



Conference Paper

The Role of Counseling in Promoting Student Happiness and Well-being: A Positive Psychology Approach

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Abstract

Student happiness and well-being have emerged as central concerns in contemporary education due to their strong influence on academic achievement, mental health, and overall life satisfaction. Drawing on the framework of positive psychology, this paper examines the role of counseling in promoting student happiness and holistic well-being, with particular reference to the Happiness Curriculum introduced in Indian schools. Happiness is conceptualized through both hedonic and eudaimonic perspectives, emphasizing positive emotions, engagement, meaning, and purposeful living. The paper synthesizes theoretical insights and empirical evidence to demonstrate how positive psychology-based counseling interventions foster resilience, emotional regulation, motivation, and healthy interpersonal relationships among students. Special attention is given to the complementary roles of teachers and parents in creating supportive environments that reinforce counseling outcomes. The Happiness Curriculum is discussed as a case study illustrating how mindfulness practices, self-expression, and reflective activities embedded in schooling can enhance emotional well-being and reduce stress and anxiety. While the paper highlights the significant benefits of counseling for student happiness, it also critically addresses challenges and limitations, including cultural sensitivity, resource constraints, counselor training, and the risk of oversimplifying complex mental health issues. Overall, the study argues that counseling grounded in positive psychology should be viewed not merely as a remedial service but as a proactive, developmental approach essential to nurturing emotionally healthy, resilient, and flourishing students. Integrating such counseling practices within educational systems can contribute to sustainable student well-being, improved academic engagement, and long-term personal and social success.

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INTRODUCTION

Happiness is a critical component of student well-being, covering a variety of positive emotions, life satisfaction, and overall contentment. It is an important part of a student's overall well-being, affecting their academic achievement, social interactions, and mental health. Students that are happy are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and resilient, which leads to improved academic performance and a more enjoyable school experience. Furthermore, happiness improves students' physical health, with evidence indicating that cheerful people have stronger immune systems, higher sleep quality, and are less likely to develop chronic diseases. In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on the relevance of happiness and well-being in the educational sector.

The Happiness Curriculum, a new effort launched in 2018, seeks to increase student happiness and well-being by introducing positive psychology principles and approaches into the school curriculum. This study paper examines the role of positive psychology counseling in enhancing student happiness and well-being, with a particular emphasis on the Happiness Curriculum.

Concept of Happiness:

Happiness is a complicated and varied term that may be defined and measured in a variety of ways. Seligman (2011) defines happiness as the combination of good feelings, involvement, and significance. Positive emotions include sentiments of joy, thankfulness, and contentment, whereas engagement entails becoming fully immersed and interested in activities. Meaning, on the other hand, entails a sense of purpose and significance in life. Happiness is more than only the absence of bad feelings; it is also the existence of pleasant emotions, involvement, and significance.

As Seligman (2011) puts it, “Well-being theory is a theory of positive emotions, strengths, and positive relationships. It is a notion of happiness, but not only pleasure, but also involvement and purpose. I believe that an excellent life, or happy life, is defined by three elements: positive feeling, engagement, and significance.”

Happiness can be classified into two types: hedonic happiness, which is based on pleasure and enjoyment, and eudaimonic happiness, which is based on living a meaningful and happy life. According to Ryan and Deci (2001), hedonic well-being is concerned with happiness as a sensation of pleasure, comfort, and satisfaction. It is about feeling well, and it is frequently measured by self-reports of satisfaction, happiness, and enjoyment. Eudaimonic well-being, on the other hand, is concerned with leading a rich, purposeful, and meaningful life. It is about having a fulfilling life, which is frequently measured by self-reports of purpose, meaning, and personal progress.

Significance of Happiness:

Happiness is critical to students' general well-being and academic achievement. According to Lyubomirsky et al. (2005), happy students are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and resilient, resulting in improved academic achievement and social interactions. According to Lyubomirsky et al. (2005), “We believe that happiness can be improved and sustained by deliberate actions that foster good emotions, strengthen social relationships, and generate a feeling of meaning and purpose. We also suggest that these activities be adapted to an individual's abilities, values, and aspirations, and that they be integrated into daily life in an enjoyable and sustainable manner.”

Furthermore, happiness improves physical health, with cheerful people reporting improved sleep quality, stronger immune systems, and lower blood pressure (Diener et al., 2000). According to Diener et al. (2000), “Happy people have better physical health, such as lower blood pressure, a healthier weight, and a stronger immune system. They also have more friends, more social support, and happier marriages. Furthermore, cheerful people are more productive, creative, and resilient, and they have superior mental health, with reduced rates of despair and anxiety.”

