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Exploring Happiness: A Comparative Study of College Students in Arts vs. Science Disciplines

Arjun Singh

Research Scholar,
Department of Psychology,
C.M.P. Degree College,
University of Allahabad,
Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh, India)

Dr. Ranjana Tiwari

Assistant Professor,
Department of Psychology,
C.M.P. Degree College,
University of Allahabad,
Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh, India)
E-mail: rt.psy1982@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT:

The present study investigated the differences in college happiness between science and art faculty students at CMP Degree College, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj. Happiness in India is a multifaceted concept influenced by personality traits, attitude, socioeconomic status, cultural norms, family dynamics, personal achievements, and environmental factors. Interpretation of happiness level is significantly shaped by physical and mental wellbeing. Quantitative between group design was employed, using a purposive sample of 80 students from the last year of under graduation (40 from arts, 40 from science), aged 17-20 years. Data were collected using a self-developed "Youth Happiness Scale" with 22 attitude statements across six dimensions (college administration, peer group, student-teacher relationship, college safety, college facilities, and perceived climate). Demonstrated reliability of 'Youth Happiness Scale' was 0.7890 Cronbach's alpha. The findings revealed no statistically significant difference in college happiness levels between science ($M=66.42$, $SD=12.80$) and art ($M=70.97$, $SD=13.01$) faculty students ($t(78) = 1.576$, $p>.05$). The lack of a significant difference in this study suggests that happiness is multi facet only one factor academic stream cannot play significant role in happiness. There are factors beyond the specific academic fields, such as the overall campus atmosphere, shared resources, or social interactions common to all students at the institution, might play a more prominent role in shaping their college happiness.

Keywords: Happiness, Art students, Science students, College, Attitude

Introduction:

India's greatest strength lies in its youth, our youth is boasting the world's largest young population. Over half of the India's residents are under 25, with the median age being approximately 28 years. The crucial task at hand is to channelise this immense youthful energy towards their

personal growth and the nation's development. Progress is evident in higher education, as indicated by the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-2022 report. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for the 18-23 age group has reached 28.4%, demonstrating a consistent upward trend. This marks a significant increase from 23.7% in 2014-15 and 27.3% in 2020-21. The Indian government is committed to further accelerate this progress of the GER to 50% by 2035. Purpose behind such a massive action plan is to generate wellbeing and happiness among youth. However, defining and attaining happiness is subjective, influenced by a complex interplay of internal and external factors. These include culture, social norms, economic status, and even the political environment of a country. Social norms, emotional expression and cultural values differ from country to country like Western cultures may associate happiness with high-arousal emotions like excitement, while Indian culture often links it to low-arousal states such as calmness and contentment. These cultural nuances make it challenging to develop a one-size-fits-all definition of happiness. Happiness is an psychological state characterized by positive feelings, self approval, serenity, and sense of accomplishment. Over all wellbeing of individual along with life satisfaction is the major outcome of happiness (Oishi et al., 2013; Trinh & Khanh, 2019). Happiness is something feeling good” (Diener, Edward F., 2009). Despite extensive research, struggle is continued to establish a universal definition of happiness. Happiness is strongly correlated with social harmony, spiritual, interconnectedness and communal factors (York, Gibson and Rankin, 2015). In India, happiness is often viewed as a collective experience, intertwined with family, community and societal well-being. Indian philosophical traditions, such as those found in the Vedas and Upanishads, emphasize inner peace and self-realization as key components of happiness.

The Report on Global Happiness identifies employment, income, community and government, values, and religion as external influences, whereas family experience, education, gender, age, and mental and physical health may be considered personal elements.

