

Research Communication

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Well-Being, Satisfaction with Life, Subjective Happiness and Mindfulness across Educational Groups: A Comparative Analysis

Abstract: Introduction: The well-being of students has become a critical concern in recent times, with a perceived decline in their holistic development and a prevailing sense of malaise. Despite having access to a wide range of resources, modern students appear to be unfocused, dissatisfied, and lacking happiness compared to previous generations. This study aims to assess the levels of satisfaction with life (SWL), subjective happiness (SH), and mindfulness (MAA) in students, as well as explore how these factors predict overall well-being (WB). Standardized tests, including the SWL scale, SH scale, MAAS, and WHO WB scale, were administered to a sample of 123 school students and 100 university students, with the goal of devising effective interventions.

Results: The findings revealed a significant difference in SWL and WB between the two groups. The regression analysis, with WB as the criterion, demonstrated a statistically well-fitted model with an R^2 value of 0.52. The regression estimates indicated that SWL, SH, and MAA significantly predict WB, with SH and MAA showing positive associations, while SWL displayed a negative relationship with WB.

Conclusion: This research effectively achieved its objective by establishing relationships among the mentioned variables. It was found that WB is negatively correlated with SWL but positively correlated with SH and MAA. Moreover, a distinction was observed between school and university students regarding SWL and WB, while no significant difference was noted for MAA and SH. Specifically, school students exhibited higher levels of SWL, whereas university students displayed higher levels of WB.

Keywords: Well-Being, Satisfaction with Life, Subjective Happiness, Mindfulness, Students, Regression

Human beings tend to perceive well-being as a rather binary aspect, leaving limited room for objectively evaluating it. To comprehend the role of well-being

realistically, it is crucial to examine objective assessments of subjective psychological factors such as Subjective Well-Being (SWL), Subjective Happiness (SH), and Mindful Attention Awareness (MAA). This emphasis is particularly important for students, considering the challenges they face not only in academics but also in their developmental stages. In this study, we investigate the well-being of students by comparing two educational groups: high school students aged between 14 and 17 and university students aged between 18 and 21 years.

The potential benefits of mindfulness for overall student well-being are widely acknowledged. However, researchers differ in their views on the effectiveness of interventions for student populations¹. One reason for this discrepancy is the lack of standardized psychological interventions. Furthermore, mindfulness is rarely studied as an innate psychological factor, making it difficult to devise effective interventions. While most interventions suggest positive outcomes such as subjective satisfaction, reduced anxiety, and increased happiness, the findings are diverse and sometimes contradictory. The aim of this study is to generalize the findings by comparing psychological factors related to well-being for different education groups, enabling the development of age-appropriate interventions tailored to students' needs.

Harris² explains how many physical health problems have their origins in adverse childhood experiences and subjective psychological toxicity, which negatively impact well-being during adolescence and young adulthood. Assessing well-being based on educational groups could help address psychological constraints related to SWL, SH, and mindfulness at an early stage.

Sureka³ reports that assessment was conducted to demonstrate the directional impact of mindfulness on anxiety and the increasing prevalence of anxiety, stress, depression, and other mental health issues among students. The study emphasizes the need for evaluating interventions to address various mental health challenges students face daily³. Subjective happiness, also known as

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subjective well-being (SWB), refers to individuals' evaluation of their lives and specific domains and activities within their lives⁴. Various factors such as academic performance, social relationships, personal well-being, and overall life satisfaction influence the subjective happiness of university students⁵. Life satisfaction, a measure of overall well-being, encompasses mood, relationship satisfaction, achieved goals, self-concepts, and perceived ability to cope with life⁶.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), health is not merely the absence of disease but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being⁷. Mental health is often overlooked as an essential component of overall health, leading to severe consequences for individuals' well-being. According to Huang⁸, compromised mental health can lead to severe health consequences, including fatal conditions like cardiovascular diseases, deaths resulting from external causes, and even cancer. These conditions have been linked to increased levels of psychological distress.

Understanding the factors contributing to individual well-being and life satisfaction is becoming increasingly important in today's rapidly changing world⁹. Education plays a fundamental role in shaping cognitive abilities, socio-economic status, and overall life experiences. Thus, exploring the relationship between education level and well-being can provide valuable insights into various subjective measures of happiness, SWL, and mindfulness.

