Factors Associated with Student Happiness at Wesgreen International School, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

دراسة العوامل المرتبطة بمستوى الشعور بالسعادة لدى طلبة مدرسة ويسجرين الدولية الخاصة في الشارقة، الإمارات العربية المتحدة

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Abstract

Students' happiness has been a growing area of research in the last few years. However, it is still new in this part of the world. Being in the field of Education for the past 18 years, and working in different schools in the Middle East, I have noticed that the students' emotional well-being is not the center of a school's focus. Goal setting and establishing future improvement plans usually takes the priority. Students spend most of their day in school. The main goal for students is to learn new things that will help them to develop their skills to be prepared for the real world. Likewise, the goal for parents and teachers is to aid in the facilitation of these goals. It is evident that every one strives to be happy. School management, teachers, parents and students wish to have happy and positive learning environments. This positive atmosphere makes the learning process smooth and creates an enjoyable climate. The primary goal of this research is to discover whether the male and female grades 4 – 6 students at Wesgreen International School in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates are happy and to also determine which factors have the biggest impact on the students' feeling of happiness. The factors examined in this research are: relationships (human factor), self-confidence and personal safety (personality factor), school activities and facilities, personal and academic achievements and extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, this research is aimed to examine the school management's and teacher's awareness of the importance of students' happiness in the educational process, as well as their understanding of student needs and opinions. The results of the research revealed that the majority of the students are happy, with 96% answering 'yes' to the first statement. The students listed the factors that affects their emotional side and what makes them happier. The most important factors in order of importance were: the relationship with their teachers, peers and family, academic achievements, extra-circular activities, the feeling of safety in

school, personal achievements and awards, and using the school facilities. The results from the staff survey revealed similar views of the most important factors that have an impact on the students' happiness. The results of this research enlighten both teachers and school management on the importance of students' happiness on the overall educational process, and provides them with useful data that will enable them to further plan and improve in the areas that are most important to students while still working on achieving major goals of the school.

ملخص البحث

لقد تزايد اهتمام الباحثين في المجال التربوي بموضوع شعور الطلبة بالسعادة والعوامل المؤثرة فيه في السنوات الأخيرة، إلا أن هذا الموضوع لا يزال حديث عهد في منطقتنا. لقد لاحظت خلال عملي في المجال التربوي في عدد من المدارس في منطقة الشرق الأوسط ولمدة تتجاوز الثمانية عشر عاماً أن موضوع الحالة النفسية والشعور بالرضا لدى الطلبة ليس على قائمة الأولويات الرئيسة في المدارس بشكل عام. حيث إن خطط التطوير وتحسين الأداء هي ما تشكل الهاجس الأكبر للمدارس حيث يُمضي الطلبة معظم وقتهم في المدرسة وهدفهم الرئيس هو اكتساب المعرفة والعلوم التي سوف تعدّهم وتؤهلهم لمواجهة سوق العمل الحقيقي في المستقبل. وعليه فإن الهدف الرئيس للمعلمين وأولياء الأمور هو مساعدة أبنائهم الطلبة في الوصول إلى هذا الهدف. إذا ما اتفقنا على أنه من الطبيعي والواقعي أن يسعى الإنسان إلى أن يكون سعيدًا في الحياة؛ فإن العاملين في المدارس من إداريين ومعلمين إضافة إلى أولياء الأمور يتمنون أن يكون الجو التعليمي في المدارس إيجابياً وسعيداً. إن الجو الإيجابيّ في المدارس يجعل العملية التعليمية سلسة ويخلق مناخاً تعليمياً إيجابيًا. إن الهدف الرئيس لهذا البحث هو معرفة مستوى السعادة لدى طلبة الصفوف من الرابع و حتى السادس في مدرسة ويس جرين الدولية الخاصة في الشارقة بدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. إضافة الى معرفة العوامل ذات الأثر الأكبر في شعور الطلبة بالسعادة. سوف يتم في هذا البحث دراسة كلٍ من العناصر التالية: العلاقات بين الطلبة وزملائهم، والطلبة ومعلميهم (العنصر الإنساني)، الثقة بالنفس والشعور بالأمان (العنصر الشخصي)،مدى توفر المرافق المناسبة وإمكانية استخدامها من قبل الطلبة، الأنشطة اللامنهجية، إضافة الى الإنجاز الأكاديمي والشخصي للطالب. كما يهدف البحث لدراسة مدى إدراك إدارة المدرسة ومعلميها لأهمية الحالة النفسية للطبة وشعورهم بالسعادة في تحقيق أهداف العملية التعليمية إضافة الى مدى فهمهم لحاجات وآراء الطلبة في هذا الخصوص. بينت نتائج الدراسة أن الغالبية العظمى من طلبة المدرسة يشعرون بالسعادة حيث أجاب ما نسبته 96% بنعم على السؤال الأول في البحث والذي تضمن سؤال الطلبة ما إذا كانوا يشعرون بالسعادة. وقد حقق عنصر العلاقات بين الطلبة وزملائهم ومعلميهم وأفراد أسرهم العامل الأكبر من حيث التأثير الإيجابي تلاه عنصر تحقيق الإنجاز الأكاديمي ثم عنصر توفير الأنشطة اللامنهجية متبوعا بالشعور بالأمان في المدرسة، بينما حل عنصرا الإنجاز الشخصي واستخدام مرافق المدرسة في المرتبتين الأخيرتين على التوالي. وقد جاءت نتائج استبيان المعلمين والإداريين في المدرسة متقاربة من حيث الاختيارات ذات الأهمية والتي لها الأثرالأكبر على سعادة الطلبة. لقد ساعدت

