EXPLORING AGE AND LOCALITY AS DETERMINANTS OF HAPPINESS: A STUDY OF SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS IN SHIMLA DISTRICT

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Abstract: This study explores the **happiness disposition** among secondary and senior secondary school students in relation to their **locality (rural and urban)** and **age (below and above 13 years)** in the Shimla district of Himachal Pradesh. The main objectives were to examine whether students' happiness levels varied significantly based on their geographical background and age group. A descriptive survey method was employed, and the data was collected using a standardized Happiness Disposition Scale. The sample included students from both rural and urban schools across different age groups.

The findings revealed that there was **no statistically significant difference** in happiness disposition between students from **rural and urban** localities at both the secondary and senior secondary levels. However, a comparison of mean scores indicated that **rural senior secondary students** (M = 93.61) reported slightly **higher happiness levels** than their **urban counterparts** (M = 90.74). Similarly, no significant difference was found between students **below and above 13 years** of age, though students **above 13 years** exhibited **higher average happiness disposition**.

The study concludes that **locality and age** do not significantly affect students' happiness disposition, though **minor trends favoring rural students and older adolescents** were observed. The results suggest that **happiness among students may be influenced more by personal and school-related factors** than by age or geographical background alone. These findings emphasize the need for inclusive, school-wide emotional well-being programs that cater to students across all age groups and localities.

Key words: Happiness Disposition, Senior Secondary School Students, Shimla.

Introduction:

Happiness is a fundamental aspect of human life, closely linked to emotional well-being, mental health, and overall life satisfaction. In recent years, the concept of happiness has gained increasing attention not only in psychology but also in education and social research. Particularly during adolescence — a period marked by emotional growth, identity formation, and social adjustment — happiness plays a pivotal role in shaping one's personality, academic success, and interpersonal relationships. Schools are not merely institutions for academic development but also platforms for nurturing emotional intelligence and positive psychological traits among students. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence happiness in students is crucial in today's educational context.

Among the many factors influencing happiness, **age and locality** are considered vital. Age brings with it cognitive and emotional development, which may impact how adolescents perceive and respond to life situations. The happiness disposition of students may vary with maturity, social expectations, and coping abilities — all of which evolve with age. Similarly, **locality**, whether urban or rural, affects the

environment in which a child is raised. Access to facilities, family dynamics, peer influence, exposure to technology, and societal pressures differ widely across rural and urban settings, thereby influencing the overall emotional state and happiness of students. For instance, rural students might experience closer-knit communities and simpler lifestyles, while urban students might have more academic pressures and greater exposure to competitive environments.

Shimla, a district in Himachal Pradesh, offers a unique blend of both rural and urban populations and is an ideal setting for such a comparative study. As a region that has experienced educational expansion alongside traditional values, Shimla provides a relevant socio-cultural context to explore how happiness disposition varies among students based on their **age group (below and above 13 years)** and **locality (rural and urban)**.

This study aims to fill the gap in understanding the psychological well-being of adolescents by exploring how age and locality serve as determinants of happiness among senior secondary school students. The findings of this research can assist educators, school counselors, and policymakers in developing tailored strategies to promote emotional well-being in schools. It will also contribute to the broader discourse on student-centered learning and holistic development by emphasizing the importance of emotional factors alongside academic performance.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Subjective well-being, commonly referred to as happiness disposition, has been explained through two primary models — the **Bottom-Up** and **Top-Down** approaches (Feist et al., 1995). The **Bottom-Up model** suggests that happiness results from satisfaction in specific life domains such as family, academics, and health (Diener et al., 1991). In this view, external conditions like **locality** (rural or urban) and life stage (age) are key determinants of happiness.

On the other hand, the **Top-Down model** posits that individuals interpret experiences through internal dispositions and attitudes, which shape their emotional evaluations. Happiness, therefore, is less about the environment and more about how individuals perceive it.

The **Social Comparison Theory** (Easterlin, 1994) adds that individuals assess their well-being by comparing themselves with others, while **goal-based theories** (Carver &Scheier, 1990) argue that fulfillment of personal goals leads to higher well-being. **Flow theory** (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) emphasizes engagement in meaningful activities as a key contribtor to happiness.

Components of subjective well-being include **positive and negative affect**, **life satisfaction**, and **domain-specific satisfaction** (Diener et al., 1997), all of which are important in evaluating happiness among students.

In the context of the present study, while **no statistically significant difference** was found in happiness based on **locality or age**, **mean score trends** indicated slightly higher happiness levels among **rural students** and those **above 13 years**. This suggests that both **external factors and internal interpretations** play a role in student well-being, supporting an integrated view of happiness.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

1.To examine the difference in happiness disposition among senior secondary school students based on locality (rural and urban) in Shimla district.

