
An Investigation Of Happiness Education Situation In Three Middle Schools In Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, China

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Abstract:

There's great significance of 'Happiness Education' in Middle Schools in China. Middle school education (aged from 13-15) is an extremely important stage of education. This period often lays the foundation for human future development and happiness. The neglect of happiness education in this period may cause effects on personal and social problems. The objects of this article are to discover and analyze the current happiness education situation in Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province, China through surveys from five dimensions of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and then to enhance the situation by multiple theories and practical activities one by one in the future. Quantitative survey description method is used in the study with the technique of SPSS in the analysis part. The online survey consists of three main parts: the conception of happiness, the happiness status and happiness influencing factors. The results of happiness education situation of the three middle school students are generally not optimistic. The findings on these factors show implementing happiness education is to enable middle school students to learn more about the theory of happiness, truly feel happiness, better understand happiness in family, campus, and social activities, and create and share happiness in practice. More comprehensive studies can be carried out in the future by taking samples from schools in different provinces to increase generalizability (Telef, Bülent Baki, 2020). It is recommended to cross domain, cross culture, and data drive while doing related research.

Keywords: Happiness Education, Middle Schools, China

Introduction

When people are asked what they want for their life, they usually answer that they want to be happy. When parents are asked what they want for their children, they usually answer that they want their children to be happy. So, happiness is not only a dream for contemporary people, but also an expectation for future generations. Education is a project for cultivating people. Educators should cultivate individuals with a scientific concept of happiness, the ability to discover, enjoy, and create happiness for themselves and others.

One of the problems in educational system is the presence of happy schools. Although it is really an old problem but it has not been studied seriously up to now (Talebzadeh, F., & Samkan, M., 2011). In China and many other countries, teachers usually use whether students master certain knowledge or skills as the main basis for evaluating them, and schools will also use students' knowledge and skill scores as the main basis for evaluating teachers' work. And happiness is rarely mentioned as an aim of education. What about the happiness concepts and abilities of students? Does education cultivate individuals with the ability to enjoy and create happiness? This is a fundamental goal problem that contemporary educators need to think about and solve.

Middle school education is the foundation of the entire education system and the middle school stage plays a decisive role in the transformation of students' lives. The lack of happiness ability can lead to a lack of personal and social happiness. The negation of happiness education

can lead to the lack of the value and meaning of life by individuals and even the entire society. Growth issues, family issues, and social relationship issues arise one after another, with a lack of enthusiasm and family awareness. At present, there is a continuous growth of non-conformists in China, and the worsening problems of low marriage rate, low birth rate, and aging are the most concentrated manifestations. Only by caring about everyone's happiness status and solving the problem of low personal happiness can we improve the overall happiness index of society and solve a series of social problems from the source.

Related Research in China

Zhang Xiaodong is the first one in China to post the essay in which happiness education is clearly called out - Psychologically, 'education is happiness education'. To be more precise, psychological education is to detect happiness, experience happiness and pursuit of happiness (Zhang Xiaodong, 2002). Liu Cilin's "Theory of Happiness Education" defined the concept of happiness in the philosophical and educational senses, believing that happiness is the dialectical unity of human physiological happiness, psychological happiness, and ethical happiness, and is the subjective feeling when human nature is affirmed. (Fan Yakui, 2003)

2.1 Learning and drawing on the experience of happiness education abroad

We found the origin of happiness education from Sukhomlinsky (Gao Feng, 2010). The happiness brought by New Zealand education to students' growth with a complete teacher structure: meeting the needs of students (Wang Jianjuan, 2008). Concept of Danish education is to give students full freedom, so that every child can grow up happily in school (Xiao Yuanqi, 2011). We also need to turn the people we educate into happy individuals. This article combines Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and starts with addressing basic human needs, gradually exploring effective ways to improve the happiness of impoverished medical students (Geng Jianfeng, 2011). In Dewey's "education is life", there is a life oriented and educational meaning of education, that is, allowing students to live in education and educate in life. In fact, both teachers and students yearn for a happy life and happy education (Hong Liu, 2012). Epicurus founded a school for the education of the common people, teaching them how to achieve happiness (Liu Zhen, Lei Xiangyong, 2018). Rousseau's happiness education thoughts provide a practical reference for happiness education in China (Chen Longhua, 2020). Noddings' concept of happiness education provides useful cultural references for exploring and innovating the development direction of school education and teaching in China. (Wu Jiameng, 2021)

