

Learning with Happiness and Academic Achievement of University Students in Thailand

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This research investigated the level of learning with happiness and the relationship to academic achievement of students in the Faculty of Education at Buriram Rajabhat University, Thailand. This study used the learning with happiness survey. Respondents included 587 students from the study area constituted 428 female respondents while 159 respondents were male. The results of the study indicated that the overall learning with happiness evaluation of students was high. The learning appreciated concept was the first ranked, followed by the equilibrium of life concept. In addition, learning with happiness and academic achievement were correlated positively. To shed light on this finding, supporting policies were recommended that contribute both academically and practically to creating a learning environment of happiness in the Thai university.

Keywords. Academic achievement, university students, learning with happiness

The United Nations recognized March 20th as the International Day of Happiness in 2012, to emphasize the importance of happiness as an integral part of personal growth and well-being (Helliwell, et al., 2022). The purpose of making this day official is to encourage governments around the world to incorporate it into their social and economic policies to create real fairness and communal well-being, which will contribute to the achievement of the happiness every human being seeks. An existence without happiness does not

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constitute a human existence when one loses sight of this truth (Mauri & Beltrán, 2021).

Human behavior and productivity are influenced by happiness. Therefore, later research has investigated the predictive ability of happiness on multiple dimensions of human activity, including academic performance (Lumontod, 2018). Students in Latin America have a decline in academic performance largely due to the obligation to help their parents earn a living. This takes away their joy of life at this age (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009). Although academic performance decline is most likely due to individual life, insufficient participation in school may cause dissatisfaction with learning. It leads to students to desperate for success in school, and eventually drops out from school (Jennings, 2003). Thus, a happy student who is satisfied with their life and school excels academically and in other areas (Rode et al., 2005).

Happiness

Happiness can be quantified as an individual's evaluation of their life on the affective and cognitive dimensions. A previous study conducted among students across 42 countries showed that happiness is a significant contributor to satisfaction in life (Diener & Chan, 2011). Also, the most critical goal in life is happiness. The content of happiness can be divided into several components: life satisfaction and narrow scales such as job satisfaction, school satisfaction, and/or product satisfaction (Fordyce, 2005). The exploration of happiness and students' life satisfaction is an important topic, as it has received the least attention among satisfactions towards other aspects of life (Omar et al., 2013). In developing countries, most parents focus on their jobs and finances. They expect to send their children to high-quality school, and don't care about learning happiness. Eventually, there will be many cases where students decline academic performance (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009).

Wongratanacheewin et al. (2016) revealed significant difficulties with teens' mental health and happiness in Turkey at various schools and levels. It was found that teenagers in Turkey ranked last out of 72 participating countries in terms of life satisfaction, while the school-related anxiety was still greater than the average from all participants. Considering those results, it can be concluded that kids in adolescence face significant present and data-based difficulties connected to their mood, happiness, and well-being. In this regard, concentrating on social-emotional learning abilities, which make up an essential variable connected to their learning in school, is crucial in accordance

with guidance services' preventative and enhancing character (Furkan & Metmet, 2021). Learning with happiness as an independent variable and academic performance as the dependent variable is important.

Learning with Happiness as Predictor of Academic Performance

Previous studies on students' academic performance were multi-layered, encompassing different measures and methods. The research focused on factors that influence a student's engagement in school; what keeps them there, and what gets them to drop out. Engagement was found to be a significant factor in educational achievement (Casuso-Holgado et al., 2013). Engagement is not the sole determinant of academic success, but it is a significant part of it. Performance in school settings is complex and can be influenced by some internal factors of a person, as well as by external factors (Jimerson et al., 2003). There may be no single explanation to explain academic success (Lumontod, 2018).