Family support, emotional regulation, physical activity, and strong social connections are key to youth happiness (Izzo, F., Baiocco, R., & Pistella, J., 2022). Educational status, achievement of career goals, community engagement and self-reflection, also significantly contribute to happiness. However, Indian youth face immense academic pressure and competition, leading to high suicide rates in the 15-29 age group (Abdel-Khalek and Lester, 2002). A happiness survey from The Knowledge Academy ((Lancet, 2021) revealed that 4203 students of humanities among UK universities (ages 18-24) exhibited higher happiness levels, while science students often contend with more intense academic pressure (Srivastava & Mishra, 2025). The demanding nature of science programs, including varied curriculum structures, rigorous coursework, practical experiments, diverse assessment methods, and technical hurdles in both field and laboratory settings, lead significant cognitive load and stress among them although students of humanities also face academic

challenges like subjective grading, extensive reading, and career uncertainties. Despite the well-established negative relationship between stress and happiness (Isabel, 2025), there's a notable lack of research on happiness specifically among science and humanities students in Indian higher education. It is strong Indian belief that career graph of science students is better than humanities students. Indian society belief that science, technology, engineering and mathematics field students get higher salaries and direct strong career path whereas humanities students carries values and pursue career for long period of time. This paper aims to examine the role of college environment as external factors influencing the happiness of higher education students.

Aim of the study:

To access the differences in college happiness between science and art stream students.

Objective:

To find out the difference between science and art stream students on their level of happiness.

Hypothesis:

There will be no difference between science and art stream student on their level of happiness.

Methodology:**Sample and Research Design:**

This quantitative study utilized a between-group design to assess differences in college happiness between students from science and arts streams. The study included a purposive sample of 80 final-year undergraduate students from CMP Degree College, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj. This sample was divided into two groups of 40 students each: Group 1 (G-1) comprised students from the science stream, while Group 2 (G-2) consisted of students from the arts stream. To ensure comparability, several variables were matched across both groups: age (ranging from 17 to 20 years), gender (20 males and 20 females in each group), and religion (all 80 students were Hindu). Furthermore, the external academic environment was controlled, as all participants were from the same institution.

Measurement Tools:**Demographic details:**

This study includes some demographic details like age, gender, year of current educational qualification, and residence.

College happiness:

The self-developed "Youth Happiness Scale" was utilized in this study. It consists of 22 items across six different dimensions: college administration, peer group, student-teacher relationships, college safety, college facilities, and perceived climate. Each item is measured using a five-point Likert rating scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the scale was found to be 0.7890.

Procedure:

For Group 1 (G-1), we randomly selected 20 male and 20 female final-year students from the science stream at CMP Degree College. After obtaining their verbal consent, we administered the 'Youth Happiness Scale.' We followed the same procedure for Group 2 (G-2), which consisted of 20 male and 20 female final-year students from the arts stream.

Result:

Table no 1-Ratio of sociodemographic variables among art and science stream students

Sociodemographic variables		Art Stream	Science Stream
		No. of students & their percentage(N=40)	No. of students & their percentage(N=40)
Gender	Male	20(50%)	20(50%)
	Female	20(50%)	20(50%)
Age (17-20 years)	Male	20(50%)	20(50%)
	Female	20(50%)	20(50%)
Education	Male	20(50%)	20(50%)
	Female	20(50%)	20(50%)
Residence	Rural	20(50%)	20(50%)
	Urban	20 (50%)	20(50%)

Students were randomly selected for the study from both the science and arts streams. Table 1 presents a representation of various sociodemographic variables, such as gender, age, education, and residence, among final-year students in these streams. All of the aforementioned sociodemographic variables were carefully matched to minimize the impact of extraneous variables on the level of happiness.

Table no. 2- Comparison between stream of art and science students on their level of happiness.

Stream	Mean	SD	p- value df =78
Science (n=40)	56.42	12.80	1.576 NS
Art (n=40)	60.97	13.01	

NS= Not significant, df= (N-2), = (80-2), = 78

Although Table 2 shows that art stream students have a higher mean happiness score (60.97) compared to science stream students (56.42), the T test value of 1.57 is not significant at either the 0.01 or 0.05 level. Therefore, the hypothesis of the study, which states that there will be no difference in happiness levels between science and art stream students, is accepted.