2. To assess the impact of age (below and above 13 years) on the happiness disposition of senior secondary students.

HYPOTHESES

H$_{01}$: There is no significant difference in happiness disposition between rural and urban senior secondary school students in Shimla district.

H$_{02}$: There is no significant difference in happiness disposition between students aged below 13 years and those above 13 years.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

- **Type of Study**: Cross-sectional study.

- **Sampling Method**: Convenience sampling.

- **Data Collection**: Questionnaire survey.

Sampling Strategy:

- **Population: Senior secondary school students (grades 11 and 12) in were taken.**

- **Sample Size: Approximately 400 students from different schools, ensuring representation** across genders, siblings and academic performances were taken.

Data Collection Methods:

- **Questionnaire**:

  o Demographic information (age, gender, family background).

  o Happiness indicators (e.g., life satisfaction, positive emotions).

  o Factors influencing happiness (e.g., academic stress, relationships with peers and teachers).

Variables and Measures:

- **Dependent Variable**: Happiness disposition (measured using a validated happiness scale).

- **Independent Variables**: Demographic variables, Gender, Locality, Birth order, Nature of Institute.

Data Analysis:

- **Quantitative Analysis**:

  o Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for demographic variables and happiness levels.

  o Inferential statistics (t-test) to examine relationships between variables.

Ethical Considerations:

- Informed consent from participants (students and possibly parents/guardians for minors).

- Confidentiality and anonymity of responses.

- Ethical approval from school authorities and/or institutional review board.

For the purpose of carrying out the study, a sample of 400 subjects comprising of equal number of male and female of ruler and urban areas selected randomly. The subjects taken belong more or less to the same socio-economic status i.e. average middle class and within the range of 13-15 years.

Table: 1

Total Sample

Locality (N = 400)		Gender (N = 400)		Age (N = 400)		Siblings (N = 400)		Nature of Institute (N = 400)	
Urban (N=200)	Rural (N=200)	Male (N=200)	Female (N=200)	Above Age 13 (N=200)	Under age 13 (N=200)	Single (N=200)	Dubble (N=200)	Government (N=200)	Self-finance (N=200)

RESEARCH TOOLS USED

In the present study, the following tools have been used:

Chinese Happiness Inventory (Lu & Shih, 1997).

CHINESE HAPPINESS INVENTORY (LU & SHIH, 1997)

Happiness was measured by the Indian adaptive version of Chinese Happiness inventory (CHI). This is a newly developed 48 item measurement tapping general subjective experience of happiness for Indian people. Three basic elements of happiness concept namely positive affect, absence of negative affect and overall satisfaction towards life was covered. Moreover, it also covers the distinctive sources of happiness of the Indian people based on extensive qualitative ground work.

The cronbach alpha of the Chinese happiness inventory was 0.95; the one month test-retest with the sample of 46 under-graduate students was 0.66 and the 2.5 years test-retest with community adults was 0.40 concurrent validity was evidenced by its correlation of 0.62 with the life satisfaction scale (Diener, Emmons, Larson and Griffin, 1985), 0.67 with composite measures of domain satisfaction, 0.48 with a measure of positive affect and 0.52 with lack of happiness' scale (reversely scored) in the emotional instability adjustment questionnaire (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1975).

Instructions

For the Chinese Happiness Inventory (CHI) following instructions were given to the subjects.

There are 48 groups of statements you are required to read each group of statements carefully and then pick one statement in each group which best describes the way you have been feeling in the past one year, roughly including today.

Scoring

The scoring is direct. The scores are given before the statement ranging from 0 to 3. If the subject had indicated his reaction for the first statement where the 0 was written before the statement, the score for that item was taken as 0. Likewise score of all the items were taken. The total happiness score was obtained by summing up all the scores of 48 items.

DATA ANALYSIS

1.1 Happiness disposition among the Senior Secondary School students in relation to Locality (Rural and urban) of Shimla district.

To study the differences between the level of happiness disposition of senior secondary school student of rural and urban t-test were applied. The means, standard deviation sand t-value at different levels are given in Table: 2 as under:

Table 2

Mean Standard Deviation and t-value of Happiness Disposition among the Senior Secondary School Students in relation to locality (Rural and Urban) of Shimla District H.P.

