A Comparative Study Of Happiness Quotient Of Graduate Level Students Studying In Naac A++ Accredited University And Non-Accredited State University

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Higher education plays a pivotal role in shaping the lives and futures of countless individuals by providing not only knowledge and skills but also a transformative experience that influences personal fulfilment and happiness. This research delves into the relationship between university accreditation and the happiness quotient of graduate-level students, aiming to compare happiness levels between students in NAAC A++ accredited universities and non-accredited state institutions. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, to gather comprehensive data on factors influencing student happiness. Quantitative surveys are used to assess happiness levels and demographic variables, while qualitative interviews provide in-depth insights into students' experiences. The results reveal that while no significant difference exists in happiness levels between male and female students, undergraduates report significantly higher levels of happiness compared to postgraduates. However, institutional accreditation status does not significantly impact happiness levels among students. Overall, the study highlights the importance of understanding and addressing factors contributing to student happiness in higher education to create supportive learning environments that prioritize student well-being and success. **Keywords:** Higher education, student happiness, university accreditation, and NAAC.

INTRODUCTION:

In the tapestry of human existence, higher education stands as a vibrant thread weaving together knowledge, personal growth, and fulfilment (Snguanyat et al., 2019). It serves as a transformative journey where individuals embark on a quest for understanding, honing their skills, and shaping their futures. Within this intricate landscape, the pursuit of happiness emerges as a fundamental aspiration, intricately entwined with the educational experience. As students traverse the corridors of academia, the quality of their journey profoundly influences their sense of satisfaction and well-being (Chung et al., 2017). This journey is not solitary but shared, with institutions playing a pivotal role in sculpting the educational landscape. Accreditation, a cornerstone of educational quality, serves as a beacon guiding institutions towards excellence. Yet, amidst the discussions of academic rigor and institutional prestige, the impact of accreditation on student happiness remains an uncharted territory(Agarwal & Sandilya, 2020).
In recent years, accreditation processes have garnered increasing attention as measures of institutional quality and performance. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in India, for instance, stands as a vanguard in evaluating and accrediting universities and colleges based on stringent criteria (Phonnuaytrakoon, 2023). These accreditations, adorned with ratings such as 'A++,' 'A+,' and 'A,' signify not just academic prowess but also a commitment to excellence in education. However, the question lingers

(Haryana & Colony, 2023): amidst the pursuit of academic rigor, does accreditation contribute to the happiness and well-being of students?

This research paper embarks on a journey to unravel the intricate relationship between university accreditation and student happiness. By juxtaposing the experiences of students enrolled in NAAC A++ accredited universities with those in non-accredited state institutions, we aim to illuminate the role accreditation plays in shaping student satisfaction and fulfilment.

Our rationale stems from a critical knowledge gap in higher education research. While the impact of accreditation on academic standards and institutional reputation has been extensively scrutinized, scant attention has been paid to its potential influence on student happiness (Cre, 2020). Thus, our endeavour seeks to fill this void by providing empirical evidence on how accreditation status may impact the subjective experiences of students.

To achieve our objectives, we employ a mixed-methods approach, blending quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. Through comprehensive data collection from students in both accredited and non-accredited institutions, we aim to capture the nuanced dimensions of their educational experiences. By delving into the intricacies that underpin student satisfaction, we aspire to offer valuable insights for educational policymakers, university administrators, and students themselves (MORÁS & Carmona, 2020).

The implications of this research extend far beyond academic discourse. Our findings are poised to resonate within the corridors of educational institutions, shaping policies and practices that foster student well-being. By shedding light on the relationship between accreditation and happiness, we aim to catalyze conversations that prioritize student-centered approaches to education.

At the heart of our endeavor lies a commitment to enhancing the educational journey for graduate-level students, irrespective of their institution's accreditation status. We envision a landscape where accreditation serves not merely as a symbol of academic prowess but as a catalyst for holistic student development. Through our collective efforts, we aspire to cultivate environments that nurture the flourishing of individuals, empowering them to embark on fulfilling educational odysseys.

NEED AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY:

The rationale for undertaking this research is multifaceted, rooted in the imperative to understand and enhance the educational experience for graduate-level students. Here are the key reasons and justifications driving our inquiry:

1. **Assessing the Impact of Accreditation on Student Happiness:** Accreditation stands as a hallmark of institutional quality in higher education. Yet, empirical research on how accreditation status influences student happiness remains sparse. By delving into this relationship, we aim to provide valuable insights into the broader impact of accreditation on the subjective well-being of students, thereby enriching our understanding of the educational experience.