Review of Literature: Numerous studies have explored the concept of well-being among different adult populations, college students, and adolescents from various perspectives¹⁰. Some studies focus on international variations based on ethical considerations of psychosocial factors impacting well-being within specific cultures¹¹. Others investigate the cognitive aspects of subjective well-being, which vary across different geographical regions¹². There are also studies exploring the relationship between well-being and factors such as food, socio-economic status, and social context¹³⁻¹⁶. Jones¹⁷ evaluated the effectiveness of an art-based mindfulness intervention on students. Black¹⁸ investigated the impact of a 5-week mindfulness-based curriculum on student classroom behavior in a lower-income and ethnic minority elementary school. Caballero¹⁹ explored the association between mindfulness and academic achievement in middle school students. Ramanathan²⁰ focused on the relationship between active school travel (AST) and emotions, well-being, and parent perceptions. Lloyd²¹ examined the well-being of young carers, specifically 10 and 11-year-old school children who shoulder caring responsibilities, highlighting the challenges

they face and the need for support systems to enhance their well-being. Co²² conducted a mindfulness-based intervention in a public hospital, demonstrating the potential of mindfulness interventions to improve well-being and performance in the workplace. Åsberg²³ conducted a study on Swedish university students' health experiences and behavior change, emphasizing the importance of implementing strategies for sustainable behavior change and maintaining a healthy lifestyle while navigating university life. Tomy²⁴ examined the validity of subjective well-being measurement for school students, while Flynn²⁵ explored predictors of happiness in undergraduate students. Bahl²⁶ focused on exploring environmental well-being.

Burke²⁷ conducted a preliminary review of mindfulness-based approaches with children and adolescents, emphasizing the feasibility and acceptability of mindfulness-based interventions. Mindfulness as a positive psychological intervention for promoting student well-being has gained popularity in recent times. The present study focuses on relevant literature related to well-being, SWL, SH, and MAA in specific groups of students. Calderon²⁸ explored levels of happiness, psychological well-being, perceived stress, and health behaviors among Thai university students, finding gender differences and emphasizing the importance of cultural factors and stress levels in examining well-being and subjective happiness among students.

Tomy²⁴ investigated the subjective well-being of high-school students using the Personal Wellbeing Index—School Children (PWI-SC), revealing a significant decline in well-being in high school students and gender differences in subjective well-being. Berdida²⁹ researched the interrelationships between stress, protective variables, mindfulness, and psychological well-being among nursing students, finding a positive influence of mindfulness on well-being. Shen³⁰ examined the relationship between convergent thinking, mindfulness, and psychological well-being, revealing a beneficial association between psychological well-being and convergent thinking and a significant correlation between mindfulness and well-being.

Brown³¹ examined the benefits of mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being, demonstrating associations with various well-being aspects and increased self-awareness. Van Seggelen-Damen³² investigated the association between mindfulness and resilience, finding a significant link between mindfulness and high well-being. Hobbs³³ evaluated the impact of a credit-bearing online happiness course on undergraduates' mental well-being, reporting a positive effect of happiness on well-being.

Also, Crowley³⁴ studied the variations in mindfulness, happiness, and anxiety among college students before and after a meditation course, revealing significant increases in mindfulness and happiness and a positive relationship between mindfulness and subjective happiness. Tingaz³⁵ examined the relationship between mindfulness, self-compassion, and happiness in student-athletes, finding significant positive connections between mindfulness, self-compassion, and happiness. Huang⁹ conducted research on Chinese college students, showing a detrimental effect of adverse childhood experiences on happiness and the mitigating effect of mindfulness on these experiences. Bajaj³⁶ explored the mediation paradigm between mindfulness and happiness among Indian undergraduate students, highlighting the positive relationship between mindfulness and happiness. Jiang⁶ explored factors influencing the happiness of Chinese university students, identifying four dimensions that positively impacted students' happiness.