نتائج الدراسة معلمي وإداريي المدرسة على فهم أهمية شعور الطلبة بالسعادة على منتجات العملية التعليمية. كما أنها وفرت معطيات مهمة يمكن استخدامها للتركيز على تطوير العناصر التي لها أهمية وأثر أكبر على سعادة الطلبة أثناء وضع خطط التطوير في سبيل تحقيق الأهداف العامة للمدرسة.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my father's soul; a man who sacrificed everything he could in order to make our family happy. My father, the man who taught me respect, kindness, and how to provide care and support to others. My father, the man that used to draw a smile on my face.

To my mother, my heaven the ultimate giver and the greatest heart. The mother that raised a loving family and still covers us with her love.

To my soulmate, my wife, and the mother of my two beautiful children, Sofia and Omar. The person who I dream with, laugh with, and enjoy life with.

To all my friends and loved ones.

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I praise God for giving me the ability and determination to accomplish this work.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Research

Students' happiness has been an important topic of study recently due to its relation to achievement, health, relationships and overall performance. Talebzadeha and Samkanb (2011) confirm the importance of the improving students' happiness in the educational system. Happy students are more motivated and tend to participate more in school activities. Happiness improves creativity and aids in developing positive social relationship among students. Per Veenhoven (1993) said happiness creates social and personal relationships, expands knowledge and encourages innovation. From my 18 years of experience working in schools in the Middle Eastern region, student happiness is not a typical objective in the educational field. The school system's focus is on academic achievements, health and safety, improving facilities, offering extracurricular activities, and increasing overall ratings. The assumption remains that students' happiness is a natural progress of the above-mentioned focus points. Schiller, Lauren and Hinton, Christina (2015) conducted a study about student happiness and academic achievement. The study took place at the St Andrew's Episcopal School, where the researchers collected data from 435 students who make up 94% of the school including: elementary, middle and upper school. A specific survey was designed to measure students' happiness levels and the main reason of their happiness. Researchers also collected students Grade Point Average (GPA) data to compare it to the results of the survey in order to measure the relationship between student happiness and achievements. Results of the study proved that happier students scored better grades and achieved higher GPAs in all levels. Many students said that they work harder when they feel happy and when they have positive thoughts. The study also showed that social

relationships are essential to student happiness. Students who had good relationships with their teachers and classmates were more likely to be happy.

