, and psychosocial distress among school children. It was found that 48.78% of adolescent girls screened positive for CMDs (Abha et al. et al., 2020). It is such an alarming situation for all concerned, and society must try to minimize such negatives by focusing more on the positives. The present study is conducted to contribute to the existing literature and knowledge on the relationship between extracurricular activities and happiness.

A study also found a significant linear relationship between the breadth of extracurricular activities and high life satisfaction, high GPAs, and low levels of psychopathology (CE Hanks, 2018). The intensity of extracurricular activities also had a significant linear relationship between low levels of psychopathology and high GPAs. In another study, the relationship between life satisfaction, social interest and participation in extracurricular activities was measured among adolescent students. High school adolescent students (Grades 9-12) with N=321 were administered a multidimensional life satisfaction measure and a scale for social interest. They were also asked to list the number of extracurricular activities they had participated in since their high school enrollment. Higher social interest was positively related to higher overall satisfaction and
satisfaction with friends and family. Also, another significant finding was that adolescents who participated in more structured extracurricular activities reported higher school satisfaction (Gilman, 2001).

Additionally, in research conducted in BC, Canada, with a total of 27,121 fourth-graders in 490 schools located in 28 public school districts, one of the significant findings was that across the profile groups, well-being and health were highest in children who were involved in different ECAs (extracurricular activities). The above literature shows the importance of happiness and the effect of extracurricular activities among students. Our current study is an effort to see the relationship between happiness and extracurricular activities in the context of high school students of Manipur.

3 METHODLOGY
3.1 DESIGN
A survey was conducted among class 10th studying students of three schools of co-educational, boys-only and girls-only schools in Imphal, Manipur. After explaining the purpose of the survey to the respective principals of the school and with their permission, the survey was conducted. The confidentiality of the data was also assured to the students, and with their consent, the survey was conducted among willing students after being properly explained. It took around 20-30 minutes to complete the survey in one class section. The number of respondents from the boys-only school was 196, and the respondents from the girls-only school were 142. The respondent from co-education school 165. Data/response were not considered if it was incomplete/incorrectly filled.

3.2 SAMPLE
The study included students (N=503) of Class X of boys only, girls only, and co-educational schools. Schools were randomly chosen from a list of 20 schools in and around Imphal, Manipur. The final sample of 503 was considered after removing the incomplete survey. Of the 503 respondents, 57.3% were male and 42.3 % female. As students were of the same class, they were aged between 14-16. All schools were English medium schools.
3.3 MEASURES

The primary focus was to effectively measure happiness (mental well-being) and degree of engagement in extracurricular activities. Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS), a widespread scale to measure happiness(mental well-being), is used.

WEMWBS is a 14-item scale that measures psychological functioning and subjective well-being. All items are worded positively and focus on components of good mental health. The scale is scored by summing the response to each item on a 1 to 5 Likert scale. The minimum scale score is 14, and the maximum is 70. For engagement in extracurricular activities, a five-point Likert scale ranged from 1 = None of the time, 2 = Rarely, 3= Some of the time, 4= Often, and 5= All of the time was used. The responses were collected during class hours. In this study, gender was used as a control variable.

3.4 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

SPSS software was used for data analysis in this study. The measure's reliability was checked using Cronbach's alpha (Selltiz et al., 1976). Cronbach's alpha showed acceptable reliability for WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale), i.e. >0.7. Happiness and extracurricular levels among different types of schools were presented as means and SD.

Correlation analysis between happiness and extracurricular activities is conducted to see the relation between the two variables, and ANOVA analysis is done for the test of happiness means between different types of schools. An Independent t-test was also conducted for the test of the difference in happiness means between boys and girls. Significant level was set at p<0.05