2.2 Establishment of Chinese domestic theory on happiness education

The theory of life education is the main line and important cornerstone of Tao Xingzhi's educational ideology. The relationship between happiness and life, as well as their relationship with education, is a key issue related to the success or failure of contemporary education. Education should be happy, and children should also be happy, just like a small reed tube, if the juice you input from this end is bitter water flowing out on the other end will never be sweet honey. (Shu Rongdi, 2014)

In the process of pursuing happiness education, it is necessary to guide students to pursue "truth, good, goodness, fullness and beauty", and we naturally think of Cai Yuanpei, the epitome of China's aesthetic education ideology. (Shen Mengling, 2017)

when it comes to Wei Shusheng, his simple, peaceful, calm, and enigmatic educational and teaching strategies are admirable, and he is known as "Contemporary Confucius". He believes that "happiness is spiritual and cannot be defined by a material measure. A person is happiest only when they have established a correct worldview. The strongest and most lasting sense of happiness is the happiness that arises after conquering their own inertia. Therefore,

both teachers and students hold an optimistic attitude towards teaching and learning, which is called "seeking joy in teaching, learning, and suffering". (Qin Xufang, 2017)

2.3 Double reduction policy research trend

The Xueyuan Road Campus of the Suqian Branch of Nanjing Normal University Affiliated High School conscientiously implements the requirements of the national "double reduction" policy, plans comprehensively, and implements precise policies. Since the implementation of the "double reduction" policy, schools have not only solved the problems of parents' "urgent and difficult care", but also explored a "double reduction" path towards happiness education based on high-quality development without increasing the burden on teachers and students (Gao Hui, Wang Chao, 2022).

The "double reduction" is related to thousands of households and education fairness. Shengli No. 58 Middle School in Dongying City, Shandong Province focuses on strengthening the main role of school education, allowing children to enjoy happy education, teachers to enjoy educational happiness, learning to become a happy process, and education to become happiness. The cause of happiness enables students to embark on a happy life from their respective starting points, making life exciting through education. (Bi Yufeng, Zhang Lijun, 2023)