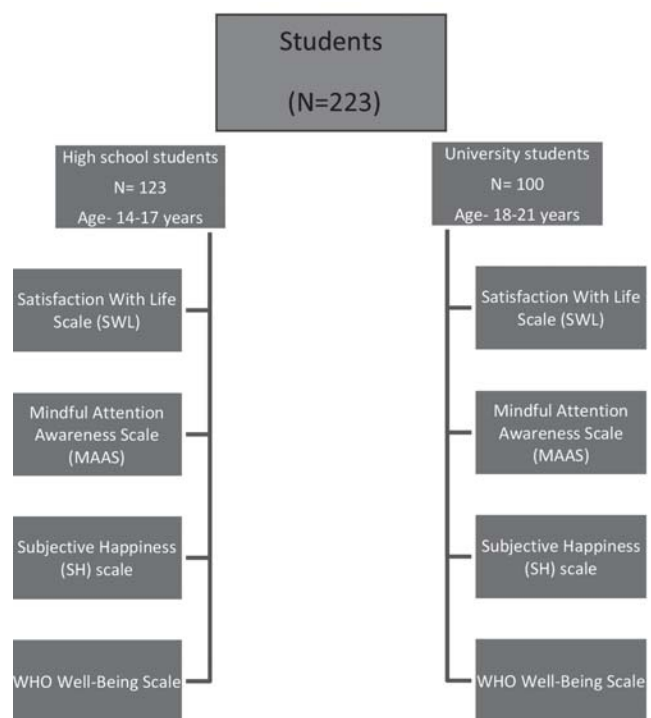
Schnettler¹² focused on university students in Chile and categorized them based on satisfaction with life domains, satisfaction with food-related life, and subjective happiness, revealing significant differences among students in various aspects of well-being. Gomez-Baya³⁷ examined the effect of school satisfaction on happiness in European school-going children, finding a positive correlation between school satisfaction and happiness. Backman³⁸ qualitatively explored Swedish students' perceptions of the role of happiness in school, emphasizing the positive relationship between subjective happiness and life satisfaction.

Kabat-Zinn³⁹ explored the incorporation of mindfulness into medical and psychological treatments, pointing towards the potential promise of mindfulness-based interventions but noting the need for more methodologically rigorous studies. Desan⁴⁰ tested the impact of a one-semester active learning curriculum covering well-being and happiness on Chinese students, observing improvements in well-being measures. Gupta⁴¹ conducted a study on university students and found that regular mindfulness meditation improved mindfulness, mindful consumption, happiness, and life satisfaction. Ibrahim⁴² investigated the happiness of undergraduate students at a university in the United Arab Emirates across seven life domains, identifying predictors of happiness and revealing low levels of life satisfaction among university students.

The review of literature thus, emphasizes the complex relationship between mindfulness, well-being, and happiness among students, with some studies reporting positive correlations, while others show varying results.

The current study aims to contribute to this body of knowledge by examining psychological factors related to well-being in different educational groups to develop targeted interventions promoting student happiness and overall well-being.

Methodology: For this study, a sample of 123 school students and 100 university students was selected using convenience sampling. Data collection was carried out through Google Forms. The survey encompassed demographic information, and participants were provided with clear instructions and informed consent before responding to the online questionnaire. Standardized tests, including the SWL scale, SH scale, MAAS, and WHO WB scale, were utilized. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics to summarize participant characteristics, and inferential statistics such as t-tests and regression analysis were employed to assess the levels of life satisfaction (SWL), subjective happiness (SH), and mindfulness (MAA), as well as their predictive relationship with well-being (WB) in students. Throughout the research process, ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to, ensuring participant anonymity and confidentiality.



Tools Used: **Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWL)**-The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) was developed by Ed Diener⁴³ and is a self-report questionnaire that is commonly used in psychological research to measure an individual's overall satisfaction with their life. The SWLS consists of five statements that respondents rate on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The statements typically include items such as “In most ways, my life is close to my ideal” or “So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.”

By summing up the scores from the five items, researchers obtain a total score that reflects the individual’s level of life satisfaction. Higher scores indicate greater satisfaction with life, while lower scores indicate lower levels of satisfaction. The analysis of the reliability of the SWLs showed an internal consistency of 0.74 (Cronbach’s alpha).

