

Impact of Happy Curriculum on Learning Outcomes of Middle-School Students of Jabalpur City

Dr. Dimple Bhalla

Assistant. Professor, Department of Education G.S. College of Commerce & Economics (Auto.) Jabalpur, M.P.

Abstract—The concept of a Happy Curriculum has gained prominence in recent years as education systems worldwide increasingly emphasize students' well-being alongside academic achievement. A Happy Curriculum integrates emotional well-being, life skills, value education, experiential learning, and a supportive classroom environment with traditional academic content. The present study examines the impact of a Happy Curriculum on the learning outcomes of middle-class students at the middle school level. Using a descriptive and inferential research design, data were collected from 300 middle-school students studying in classes VI–VIII from selected urban schools of Jabalpur city. Tools included a Happy Curriculum Exposure Scale and a Learning Outcomes Achievement Test, supplemented by a Student Well-being Questionnaire. Statistical analysis using mean, standard deviation, t-test, and correlation revealed that students exposed to a Happy Curriculum demonstrated significantly higher learning outcomes, better emotional regulation, and improved classroom engagement compared to students following a conventional curriculum. The findings suggest that a Happy Curriculum plays a crucial role in enhancing holistic learning outcomes among middle-school students and supports the integration of happiness-oriented practices into mainstream education.

Index Terms—Happy Curriculum, Learning Outcomes, Emotional Well-being, Classroom Environment, Middle School students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century is no longer confined to cognitive development alone; it increasingly recognizes the importance of emotional, social, and psychological well-being of learners. The idea of a Happy Curriculum stems from positive psychology and holistic education, emphasizing joy, satisfaction, emotional balance, and meaningful learning

experiences in schools. In India, initiatives such as the Happiness Curriculum introduced by the Delhi Government have highlighted the relevance of happiness and well-being in school education.

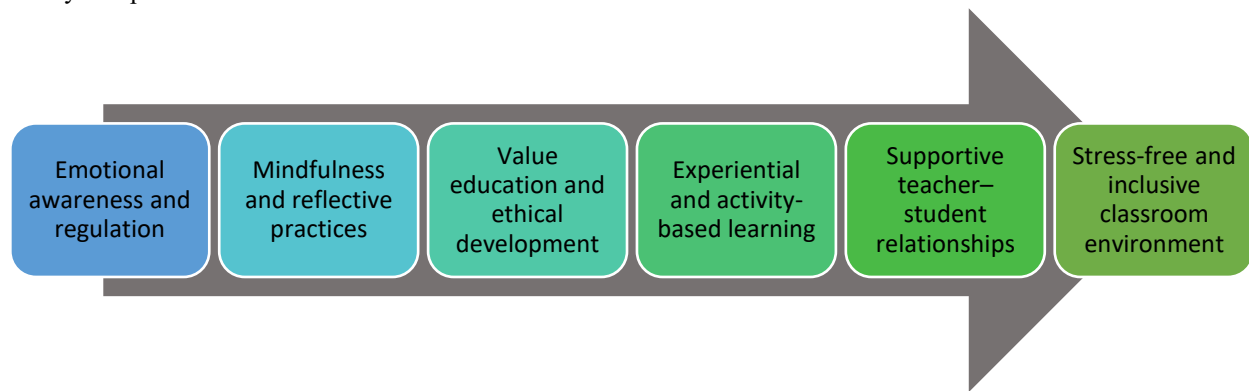
Middle-class students constitute a significant segment of the Indian education system. These students often face academic pressure, competitive expectations, parental aspirations, and social comparisons. While they generally have access to basic educational resources, they may experience stress related to performance, future security, and social mobility. A Happy Curriculum can potentially mitigate these pressures by fostering intrinsic motivation, emotional resilience, and a positive attitude towards learning.

Learning outcomes refer to the measurable knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that students acquire as a result of educational experiences. Research indicates that emotional well-being and positive school climate significantly influence students' academic performance and long-term learning outcomes. Therefore, examining the impact of a Happy Curriculum on the learning outcomes of middle-class students is both timely and relevant.

II. CONCEPT OF HAPPY CURRICULUM

A Happy Curriculum is an educational framework that integrates happiness, well-being, and life skills into the formal curriculum. A happy curriculum is not an addition to education but a necessary transformation of the learning process. By prioritizing happiness and well-being alongside academic excellence, education becomes more meaningful, humane, and effective. In today's rapidly changing world, a happy curriculum plays a vital role in shaping confident, emotionally balanced, socially responsible, and competent individuals.