Conceptual Framework

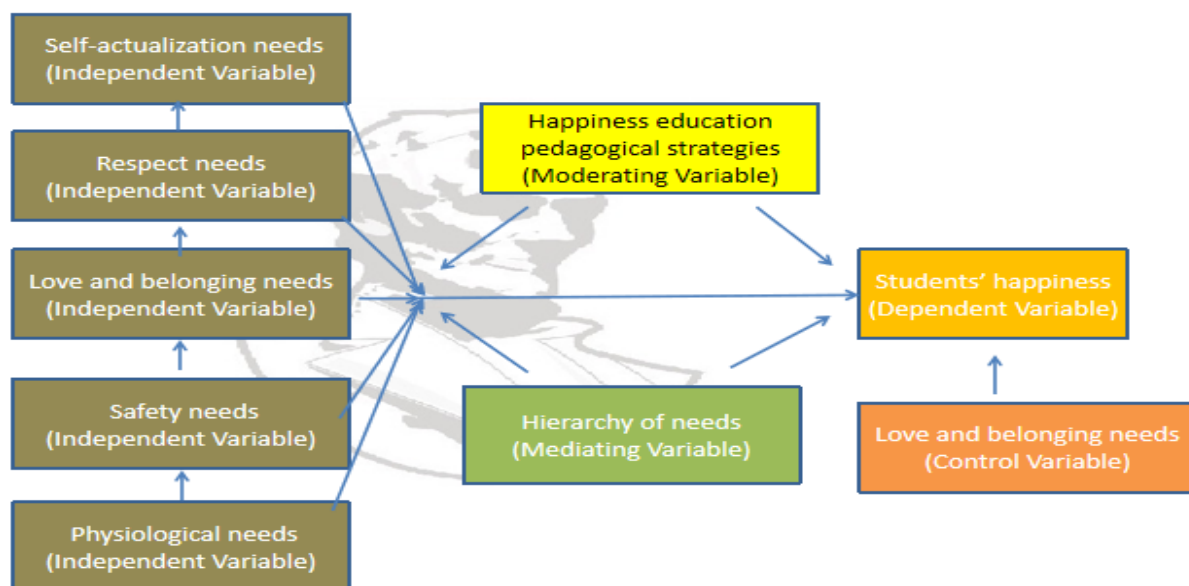


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

In the framework (Figure 1), student happiness is the dependent variable, and the five levels in Maslow's hierarchy of happiness needs are all independent variables. There is another progressive relationship between each of them. Usually, when students' lower level needs are met, they will generate and focus on higher-level needs. Whether the five levels of needs are satisfied or not singly and together constitutes and affects students' happiness experience.

Among them, the need for love and belonging is also a control variable, which has the greatest impact on the happiness of middle school students and can be said to play a decisive role. And the hierarchy of needs plays the role of mediating variable in this system. Because students' individual happiness levels may be at different stages of development, under the same satisfaction conditions, their happiness levels will produce different reactions, which is caused by different levels of needs.

Happiness education pedagogical strategies is moderating variable. Through the teaching strategy of "student-centered" and project-based activity strategies, as well as educational strategies involving parental intervention and action education strategies in experiments, we can provide effective guidance on happiness education for students from five levels of needs, regulating their cognition and practice of happiness, thereby gaining positive happiness experiences, accumulating their knowledge about happiness, and enhancing their self- perception and creative abilities towards happiness to ensure that the implementation of educational strategies based on happiness education has a positive impact on the happiness of middle school students.

Research methodology

4.1 Quantitative survey method

Descriptive analysis on the differences in frequency distribution and central trends of the data is performed. And regression analysis method is used to analyze the degree of difference between dependent and independents.

4.2 Sampling and data collection

Cluster sampling method of probability sampling design is applied in this research to generalize sample population to all members of target population.

Questionnaire to approximately 800 sample number of three middle schools in Jiangsu, China is distributed, and online survey is applied in the research area. Before final confirmation of questionnaire, pilot survey to 50 respondents is surveyed to ensure the draft questionnaire is appropriate and correct.

4.3 Source of data

Using first-hand data research methods, the writer aims to understand the data records related to happiness education for middle school students. The primary data is collected through questionnaire surveys to analyze and obtain correct data.

4.4 Analysis technique

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is used in this research because it is well systematical prediction and statistical data analysis. Descriptive analysis on the differences in frequency distribution and central trends is performed to analyze the current situation of happiness education in the three middle schools in China. Regression analysis method is used to analyze the degree of influencing factors.

Findings and Results

Key findings and results of the study are summarized as following:

Table 1: Reliability and Validity of the Survey Questionnaire on Happiness Among Middle School Students

Sample Size	Number of Items	Cronbach . α Coefficient	KMO Value
781	27	0.854	0.926

The questionnaire consists of 27 questions and the sample size of 781 provides valid responses. The reliability coefficient and validity coefficient of the questionnaire is 0.854 and 0.926 respectively, indicating that the questionnaire had strong reliability and validity.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of the Influencing Factors to the Students' Happiness Index in Three Middle Schools in Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province, China

Items	Regression Coefficient	T-value	P-value	VIF
Constant	3.57	21.69	0.000**	-
Which of the following places do you think has the greatest impact on your happiness?	-0.01	-0.27	0.789	1.12
Which of the following people do you think has the greatest impact on your happiness?	-0.10	-3.85	0.000**	1.46
Which of the following people do you think has the greatest impact on your happiness?	-0.05	-2.35	0.019*	1.36
Which of the following aspects do you think has the greatest impact on your happiness?	0.07	1.98	0.048*	1.01
Which of the following do you find most valuable?	0.13	5.18	0.000**	1.01
Sample	781			
R ²	0.088			
Adjusting R ²	0.082			
F	F(5,775)=14.975,p=0.000			
* p<0.05 ** p<0.01				

In regression analysis, the P-value indicates the significance of various factors influencing students' happiness. Key influences include family support, parental involvement, self-achievements, and the sense of love and belonging. A low P-value for these variables suggests that they play a crucial role in shaping students' overall happiness. Family and parents provide emotional stability and guidance, while self-achievements boost self-esteem and confidence. Furthermore, a strong sense of love and belonging fosters a supportive environment, enhancing well-being. Together, these factors significantly contribute to the happiness index of students, underscoring the importance of a holistic approach to their emotional and psychological development.

