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# Mapping the Evolution of Research on Happiness and Education: A Bibliometric Review (2019-2025)

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### **Abstract**

This bibliometric review maps the evolution of research on happiness and education between 2019 and 2024. The analysis reveals significant trends in the intersection of emotional well-being and educational practices, with key themes such as well-being, education, emotional intelligence, and resilience gaining prominence. The findings indicate a steady increase in publications through 2022, followed by a slight decline in 2025. Dominant research topics highlight the importance of psychological health in educational settings, while emerging themes such as the intersection of psychological conditions and education, and mental health interventions continue to shape the discourse. The study also explores the influence of leading authors, institutions, and journals, offering valuable insights for future interdisciplinary collaborations. Additionally, the co-authorship network analysis uncovers the fragmented nature of international collaborations, highlighting opportunities for bridging gaps between research groups. This review emphasizes the need for continued exploration of the psychological dimensions of education and encourages further integration of mental health perspectives within educational research.

*Keywords:* Happiness, Education, Bibliometric Analysis, Research Trends, Co-authorship.

## **Mapping the Evolution of Research on Happiness and Education: A Bibliometric Review (2019-2025)**

Happiness is increasingly recognized as a fundamental factor in education, influencing not only academic success but also mental and emotional well-being (Seligman, 2011). While traditional educational systems often emphasize cognitive performance and measurable achievements, recent research suggests that happiness is not merely an outcome but a prerequisite for effective learning (Diener, Oishi, & Tay, 2018). By fostering an environment where students experience positive emotions, a sense of purpose, and social connection, educational institutions can enhance both short-term academic performance and long-term personal development (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Studies highlight the strong link between happiness and mental health, emphasizing that students who report higher happiness levels tend to experience lower stress levels, better emotional regulation, and stronger coping mechanisms (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). Happiness influences academic performance through cognitive, motivational, and social mechanisms (Boekaerts, 2011). Research demonstrates that positive emotions enhance memory retention, problem-solving abilities, and critical thinking skills, all essential for learning. Moreover, students with higher levels of happiness show greater intrinsic motivation, leading to higher engagement, persistence, and overall academic success (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Additionally, a supportive and emotionally positive learning environment fosters better teacher-student relationships, encouraging student participation and a deeper connection to the learning process (Hattie, 2009). Schools that prioritize social and emotional learning strategies have reported improvements in both student well-being and academic outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011). Beyond immediate academic benefits, positive educational experiences enhance adaptability, resilience, and intrinsic curiosity, encouraging individuals to pursue learning beyond formal schooling (Gopnik, 2020). Studies suggest that students

who experience happiness in education are more likely to engage in continuous skill development, career growth, and personal enrichment later in life (Schleicher, 2018).

Definitely, happiness is undeniably intertwined with well-being and stands as a crucial aspect of education.

The period from 2019 to 2024 witnessed a significant surge in research on mental health, life satisfaction, and well-being within educational settings (Rawdin & Dhillon, 2024). This heightened focus reflects both growing societal awareness of student well-being and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which reshaped education globally. As a result, researchers have increasingly examined mental health interventions, school environments, and the integration of well-being in curricula (Gao et al., 2024).

Despite significant advancements, more research is needed to clarify the specific mechanisms linking educational environments and student well-being (Bondebjerg et al., 2023). Existing studies primarily focus on health education and psychological well-being, but research explicitly linking happiness to education remains fragmented. Several bibliometric studies have explored well-being and mental health more broadly, offering methodological insights applicable to happiness research in education, such as co-citation mapping and research network visualization. However, a significant limitation of these studies is that they often overlook the educational context, focusing instead on public health or general psychological well-being (Lomas et al., 2021). This gap reinforces the need for a specialized bibliometric study centered on educational settings.

One of the most relevant bibliometric studies in a closely related area is the analysis of college students' health education (CSHE) conducted by Gao et al. (2024). Examining 1358 articles from the Web of Science Core Collection, this study mapped research collaborations, keyword co-occurrences, and thematic trends. The findings revealed a significant rise in publications on mental health and well-being, emphasizing growing institutional and international cooperation in this area. Furthermore, the study identified key

themes such as public health, digital learning, and mental health interventions, which are increasingly shaping discussions on student well-being. While this research provides a useful methodological framework, it does not focus specifically on happiness in education, thus leaving room for further investigation.