Several schools and universities in Thailand apply a popular theory of learning with happiness based on the complexity of the assessment of academic performance and learning with happiness. It comprises 6 concepts based on learning with happiness as follows: 1) Love and Respect Concepts; learning is based on the love and faith in teachers and subjects. This is considered an essential component because when students love and care for the lesson, the teacher, and the co-learner, it creates mutual understanding between teachers and students. 2) Learning Appreciating Concept: This concept helps learners appreciate what they learn. It will make learners want to study and learn. 3) Naturalization Concept: This concept focuses on learning knowledge in and outside of the classroom. 4) Willing and Firm Concept: Knowing yourself, recognizing your pros and cons, accepting one's condition, and not looking down on oneself are essential to not blaming the people around you and being ready to improve. It helps the student develop the skills to calm emotions, be confident, and be sincere. 5) Friendship Concept: this concept involves accepting each other, listening to each other, helping each other think, working together, and seeing each other's value. It is possible for the group to work together to forgive and give reason and change a chance. Building an effective relationship with each other will support each other and success is not far away. 6) Equilibrium of Life Concept: Maintaining balance in life is about adapting to moderation. It is critical to know your limitations and act within those limits to maintain proper conduct. This will avoid becoming narcissistic or looking down on oneself (Boonsue, 1997). Based on the

concept of learning with happiness, it was hypothesized that these dimensions are related to the academic achievement of Thai students positively. However, there were many groups of students in Thailand which the next session will discuss about the specific groups of students which being the main structure of the educational system for the whole country and significant to the investigate the learning with happiness.

Thai University's Students

Thai institutions, both domestic and international, always emphasize learning by being happy and achieving academic success. The main idea is to encourage students to gain knowledge, skills, and experience with happiness. Learning with happiness is the most critical factor in a student's learning, as it is both a factor conducive to learning and an outcome of student learning. Various studies in education have found that focusing on students' positive aspects is imperative for their happiness and wellbeing (Khan & Husain, 2010; Michalos, 2007; Seligman, 2009). Happiness is associated with academic achievement (Pekrun et al., 2002). These reviewed issues provide a basis for the hypothesis that happy students will perform well in their examinations and aim for successful careers when they graduate (Omar et al., 2013). Even though this concept has been used in many fields, the target group of this study which has to pass high stress and anxiety as an educational profession has not been studied yet.

In Thailand, there were some studies on learning happiness toward academic achievement; for instance, the impact of academic achievement of Thai traditional medicine students (Rujiganjanarat et al., 2020); factors affecting learning happiness of nursing students (Bundajak, et al., 2017); happiness level and related factors of medical students at Khon Kaen University (Wongratanacheewin et al., 2016). They were mainly focused on a specific group of students in Thailand due to the predictive risk and stress associated with the learning content. However, being a teacher or educational professional in Thailand often has a lower status in the social and educational hierarchy. This has direct implications for student happiness and educational success in all areas. Moreover, the teaching profession also carries risks and pressures equal to health and medical study.

This is because they have to bear the expectations of parents, the anxiety of promotion in their career path, and the needs of the students. This group of students must teach the country's future population. Apart from obtaining the stress and hope from the

student's parents, this group of students has to pass other pressures such as the career path, academic report, and legal documentation for the Ministry of Education. There is evidence of very limited studies on the relationship between learning with happiness and the educational performance of students in the Faculty of Education. It can be hypothesized that students learning with happiness from the Faculty of Education, Buriram Rajabhat University are high on academic achievement.

To increase research contribution in Thailand, this study aims to investigate the learning with happiness level and the relationship to academic achievement of students in the Faculty of Education at Buriram Rajabhat University to recommend the supporting policy for contributing the learning atmosphere and academic achievement together. Based on the problem statement and literature's gap, this study hypothesizes that learning with happiness concept related to academic achievement of students in the Faculty of Education, Buriram Rajabhat University positively.