Its key components include:



Emotional awareness and regulation

Emotional awareness refers to the ability of students to identify, understand, and express their emotions, while emotional regulation involves managing these emotions in constructive ways. Middle-school students often experience emotional instability due to physical, cognitive, and social changes. Emotional awareness helps learners understand their inner experiences, while emotional regulation enables them to respond positively to challenges. Students with emotional regulation skills show better classroom behavior, reduced conflicts, and improved learning engagement.

Mindfulness and reflective practices

Mindfulness involves being fully present and attentive to the current moment without judgment. Reflective practices encourage learners to think about their thoughts, emotions, and actions to gain self-understanding. Mindfulness helps students reduce stress, improve concentration, and enhance emotional balance. Reflective practices strengthen metacognitive abilities and promote self-directed learning. Together, they create a calm mental state conducive to meaningful learning.

Value education and ethical development

Value education aims at the development of moral, ethical, and social values that guide responsible behavior and decision-making. In a rapidly changing society, students require strong ethical foundations to make responsible choices. Value education fosters character development and social responsibility, enabling students to become ethical citizens.

Experiential and activity-based learning

Experiential learning emphasizes learning through direct experience, participation, and reflection rather than passive content absorption. Activity-based learning enhances student engagement and enjoyment. When students actively participate, they develop deeper understanding, creativity, and critical thinking. Experiential learning also caters to diverse learning styles.

Supportive teacher-student relationships

A supportive teacher-student relationship is based on trust, empathy, mutual respect, and open communication. Strong teacher-student relationships create emotional security, which is essential for effective learning. Students are more likely to participate, take academic risks, and seek help when they feel supported by their teachers.

Stress-free and inclusive classroom environment

A stress-free and inclusive classroom environment ensures emotional safety, equity, and respect for diversity, allowing all students to learn without fear or discrimination. High academic pressure and fear of failure negatively affect learning outcomes. A stress-free environment reduces anxiety and encourages exploration, creativity, and participation. Inclusivity ensures that every learner feels valued and respected. The key components of the Happy Curriculum collectively contribute to the holistic development of learners by addressing emotional, ethical, cognitive, and social dimensions of education. By integrating emotional awareness, mindfulness, value education, experiential learning, supportive relationships, and inclusive environments, the Happy Curriculum transforms classrooms into joyful and meaningful learning spaces. These components significantly

enhance learning outcomes and align closely with the vision of NEP 2020, which emphasizes happiness, well-being, and learner-centred education. Thus, the primary aim of a Happy Curriculum is to create joyful learning experiences that enhance students' engagement, motivation, and overall development, thereby positively influencing learning outcomes.

III. EFFECTIVENESS OF HAPPY CURRICULUM

Middle school is a critical developmental stage marked by rapid cognitive, emotional, and social changes. During this phase, students often experience academic pressure, identity formation challenges, and emotional fluctuations. The happy curriculum, which integrates emotional well-being, joyful learning, and holistic development into the teaching-learning process, has a significant positive impact on middle school students.

➤ *Emotional and Psychological Development*

A happy curriculum helps middle school students develop emotional awareness, self-regulation, and resilience. Practices such as mindfulness, reflection, and value-based discussions reduce stress, anxiety, and fear of examinations. Students feel emotionally safe, leading to improved self-esteem and confidence.

➤ *Improved Academic Performance*

When students are emotionally engaged and happy, their attention span, comprehension, and retention of knowledge improve. Activity-based learning and experiential methods enhance conceptual clarity and academic achievement. Happiness acts as a catalyst for intrinsic motivation, encouraging students to learn for understanding rather than rote memorization.

➤ *Increased Student Engagement and Motivation*

A happy curriculum promotes active participation through collaborative learning, projects, games, and creative tasks. Students become more curious and enthusiastic about learning, resulting in higher classroom involvement and reduced absenteeism.

➤ *Social Skills and Interpersonal Relationships*

Through group activities, peer interaction, and cooperative learning, students develop communication skills, empathy, teamwork, and respect for diversity.

Positive peer relationships reduce behavioral problems and foster a sense of belonging in school.