Despite the growing interest in happiness and education, significant research gaps persist, particularly regarding longitudinal studies, cross-cultural comparisons, and special educational needs (Yun et al., 2024).

While bibliometric studies in related fields offer valuable insights, a dedicated bibliometric analysis on happiness in education is necessary to address these gaps. Such an analysis would:

- Provide a comprehensive overview of research trends in happiness and education.
- Identify key authors, journals, and institutions driving this research area.
- Map collaborations and emerging themes.
- Uncover methodological and regional biases that need further attention.

By applying rigorous bibliometric methodologies, this study aims to provide a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of research on happiness and education from 2019 to 2025. Specifically, the objectives are:

1. To examine the growth of research publications over time, identifying trends in scholarly output.
2. To identify dominant and emerging themes in happiness and education research through keyword analysis and thematic mapping.
3. To analyze key authors, institutions, and journals that have significantly contributed to this research field.
4. To explore collaboration networks among researchers and countries, assessing co-authorship patterns and international research partnerships.

## Method

This study is based on bibliometric data retrieved from Scopus, covering the period 2019-2025. The selection of this period ensures that the analysis captures recent trends in happiness and education research, aligning with the rapidly evolving landscape of psychological and educational studies. This timeframe also allows for a manageable dataset while maintaining relevance to contemporary discussions on student well-being.

To ensure a systematic and reproducible search, the following search query was applied:

```
TITLE-ABS-KEY ( happiness AND education ) AND PUBYEAR > 2018 AND  
PUBYEAR < 2026 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Happiness" ) OR  
LIMIT-TO ( EXACTKEYWORD , "Education" ) )
```

After executing the search, duplicate records and irrelevant publications were removed. The final dataset consisted of 1017 publications.

The bibliometric techniques applied to analyze dataset include:

- Publication trends analysis: assessment of annual publication output to examine the growth of research over time.
- Keyword analysis: identification of dominant and emerging themes through keyword co-occurrence mapping. In Map-themes analysis the Walktrap clustering algorithm was conducted.
- Co-authorship network analysis: mapping of collaborations among researchers, identifying key contributors and research clusters.
- Country collaboration network analysis: exploration of international research partnerships, highlighting global collaboration patterns in happiness and education research.

All data were processed using Bibliometrix (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), an R package

designed for bibliometric analysis, and visualized using Biblioshiny, an interactive interface that facilitates data interpretation in order to ensure a comprehensive, structured, and replicable analysis of how happiness research in education has evolved over the last five years.

## **Results**

### ***Publication trends***

The analysis of publication trends from 2019 to 2025 shows a steady increase in research on happiness and education, with the highest number of publications recorded in 2022 (200 publications). The publication output remained strong in 2023 (175 publications) and 2024 (170 publications), though a noticeable decline is expected in 2025 with only 26 publications recorded so far. This suggests that while the field continues to attract significant attention, although the rate of publication growth has slowed down after reaching its peak in 2022.

### ***Dominant research topics***

An updated keyword analysis of the dataset reveals, as logically expected, that happiness remains the most frequently studied topic among both authors' keywords and Keywords PLUS, with 457 occurrences in the authors' list and 742 occurrences in the Keywords PLUS list. This reinforces its centrality in the research field. Other significant keywords in the authors' list include education (159), well-being (77), quality of life (32), anxiety (19), and emotions (19). These topics highlight the strong relationship between psychological well-being and educational contexts. The inclusion of positive psychology (12), family (9), intervention (9), and resilience (19) further emphasizes the growing focus on mental health and psychological interventions within the educational sphere.

On the Keywords PLUS side, additional prominent terms include controlled study

(219), psychology (183), adolescent (165), job satisfaction (39), and workplace (29), reflecting broader interdisciplinary interests. Keywords such as child psychiatry (7), guilt (5), and melanoma (5) suggest that some research is intersecting with medical and health-related topics, particularly in terms of psychological health and its influence on educational outcomes.