2. **Informing Accreditation Practices:** Educational accreditation processes play a pivotal role in assessing and ensuring institutional quality. Should our research reveal a correlation between accreditation and higher levels of student happiness, it could inform policymakers and accrediting bodies about the effectiveness of current accreditation practices. This, in turn, may lead to refinements in accreditation criteria and procedures to better align with student well-being.

3. **Enhancing Student Experiences:** Student happiness is intrinsically linked to the success and effectiveness of higher education institutions. Through this research, we seek to identify the specific factors that contribute to or detract from student happiness, thereby empowering universities to make informed decisions in improving the quality of education and support services they provide.

4. **Addressing Disparities:** Recognizing the diversity among higher education institutions, from prestigious accredited universities to non-accredited state institutions, our study aims to understand the happiness levels of students across these settings. By shedding light on potential disparities and challenges faced by students, we hope to inform efforts aimed at bridging gaps in educational quality and student well-being.

5. **Contributing to the Well-being Discourse:** Happiness and well-being are increasingly acknowledged as crucial aspects of individual success and fulfillment. By examining the happiness quotient of graduate-level students in the context of their higher education experience, our research contributes to the broader discourse on the factors influencing well-being, both within educational settings and beyond.

6. **Supporting Informed Decision-Making:** Prospective students often navigate a myriad of factors when choosing where to pursue their higher education. By providing evidence on the relationship between

accreditation and student happiness, our research empowers students to make more informed decisions about their educational journey, thereby enhancing their overall satisfaction and well-being.

In summary, this research endeavors to fill a significant knowledge gap by exploring the intricate interplay between university accreditation and student happiness. With implications for accreditation practices, educational quality, and the well-being of graduate-level students, our study aims to contribute to both academic discourse and practical decision-making within the realm of higher education.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Compare happiness levels between graduate-level students in NAAC A++ accredited universities and non-accredited state universities.
2. Identify factors influencing student happiness in both types of institutions. *
3. Assess the impact of accreditation status on student happiness.
4. Provide qualitative insights into the subjective experiences of students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research investigates the impact of intelligence quotient (IQ), emotional quotient (EQ), spiritual quotient (SQ), and adversity quotient (AQ) on the quality of graduates in vocational higher education. Conducted among 217 cadets from Surabaya Shipping Polytechnic who have completed internships, the study employs a correlational and quantitative approach, utilizing a questionnaire derived from established scales and analysed through Structural Equation Models (SEM). The findings reveal both direct and indirect positive effects of IQ, EQ, SQ, and AQ on graduate quality, with EQ and SQ playing dominant roles in the development process. Specifically, EQ contributes 25.2% and SQ 21.4% towards professional and ethical quality, while IQ supports the development of all quotients. Consequently, the study suggests emphasizing IQ and EQ in student acceptance requirements to foster other quotients and design learning experiences tailored to IQ, EQ, SQ, and AQ for comprehensive development and evaluation of outcomes. (Puspitacandri et al., 2020)

This study aimed to assess the emotional quotient (EQ) and social adjustment of sophomores at Rajamangala University of Technology Sri Vijaya, Thailand, in the academic year 2017, and investigate the relationship between EQ and social adjustment. A sample of 335 students was selected through purposive sampling, and data were collected using a survey questionnaire. Results revealed that students exhibited above-normal levels of EQ in the goodness aspect, while smariness and happiness aspects were within normal ranges. Social adjustment, encompassing physical, emotional, social, and intellectual aspects, was found to be at moderate levels overall. Importantly, a significant positive relationship was observed between students' EQ and social adjustment, indicating that higher EQ levels were associated with better social adjustment. Analysis utilized percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation coefficient statistics.(Ketkaew et al., 2021)

This study examined the emotional quotient (EQ) and social adjustment of 335 sophomores at Rajamangala University of Technology Sri Vijaya, Thailand, in 2017. Utilizing a survey questionnaire, it found that students displayed above-normal EQ levels in the goodness aspect, while smariness and happiness aspects were within normal ranges. Social adjustment, covering physical, emotional, social, and intellectual aspects, was moderate overall. Notably, a significant positive correlation was detected between students' EQ and social adjustment, indicating that higher EQ levels were linked to better social adjustment. Analysis incorporated percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation coefficient statistics. (Alves-Pinto & Giannetti, 2019)