Happiness is also important to students' mental health and well-being. Unhappy students are more prone to experience anxiety, sadness, and other mental health issues, which can have long-term effects on their academic and personal lives (Harter, 1999). According to Harter (1999), “Students who are unhappy and dissatisfied with their lives are more likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. They are also more prone to participate in problematic conduct, such as substance abuse and delinquency. On the other side, pupils who are happy and satisfied with their lives are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and resilient, as well as having stronger social interactions and academic achievement.”

Educators can help avoid mental health problems by supporting student happiness and well-being and creating a supportive and loving environment that encourages student participation and success. Furthermore, happiness is critical for students' future success and well-being. People who are happy are more likely to succeed in their occupations, have stronger social interactions, and have higher levels of life satisfaction (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005).

The Role of Counseling for Positive Psychology:

Positive psychology counseling is a potential strategy for increasing student happiness and well-being. Positive psychology is a relatively young branch of study that aims to promote mental well-being and happiness rather than simply treating mental illness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Good psychology's theoretical foundation is based on the concept of thriving, which includes three elements: good emotions, engagement, and meaning (Keyes, 2002).

Positive psychology counseling tries to improve these components, improving general well-being and happiness. Counseling can help students develop coping skills, resilience, and a growth mindset by using positive psychology principles and approaches. This, in turn, can result in better mental health, less stress, and a greater sense of well-being.

Case Study: The Happiness Curriculum:

The Happiness Curriculum is an innovative effort that began in 2018 in government schools in Delhi, India. The Happiness Curriculum is a comprehensive educational program designed to increase students' happiness and well-being through mindfulness, self-expression exercises, and storytelling.

The Happiness Curriculum is built on positive psychology ideas, with an emphasis on fostering pleasant feelings, involvement, and meaning. The curriculum involves a variety of activities, such as meditation, yoga, and creative expression, all of which are intended to help students feel better and happier.

According to research, the Happiness Curriculum improves students' well-being by significantly increasing happiness, life satisfaction, and emotional well-being. The approach has also been demonstrated to lower stress and anxiety, resulting in better mental health outcomes.

The Role of Teachers in Promoting Student Happiness:

Teachers have an important role in enhancing students' happiness and well-being. Teachers who incorporate positive psychology ideas into their teaching techniques can create a supportive and nurturing learning environment that encourages student satisfaction and engagement.

According to research, teacher-student relationships have an important role in fostering student well-being and academic performance. By developing strong relationships with their pupils, teachers can generate a sense of safety and belonging, which can lead to positive emotions and engagement.

Teachers can also enhance student happiness by adding mindfulness activities into their classrooms. Mindfulness has been demonstrated to improve students' emotional well-being, lowering stress and anxiety while increasing focus and attention (Felter et al., 2017). Teachers can help students develop more self-awareness, self-regulation, and resilience by introducing mindfulness activities into their curriculum.

Teachers can also improve student satisfaction by encouraging their students to adopt a growth mentality. A growth mindset is the concept that skills and intelligence can be developed through hard work and education (Dweck, 2006). Teachers may help students build resilience and confidence, resulting in increased happiness and well-being, by encouraging them to see adversities as chances for growth and development.

The Role of Counseling in Promoting Student Happiness:

Counseling is essential for increasing student happiness and well-being. Counseling, according to Seligman (2011), can

assist students in developing good emotions, strengths, and healthy relationships, all of which are necessary for happiness. According to Seligman (2011), “well-being theory” is a theory of positive emotions, strengths, and relationships. It is a happiness theory, but not only in terms of pleasure, but also in terms of involvement and purpose.

Counseling can also help students establish a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives, which is essential for eudaimonic happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2001). According to Ryan and Deci (2001), eudaimonic well-being is concerned with having a rich, purposeful, and meaningful life. It is about living a fulfilling life, and it is frequently operationalized through self-report metrics of purpose, meaning, and personal progress.

Counseling can also assist students in developing intentional activities that enhance pleasant emotions, strengthen social connections, and foster a feeling of meaning and purpose (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). According to Lyubomirsky et al. (2005), “We propose that happiness can be increased and sustained by intentional activities that cultivate positive emotions, strengthen social connections, and promote a sense of meaning and purpose.” We also propose that these activities be customized to an individual's talents, values, and aspirations, and that they be integrated into daily life in an enjoyable and sustainable manner.”

