



Does Gender or Academic Discipline define Happiness? A Comparative Study of Undergraduate Students



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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the happiness among undergraduate students in terms of gender and academic disciplines. A survey method of descriptive research was used to collect the relevant information from the respondents. A sample of 100 students from various fields at various public universities in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, was gathered by stratified random selection method. Relevant information was collected using standardized tool of happiness developed by Himanshi Rastogi and Janaki Moorjani (2017). Results revealed that gender and academic discipline did not have any significant role on the level of happiness among students. Therefore, it can be concluded that the nature of academic discipline—whether perceived as rigorous or otherwise—does not have a substantial effect on the overall happiness of students. Together, these findings highlight the importance of adopting inclusive and comprehensive student wellness programs that cater to the entire student population, regardless of gender or academic discipline.

Keywords: Happiness, Academic disciplines, Undergraduate students

A country's future is dependent on the each and every individual of every community among them the most potent ones are students. The occurrence of issues related to mental health among students can lead to various noxious effects, resulting in decline in academic performance, increase in dropout rates and overall impracticality among students (Bahrami *et al.* 2011). In today's era much emphasis has been given to happiness in field of research as it has very strong impact on one's life. Happiness is such a broad term whose definition is case-specific. It is an electrifying an elusive state. For one person it is buying luxurious thing on the other hand it is just feeding themselves. Happiness increases job and academic performance, and it strongly affects one's mental as well as physical health. Higher levels of life satisfaction id directly proportional with improved social relationships, career success, physical health, and societal economic contributions (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2007).

Undergraduate students are the young generations who collaborates in development of the motherland. The question what happiness is as old as mankind itself. The greatest philosophers, religious leaders have always tried to find what makes a man happy? And how can a man be happy? Thus, the answers to these questions give birth to different definitions. It is interpreted as an overreaching term for virtue. It is a state of one's emotional and mental well-being defined by optimistic and delightful emotions spanning serenity and euphoria. Happiness is the utmost target of rational individuals who work to earn money to fulfil their basic need of life like buying goods, consuming it for staying alive and to enjoy their life; enjoying in context

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of getting happiness at their own sake. Happiness is invaluable and ultimate end of life. It is well said that being happy makes people healthier and increase their potential to earn well. Happiness is mind's status to be an internal job which comes from within. Myers and Diener (1995) described happiness as experience of frequent positive effect, infrequent negative effect and an overall sense of fulfilment with life. Veenhoven (1997) defined the term happiness as a measurable quantity; a degree to which a person evaluates its whole life with positivity. Hills and Argyle (2001) viewed happiness to be consisting of four components, specifically: life satisfaction, positive emotions and good mood, lack of negative mood and emotions of other factors such as optimism, self-esteem and sense of prosperity. This theory indicates that happiness is having a good and stronger immune system, having a good social circle, tackling with odd situations effectively, creativity and empathic attitude towards others.

Thus, happiness is individual's mind status where he feels gratified with all aspects of life. It is compilation of all good emotions, traits and behaviour which an individual owns which makes him feel joyous, happy, prosper, and mentally healthy.

Review of Related Literature

Happiness is highly needed in today's youth as it affects them mentally as well as physically in achieving any goal in their life. Along with happiness, sound study habit results in students performing better academically. Fordyce (1977) suggested that the achievement of happiness is one of the most important goals of humankind. McCabe *et al.* (2011) pointed out that happy people are generally successful in multiple areas of life such as social, work and family domains. Promoting student satisfaction will benefit not only the kids but also the efficient operation of the entire social and educational system. Being happy is not only beneficial for students' emotional level but it is imperative for the whole society. Researchers' findings provide a strong historical, theoretical blueprint to understand happiness well and provide ways to achieve it, some of it connect it to spiritual bliss, some categorizes it into different forms where

as some talks about hedonic as well as eudiamonic happiness (Korath & Sangheethaa 2015; Lomas *et al.* 2021; Veenhoven, 1997; Davis & Georgetown, 1981; Patra 2021; Veenhoven, 2015). Researches showed an influence of gender on happiness (Zhou & Clemson, 2013; Chakraborty *et al.* 2019; Kaur & Kaur 2022), whereas some advocated significant relation between happiness and study habits, claiming a happy environment and happy mindset would encourage to adapt to good habits of learning in students (Bahrami *et al.* 2011; Karnchanasubsin & Jotaworn, 2023), few provide evidences from studies and spoke for happiness and its effect on academic achievement of student (Moussa & Ali, 2022; Banupriya & Rajan, 2019; Tabbodi, Rahgozar & Abadi, 2015; Koç & Pepe, 2018; Gogoi & Sahoo, 2022).