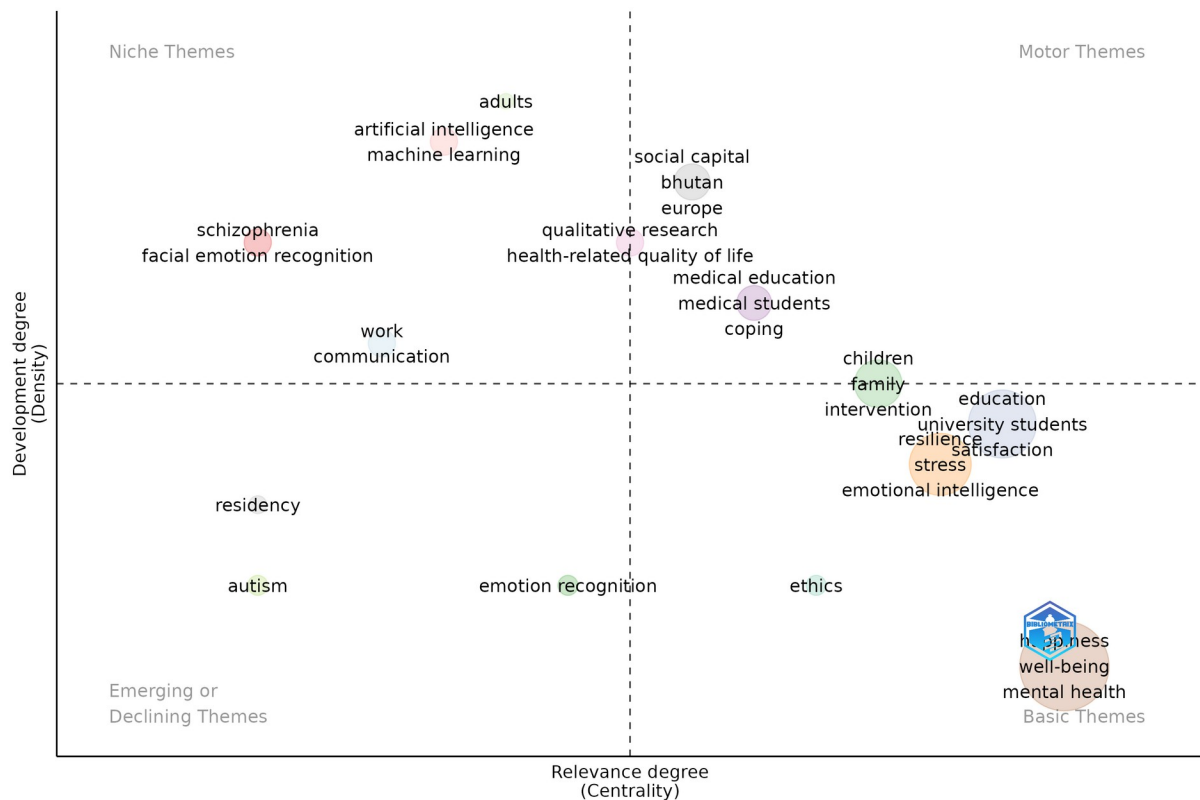


Illustration 1. Thematic map

### **Thematic map: emerging and established trends**

A thematic analysis, based on Callon's Density vs. Centrality framework, categorizes research topics by their development and relevance. The thematic map provides a clear overview of the maturity and importance of different research areas within the field of happiness and education (illustration 1).

- Motor themes (well-developed and central topics). The most central and well-developed themes include happiness (1,198 occurrences), education (246

occurrences), and resilience (157 occurrences). These topics remain at the heart of the research, reflecting their ongoing importance in understanding the emotional and psychological dimensions of education. Happiness has the highest centrality (Callon Centrality = 1,353), indicating its central role in the academic discourse. Themes such as children (54 occurrences), family (9 occurrences), intervention (9 occurrences), and adolescent (8 occurrences) also contribute to the central focus on emotional well-being in educational contexts. The increasing prominence of themes related to emotional intelligence, facial emotion recognition (5 occurrences), and empathy (7 occurrences) further emphasizes the shift toward understanding emotional responses and psychological health in students.