Discussion:

Happiness is a subjective phenomenon influenced by a multitude of variables, mainly categorised by internal and external factors. Cultural and environmental factors are the major attraction of happiness research. The present study aims to emphasise the role of external academic variables like administration of the institute, relationship with peer group, student teacher interaction quality, feeling of safety in the institute, facilities available on the campus and perceived academic climate, on the level of happiness of art and science stream final year students. To what extent do both streams affect the happiness level of their stream students, and how much do they differ? Extraneous variables like gender, age, academic experience and residential area were controlled by matching the ratio of all variables in terms of frequency and duration. Forty students from each stream were randomly selected and matched on sociodemographic variables. Self-developed five-point Likert scale covering the dimension of college administration, peer group, student-teacher relationship, college safety, college facilities and perceived climate, “Happiness Youth Scale” was administered to both groups by the same researcher. Overall scores indicate that students from the science stream had a 56.42 mean score and 12.80 SD, while art stream students had a 60.97 mean score and 13.01 SD. Though superficially, mean scores are showing higher happiness among art stream students, a p-value of the t-test of 1.576 proves that the mean score difference between these two groups is not significant. Findings indicate that students from the science and art stream have an equal level of happiness and satisfaction with the administration of the institute, relationship with peer group, student-teacher interaction quality, feeling of safety in the institute, facilities available on the campus and perceived academic climate of the college. Student of both streams do not feel differentiated in their treatment from the college side. There is a dearth of research on the academic climate of the institute and the happiness index of different streams. Happiness of students is impacted by many factors like personal interest, individual strengths, career aspirations, social interactions, family support and many more. Chaudhary and Hemant (2023) investigated the happiness index of class XII students of different streams like science, art and commerce and reported that art stream students are comparatively happier than science and commerce stream students. Moussa and Ali (2022) explored during COVID-19 the strong relation between academic success and happiness level among higher education students without gender difference. Happiness of higher education students is mostly affected by their involvement in educational activities, inner gratification, academic success, attainment of knowledge, skills and proficiencies, tenacity,

achievement of educational outcomes, and post-college professional accomplishment (Kuh et al., 2006). Some other inspirational elements like beliefs, mentalities and personal qualities, shape life satisfaction and happiness, but gender does not play a major role in the happiness of youth. Life satisfaction varies approximately with 30% variance of stress, spiritual activities and happiness (Mohd, S., & Imtiaz, S., 2012). youth in metropolitan cities are facing social problems, intimidating realities and impersonality, and an unsatisfying life are potentially causing a lower level of happiness in urban youth in comparison to youth of rural areas (Lim, Cappa & Patton, 2017). Researchers are also reporting controversial findings that females are comparatively happier and later in their age more depressive than males (Hills & Argyle, 2001). Although variables like age, gender, education and residence were controlled in the present study by matching techniques, some other variables like income, marital status and religious identity should need to be explored in the present study because it has been reported by other studies that beyond certain level income does not show positive correlation with happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Married youth are reporting better happiness levels than single ones, it might be because they receive social and emotional support from their life partners. Similarly, people with religious identity report more happiness than secular ones, the reason might be that religion provides social support, meaning, and discipline (Welzel & Inglehart, 2010).

Although happiness-related research reports a variety of facts promoting happiness, and also identifies anti-happiness elements. The major challenge of previous research is its quantitative nature and utilitarian perspective of happiness. There is a need to promote phenomenological inductive research as well as understanding the role of within-culture variation rather than focusing on intercultural differences (Diener et al., 2003). Happiness is closely related to satisfaction, life achievements and subjective well-being of individuals. Some schools of thought strongly believe that happiness is one's subjective responsibility; it should not be influenced by external variables like structural, environmental and political factors. The present study is an attempt to understand the role of the academic environment of educational institutes on the happiness level of different streams. The findings of the study strongly suggest that happiness is prominently influenced by internal variables like self-expectation, personality traits, cognitive style of the individual and their way of coping, rather than external academic environment like peer group, academic and administrative discipline of the higher education institutes. Another major reason as root cause of such findings is the constant and unbiased attitude of academic institutes towards all streams of students.

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