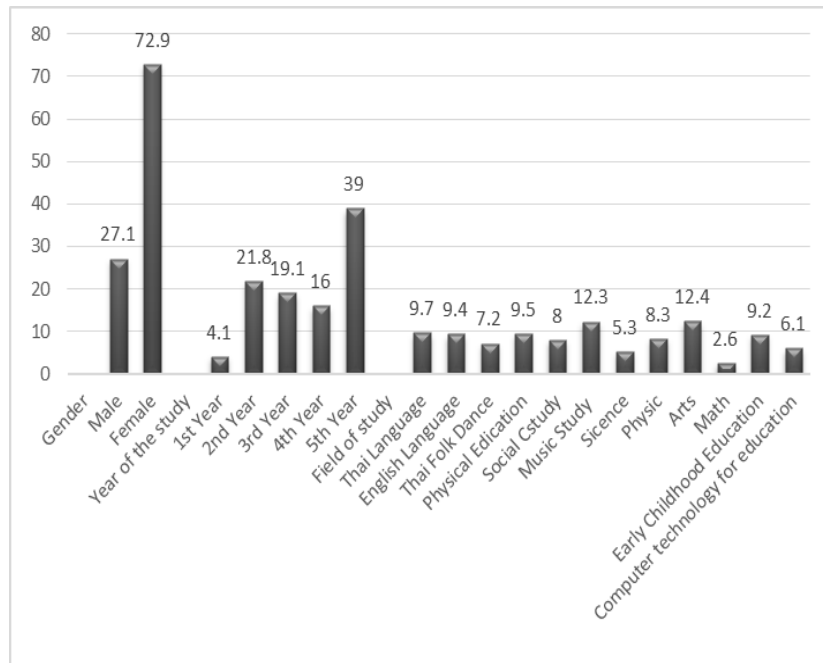
Method

Sample

Based on the population and sample strategy, the target sample should have at least 346 respondents. However, the actual data collection can reach 587 respondents. This means that the target sample is particularly the students in the faculty of education interested in this survey. It may relate to their profession when they become teachers after graduation. They can apply this concept to their teaching and pedagogy.

The population of the Faculty of Education students at Buriram Rajabhat University is 3,376 students. The sample size was calculated by the table of sample size with the total population at an acceptable margin of 95% confidence level. The sample number should be at least 346 sample ($n = 346$) (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). To distribute the opportunities across all departments of the Faculty of Education, students were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The inclusions criteria apply were being a current student from year 1 to year 5 only and enrolled the courses in 2020 academic year. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria apply was the alumni or the re-status students due to this group of students may not have spent time in the educational system for a while, it has an impact on the satisfaction of learning in the university system.

Figure 1
Demographic Overview of Sample



As shown in [Figure 1](#), the willingness to participate was 70:30 percent between males and females: 428 respondents were female, representing 72.9%, while 159 respondents represented 27.1%. Most respondents were in the fifth year at 229 respondents accounting for 39%, followed by the second year at 128 people accounting for 21.8%, the third year at 112 people around 19.1%, and the fourth year at 94 people, representing 16.0%, and the first year at 24 people accounting for 4.1%, respectively. The majority of respondents studied Art Education at 73 people accounting for 12.4%, followed by Music Education at 72 people representing 12.3%, and Thai language at 57 people, around 9.7%, respectively.

Instrument

Learning with Happiness Questionnaire

The learning with happiness questionnaire was developed and trialed on a group of samples with similar characteristics to the target sample. This questionnaire consisted of General information (i.e. gender, cumulative grade point average, year of study) and Learning with Happiness questions. It is characterized by a rating scale of 5 levels, with a score of 5 meaning most agree and 1 meaning least

agree. In this study, there were 6 steps to develop the questionnaire survey as follows: Study-related documents and researches, Synthesized learning with happiness questions following the terminology definition, brought the synthesized questionnaire to check content validity, language accuracy, and item objective congruence by three experts, tried out the questionnaire with a non-sample group of 30 respondents, analyzed the questionnaire's confidence by finding Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and prepared a complete questionnaire to collect data from the sample. To find a relationship between learning with happiness and academic achievement, this study used Pearson product moment correlation coefficient statistics.

Procedure

Prior to commencing data collection, the researcher submitted the research proposal and questionnaire survey to the research institution at Buriram Rajabhat University in order to obtain both research authorization and ethical clearance. Following the approval of the questionnaires, they were subsequently disseminated to the registrar division of the Faculty of Education, adhering to predetermined sample criteria, to ensure the acquisition of valid data. The data collection phase spanned approximately five weeks, encompassing the duration during which current undergraduate students had the opportunity to withdraw from or enroll in courses. All participating individuals voluntarily consented to partake in this study. Notably, prior to completing the questionnaires, participants were apprised of the study's objectives, and their informed consent was duly obtained through a formal consent form. Subsequently, participants were provided with the questionnaires for completion.

Results

Based on the survey of 587 students, the respondents had the highest cumulative GPA at 3.99 and the lowest cumulative GPA at 2.00, and a standard deviation of 0.34. The average GPA was 3.29 for all respondents. For the purpose of learning with happiness investigation, this section shows the overall mean and standard deviations of learning with happiness first, and the description result of specific dimensions under the learning with happiness concept. The overall learning with happiness in all dimensions was high. The mean was 4.41 and the standard deviation was 0.46. When considering each dimension, it was found that learning appreciated was at a high level ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.50$), followed by the equilibrium of life at a high

level ($M = 4.44$ and $SD = 0.51$). While naturalization was ranked last but still high ($M = 4.37$ and $SD = 0.55$).