➤ *Reduction in Stress and Behavioral Issues*

By creating a supportive and non-threatening learning environment, the happy curriculum helps minimize academic stress, disciplinary problems, and classroom conflicts. Students exhibit better behavior, emotional balance, and adaptability.

➤ *Development of Life Skills and Values*

Middle school students acquire essential life skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, ethical reasoning, and responsibility. Value education and real-life experiences help in character formation and moral development.

➤ *Support for Inclusive and Diverse Learners*

The happy curriculum recognizes individual differences in learning styles, abilities, and emotional needs. Inclusive practices ensure that all students, including slow learners and children with special needs, feel respected and supported.

➤ *Positive Teacher-Student Relationships*

A happiness-oriented curriculum strengthens trust and communication between teachers and students. Teachers act as facilitators and mentors, which enhances students' sense of security and willingness to express themselves.

The impact of a happy curriculum on students is profound and multidimensional. By integrating happiness, emotional well-being, and joyful learning with academic instruction, schools can nurture balanced, confident, motivated, and socially responsible learners. In the long run, a happy curriculum contributes not only to academic success but also to the overall personality development and mental health of school students.

IV. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The concept of happiness-oriented education has gained increasing attention in educational research due to its potential to improve both academic and non-academic outcomes. The Happy Curriculum, grounded in positive psychology and social-emotional learning (SEL), emphasizes emotional well-being,

mindfulness, values, and experiential learning as essential components of effective education. This review synthesizes existing literature to understand how such curricula influence learning outcomes among middle-school students.

➤ *Theoretical Foundations of the Happy Curriculum*

The Happy Curriculum draws its theoretical basis from Positive Psychology, Constructivist Learning Theory, and Humanistic Education.

Seligman et al. (2009) introduced the concept of *Positive Education*, integrating happiness and well-being with academic instruction. They argued that positive emotions broaden students' cognitive resources, leading to improved learning and creativity. Maslow (1968) emphasized that emotional security and self-actualization are prerequisites for effective learning, aligning closely with the objectives of the Happy Curriculum.

Vygotsky (1978) highlighted the social and emotional context of learning, suggesting that supportive environments enhance cognitive development.

These theories collectively support the idea that emotional well-being is fundamental to academic success.

➤ *Emotional Well-Being and Academic Achievement*

Several studies have established a strong link between students' emotional well-being and learning outcomes. Durlak et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of school-based SEL programs and found significant improvements in students' academic performance, classroom behavior, and emotional regulation.

Suldo et al. (2014) reported that middle-school students with higher life satisfaction demonstrated better grades and school engagement.

Reschly et al. (2020) found that emotional competence predicted academic resilience among adolescents.

These findings suggest that happiness-oriented interventions positively influence learning outcomes by enhancing emotional stability and motivation.

➤ *Mindfulness-Based Interventions and Learning Outcomes*

Mindfulness is a central component of the Happy Curriculum, particularly relevant for middle-school learners experiencing emotional and academic stress.

Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, and Walach (2014) reviewed mindfulness-based school programs and reported improvements in attention, emotional regulation, and academic performance.

Schonert-Reichl et al. (2015) found that mindfulness practices reduced stress and enhanced executive functioning among students aged 9–13.

In the Indian context, Kaur and Arora (2021) observed improved concentration and classroom engagement among middle-school students participating in mindfulness sessions.

These studies highlight the effectiveness of mindfulness in creating optimal learning conditions.

➤ *Value Education, Ethics, and Social Development*

Value education is an integral part of happiness-based curricula, fostering moral and ethical development alongside academic learning.

Lickona (2012) emphasized that character education promotes responsible behavior and academic integrity. Berkowitz and Bier (2014) found that value-based programs positively influenced students' social skills, discipline, and academic motivation.

NCERT (2021) reported that happiness-oriented and value-based learning improved students' social adjustment and cooperative behavior in Indian schools.

The literature indicates that ethical development contributes indirectly to academic success by fostering positive learning environments.

➤ *Experiential Learning and Student Engagement*

The Happy Curriculum emphasizes experiential and activity-based learning as a means to promote joy and engagement.

Kolb (1984) proposed that learning occurs through experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application.

Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) identified student engagement as a key predictor of academic achievement.

Sharma and Gupta (2021) found that activity-based happiness modules increased classroom participation and learning retention among middle-school students. Engaged learners demonstrate higher motivation, deeper understanding, and improved academic outcomes.