Another study in a Midwestern American school district with a sample group of 709 students from Grade nine and with 465 students from Grade 6 and teachers of Grades one to three, studied the correlation between students' happiness and students' performance. The results of the study proved that happy students treated their peers and teachers with more respect, resulting in more efforts towards learning and working in groups (Parish, T & Parish, J, 2005 p. 24).

The relationships at home has a great impact on the level of happiness. A study on 9107 secondary school students in New Zealand showed that students who had positive relationships with their family and friends were happier than the ones who witnessed yelling and fighting at home. This study showed the importance of the relationship factor on children's wellbeing and happiness (Lambert, M et al, 2014 pp. 101-109).

Leaders in the education field are constantly searching for ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This is done by continuously collecting and analysing data, and acquiring knowledge of current theories and trends in teaching and learning. The main objectives of the Ministry of Education (MOE) in the United Arab Emirates, show that students' happiness is not evident. Their focus is on: providing students with exceptional learning quality, best performance during teaching, creating a safe and challenging environment, and encouraging innovation. Therefore, schools' objectives are aligned with the vision of the MOE with the focus on the curriculum that comprises the highest level of information essential to the students in their future. Likewise, schools work hard to provide the best resources in regards to the usage of technology in the classrooms along with state

of the art facilities. School leaders work continuously on following the latest trends and programs to build their students' personality and character but there are no clear programs that focus on improving students' happiness (Talebzadeh and Samkan, 2011). All of this is done in order to produce a productive, knowledgeable, creative and positive generation. Schools are rated against academic achievements. On October, 2015, Fair Reporters published the article "The Best Education Systems in the World in 2015". Factors such as the literacy rate, extracurricular activities, sports, problem solving style rather than traditional teaching style determined which education system was better were discussed. Also, in 2015 a study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ranked educational systems by achievement results in Math and Science. This indicates that high achievement results in these two subjects gave high rankings to the educational systems exceeding in these subjects. Ranking systems like the OECD tend to influence schools into focusing on the criteria that will improve their position. Therefore, assessments are an integral part in planning for any school. All of the aspects aforementioned are important and there is no denial of the great importance in providing students with a strong teaching and learning system recognisable internationally. However, the main goal of this research is to identify the main factors that are associated with students' happiness. Because of this research we will be able to identify the percentage of the students' happiness or lack thereof. This will give us indicators on how to improve students' achievements in all areas including: academic, social awareness, emotional and personal development. Children are the future leaders, educators and entrepreneurs. They are the similitude to a growing garden. Proper care needs to be taken to plant seeds, nurture and protect them so that they can grow and give back and achieve their greatest potential. The way children are treated in their learning years will have a great impact on the way they will

be as adults. "Understanding how children feel about their lives is a crucial part of the overall picture of the quality of life for children in this country. Children's well-being is crucial, not just for their own lives, but for society as a whole." (The Good Childhood Report, 2016). Creating a happy community is an important goal in United Arab Emirates, in a 2017 National Newspaper article, H.H. Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum said, "We, in the UAE, believe that people's happiness is a renewable and sustainable asset and an indicator for a positive and coherent society," Therefore, to contribute towards achieving this goal we must begin from the school system as it a foundation in a child's development. On March 8, 2016, H.H. Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum launched the Ministry of Happiness. Sheikh Mohammad said "Today we adopted the National Programme for Happiness and Positivity. Our ultimate goal as a government is for happiness as a way of life" (The National Newspaper, 2017). This idea is a unique and innovative approach unlike any other programme launched by the UAE government. This revolutionary vision is built on a deep understanding of psychology and sociology and it aims to fulfill the individual's needs. H. H. Sheikh Mohammad with his phenomenal vision knew that to create a more productive, civilized, innovative society, we need to understand and value individual's emotional happiness. Launching a Ministry of Happiness indicates that the United Arab Emirates is taking a giant leap forward in this area. It is empowering us with the opportunity to value happiness and to plan accordingly in order to provide the tools and programs to enrich our community. As educators, we need to adopt this vision, believe in it and give everything we can in order to create a happy learning environment for our children.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Educational Institutions put a lot of effort in planning and providing resources towards improving student results. However, in many cases, emotional happiness is an aspect that is highly neglected. Studies have shown that happy students perform better and therefore achieve better results. Blair (2002) and Raver (2002) confirm that many studies in this field have proven that students' emotions are an important influence in their achievement in primary school. Duchesne et al (2008) stated that there was a negative relationship between anxiety and assessment taking, which affected the students' completion of high school. Gilman and Huebner (2006) agreed with the strong correlation between students' wellbeing and higher assessment marks. I have been working in the field of education for more than 18 years as a teacher and in management. Throughout these years I have not been in an organization that had students' happiness as one of its main goal, where happiness was one of the fundamental steps in reaching an overall mission and vision. While it is listed as an objective, its priority is placed as third, fourth, or more following; academic achievement, increasing enrollment, and health and safety. Many of the improvement plans that are implemented in schools are to achieve better results for students, which in turn, reflects positively on the school image in the educational market, thus attracting more students, and improving school ranking among competitors. However, the purpose of all the above is not for the sake of making students happy as a primary objective. On the contrary, schools can provide nice facilities, offer a variety of activities, with an existing curriculum and have excellent and enthusiastic teachers, which eventually will contribute towards students' overall happiness. In order to be able to touch their lives and leave a positive mark on their personality and impact their future, we need to investigate what is more important to the students. What are the things that actually bring happiness to the students? Often times,