Love and Respect

When considering to the first dimension (Love and Respect), it was found that the overall opinions on love and respect dimension was high level and positively characterized ($M = 4.41$ and $SD = 0.54$). The question that implied the greatest meaning was the teachers who are encouraging and giving opportunities to students at a high level ($M = 4.47$ and $SD = 0.67$), followed by having a passion and interest in the subject ($M = 4.47$ and $SD = 0.6$). The lowest level indicator was the teachers who teach with understanding, deep knowledge, and accuracy, and create quality lessons and teaching materials ($M = 4.32$ and $SD = 0.70$).

Learning Appreciating

The overall opinion towards learning appreciating was at a high level ($M = 4.44$ and $SD = 0.50$). Considering to the questions, it was found that the question with the highest level was the students devoted their time to reading, which makes the study results at a good level ($M = 4.59$ and $SD = 0.58$), followed by Students working diligently to make their parents proud and happy at a high level ($M = 4.46$ and $SD = 0.63$). The lowest level was for students who studied hard and passed the exam at a high level ($M = 4.39$ and $SD = 0.64$).

Naturalization

Overview opinion towards naturalization was high ($M = 4.37$ and $SD = 0.55$). Based on each question, it was found that the highest item was the students are interested in field trips to enhance their firsthand experience ($M = 4.53$ and $SD = 0.67$), followed by the students like activities outside the classroom because of the feeling of freedom without pressure and more nature ($M = 4.47$ and $SD = 0.63$). The lowest level was the university offering a wide range of activities outside the classroom ($M = 4.28$ and $SD = 0.77$).

Willing and Firm

All opinions towards willing and firm were high ($M = 4.43$ and $SD = 0.51$). Based on each item, it was found that students who are determined to graduate have the highest level ($M = 4.57$ and

$SD = 0.62$), followed by students who can accept and developing their strengths and weaknesses ($M = 4.48$ and $SD = 0.65$). Students are ready to learn and do not insult themselves ($M = 4.32$ and $SD = 0.61$) had the lowest level.

Friendship

Opinion towards friendship was high ($M = 4.40$ and $SD = 0.56$). When noticing each item, it was found that teachers and students are helpful and goodwill to each other at a high level $M (= 4.49$ and $SD = 0.66)$, followed by Students and roommates can work in groups at a high level ($M = 4.47$ and $SD = 0.65$). As a result of this survey, the lowest opinion was that teachers and students work together, help each other, think and see the importance of one another ($M = 4.25$ and $SD = 0.66$).

Balanced Life Learning

The overall opinion towards equilibrium of life was highly regarded ($M = 4.44$ and $SD = 0.51$). Students have good behavior and practices and are at an absolute agree level ($M = 4.54$ and $SD = 0.61$), followed by students who are responsible for their work at a high level ($M = 4.48$ and $SD = 0.61$). Students expressing themselves according to their limits had the lowest level ($M = 4.30$ and $SD = 0.61$).

Based on the objective to investigate the relationship between learning with happiness and academic achievement of students at Buriram Rajabhat University correlation was performed. Results are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1

Relationship Between Learning with Happiness Dimension and Academic Achievement (N = 587)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Love & Respect	-	.68**	.68**	.65**	.75**	.65**	.19*
2. Learning Appreciation		-	.68**	.74**	.64**	.70**	.14*
3.Naturalization			-	.69**	.68**	.65**	.17*
4.Willing and Firm				-	.70**	.75**	.17*
5.Friendship					-	.68**	.15*
6.Equilibrium of Life						-	.18*
7.GPA							-

In [Table 1](#) shows the relationship between academic achievement and learning with happiness of students at Buriram Rajabhat University, it was found that all variables (love and respect; value; naturalization; willing and firm; friendship; and equilibrium of life) were positively correlated with the academic achievement of the Faculty of Education students, Buriram Rajabhat University was statistically significant. However, the significant dimension which was the first predictor to academic achievement statistically was equilibrium of life, followed by naturalization, and willing and firm. The last correlation was found in love and respect, respectively.