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 summarize and presents the descriptive statistics of the sample:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of school</th>
<th>No. of Respondent</th>
<th>Extracurricular(Mean)</th>
<th>Happiness (Mean)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-educational</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>3.2364</td>
<td>45.503</td>
<td>8.05214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls only</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>3.6268</td>
<td>44.4718</td>
<td>7.94814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys only</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>3.6378</td>
<td>46.7143</td>
<td>7.37772</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author & Computed Data
After eliminating respondents who have submitted improperly/incomplete data a total of 503 respondent's data was used for this study purpose. Categorising students into three groups as low well-being where the total score is less than 43, moderate for 43-60 and high for greater than 60 using the WEMWBS manual for scoring and analysing below Table 2 is prepared:

Table 2. Happiness level among high school students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total no. of responses</th>
<th>503</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% Low wellbeing</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Moderate wellbeing</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% High wellbeing</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author & Computed Data

From Table 2, 32% of students were under a low level of well-being, and only 1.8% were at a high level, with 66.2% at a moderate level. A high number of low levels of well-being scores and a very low percentage, i.e. 1.8% (high level of well-being), is alarming. Schools and parents should see where and how they can improve the well-being of the students.

The correlation matrix (Table 3) is given below showing the relationship between happiness and extracurricular activities.

Table 3 Correlations between extracurricular activities and happiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>45.68</td>
<td>7.804</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.127</td>
<td>.329 **</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed), N = 503

Source: Author & Computed Data

From Table 3. We can see that Pearson's correlation coefficient between the sum score of happiness and extracurricular activity i.e 0.329** is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). Hence it can be said that extracurricular activities positively impact happiness/mental wellbeing. Students with higher engagement in physical extracurricular activities are found to show higher happiness/ mental well-being. This shows the importance of extracurricular activities in a student's life, as it positively correlates to happiness/ mental well-being. School management and various concerned staff may look at such findings to give the required focus on extracurricular activities.

ANOVA test is done for the three groups of schools, i.e. Co-educational, girls-only only and boys-only schools, to find the difference in Happiness/mental well-being
among them. A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in mean happiness score between at least two groups (F(2, 500) = [3.499], p = 0.031). To determine the exact groups which differ from each other, the Tukey post hoc test is done. Tukey's HSD Test for multiple comparisons found that the mean value of happiness was significantly different between boys-only schools and girls-only schools (p = 0.025, 95% C.I. = [0.2307, 4.2542]). Here, it may also be understood by various stakeholders in the school-student relationship that what may bring happiness/mental well-being in boys and girls may differ in various ways.

Also, a two-sample t-test was performed to compare happiness levels between males and females. The finding revealed that male high school students of Manipur were showing higher mean score of happiness when compared to their female counterparts (M = 46.67, SD = 7.26) and girls (M = 44.45, SD = 8.27); t(3.216) = 501, p = .001. It needs to be further explored to see if the baseline of happiness in females are low in general and how to account for the difference in future studies.

5 CONCLUSION

In this study it is revealed that engagement in extracurricular activities has a positive effect on happiness/mental well-being among students of class 10 in various schools in Imphal, Manipur. Also, our study examined how the type of school(based on male/female only or co-education) relates to happiness/mental well-being and extracurricular activities. It was found that schools with boys-only schools showed a higher significant mean happiness score than girls-only schools. Also, male students showed higher significant mean happiness score than female students in general. Such findings of positive psychology may be used by policymakers and different school management and benefit by implementing scope for engagement of students in various extracurricular activities to increase their mental well-being, thereby positively impacting the students. Extracurricular activities (ECA) like learning dance, music, sports or doing YOGA do impact on the happiness level. Students should also be given options and a chance to participate in extracurriculars. Also, involvement in extracurricular activities is better if it comes with an intrinsic motivation, with which the individual can achieve Flow and also an increase in subjective well-being. Awareness about positive mindset/psychology among various actors in educational settings needs to be increased and emphasized for a better engagement and learning environment in the education.
system. Different variables involved in a student's life may be important for Happiness/mental well-being, and further research may also be conducted to find other factors impacting happiness/mental well-being. The research is restricted to a particular state/region (Manipur) of India and among a certain age group of students. Also, other factors of positive behaviour and outcome variables like students' performance may be explored and studied for a larger sample in future research to validate and ascertain the relation and impact of positive behaviour elements in the academic environment.

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