- Basic themes (fundamental but less developed). While still significant, themes such as medical education (9 occurrences) and qualitative research (12 occurrences) show less centrality in the field. These themes are foundational but are not yet as developed or central as topics like happiness and education. Medical education (Rank Centrality = 10) has some degree of centrality, but its focus remains on specific student populations, particularly in health-related fields, which limits its broader applicability to general educational contexts.
- Niche themes (specialized but peripheral areas of research). Themes such as schizophrenia (7 occurrences), autism (7 occurrences), and facial emotion recognition (5 occurrences) are specialized areas within the broader research on happiness and education. These topics, though important in specific contexts, have lower centrality and are still developing in terms of their broader relevance. However, their presence suggests opportunities for interdisciplinary growth, particularly in fields like medical education, psychology, and special education.
- Emerging or declining themes (topics in transition). Certain themes, such as social capital (23 occurrences) and ethics (7 occurrences), appear as emerging or declining

topics within happiness research. While social capital is gaining importance in educational research, its relevance is still in the early stages of development. Similarly, ethics is an area where ongoing research is likely to shape future educational practices, especially in terms of mental health and well-being.

### ***Most influential authors & journals***

The updated analysis of author productivity highlights *LAM, TAI HING* and *WANG, MAN PING* as the leading contributors, each with 9 articles. The fractionalized contribution metric, which accounts for co-authorship, reveals that both *LAM, TAI HING* and *WANG, MAN PING* have the highest impact (1.27), indicating their significant presence in the field. Other significant authors include *HO, SAI YIN* (7 articles, 0.99 fractionalized contribution), *LAI, AGNES YUEN KWAN* (7 articles, 0.98 fractionalized contribution), and *SIT, SHIRLEY MAN MAN* (6 articles, 0.87 fractionalized contribution). The authors with a notable influence despite having fewer publications are *RAVINA-RIPOLL, RAFAEL* (4 articles, 1.03 fractionalized contribution) and *GOSS, MADISON* (4 articles, 0.70 fractionalized contribution).

**Table 1. Most Productive Authors**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Articles Published</b>	<b>Fractionalized Contribution</b>
LAM, TAI HING	9	1.27
WANG, MAN PING	9	1.27
HO, SAI YIN	7	0.99
LAI, AGNES YUEN KWAN	7	0.98
SIT, SHIRLEY MAN MAN	6	0.87
GONG, WEI JIE	4	0.54
GOSS, MADISON	4	0.70
MCNUTT, SARAH	4	0.70
RAVINA-RIPOLL, RAFAEL	4	1.03
AGOSTINHO, FENI	3	0.48

The most prolific academic journals publishing research on happiness and education and the productivity evolution is on table 2.

**Table 2. Most productive journals and evolution productivity over time**

<b>Journal</b>	<b>Total articles</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>
<i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i>	60	5	14	30	52	60	60	60
<i>PLOS ONE</i>	20	1	4	8	11	13	17	20
<i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>	16	1	2	7	12	15	16	16
<i>Journal of Happiness Studies</i>	15	3	5	6	11	14	15	15
<i>Sustainability (Switzerland)</i>	13	0	3	5	10	11	12	13
Rest of journals less than 10 articles								

The analysis of journal productivity over time shows a consistent upward trend in publications from *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, with the most notable growth seen between 2021 and 2023. *PLOS ONE* and *Frontiers in Psychology* also exhibit significant increases. The steady rise in publications from *Sustainability (Switzerland)* indicates the growing intersection between happiness research and sustainability.

### ***Most productive countries and institutions***

The analysis of country-level productivity reveals the following leading contributors to happiness and education research:

- The USA leads by a significant margin, with 654 publications. This highlights its prominent role in shaping global research on happiness and education.
- China (522 articles) follows as the second most productive country, showing a strong

national interest in the topic.

- Other notable contributors include *Iran* (209), *UK* (204), and *India* (137), reflecting diverse international engagement in happiness research.

The top institutions producing research on happiness and education are in table 3, where University of Hong Kong and University of Turku highlight.

