



Subjective Wellbeing in relation to the Joy of Learning among Secondary Students in Kolkata

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Abstract- There is growing interest in understanding how students' overall happiness and their enjoyment of learning are connected, especially at the secondary school level. In cities like Kolkata, students face a lot of academic pressure, which can affect both their mental health and how engaged they feel in school. The main goals of this study were to measure how secondary students in Kolkata feel about their overall wellbeing and how much joy they find in learning. The study also looked at whether there are differences between boys and girls, and explored the connection between these two aspects. A quantitative descriptive survey method was used. The researchers selected 250 secondary students from both government and private schools in Kolkata using purposive sampling. A bilingual and validated version of the Student Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire (SSWQ), originally developed by Renshaw in 2022, was used to collect the data. The findings showed that female students scored significantly higher than male students on both joy of learning and subjective wellbeing. There was also a strong positive link between the two; students who found more joy in learning also reported feeling better about their lives overall. Gender clearly makes a difference in how students experience both joy in learning and overall wellbeing. The strong connection between the two suggests that helping students enjoy learning more could be a meaningful way to support their mental and emotional health in Kolkata's secondary schools.

Keywords - subjective wellbeing, joy of learning, secondary students, gender differences, Kolkata, student engagement.

I. Introduction

For a long time, success in secondary school has been measured mostly by marks, exam results, and how well students perform in a competitive environment. But now, more and more research in positive psychology and educational thinking suggests that how students feel about their learning might be just as important as what they actually achieve. This introduction looks at the connection between subjective wellbeing and the joy of learning, especially in the context of secondary students in Kolkata; a city where old traditions in education meet new ways of understanding student development.

Subjective wellbeing is basically how a person thinks and feels about their own life; whether they are satisfied, experience positive emotions, and are not overwhelmed by negative ones (Diener, 2000). In schools, student wellbeing has become an important idea. It is not just about not being sad or stressed; it is about feeling engaged, having a sense of purpose, and truly flourishing (Seligman, 2011). For secondary students, who are dealing with the ups and downs of adolescence along with heavy academic pressure, subjective wellbeing is both a result of positive school experiences and a predictor of how well they will do later in life (Suldo et al., 2014). Studies have shown again and again that students who feel better about their lives are more engaged in learning, remember things better, and have a more positive attitude toward school (Huebner &



Gilman, 2006). So, the school environment is not just a place for teaching facts; it is a space where wellbeing can be nurtured, with effects that last long after students leave the classroom.

The idea of the "joy of learning" is about the natural curiosity, interest, and real pleasure students feel when they are learning something new. It is different from studying just to get marks or to make parents happy. The joy of learning comes when students find meaning and satisfaction in the process itself (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This is close to what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) called "flow" - that state where you are so absorbed in what you are doing that you lose track of time, because the activity is both challenging and enjoyable. The connection between how students feel about their lives and the joy they find in learning is not just a vague idea; it is rooted in solid psychological theories. One such theory is self-determination theory, which says that every person has three basic needs: to feel in control of their own actions (autonomy), to feel capable (competence), and to feel connected to others (relatedness). When these needs are met, people naturally feel better and become more motivated from within (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In a school setting, when students are in an environment that respects their choices, helps them feel capable, and builds strong relationships, they are more likely to enjoy what they are learning and stay genuinely engaged. Another helpful idea is the broaden-and-build theory. This theory suggests that positive emotions like joy, interest, and curiosity; do more than just make us feel good in the moment. They actually expand our thinking and help us build lasting strengths (Fredrickson, 2001). So, when a student experiences joy in learning, it opens up their mind, makes them more flexible in how they think, helps them form stronger bonds with others, and builds a kind of mental toughness that helps them bounce back from academic setbacks. These strengths then feed back into their overall wellbeing and keep them engaged with learning over time. In India, the joy of learning has deep roots in ancient traditions where education was seen as a way to understand yourself and the world, not just a path to a job. But in today's secondary schools, especially in big cities like Kolkata, the focus is often on cramming for competitive exams rather than on truly engaging with knowledge (Kumar, 2016). This pulls between learning for its own sake and learning for results creates a complicated background for understanding how students really feel about their education.