From the literature review, it can be revealed that the findings are both contradictory as well as conflicting with respect to the above-mentioned notions. Further, very few Indian researchers have attempted to investigate these notions together. These considerations stimulated the investigator to study Happiness in relation to gender and academic streams of undergraduate students. Hence comprehensive study in this area will bring new knowledge about this problem and will be helpful in chalking out new paradigms in higher education so that the undergraduate students can be helped to become more intelligent and happier in 21st century.

Research Gap

In this study, a major gap in literature is addressed through an examination of happiness in context of gender and academic streams. It is essential to address this gap. Therefore, the study linking the aspects of happiness with gender and academic streams of undergraduate students will be very worthy for the students themselves to understand the factors of happiness as well as for higher education institutions to carve the best future of undergraduate students. The following questions will be the focus of the researcher's investigation:

1. Whether happiness differs significantly with regards to gender.
2. Whether happiness differs significantly with regards to academic discipline.

Objectives

1. To compare the mean score of happiness of undergraduate students in terms of gender.
2. To find out the difference in happiness of undergraduate students in terms of academic discipline.

Hypotheses

The following null hypothesis was formulated to find out the difference in happiness of undergraduate students in terms of gender and academic disciplines:

1. There is no significant difference in mean score of happiness of male and female undergraduate students
2. There is no significant difference in mean score of happiness of undergraduate students of science and arts & humanities discipline.

Methodology

- ❑ **Method:** The present study employed survey method of descriptive research
- ❑ **Sample & Sampling method:** A sample of 100 students from various fields at various public universities in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, was gathered using a stratified random selection method.
- ❑ **Research Tools Used:** Happiness scale by Himanshi Rastogi and Janki Moorjani (2017) was used for the study.
- ❑ **Statistical Technique Used:** Appropriate descriptive as well as inferential techniques were used.

Normality of the data

Several techniques, such as the skewness (Sk), kurtosis (Ku), Z-values, Normal Probability Curve i.e. NPC, and Quantile-Quantile i.e. Q-Q plot i.e., were employed to confirm the data distribution. A key characteristic of a normal distribution is that the mean, median, and mode coincide at the central

point of the distribution with identical numerical values (Garrett, 2009). According to Ghasemi & Zahediasl (2012), the acceptable Z-value range for determining normality is between -2.58 and +2.58, while Doane & Seward (2011) suggest a stricter range of -1.96 to +1.96 in a normal distribution. The Z-values presented in the following tables fall within these acceptable limits, confirming that the data for all variables meet the normality criteria.

Table 1 presents mean's standard error (1.081) which indicates sample mean 186.30 deviates by 1.081 with respect to population mean. This represents sample mean is reasonably near the population mean. The value 10.80, depicts deviation on both positive and negative side from mean. The skewness at (-.098) depicts that data is skewed to the left side. The negative value of kurtosis (-.170) is marginally over the 0 indicating platykurtic distribution.

The value of z of skewness and kurtosis of undergraduate students' happiness (-.0406 and 0.356) suggest Z-values for skewness and kurtosis lies within the range -1.96 to +1.96, considering normal distribution of data at 5% significance level. Observation of the table 1, Figs. 1A & 1B lead to conclude that the scores of happiness of undergraduate students are distributed normally.

Table 2 presents the significance values for both tests Kolmogorov-Smirnova (.200) and Shapiro-Wilk test (.575) are higher as compared to 0.05, (i.e. $p > 0.05$) the data for Happiness Scores can be considered normally distributed. This confirms that parametric statistical tests can be appropriately applied for further analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation

Objective 1: To compare the mean score of happiness of undergraduate students in terms of gender.