**Table 3. Most productive institutions**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Articles Published</b>
The University of Hong Kong (China)	53
University of Turku (Finland)	32
Shiraz University of Medical Sciences (Iran)	24
University of Glasgow (UK)	19
Penn State College of Medicine (USA)	18
Harvard Medical School (USA)	17
Iran University of Medical Sciences (Iran)	17
University of California (USA)	17
Islamic Azad University (Iran)	16
Fudan University (China)	15

### ***Co-authorship Network Analysis***

The updated co-authorship network provides insights into the collaboration patterns among researchers in the field. Key network metrics include:

- **Betweenness:** measures how often a researcher acts as a bridge between other researchers. In this updated network, *LAM*, *TAI HING* and *WANG, MAN PING* have the highest betweenness scores (5.231), indicating that they play a central role in facilitating collaboration across different groups.
- **Closeness:** indicates how easily a researcher can access others in the network. Researchers such as *HO*, *SAI YIN* and *SIT, SHIRLEY MAN MAN* have lower closeness scores (0.1), suggesting they are more isolated within their respective clusters.
- **PageRank:** reflects the importance of a researcher in the network. *LAM, TAI HING*

and WANG, MAN PING both have the highest PageRank scores (0.048), highlighting their significant influence in the research community.

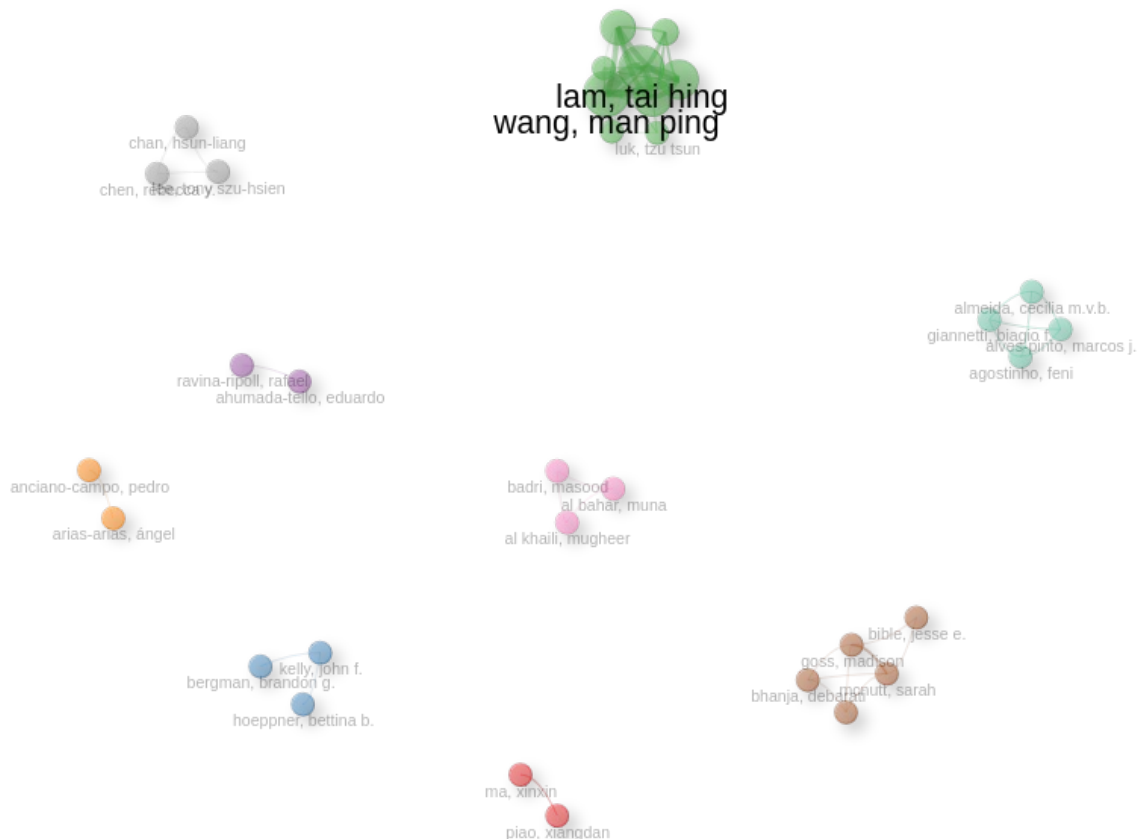


Illustration 2. Collaboration network

Six clusters are identified (illustration 2) composed as:

- Cluster 1: central researchers in this cluster include MA, XINXIN and PIAO, XIANGDAN, demonstrating their strong collaborative bonds within this group.
- Cluster 2: this cluster, featuring HOEPPNER, BETTINA B. and KELLY, JOHN F., shows emerging collaborations, particularly in interdisciplinary areas.
- Cluster 3: researchers such as LAM, TAI HING, WANG, MAN PING, HO, SAI YIN,

and *SIT*, *SHIRLEY MAN MAN* form the central group in this cluster, showing a high degree of collaboration within the emotional well-being and education research.