Discussion

Using empirical results, it was not possible to accept the first hypothesis that university students have low levels of learning with happiness. A total of six dimensions of learning with happiness were found to be at the agreed level; love and respect, learning appreciating, naturalization, willingness and firm, friendship, and equilibrium of life. In previous studies of medicine students ([Rujiganjanarat et al., 2020](#); [Wongratanacheewin et al., 2016](#)) and nursing students ([Bundasak, et al., 2017](#)), it was found there was a high level of stress and pressure in studying their field, as well as a low level of happiness. The reason that this sample group of academic students reported a high level of satisfaction is that the study content is not as intensive as medical and nursing students. Learning and careers are different. During time as students in the Faculty of Education tried many techniques and teaching styles for creating the most effective way of teaching students. Thus, there was a high level of learning with happiness. When they were in the real world as teachers, they experienced high stress and pressure from many factors. The happiness level may differ if the data were collected from teachers with 5-10 years' experience. As students, medical and nursing students were subjected to stress and pressure. Their study content is related to people's lives, it should be pressured to control the quality.

In literature, performance in school settings has been shown to be complex and influenced by both internal and external factors ([Jimerson et al., 2003](#)). Academic success may not have a single explanation ([Lumontod, 2018](#)). In response to this condition, the second hypothesis was developed, that learning with happiness combined several dimensions related to academic achievement positively in the Faculty of Education at Buriram Rajabhat University. It was found that students placed a high value on the concept of love and respect based on the perception that the teacher encouraged and

provided opportunities for all students, as well as having a passion for the subject matter. This creates a sense of admiration and liking between teachers and students regarding the subject matter studied. Learning appreciating concepts were rated at a high level. When students pass the exam and acquire a good grade for their parents, they will realize the significance of education. A decent career will eventually be found after graduation. The naturalization concept was evaluated at a high level because students are interested in field visits to enrich their personal experience. Also, the university frequently arranges learning activities outside of the classroom, some of which are community-based to address children's issues, promote local knowledge, or promote environmental preservation and energy conservation. With the first reason that students are determined to graduate, willingness and firm concept were measured at a high level. Students understand their unique abilities and shortcomings, as well as how to regulate their emotions and discriminate between different obstacles. It only motivated them to strive for graduation when they realized the significance of their duty as students. The concept of friendship was explored at a high level, with the observed cause being that instructors and students are helpful and goodwill to one other. When instructors and students recognize the value of one another and listen to one another's perspectives, it produces a positive atmosphere in the classroom, such as civility, compassion, and beautiful language, and it unifies them when they confront a difficulty. The concept of life equilibrium was determined to be at a high level for two reasons: First, pupils have good conduct and practice as students. A student who has a life schedule that includes learning, home, exercise, and adequate rest can achieve life balance and improve academic achievement. They will be modest, will not look down on others, will not be self-centered, will cherish others, will cooperate and be responsible, and will study as intended.

Conclusion

This research investigated the relationship between learning with happiness and academic accomplishment, among students at Buriram Rajabhat University. The findings indicated that the learning with happiness included several dimensions and academic accomplishment of students at Buriram Rajabhat University's Faculty of Education was approved positively. The synthesized policy suggestions benefit universities intellectually while also providing a practical development for generating learning with happiness in the classroom.

Limitations and Suggestions

Due to the COVID19 epidemic, the limitations of this research threaten the approach of collecting data face-to-face. The data collecting timeline was extended until the institution announced its completion of onsite learning and adaptation to the online system. Learning with Happiness was an essential determinant to drive human actions and abilities in future studies. It may be used to different human areas, such as best practice educational organizations, successful young scientists, or failing children in juvenile prison.

Implications

Based on the findings and discussions above, the following policy recommendations could potentially be proposed to the institution and related government agencies to encourage learning with happiness, the first policy is a creating online learning classes that will captivate the next generation of students. Students can study anytime they want and anywhere they want. The second policy is an increasing number of activities that fulfill the needs of students, stimulate participation, and provide students the opportunity to select what they do. Third policy is encouraging university board involvement. Teachers, students, and parents should have representation in the school administration to voice their concerns. Forth policy is an establishing a Happiness and Well-Being Center at the university would offer students practical advice on how to live happy and rewarding lives. Various elements such as demographics, attitude, motivation, family, and friends have all had a part in the academic success of the students of the Faculty of Education at Buriram Rajabhat University.

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