

# Impact of Positive and Negative Experience on Life Satisfaction in High School Students

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**Abstract:** *The last two decades were characterized by increasing pressure to improve student achievements through high academic accountability emphasis. As a result, curriculum goals have become more academic and skill-oriented, and social and emotional components of educational programs have taken the back seat to increasingly rigorous academic demands (Hargreaves 2003). Subjective well-being, defined as consisting of a cognitive component (life satisfaction appraisals), and an affective component (the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative emotional experiences) (Deiner 2000), is particularly important in the context of school as studies have demonstrated a positive association between students' levels of subjective well-being and their academic functioning, social competence, physical health, achievements, and behavioral engagement in school (Antaramian et al. 2010). Additional studies suggest that higher levels of subjective well-being among schoolchildren correlate with better relationships with parents, teachers, and peers (Gilman and Huebner 2006). The present study was taken up to study the positive and negative experiences of children and its impact on life satisfaction. Sample of 100 school children of 9 th and 10 th classes in Hyderabad were selected. Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1991) and Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) by Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, January 2009 were administered to students. The scales were scored and statistically analyzed and the results interpreted.*

**Keywords:** Life satisfaction, positive and negative experiences, high school students

## 1. Introduction

Life satisfaction is the way a person evaluates his or her life and how he or she feels about where it is going in the future. It is a measure of well-being and may be assessed in terms of mood, satisfaction with relations with others and with achieved goals, self-concepts, and self-perceived ability to cope with daily life. It is having a favorable attitude of one's life as a whole rather than an assessment of current feelings. Feeling both positive and negative emotions is a natural part of being human. The two major components of well being are life satisfaction and experienced emotions. As indicated by previous research, the affective component of Well Being depends primarily on the frequency and not on the intensity of positive and negative experiences (Diener, Colvin, Pavot, & Allman, 1991; Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 1990). Diener and colleagues (1990), for instance, found that self-reported intensity of positive affect added little to the prediction of well being after the frequency of positive affect had been taken into account.

Regarding the relation between the emotional and cognitive components of life satisfaction, research has shown that when people make judgments about life satisfaction, hedonic balance (i.e., the proportion of positive/pleasant emotions to negative/unpleasant emotions experienced) serves as an important source of information (Schimmack, Oishi, & Diener, 2002; Schimmack,

Radhakrishnan, Oishi, Dzokoto, & Ahadi, 2002; Schwarz & Strack, 1991; Suh, Diener, Oishi, & Triandis, 1998). Moreover, experimental evidence has shown that positive and negative experiences have a causal influence on satisfaction judgments (Schwarz & Clore, 1983). Such findings are supportive of an affect-as-information perspective (e.g., Schwarz & Clore, 2007), suggesting that

people rely on their emotional experiences to form judgments of how satisfied they are with their lives.

The last two decades were characterized by increasing pressure to improve student achievements through high academic accountability emphasis. As a result, curriculum goals have become more academic and skill-oriented, and social and emotional components of educational programs have taken the back seat to increasingly rigorous academic demands (Hargreaves 2003). Subjective well-being, defined as consisting of a cognitive component (life satisfaction appraisals), and an affective component (the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative emotional experiences) (Deiner 2000), is particularly important in the context of school as studies have demonstrated a positive association between students' levels of subjective well-being and their academic functioning, social competence, physical health, achievements, and behavioral engagement in school (Antaramian et al. 2010). Additional studies suggest that higher levels of subjective well-being among schoolchildren correlate with better relationships with parents, teachers, and peers (Gilman and Huebner 2006). Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1991) and Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) by Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, January 2009 were administered to students. The scales were scored and statistically analyzed and the results interpreted.

## 2. Methodology

**Locale of the Study:** Hyderabad

**Sample:** 100 high school students randomly selected

**Tools:** Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1991) and Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) by

Ed Diener and Robert Biswas-Diener, January 2009 were administered to students

**Objective:** To study the impact of positive and negative experiences on life satisfaction of students

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 1:** Frequency distribution of students on SLSS

S.no	SLSS	Extremely dissatisfied	Slightly satisfied	Extremely satisfied
		7(7%)	24(24%)	28(38%)
				35(35%)
				6(6%)

The table clearly shows that 35 percent of the selected high school students were satisfied with their life and 28 percent of them expressed slight satisfaction. The study revealed that on average 7 percent of the selected sample expressed extreme satisfaction and extreme dissatisfaction with their life, which is some times normal at this agegroup.

**Table 2:** Frequency distribution of students on Scale of Positive and negative Experiences

S.no	Dimension	LOW	AVERAGE	HIGH
1.	Positive	12(12%)	57(57%)	31(31%)
2.	Negative	25(25%)	54(54%)	21(21%)
3.	Affect balance	12(12%)	48(48%)	30(40%)

From the above table it is clearly evident that on average 50 percent of the selected sample showed average positive , negative and balanced experiences. It was interesting to note from the study that 31% of the selected sample scored high on positive experience, 21 percent high on negative experiences and 30 percent high balanced experiences. Further the study reveals that 12 percent of selected population scored low on positive and negative experience.

**Table 3:** Relation between positive and negative experiences and life satisfaction

S.no		Positive experience	Negative experience	Balanced experiences
	Life satisfaction	0.87*	-0.74*	0.95*

The above table indicates the correlation between life satisfaction and positive, negative experiences. It was interesting to note from the study that life satisfaction showed a positively significant relation with positive experiences and significant negative relation with negative experience. And further the study revealed that life satisfaction has perfect correlation with balanced experiences.

### 4. Conclusion

The study reveals an interesting finding that equal proportional of sample were satisfied or dissatisfied with their life. Another surprising finding is that equal proportion of 7% felt extreme satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their life. It was encourage to note from the study that 50 percent of the sample scored average on positive and negative experiences. The study found that the positive and negative experiences have impact on the life satisfaction

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