school representatives lack awareness on important issues that matter to students. This leads to them questioning their methods and wondering why students are not achieving better results and schools not reaching their goals. This research should enable schools to focus on the issues that matter in this area. I believe that students' happiness needs to be the biggest priority. Plans must be designed specifically to achieve this goal. Many educators identify happiness solely by creating fun and enjoyable learning environments that make students behave better and go home happy. However, the vision of students' happiness is greater than that.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to identify the factors that make Wesgreen International School students happy, and what factors are more important and have a bigger impact on overall happiness. Another objective is to find out if school management and teaching staff are aware of what makes students happy. The results of this study will lead to recommendations on how to increase student happiness in the school, which will reflect positively on the overall school effectiveness and academic achievements. I strongly believe that making students happy should be a main priority in all schools. For that reason, I wanted to study the relationship between students' feelings, achievements, and the impact of happiness on their overall performance, but after re-evaluation, this should be done at a later stage. The first step should be finding out what actually makes students happy in the Gulf Region. We are aware of how powerful and important it is to study students' feelings if we want to leave an impact on their lives and future. If we don't know what makes children happy, how can we plan and improve? Knowing students' opinions are crucial in the advancement plans in the field of education.

In this study I am aiming to:

- Find out the most important factors of students' happiness in Wesgreen International School in Sharjah, UAE.

- Find out if the school management and teachers have a full understanding of student needs in this area.

- Provide the school management and teachers with reliable data of their students' feelings, which will enable the school to include new innovative ideas in their plans.

This will positively reflect students' performance in different areas such as: academic achievement, behaviour, attendance, participation in extracurricular activities and their relationship with their peers and teachers.

1.4 Research Questions

- What makes Higher Primary students feel happy in school?

- Identify the most important factors that have biggest impact on students' happiness.

- What is the perception of happiness between school management, teachers and students?

- Is there a clear understanding of needs and wants between the school management teachers and students?

1.5 The structure of this paper

The study will comprise of five chapters. In this chapter, I explained research objectives, research questions, research hypothesis and the structure of the research. The overview and the research background added more clarification on the major goals of the research, benefits of the results and the contribution that the research will add to the educational field.

Chapter 2, is the literature review where I will include similar researches and papers in the same area. It will include definitions and results of these researches and the importance of human wellbeing and its impact on students in their achievements. It will also provide relative findings in the same area. The chapter will end by listing some suggestions of these similar researches.

Chapter 3, will contain the research methodology, questions and the data collection and will explain the survey structure and its relation to the survey items.

Chapter 4, will contain the results of the research and data analysis.

Finally, in chapter 5, will contain the research summary followed by conclusion and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction:

Seligman (1995) states that the origins of people's happiness is developed early in childhood. He affirms that teaching ten-year-old children positive thinking skills would reduce the level of depression that they could face during puberty and thereafter (Seligman, 2002).