This study investigates the impact of moral, emotional, and adversity quotient on the good citizenship of 1,087 undergraduate students from eight Rajabhat universities in Northeastern Region, Thailand. Utilizing descriptive statistics and structural equation modeling, findings indicate that both adversity quotient and moral quotient positively influence good citizenship significantly at the 0.01 level, while emotional quotient shows a negative direct effect at the 0.05 level. The structural equation model fits the empirical data well, as evidenced by the chi-square value of 167.784 (df = 119, p-value = 0.0022), RMSEA = 0.019, SRMR = 0.022, and chi-square/df = 1.409, with an R^2 of 0.559. (Siphai, 2015)

This study explores the relationship between stress and happiness among students at Rajabhat University in Thailand. Conducted through a cross-sectional survey method, with 190 students sampled using stratified proportion random sampling, the research found a predominant high level of stress and limited happiness among participants. Demographic factors such as education level, family income, and gender were associated with stress and happiness levels. Statistical analysis revealed a significant association between stress and happiness at the 0.05 significance level. The findings underscore the importance of investigating stress causes, implementing stress management strategies, and identifying factors contributing to student happiness to enhance the quality of teaching and learning experiences. (Benjanirat et al., 2021)

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Surveys:
Quantitative surveys serve as the primary method for collecting structured data on the happiness levels of graduate-level students. These surveys are designed to assess various dimensions of student well-being, including satisfaction with academic experiences, campus resources, and overall quality of life. Utilizing Likert-type scales, participants rate their agreement with statements related to happiness and satisfaction. Descriptive statistics, such as means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, are employed to summarize survey responses and examine the distribution of happiness scores among students in both accredited and non-accredited institutions.

Sampling Strategy:
Participants for the surveys are selected using a purposive sample technique to ensure representation from both NAAC A++ certified colleges and non-accredited state schools. Participants are selected from various academic fields and demographic profiles to provide a thorough understanding of student experiences. The sample size of 130 was chosen to provide statistical power and proper representation from different institution types. It includes 43 male and 87 female participants to represent gender diversity.

Data Collection Procedure:
Quantitative surveys are administered electronically to participants, who are invited to complete the surveys voluntarily. The surveys are distributed via email or online survey platforms, with participants providing informed consent prior to participation. Participants are assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Survey data are collected over a designated period to capture a sufficient number of responses from both accredited and non-accredited institutions.

Data Analysis:
Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, are computed to summarize the happiness levels of students in both types of institutions. These statistics provide an overview of the central tendency and variability of happiness scores among participants. To compare the happiness levels between accredited and non-accredited institutions, independent samples t-tests are conducted, examining whether there are significant differences in mean happiness scores between the two groups. Frequency analysis is also employed to explore the distribution of responses to individual survey items, identifying patterns and trends in student perceptions of happiness-related factors.

Ethical Considerations:
Ethical guidelines for research involving human participants are strictly adhered to throughout the study. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, and measures are taken to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of survey responses. Ethical approval is sought from relevant institutional review boards prior to data collection.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the major findings of the study on the existing happiness level among the students and whether it is significantly differed on the basis of gender, course they study, and the institution has accredited by NAAC A+ or not. Hence the collected data are analysed as per the objectives and hypotheses constructed for the study. The detailed analysis and interpretation are given below.

What are happiness levels of students?
The collected data have been analysed by using frequency and percentage and the result is presented as Table 1.

Table 1: Happiness Level of Students		
	Frequency	Percentage
Low	19	15%
Average	79	61%
High	32	25%
Total	130	100%

The table displays the distribution of happiness ratings among polled students. Out of the 130 pupils surveyed, 19 students, which is 15% of the sample, expressed a poor degree of contentment. 79 students, or 61% of the sample, reported having an average degree of contentment. 32 students, including 25% of the sample, indicated a high degree of satisfaction. This analysis offers insights into the different levels of happiness reported by questioned students, with a notable percentage falling within the average happiness range.