- Cluster 4: *RAVINA-RIPOLL*, *RAFAEL* and *AHUMADA-TELLO*, *EDUARDO* form another emerging cluster, though their interactions with other clusters remain limited.
- Cluster 5: *GOSS*, *MADISON* and *MCNUTT*, *SARAH* belong to a smaller cluster, with notable betweenness (1), indicating their potential role in connecting different research groups.
- Cluster 6: researchers in this group, such as *BURNS*, *AMY S.*, *BIBLE*, *JESSE E.*, and *BHANJA*, *DEBARATI*, are part of a developing cluster with emerging interdisciplinary connections.

These findings suggest that, while strong collaborative groups exist, the connections between different clusters remain limited. Future efforts may focus on bridging these groups to foster broader interdisciplinary research.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

The analysis of research trends, dominant topics, influential authors, and international collaborations presented in this study offers a comprehensive overview of the field of happiness and education from 2019 to 2025. Several key findings emerge that contribute to a deeper understanding of the current state of research and provide valuable insights for future directions.

1. Publication trends. The steady increase in publications from 2019 to 2022, followed by a decline reflects the evolving interest in happiness and education. While the rapid growth in the number of publications may indicate a saturation point in the field, the consistent output in 2023 and 2024 suggests that the field remains relevant, albeit with slower expansion.

2. Dominant research topics and thematic trends. The analysis reveals the growing intersection between psychological health and educational practices, with frequently occurring terms such as *well-being*, *education*, and *quality of life* highlighting the foundational themes in the field. The increasing prominence of concepts like *emotional intelligence*, *anxiety*, and *resilience* points to a shift toward addressing the emotional and mental health challenges faced by students in educational settings. Moreover, the thematic map underscores the continued centrality of *happiness* and *mental health*, with well-developed themes remaining at the core of the research. Niche themes, including *schizophrenia* and *facial emotion recognition*, indicate a rising interest in the intersection of psychological conditions and education. These findings suggest that future research should not only continue to explore the psychological dimensions of education but also foster interdisciplinary collaboration between fields such as psychology, social work, mental health, and special education, enriching the academic discourse and broadening the scope of educational interventions.
3. Collaborations and influential researchers. The co-authorship network analysis revealed that while collaboration clusters exist, cross-group interactions remain limited. The fragmentation observed in the co-authorship network also points to a potential challenge for the field: the need for stronger interdisciplinary and cross-national collaborations to foster a more holistic understanding of happiness in education.
4. Institutions and Journals. Institutions such as *The University of Hong Kong* and *University of Turku* have emerged as key players in happiness and education research, contributing significantly to the global body of knowledge. Journals like *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* and *PLOS ONE* are central in disseminating research findings. This trend suggests that institutional support and

access to high-impact journals are critical to the continued success of research in this field.

The findings of this study point to several key directions for future research:

- First, there is a need for more interdisciplinary collaborations, particularly between researchers in education, psychology, mental health, and social sciences.
- Second, while themes like *happiness*, *well-being*, and *mental health* remain central, emerging topics such as *emotional intelligence*, *social capital*, and *autism* should be explored further, especially in educational settings.

In conclusion, the field of happiness and education remains active and important, with ongoing contributions from diverse regions and disciplines. The growing focus on emotional and mental well-being in educational contexts highlights the need for continued research that integrates psychological health with educational practices. By fostering greater interdisciplinary collaboration and exploring emerging topics, future research can continue to advance the understanding of happiness and its role in educational success. As the field evolves, it will be essential to adapt to new challenges and opportunities, ensuring that the research remains relevant and impactful in improving both student well-being and educational outcomes.

**NOTE**

Data set available: <https://zenodo.org/records/14906083>

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