To compare the happiness of undergraduate students in terms of gender the following null hypothesis was formulated.

Table 1: Summary Statistics indicating the Normality of Happiness Scores among Undergraduate Students

N	Mean	SD	Std Error Mean	Sk	Std Error Sk	Z value of Sk	Ku	Std Error Ku	Z value of Ku
100	186.30	10.806	1.081	-.098	.241	-0.406	-.170	.478	0.356

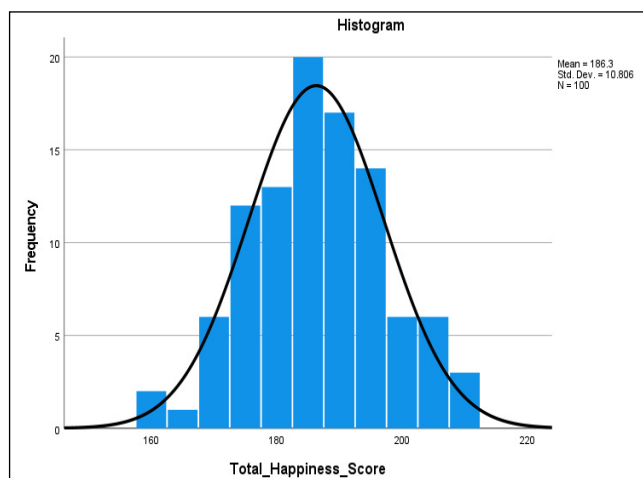


Fig. 1A: NPC depicting scores of Happiness of Undergraduates (N=100)

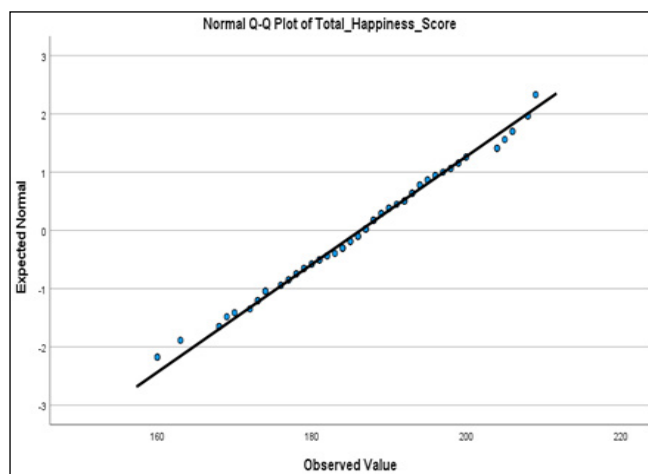


Fig. 1.1B: Q-Q plot showing Happiness scores of Undergraduate Students (N=100)

Table 2: Kolmogorov-Smirnova and Shapiro-Wilk test of Normality to test significance of the Normal Distribution of Happiness Scores of Undergraduate Students

	Normality Test					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Total Happiness Score	.066	100	.200 [*]	.989	100	.575

Null Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in mean score of happiness of male and female undergraduate students.

An independent t-test was employed, and results are shown in table 3.

Table 3 presents that the mean happiness scores for females (186.15) and males (186.46) with standard deviation for female is 10.932 and for male is 10.782 which are very close, suggesting no substantial difference between the two groups. The results indicates that there is no remarkable difference in the happiness of the two groups, the $t(98) = -0.140$, p -value (Sig. 2-tailed) = 0.889. The p -value $0.889 > 0.05$, indicating no difference in happiness scores between both groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis “There is no significant difference in mean score of happiness of male and female undergraduate students” is accepted. The confidence interval (-4.618 to 4.009) includes zero, further confirming that the difference is not significant and the hypothesis i.e. ‘There is no significant difference in mean score of Happiness of male and female undergraduate students’ is accepted.

Objective 2: To find out the difference in happiness of undergraduate students in terms of academic disciplines.

To know the level of happiness of undergraduate students in terms of academic disciplines the following hypothesis was formulated.

Null Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in mean score of happiness of undergraduate students of science and arts& humanities discipline.

An independent t-test was employed, and results are showed in table 4.