Figure 1 Happiness Level of Students

HAPPINESS LEVEL OF STUDENTS

■ Frequency ■ Percentage

Low: 19, 15.6
Average: 79, 61.8
High: 32, 25.6
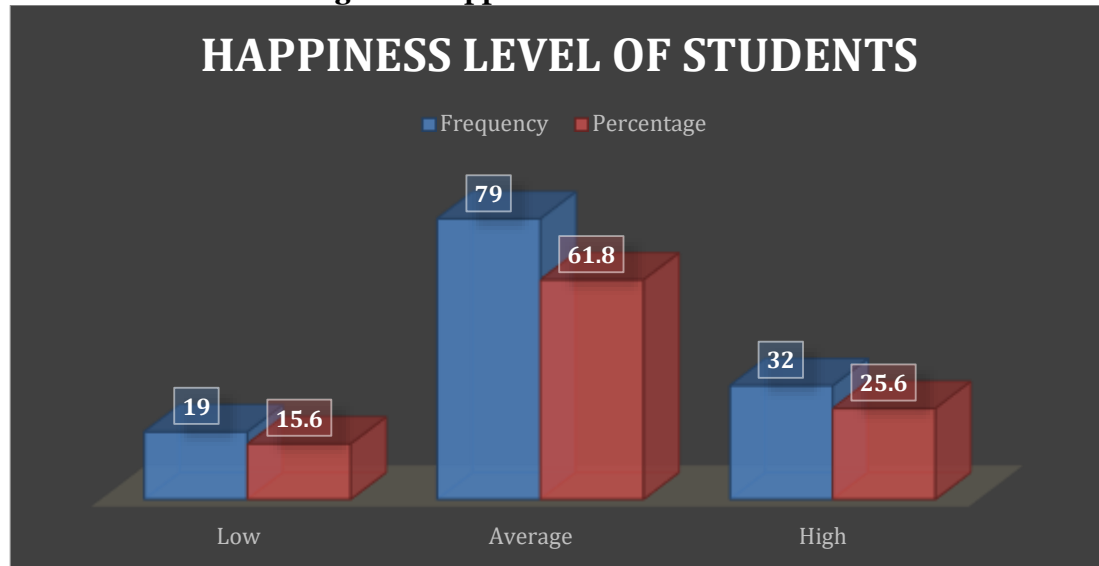
Do Happiness level of students vary by their demographics?

To check whether mean scores of happiness level differ among the students based on their gender, course, NAAC Accreditation, hypothesis was formulated as there exists no significant difference in the mean scores of happiness level among students based on certain demographics. Independent sample t-test was carried out for the mean difference analysis and .05 levels of significance was fixed. The result is presented in Table 2. ****

Table 2: t-test Results of mean scores of Happiness Level among students on Selected Demographic Variables

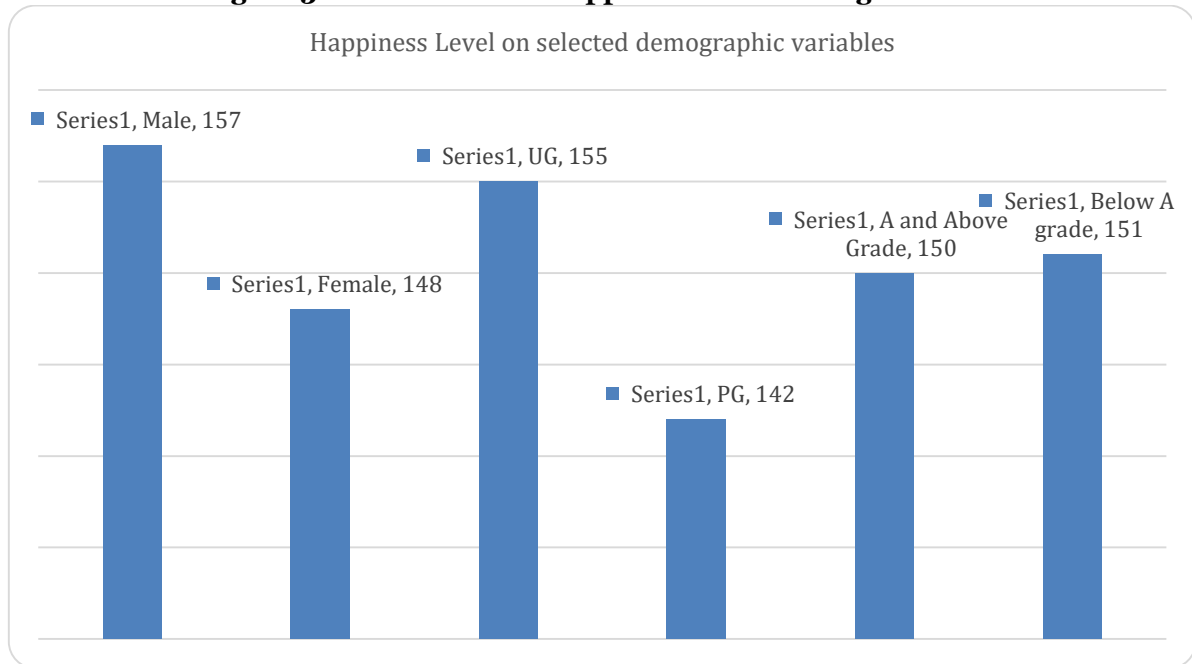| Variables	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Remarks
Gender	Male	43	2.0233	0.46231	128	0.991	0.000	Significant p < 0.05
	Female	87	2.1379	0.68493				
Course	UG	44	1.9773	0.69846	128	1.623	0.438	**Significant** p < 0.05
	PG	86	2.1628	0.57108				
NAAC Accreditation	NAAC A+ Grade and above	106	2.0849	0.63423	128	-0.581	0.743	Not Significant p > 0.05
	Below NAAC A+ Grade	24	2.1667	0.56466				