Locality	Group Statistics				df	t-value
	N	M	SD	SE_M		
Rural	200	93.61	17.78	1.26	398	1.75
Urban	200	90.74	14.89	1.05		

't' value at 0.05 level of significance with df 398 = 1.96

't' value at 0.01 level of significance with df 386 = 2.33

Further, the above Table 2, the calculated t-value for happiness disposition among students from rural and urban localities was determined to be 1.75. Since the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance (1.96) exceeds this calculated t-value of 1.75, the results suggest that there is no statistically significant difference in happiness disposition between students from rural and urban localities at the secondary and senior secondary levels.

Hence, Hypothesis **H0:1**: which states that "There exist no significant difference between happiness disposition among the rural and urban secondary school students." stands not accepted.

Table 3

Mean, Difference and Std. Error Difference of Happiness Disposition among the Senior Secondary School students in relation to Locality (Rural and Urban) of Shimla district (H.P).

Locality	t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	N	M	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Rural	200	93.61	2.87	1.64	0.35	6.09
Urban	200	90.74	2.87	1.64	0.35	6.09

Figure 1
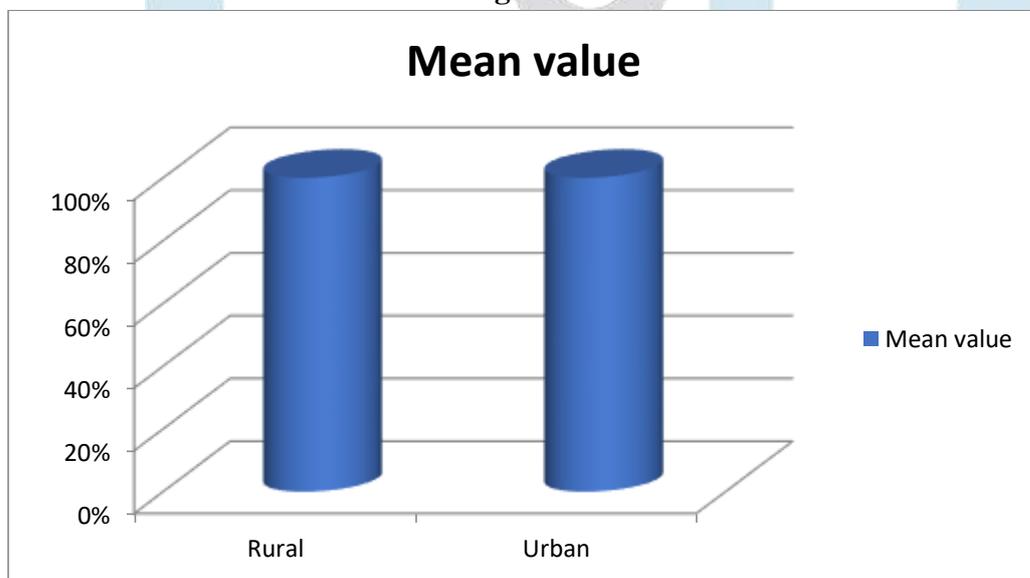
Further, the above Table 3 and Figure 1, the mean scores for Rural and Urban Senior Secondary School student exhibits were found to be 93.61 and 90.74 respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that rural senior secondary school students exhibit a higher level of happiness than their urban counterparts.

1.2 Happiness Disposition among the Senior Secondary School students level in relation to age group wise (Above 13 and below 13) of Shimla district.

To study the differences between the level of happiness disposition of Senior Secondary School students of age group wise t-test were applied. The means, standard deviations and t-value at different levels are given in Table 4 as under:

Table 4

Mean Standard Deviation and t-value of Happiness Disposition among the Senior Secondary School Students in relation to Age (Above 13 and Below 13) of Shimla District of H.P.

Age group wise	Group Statistics				df	t-value
	N	M	SD	SE$_M$		
Above 13	200	93.27	19.57	1.38	398	1.17
below 13	200	91.19	15.71	1.11		

't' value at 0.05 level of significance with df 398 = 1.96

't' value at 0.01 level of significance with df 380 = 2.33

From Table 4, the calculated t-value of happiness disposition for students of age group wise was found to be 1.17. Further it can be seen that as the critical value at 0.05 level of significance (1.96) is greater than the calculated t-value 1.17, therefore, t-value have been found no significant for happiness disposition for students at senior secondary level in relation to age group.

Hence, Hypothesis **H02**: which states that "There exist no significant difference between Happiness Disposition among the secondary school students having age below 13 and secondary school students having age above 13" stands accepted.

Table 5

Mean Difference and Std. Error Difference of Happiness Disposition among the Senior Secondary School students in relation to age group of Shimla district (H.P).