The Role of Parents in Promoting Student Happiness:

Parents play an important and complex role in improving happiness with learning. Parents have a tremendous influence on their children's emotional well-being, self-esteem, and overall happiness. They may provide a healthy and supportive environment that enables their child to have a growth mindset, develop resilience, and form positive relationships. Parents can assist their children develop a sense of control and agency in their life by providing emotional support, setting realistic expectations, and supporting autonomy. Parents can also model cheerful behaviors for their children, such as exercising gratitude, mindfulness, and self-care, which can help them be happier. Furthermore, parents can encourage their children to participate in things that provide them delight while also providing opportunities for socialization, such as extracurricular activities, sports, or hobbies.

This allows parents to assist their child develop a sense of purpose and belonging, both of which are necessary components of happiness. Furthermore, parents can teach their children effective coping methods, such as problem-solving, communication, and conflict resolution, to assist them traverse the obstacles of adolescence and early adulthood. Parents may encourage student happiness, well-being, and general success by being actively involved and supportive in their child's life.

The Impact of Counseling on Student Happiness:

Counseling can improve student happiness and well-being, according to research. Diener et al. (2000) discovered that cheerful students have superior physical health, which includes

lower blood pressure, a healthier weight, and a stronger immune system. According to Diener et al. (2000), “Happy people enjoy superior physical health, which includes lower blood pressure, a healthier weight, and a stronger immune system. They also have healthier social ties, such as more friends, more social support, and more peaceful marriages. Furthermore, cheerful people are more productive, creative, and resilient, with superior mental health, including reduced rates of sadness and anxiety.”

Another study, conducted by Harter (1999), discovered that dissatisfied students are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues, which can have long-term ramifications for their academic and personal lives. According to Harter (1999), “students who are unhappy and unsatisfied with their lives are more prone to suffer from anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders. They are also more likely to exhibit negative behaviors such as substance misuse and delinquency. Students who are content with their lives, on the other hand, are more likely to be driven, engaged, and resilient, as well as to have stronger social interactions and academic success.”

Challenges and Limitations:

While Positive Psychology has shown potential in boosting student happiness and well-being, there are significant obstacles and limitations to its use in counseling. Some of these obstacles and restrictions are:

1. Positive Psychology's emphasis on measurable outcomes and quantitative data may contrast with the more qualitative, subjective character of counseling. This can make it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of Positive Psychology interventions in counseling settings.
2. Positive Psychology focuses on universal human characteristics and virtues, yet cultural and individual distinctions in values, beliefs, and experiences may still exist. This can lead to a one-size-fits-all strategy, which may not be effective for all students.
3. Counselors may lack the essential training or knowledge in Positive Psychology principles and therapies, limiting their ability to effectively implement these techniques in practice.
4. Positive Psychology's emphasis on positive emotions and qualities may lead to an oversimplification of complicated topics such as trauma, mental illness, or systematic injustice.
5. Power dynamics, such as privilege, oppression, and marginalization, can have an impact on students' experiences and outcomes.
6. Counseling services may suffer time and resource constraints, making it difficult to execute Positive Psychology methods that necessitate significant time and resources.

7. Some students may be resistive to or stigmatized by the concept of obtaining counseling services, limiting the effectiveness of Positive Psychology methods.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, happiness is an important aspect of student well-being and academic performance. Counseling is essential for enhancing student happiness and well-being by assisting students in developing positive emotions, strengths, and relationships. Educators can increase student happiness and well-being by introducing positive psychology principles and strategies into the educational curriculum, which will lead to improved academic achievement, social relationships, and mental health. The Happiness Curriculum is a ground-breaking program that has yielded encouraging results in boosting student happiness and wellbeing.

Counseling provides students a secure environment in which to vent their emotions, obtain insight about their concerns, and build coping skills. It enables students to strengthen their connections, handle stress, and develop a sense of purpose. Counseling enables students to focus on their strengths using strategies such as mindfulness, cognitive restructuring, and goal-setting, resulting in a more positive attitude on life.

Furthermore, positive psychology-based counseling interventions contribute to the creation of a supportive school atmosphere that values mental health as an important component of student achievement. When students feel appreciated, encouraged, and understood, their whole well-being increases, leading to increased academic achievement, engagement, and mental health.

However, several challenges and limitations must be addressed, including the need for cultural sensitivity, the possibility of undesirable side effects, and additional research into the long-term impacts of positive psychology interventions. Teachers and parents play an important role in supporting student happiness and well-being, and they must collaborate to establish a supportive and loving environment that encourages student happiness and participation.

In today's fast-paced and often stressful educational environment, incorporating counseling services based on positive psychology principles can have long-term benefits. Counseling provides students with the tools they need to confront future obstacles confidently and resiliently by cultivating emotional intelligence, self-compassion, and a positive mentality. In essence, counseling is more than a reaction to problems; it is a proactive strategy to enrich student life, allowing them to flourish intellectually, emotionally, and socially.

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