The t-test results in Table 2 reveal the comparative analysis of mean happiness levels among students across different demographic variables. Among male students (N=43), the mean happiness score was 2.0233 (SD=0.46231), while among female students (N=87), it was 2.1379 (SD=0.68493). The t-test indicated a significant difference (t=0.991, p<0.05) in happiness levels between male and female students, with females showing slightly higher levels of happiness. In terms of academic course, undergraduate (UG) students (N=44) had a mean happiness score of 1.9773 (SD=0.69846), while postgraduate (PG) students (N=86) had a higher mean score of 2.1628 (SD=0.57108). However, the t-test did not reveal a significant difference (t=1.623, p>0.05) between the happiness levels of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Regarding NAAC accreditation, institutions with NAAC A+ Grade and above (N=106) had a mean happiness score of 2.0849 (SD=0.63423), whereas those below NAAC A+ Grade (N=24) scored slightly higher at 2.1667 (SD=0.56466). The t-test did not show a significant difference (t=-0.581, p>0.05) in happiness levels between institutions with different accreditation statuses. These findings suggest that while there are significant variations in happiness levels between male and female students, and no significant difference between undergraduate and postgraduate students, the accreditation status of institutions does not seem to significantly influence student happiness levels. This nuanced understanding can aid in the development of targeted interventions and policies aimed at enhancing student well-being across various demographic and institutional contexts.

The objectives outlined in the study are multi-faceted and aim to comprehensively understand the factors influencing student happiness across different types of institutions, assess the impact of accreditation status on student happiness, and provide qualitative insights into the subjective experiences of students. Firstly, by identifying factors influencing student happiness in both accredited and non-accredited institutions (Objective 2), the study seeks to explore the various determinants that contribute to student well-being, which can inform institutional policies and interventions aimed at fostering a positive academic environment. Secondly, the objective to assess the impact of accreditation status on student happiness (Objective 3) delves into the potential influence of institutional quality and recognition on students' emotional well-being, thereby contributing to the ongoing discourse on the relevance and effectiveness of accreditation systems in higher education. Lastly, by providing qualitative insights into the subjective

experiences of students (Objective 4), the study aims to capture the nuanced perspectives and lived experiences of individuals, offering rich qualitative data that can complement quantitative findings and provide deeper insights into the intricacies of student happiness within the academic context. Together, these objectives underscore a holistic approach to understanding and enhancing student happiness, encompassing both quantitative analysis and qualitative exploration to address the multifaceted nature of well-being in higher education.

Figure 3: Mean scores of Happiness Level among Students

Happiness Level on selected demographic variables

Series1, Male, 157
Series1, UG, 155
Series1, A and Above Grade, 150
Series1, Below A grade, 151
Series1, Female, 148
Series1, PG, 142

CONCLUSION

This study offers useful insights into the satisfaction levels of graduate-level students and how demographic characteristics may affect their well-being in higher education environments. An examination of happiness levels among questioned students shows a significant fraction reporting average happiness level, with lesser percentages suggesting low or high levels. These results highlight the significance of dealing with elements that influence student happiness, which is essential for both personal well-being and creating a nurturing learning atmosphere in academic settings. An analysis of satisfaction levels depending on demographic factors including gender, subject of study, and institutional accreditation status uncovers detailed information. Although there was no significant difference in satisfaction ratings between male and female students, distinct differences were seen based on students' courses of study. Undergraduate students showed notably more happiness than postgraduate students, indicating possible differences in experiences or stress factors in the academic setting. The institution's accreditation status did not seem to have a significant effect on student satisfaction levels, suggesting that variables other than institutional reputation may have a greater influence on student well-being. The findings emphasize the intricate nature of variables that impact student happiness in higher education and stress the need of taking into account different demographic features when addressing student well-being. These findings may be used by educators, legislators, and institutional leaders to create more supportive and inclusive cultures that promote student happiness and general well-being. Creating a good and supportive educational environment is crucial for fostering students' intellectual, emotional, and social growth, which in turn leads to their long-term success and fulfilments outside of academics.

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