Kolkata holds a special place in India's educational map. It is a city with a rich history of ideas and culture; home to Nobel winners, famous schools and colleges, and a long tradition of academic excellence. This makes Kolkata a unique setting for studying student wellbeing and engagement. The city's schools range from old missionary institutions to modern private schools, and they serve students from many different backgrounds, all dealing with the pressure of India's tough secondary exam system (Majumdar, 2019).

Lately, there has been a growing awareness among educators in Kolkata that student engagement matters beyond just exam scores. Schools across the city have started cultural programmes, inter-school events, and hands-on learning activities designed to bring back what many teachers call "the joy of learning." These efforts show that people are beginning to understand that student wellbeing and real engagement are not just add-ons; they are essential parts of a good education.



II. Rationale of the study

Even though there is a growing amount of research around the world on student wellbeing and engagement, very little of it has focused specifically on secondary school students in Kolkata. Some studies have looked at academic stress among Indian teenagers (Verma et al., 2002), and others have explored the cultural side of Indian education (Kumar, 2016). But the direct link between how students feel about their lives and the joy they experience in learning has not really been studied in this particular group.

At the same time, schools in Kolkata have started paying more attention to student engagement; organising cultural events, collaborative projects, and other activities meant to make learning more enjoyable. However, there is not enough solid research to show whether these efforts actually lead to better wellbeing outcomes for students. This study tries to fill that gap. It looks closely at the connection between subjective wellbeing and the joy of learning among secondary students in Kolkata, while also taking into account the unique cultural and educational realities that shape their experiences.

III. Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study as follows:

- To assess the subjective wellbeing of students at secondary level in Kolkata.
- To assess the joy of learning of students at secondary level in Kolkata.
- To investigate the variation of gender of students in subjective wellbeing and joy of learning at secondary level in Kolkata.
- To examine the correlation between subjective wellbeing and joy of learning of students at secondary level in Kolkata.

IV. Hypotheses of the study

H01: There is no significant difference in the subjective wellbeing among secondary level students with respect to gender.

H02: There is no significant difference in the joy of learning among secondary level students with respect to gender.

H03: There is no significant correlation between subjective wellbeing and joy of learning of students at secondary level.

V. Methods

To carry out this study, the researcher used a quantitative descriptive survey method. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling. The overall group of interest called the population was all secondary students in the Kolkata district. From this larger group, a sample of 250 students was selected, drawn from both government and private schools.

In this research, the students' subjective wellbeing was the main thing being studied as the dependent variable. The focus was on understanding the relation between subjective



wellbeing and joy of learning and how this wellbeing might differ depending on the gender. To collect the data, a bilingual version of the Student Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire (SSWQ) was used. The original English version of this tool was created by Tyler L. Renshaw in 2022. Before using the translated and adapted version, the researchers carefully checked and confirmed that it was reliable and valid for the group they were studying.

VI. Results

To analyse the data, the researcher used inferential statistical methods. After that, hypothesis testing was done, with the null hypothesis serving as the baseline for comparison.