Age group	t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	N	M	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Above 13	200	94.20	4.57	1.57	1.47	7.66
Under 13	200	89.63	4.57	1.57	1.47	7.66

Figure:2
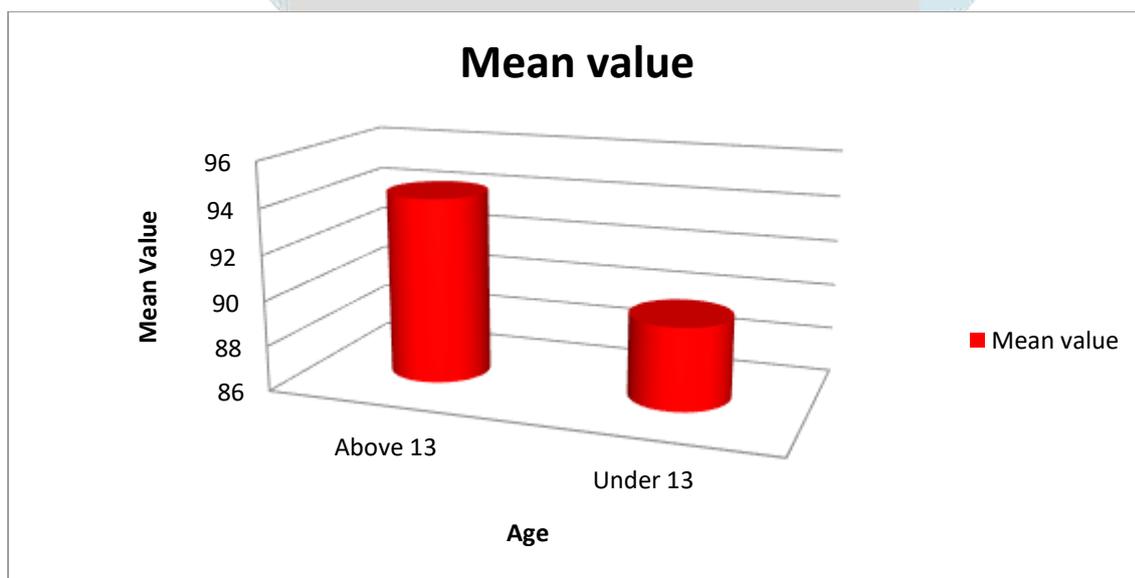
Further, the above Table 4 and Figure 2, the mean scores for senior secondary school students above 13 years of age and below 13 years of age were found to be 93.27 and 91.19, respectively. Therefore, it can be concluded that senior secondary school students above 13 years of age exhibit a higher level of happiness disposition compared to their counterparts below 13 years of age.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

RESULTS

The study aimed to investigate the influence of **locality (rural vs urban)** and **age (below and above 13 years)** on the happiness disposition of secondary and senior secondary school students in Shimla district.

The statistical analysis revealed that there is **no significant difference** in the happiness disposition between students from **rural and urban localities** at both the **secondary** and **senior secondary** levels. This means the null hypothesis stating that "There exists no significant difference between happiness disposition among rural and urban students" **cannot be rejected**.

However, an analysis of the **mean scores** indicates a slight practical difference. Rural senior secondary school students had a **higher mean happiness score (M = 93.61)** compared to their urban counterparts **(M = 90.74)**. While this difference was not statistically significant, it suggests that rural students may experience marginally greater levels of happiness in their school environments.

Similarly, when comparing students **below and above 13 years of age**, the findings show **no statistically significant difference** in happiness disposition. Therefore, the null hypothesis that "There exists no significant difference between happiness disposition among students below and above 13 years" **is accepted**. Yet, the data further suggests that **students above 13 years of age** tend to report **a slightly higher level of happiness** disposition than their younger peers, indicating a trend that may be explored in further research.

CONCLUSION

The results of the present study suggest that **locality and age do not significantly impact** the happiness disposition of students at the secondary and senior secondary levels in Shimla district. Although no statistically significant differences were found, the **mean score comparisons** indicate that **rural students** and those **above 13 years of age** tend to exhibit **slightly higher levels of happiness** than their urban and younger counterparts, respectively.

These findings highlight the possibility that **happiness disposition among students may be influenced more by internal psychological, familial, and educational factors** than by external variables like age or locality alone. Given the relatively small mean differences, educational policymakers and school administrators should focus on **universal strategies to enhance emotional well-being**, such as promoting resilience, positive peer interactions, and stress management techniques for all students, regardless of age or geographical setting.

Further research with larger and more diverse samples, as well as qualitative exploration of contextual factors, could provide deeper insights into the subtle influences on adolescent happiness in school environments.

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