Subjective Happiness Scale (SH)-The Subjective Happiness Scale (SH) is a self-report questionnaire designed to measure an individual’s subjective well-being or happiness. It was developed by researchers Lyubomirsky and Lepper⁴⁴ and has since been widely used in psychological research. The SH consists of four simple statements about happiness, and respondents rate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement on a seven-point scale. The scores for each statement are then summed to obtain an overall happiness score, ranging from 4 to 28. Higher scores indicate a higher level of subjective happiness. The tool’s Cronbach’s alphas were from 0.79 to 0.94, and its stability reliability was 0.72. The SH is a brief and straightforward measure that provides a snapshot of an individual’s self-perceived happiness.

Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS)- The MAAS (Mindful Attention Awareness Scale) is a psychometric instrument designed to measure an individual’s level of mindfulness or their ability to maintain present-moment awareness and non-judgmental acceptance of their thoughts, feelings, and sensations. It was developed by a team of researchers led by Brown and Ryan³¹. The scale consists of 15 items that assess various aspects of mindfulness, such as attention to the present moment, the tendency to get lost in thoughts, and the ability to refrain from judging experiences. The MAAS scale has demonstrated good internal consistency typically ranging from 0.80 to 0.90. The scale has been used in numerous research studies and clinical settings to assess mindfulness and its effects on well-being, mental health, and cognitive processes.

WHO Well Being Scale (WHO-WB)- The WHO WB (World Health Organization Well-Being) scale is a measurement tool designed to assess

an individual’s subjective well-being. It was introduced in 1998 by the WHO Regional Office in Europe⁴⁵. It aims to capture various dimensions of well-being, including physical, psychological, and social aspects, in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of a person’s overall well-being. The WHO WB scale consists of a set of questions that are used to gather information about an individual’s well-being. These questions cover various aspects such as an individual’s overall satisfaction with life, their positive emotions, negative emotions, vitality, and social connectedness.

Hypotheses: H1a: There exists no significant difference in life satisfaction among the school and university students

H1b: There exists no significant difference in subjective happiness among the school and university students

H1c: There exists no significant difference in mindfulness among the school and university students

H1d: There exists no significant difference in well-being among the school and university students

H2: Life satisfaction, subjective happiness and mindfulness of the students have significant impact on their well-being

Results: The above table shows that there is a significant difference in SWL and WB scores between the school students and university students ($p > 0.05$). However, no significant differences were found for SH and MAA scores ($p < 0.05$).

Hence, H1a and H1d have been accepted. However, H1b and H1c could not be accepted. The mean scores have been illustrated in figure 1.

Table 1: t-test for the variables across education groups

Variables	Group	N	M	SD	t	df	p
SWL	School Students	123	19.033	6.595	2.058*	216.054	0.041
	University Students	100	17.260	6.229			
SH	School Students	123	17.447	5.259	0.205	209.887	0.838
	University Students	100	17.300	5.376			
MAA	School Students	123	3.224	1.179	-1.431	198.193	0.154
	University Students	100	3.470	1.348			
WB	School Students	123	54.146	21.000	-2.085*	217.357	0.038
	University Students	100	59.800	19.408			