Table 4 presents that the mean happiness scores for science students (187.26) and non-science (185.34) with standard deviation for science is 11.41 and for arts& humanities is 10.18 which are close enough, suggesting no substantial difference between the two groups. The results indicates that there is no remarkable difference in the happiness of the two groups, the $t(98) = -0.887$, p -value (Sig. 2-tailed) = 0.377. The p -value $0.377 > 0.05$, indicating no statistical difference in happiness scores of sciences and arts& humanities groups. Therefore, the null

Table 3: Showing difference in Happiness of undergraduate students in terms of Gender

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Happiness Total Score	Female	52	186.15	10.932	1.516	98	-.140	.889	Lower	Upper
	Male	48	186.46	10.782	1.556				-4.618	4.009

*Not significant at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 4: showing difference in Happiness of Undergraduate Students in terms of Academic Streams

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	SD	SEM	df	T	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Happiness Total Score	Science	50	187.26	11.414	1.614	98	.887	.377	Lower	Upper
	Arts & humanities	50	185.34	10.187	1.441				-2.374	6.214

*Not significant at 0.05 level of significance.

hypothesis “There is no significant difference in mean score of happiness of science and arts & humanities undergraduate students” is accepted. The confidence interval (-2.374 to 6.214) includes zero, further confirming that the difference is not significant and the hypothesis i.e.

‘There is no significant difference in mean score of happiness of science and arts & humanities undergraduate students’ is accepted.

Findings

The main findings came out from the present study are listed below: -

1. The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in the happiness between undergraduate students with reference to gender. This implies that gender does not play a determining role in the level of happiness experienced by students at the undergraduate level. The emotional well-being of students, in this context, appears to be independent of gender, suggesting that both male and female students derive happiness from similar or equally accessible sources and experiences within the academic environment.
2. The findings predict no remarkable difference exists in the happiness of students enrolled in science and arts & humanities disciplines. This suggests that academic discipline or stream affiliation does not influence students’ happiness. Despite the presumed rigor or

nature of specific academic streams, the study found that students across disciplines report similar levels of happiness, pointing to the need for unified well-being strategies across all academic departments.

DISCUSSION

Findings of this study are in consonance with the findings reported by (Chakraborty *et al.* 2019; Gogoi & Sahoo, 2022), who didn’t find any relationship of happiness with respect to gender and stated that gender has no role in happiness of college and university students. The potential explanation of no difference of happiness among male and female undergraduates may be due to changed lifestyle. Today’s advancements have placed male and female students at same platforms, awareness among family and society, focus on academic factors like having equal amount of academic pressure, to achieve life goals, their social life and their vision towards their future all have impact irrespective of gender.

In the current study the investigator didn’t find any study which found out the impact of stream over the happiness of students. The happiness of a person does not depend upon academic stream as every stream has its weightage and has its own quality. Science and arts & humanities stream expose students to extreme pressures like rigorous examinations, competitive environments, and uncertainties regarding future careers. Despite differences in curriculum content, these common challenges tend to impact students equally.

CONCLUSION

The investigation aimed to explore the happiness of undergraduate students with reference to gender, academic stream. The analysis of data yielded two significant insights. First, there was no statistically remarkable difference in happiness between male and female undergraduates, indicating that emotional well-being at the undergraduate level is not influenced by gender. Second, the comparison between students of science and arts & humanities disciplines also revealed no significant variation in happiness levels. This finding underscores that the nature of academic discipline—whether perceived as rigorous or otherwise—does not have a substantial impact on the overall happiness of students. Together, these findings highlight the importance of adopting inclusive and comprehensive student wellness programs that cater to the entire student population, regardless of gender or academic disciplines.

Recommendations

On the ground of findings, the study recommended the measures as:

- ❑ Reconsidering the role of gender in emotional well-being initiatives
- ❑ Since the study indicates that happiness is not influenced by gender among undergraduate students, it implies that happiness-enhancing programs in educational institutions should adopt a gender-neutral approach.
- ❑ Curriculum development should not be stream-specific for emotional support.

The finding that academic stream does not influence happiness suggests that student well-being programs should be uniformly implemented across all disciplines. Institutions should avoid stream-specific assumptions about students' emotional needs.

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