Table 3: Findings in the Survey of Happiness Education Situation in Three Middle Schools in Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province, China

Themes	Happiness Education Situation
The concept of happiness (Maslow's hierarchy of needs)	Little number of the students (19.08%) in the three middle schools have the knowledge of Maslow's hierarchy of needs on happiness.
Happiness situation	The happiness index of the students in the three middles schools is quite low(62.74%).

Influencing factors	Family and parents occupy the most proportion influencing students' happiness on the aspect of belonging and love, which plays the most important role in middle school stages, not self-achievements.
In General	There are positive correlations between all the five levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the student happiness index.

Finding 1- The importance of well-being: The majority of participants (61.59%) believe that people's well-being is "very important", while 92.25% of the participants believe that well-being is important or very important, showing the importance of well-being in their lives.

Finding 2- Self-well-being assessment: Only 35.85% of the participants consider themselves "happy", with even less 26.89% say they are "very happy", The happiness index of the students in the three middles schools is quite low rate of 62.74%. Nearly half of them are lack of the experience of consistent happiness feelings.

Finding 3- Well-being in family and school life: In family life, only 69.65% of participants consider themselves happy or very happy; In school life, even less, 59.67% of people held the same opinion, echoing Finding 2, showing that family and school play an important role in the well-being of participants.

Finding 4- Basic living needs and sense of security: 78.24% of the participants felt that their basic living needs could be met, and 75.06% felt safe at home, indicating that the participants were in a good state in terms of basic living conditions and sense of security.

Finding 5- Impact of interpersonal relationships: Family was considered to have the greatest impact on well-being (55.44%), followed by friends (26.25%) and self (25.48%). Participants generally felt love and support from their families, but 50.58% saying they were "very loved".

Finding 6- Respect and self-worth: 42.89% of the participants felt that they were respected by their teachers, while 38.67% felt that they were respected in their families. 41.49% believe that "love and belonging" have the greatest impact on happiness, while 27.02% believe that "self-fulfillment" is also important.

Finding 7- Most valuable aspects: Achieving dreams was considered the most valuable (30.6%), followed by good grades (22.92%) and physical and mental health (19.85%), reflecting the participants' emphasis on personal growth and success.

In summary, participants generally have a longing attitude towards well-being, believing that family, school, and relationships play an important role in well-being.

Conclusion and Discussion

According to the investigation, the overall happiness situation of middle school students is not optimistic in most aspects except that participants' basic living needs and sense of security is satisfying. And Middle schools urgently need to implement and promote happiness education to improve students' concept of happiness, happiness ability and happiness index effectively.

The utmost of the related research is to improve the happiness of the students comprehensively. In addition to effectively meeting the five levels of needs of middle school students, the following points are also important.

First, happy teachers are root of happiness education. Teachers with happiness feelings are more easily to provide happy education. Without happy teachers, students are hard to get real happiness education. Secondly, happy classes are soil of happiness. Classes are the places where students study, communicate and grow. So, the research of happy classes and courses are very important. Thirdly, families are water of happiness education. They should modulate the environment of the students' growth by their peculiar advantages, such as inborn love, permanent concern and one-to-one or face-to-face communication convenience. At last, communities are sunshine of happiness education. Communities are small social units in a city, a country and the world. Student education should be included in their communities' concerning to help them build the mind of being a civil. And a civil that is loved by the society and will love the society when they grow up and enter the world.

On the path of happiness education in China, it is important to learn from the experiences of other countries, but it is more important to be based on the facts of its own. Adhering to the implementation of the "double reduction policy" can solve the urgent problem on the surface. The reform of the college entrance examination policy and the transformation of the talent evaluation mechanism are key, while the improvement and reconstruction of the value system is essential.

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