* $p < 0.05$

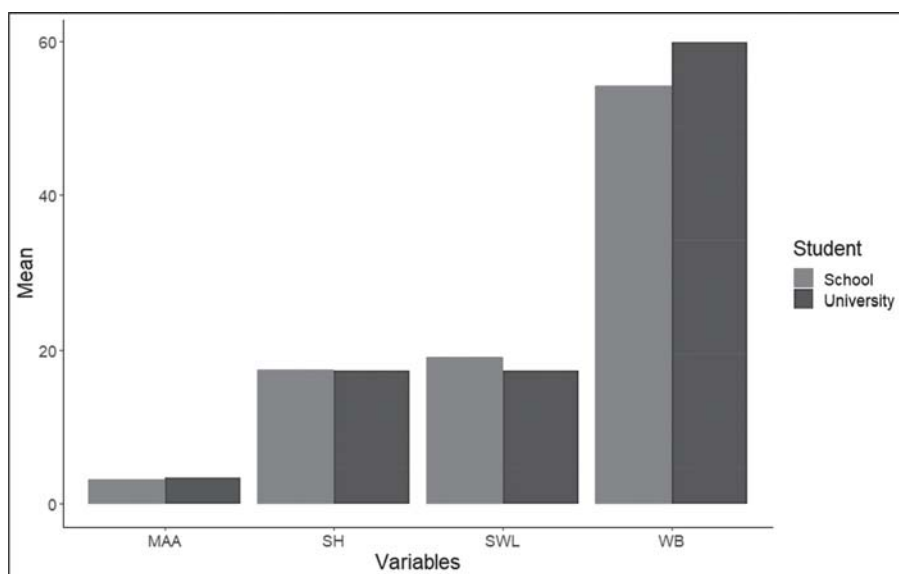


Fig. 1: Illustrating the Mean of MAA, SH, SWL and WB of school and university students

Table 2: Regression analysis involving well-being as the criterion

Predictor	b	SE	β	t	p	95% C.I.	
						Lower	Upper
SWL	-1.494	0.187	-0.473**	-7.993	0.000	-1.862	-1.125
SH	0.597	0.218	0.155**	2.733	0.007	0.166	1.027
MAA	3.903	0.872	0.241**	4.476	0.000	2.184	5.621

** $p < 0.001$ Criterion: Well-Being

The above table shows the regression analysis involving well-being as the criterion. The model was found to be well-fitted statistically ($p_F < 0.000$) and showed a R^2 of 0.52. The Durbin-Watson statistic also revealed the absence of autocollinearity ($D-W = 1.9$), which enabled us to interpret the further estimates of the multiple regression analysis.

The regression estimates indicate that each of the three predictors (SWL, SH and MAA) significantly predicts WB ($p > 0.001$). While SH and MAA have a positive prediction of WB, SWL is negatively related to WB. The scatter plots have been illustrated in figure 2.

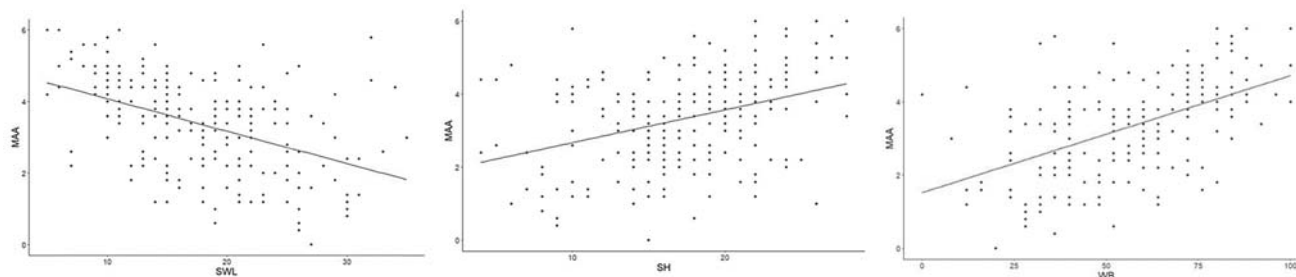


Fig. 2: Illustrating the scatter plots

Hence, the H2 has been accepted.

The results of the study indicate significant differences between school students and university students in terms of their satisfaction with life (SWL) and well-being (WB) scores. The t-test analysis revealed that school students had higher SWL scores compared to university students, while university students had higher WB scores than school students. However, no significant differences were found in subjective happiness (SH) and mindfulness (MAA) scores between the two groups. These findings reject hypotheses H1a and H1d. H1b and H1c is accepted due to the lack of significant differences in SH and MAA scores. Additionally, the regression analysis demonstrated that SWL, SH, and MAA significantly predicted well-being. Overall, these findings highlight the importance of considering educational differences and multiple predictors

in understanding and promoting well-being among students.

University students by and large, could feel greater well-being compared to school students due to lesser restrictions, more volition, more peer group activities and freedom to choose their relationships, careers and daily routine. Personal responsibility and freedom to make decisions could be the reason for feeling competent, resulting in enhanced well-being.