➤ *Teacher–Student Relationships and Learning Outcomes*

Supportive teacher–student relationships play a critical role in the success of the Happy Curriculum.

Roorda et al. (2011) reported that positive teacher–student relationships were strongly associated with academic achievement and emotional well-being.

Cornelius-White (2007) found that learner-centered teacher behaviors positively affected student motivation and performance.

In Indian schools, Mehta (2020) observed that empathetic teacher practices reduced student anxiety and improved learning outcomes.

These studies confirm that emotional support from teachers enhances students' willingness to learn.

➤ *Happy Curriculum and Indian Educational Context*

The implementation of happiness-oriented education in India gained momentum with initiatives such as the Delhi Happiness Curriculum.

Government of Delhi (2018) reported improved student engagement, reduced stress, and positive behavioral changes following the introduction of the Happiness Curriculum.

Singh and Mishra (2022) found that middle-school students exposed to happiness-based learning demonstrated higher emotional intelligence and academic achievement.

NEP 2020 strongly advocates joyful, stress-free, and holistic education, reinforcing the relevance of the Happy Curriculum at the national level.

V. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the level of exposure to Happy Curriculum practices among middle-school students.
2. To assess the learning outcomes of the middle school level students.
3. To compare learning outcomes of students exposed to a Happy Curriculum and those following a conventional curriculum.
4. To examine the relationship between Happy Curriculum exposure and learning outcomes.

VI. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant difference in learning outcomes between middle-school students exposed to a Happy Curriculum and those following a conventional curriculum.
2. There is no significant relationship between Happy Curriculum exposure and learning outcomes of middle-school students.

VII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey and comparative research design.

7.2 Sample

The sample consisted of 300 middle-school students studying in classes VI–VIII from six urban middle schools from Jabalpur city. Out of these, 150 students were from schools implementing Happy Curriculum practices, and 150 students were from schools following a conventional curriculum.

7.3 Tools Used

1. Happy Curriculum Exposure Scale (self-developed)
2. Learning Outcomes Achievement Test (covering language, mathematics, and general awareness)
3. Student Well-being Questionnaire (self-developed)

7.4 Data Collection

Data were collected through direct administration of tools with the permission of school authorities.

7.5 Statistical Techniques

Mean, standard deviation, t-test, and Pearson's correlation coefficient were used for data analysis.

VIII. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Table 1: Comparison of Learning Outcomes Scores

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Result
Happy Curriculum	150	72.45	8.62	6.87*	Significant
Conventional Curriculum	150	65.30	9.15		

*Significant at 0.01 level

Interpretation: The mean learning outcomes score of students exposed to the Happy Curriculum is significantly higher than that of students following the conventional curriculum. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2: Correlation between Happy Curriculum Exposure and Learning Outcomes

Variable	N	r-value	Result
Happy Curriculum Exposure & Learning Outcomes	300	0.62*	Significant

*Significant at 0.01 level

Interpretation: A moderate to high positive correlation exists between Happy Curriculum exposure and learning outcomes, indicating that increased exposure to happiness-oriented practices enhances students' learning outcomes.

IX. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Middle-class students exposed to a Happy Curriculum show higher academic achievement and better learning outcomes.
2. Happy Curriculum practices positively influence students' emotional well-being and classroom engagement.
3. There is a significant positive relationship between happiness-oriented curriculum exposure and learning outcomes.
4. Students following a conventional curriculum exhibit comparatively lower motivation and higher academic stress.

X. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- Schools should integrate happiness-oriented activities, mindfulness, and life skills into the middle school curriculum.
- Teachers should be trained to create emotionally supportive and joyful learning environments.
- Curriculum planners should balance academic rigor with students' well-being, especially for middle-class students facing competitive pressures.

- Assessment practices should include non-cognitive learning outcomes such as emotional and social development.

XI. CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that a Happy Curriculum has a significant positive impact on the learning outcomes of middle-class students at the middle school level. By fostering emotional well-being, intrinsic motivation, and active engagement, a Happy Curriculum enhances both academic and holistic development. In an era marked by academic competition and stress, especially among middle-class students, integrating happiness and well-being into education is not merely desirable but essential. Future research may extend this study to rural and senior secondary students and adopt longitudinal designs to examine long-term effects.

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