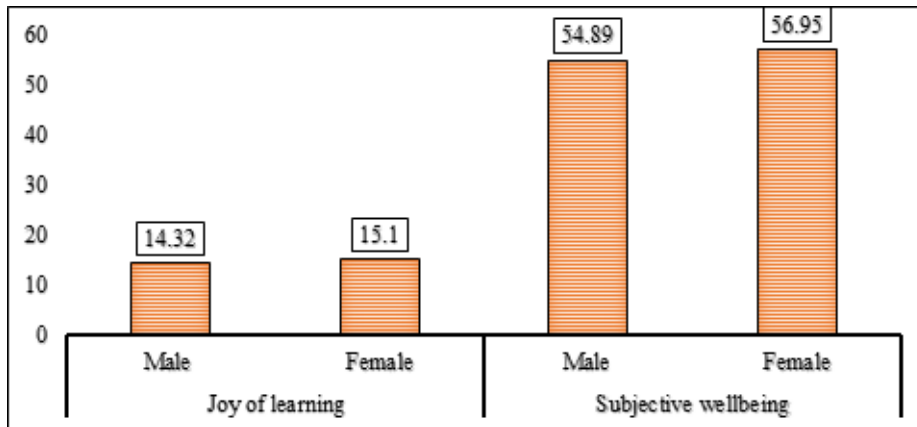


Figure 1: Presenting mean distribution

Table 1: Showing independent sample t-test

Table of analysis							
Variable	Category	Mean	t	df	Std. error Diff.	p-value	Remarks
Joy of Learning							
Gender	Male	14.32	-3.362	248	0.233	0.001	*S
	Female	15.10					P<0.05
Subjective Wellbeing							
Gender	Male	54.89	-2.906	248	0.710	0.004	*S
	Female	56.95					P<0.05



Table 1 showed that the independent sample t-test evaluating the comparison of mean of male and female students concerning joy of learning was appeared statistically significant [$t(248) = -3.362, p < 0.05$] and concerning subjective wellbeing was also appeared statistically significant [$t(248) = -2.906, p < 0.05$]. In both cases, female students showed better score than male students. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected at 0.05 level for both cases.

Table 2: Showing Pearson correlation

Correlations			
		JOY OF LEARNING	SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING
JOY OF LEARNING	Pearson Correlation	1	0.774
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING	Pearson Correlation	0.774	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

Table 2 showed that the Pearson correlation value between joy of learning and subjective wellbeing was found to be 0.774 and the p-value was 0.000; indicated statistical significance. The correlation was positive and strong between joy of learning and subjective wellbeing of students.

VII. Findings

- i) Female students scored higher than male students on both Joy of Learning and overall Subjective Wellbeing. Both differences were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).
- ii) Gender played an important role in how students experience joy in learning and their overall sense of wellbeing in the educational context of Kolkata's secondary schools.
- iii) Positive and strong correlation found between joy of learning and subjective wellbeing of students at secondary level in Kolkata.

VIII. Discussion

The result that girl students in this study reported significantly more joy in learning and higher overall wellbeing than boys is interesting; it matches some earlier studies but also differs from others. In their large meta-analysis, Wong, Liem, Chan, and Datu (2024) found that affective engagement; which includes things like enjoyment and positive feelings toward learning; had the strongest connection with subjective wellbeing ($r = 0.40$). However, they did not specifically report whether boys and girls differed in this regard. Similarly, Laranjeira and Teixeira (2025), while validating a scale for student engagement, found links between engagement and wellbeing but did not find major differences between genders in their analysis.



Coming to the Indian context, Ganguly and Vikram (2025) studied adolescents in poorer, resource-limited areas of South India. They found that going to school and studying regularly improved wellbeing for all students. But they also observed that girls in those settings carried a much heavier load of household work, which harmed their health. This makes the current finding from Kolkata especially interesting; it suggests that in an urban setting like Kolkata, where such domestic pressures on girls may be less severe, girls might actually experience higher wellbeing than boys. This could be because they have more time and freedom to engage with school and learning in a positive way.

Lomas and colleagues (2025) looked at how emotional awareness and regulation affect adolescent wellbeing. While they considered gender differences in certain behaviours, they did not find major differences in wellbeing levels between boys and girls. The other important finding from this study; that joy of learning and subjective wellbeing are strongly connected fits well with existing research. Wong et al. (2024) clearly showed that affective engagement (which is essentially joy of learning) has the strongest link with wellbeing compared to other types of engagement. This also makes sense in light of self-determination theory, which Ryan and Deci (2017) explained that when students feel a sense of autonomy, competence, and connection, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and experience greater wellbeing.

Still, the fact that girls in Kolkata scored higher on both counts is something worth exploring further. It may have a lot to do with the specific cultural and social environment of urban West Bengal, where girls might be encouraged more in education or face fewer restrictions compared to other parts of India.

IX. Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that female students in secondary schools across Kolkata feel more joy in learning and report higher overall wellbeing compared to male students. There is also a strong link between how much students enjoy learning and how good they feel about their lives. This tells us that schools need to pay attention to these differences and create learning experiences that work well for both boys and girls. Most importantly, it reminds us that helping students find real enjoyment in their studies can go a long way in supporting their mental and emotional health, especially in a busy city like Kolkata.

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