Both the groups do not seem to have high levels of SH as their scores are just above the midpoint of the

scale. It is possible that lack of autonomy, nagging from parents and involvement in too many extracurricular activities and academic overload, hamper high levels of happiness in school students. However, as they are usually free from responsibilities of living like food, clothing and shelter, they are more or less satisfied with life. University students tend to have pressure of performance in all areas of life, day to day responsibilities of living, extreme parental expectations, financial constraints and academic overload, which could be the reason for the levels of happiness that they have. However, their sense of freedom, absence of imposition of structured activities, as well as absence of active control from authority figures, could be the primary reason for their average levels of happiness and well-being. Mindfulness levels are average for both the groups which could be due to distractions as well as an external focus, instead of an internal one.

Discussion: Several studies have reported findings that align with the results of the present study. Hobbs³³ conducted research on the impact of a credit-bearing online happiness course on the mental well-being of first-year university students, revealing a positive association between subjective happiness (SH) and mental well-being. Similarly, Gupta⁴¹ demonstrated a positive relationship between mindfulness and subjective happiness among higher education students.

Gómez-Baya³⁷ explored the influence of school satisfaction on happiness among European school-going children, and the study found a positive correlation between school satisfaction and happiness. This underscores the role of satisfaction with student life and peer relationships in promoting happiness, indicating a significant connection between school environment, life satisfaction (SWL), subjective happiness (SH), and well-being.

Schnettler¹² investigated the positive relationship between well-being (WB) and subjective happiness (SH) from the perspective of subjective well-being in the context of university students' eating habits and happiness. Backman³⁸ examined the well-being of Swedish students and emphasized the importance of considering students' perspectives while creating positive school experiences that foster well-being. The study's regression analysis showed a positive relationship between subjective happiness (SH) and satisfaction with life (SWL) in terms of happiness and life satisfaction. Van Seggelen-Damen³² conducted a study aiming to explore the relationship between mindfulness and resilience, moderated by orientations of self-focus and well-being in the Dutch and

Flemish population. The results revealed that mindfulness was associated with higher well-being. On the other hand, some studies have reported different findings from the current study.

Burke²⁷ reviewed mindfulness-based approaches with children and adolescents, and while it did not find strong evidence for the effectiveness of mindfulness-based treatments in promoting psychological health and well-being, it acknowledged the feasibility of such therapies for young populations. Kabat-Zinn³⁹ highlighted the significance of cross-cultural sensitivity and personal practice among mindfulness instructors to predict the efficacy of interventions and resultant well-being in students. However, this study lacks an objective assessment of students' mindfulness (MAA), which sets it apart from the current study. Desan⁴⁰ did not find a significant relationship between mindfulness and well-being in their research. The difference in findings could be attributed to the use of different measurement scales; while this study utilized the MAAS scale, Desan⁴⁰ employed the PANAS scale. Ibrahim⁴² reported a positive relationship between satisfaction with life (SWL) and well-being in university students. The discrepancy in findings could be due to the utilization of different scales and cultural variations between the two studies. Schnettler¹² found a positive relationship between satisfaction with life (SWL) and well-being (WB), which contrasts with the current study's findings. This divergence could be attributed to differences in the study's time frame, measurement scales, and cultural factors.

Conclusion

The study successfully achieved its objective of examining the relationships among the mentioned variables. It was observed that well-being (WB) had a negative correlation with satisfaction with life (SWL) but a positive correlation with subjective happiness (SH) and mindfulness (MAA). Furthermore, significant differences were found between school and university students in terms of SWL and WB, while no significant differences were noted for MAA and SH. School students exhibited higher SWL, whereas university students displayed higher WB.

Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged in this study:

- The exclusion of primary school students may restrict the generalizability of the findings across different age groups.

- A larger sample size could have improved the study's ability to generalize the results to a broader population.
- The reliance on self-report measures may introduce response biases, affecting the accuracy of the data.
- Offline administration of tests might have provided more reliable results compared to the online approach.
- The absence of a randomized study design limits the establishment of causality between the variables.

Future Implications

The insights gained from this research can be leveraged to enhance educational practices and promote positive well-being among students. Implementing interventions based on SWL, SH, and MAA could contribute to students' overall satisfaction with life and happiness. Additionally, conducting pre and post psychological intervention assessments based on these factors could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of well-being promotion strategies in educational settings. □

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