The aim of this research was to find out the factors that have the biggest impact on the students' feelings in a private school in Sharjah, UAE. Another aim was to collect information from the teaching and management staff in the school to determine if they were aware of what makes students happy in an educational environment. This chapter of the research will include: an overview of students' happiness, the importance of children's emotional side regarding their overall performance and achievements, and factors that affect students in life and school. In the article titled "Love, Happiness, and America's Schools - The Role of Educational Leadership in the 21st Century", Hoyle & Slater (2001) state that one of the most important goals for leaders in the educational field in America is to focus on love and make it (love) the heart of the educational vision. They add that love has not taken this position yet, they believe the importance of it is rapidly growing; if leaders in the educational system focus more on love it will help them in achieving their goals. Before going further into this topic, we must answer the question, "What is happiness?". Daniel Gilbert a Harvard psychologist defines happiness as "frequent positive feelings accompanied by an overall sense that one's life has meaning."

Seligman (2005) believes that happiness causes a person to have better feelings. Happiness is a main process by which a person takes pleasure from their surrounding environment.

2.2 Children's Happiness

Children's happiness has been a popular point of research due to the importance of emotions and feelings in general and to its relationship to many important factors in life. According to Park (2003) we should start programs that increases happiness among children very early in life, because children gain most of their personal qualities that shape their lifestyle before adolescence. People aim to reduce negativity and become more positive; they would rather experience happiness to be satisfied in their life as per (Duckworth, Steen, and Seligman 2005). As educators, we realize the importance of establishing a positive climate in the schools and we always work towards this goal. Chafouleas & Bary (2004) stated that spreading positive feelings between students has a positive impact on the schools environment as a whole. Talebzadeh & Samkan (2011) see that one of the current challenges in the school system is creating a happy environment. The presence of happiness is missing in many schools and it is the main cause of students' lack of interest in attending school. They add that students skipping school is not an indication that they are not interested in attending classes; in many cases students are present but are not excited to be in school. This is evident in the lack of participation in school activities, interacting with other students and achievement results. Nasoohi (2009) mentions that working towards creating a happy climate in schools will encourage students to attend school, which will reflect positively not only on the academic achievements of student but also on many other values in related to relationships in school and society. The primary goal of parents is to raise a happy child (Diener & Lucas 2004). In the study conducted by Uusitalo-Malmivaara (2011) on students in Finland, the researcher raised many questions such as: are Finnish students happy compared to the others in different parts of the world, what do children think will make them happy, and does the school play a role in providing happiness to the students. The

sample group of grade 6 students in this study will enable me to compare the finding of my research.

2.3 Measuring Children's Happiness

Measuring children's happiness can start very early. "The self-rating measures of happiness and life satisfaction display considerable validity in children over 8 years of age" (Gilman and Huebner2003; Ivens2007). Children can actually feel their happiness and are able to decide if they feel happy or not. By the age of 12, they are more able to describe their feelings and identify the reasons behind feeling happy because they are closer to the age of adolescence per (Denham 1998; Harter 1982). Per classical Piagetian theory of child development (Meadows 1993, pp. 208–210), 12-year-old children are very close to the stage of formal operations. However, their ability to think deeply, make hypotheses and realize the consequences of their decisions are still not well- developed. This compensation makes this age group very interesting to study, says Uusitalo-Malmivaara (2012).

2.4 Factors Affecting Students' Happiness

Happiness is a feeling affected by many factors. These factors could have either a positive or negative influence on children's feelings. Sometimes what we think has a big impact on children's happiness, is quite limited. As per Robert et al. (2005) teachers play a great role in children's positive lifestyle because the greatest impact on children feelings happen in their young age. Zarei (2013) stated that different factors had influence on students feeling happy in schools. Some of these factors were: cultural activities, sports, art activities and religious events. From the results of this study, we notice the big role that activities play on influencing students' happiness in schools. It has been proven that positive and negative

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relationships between children and others, such as parents and friends, have a significant impact on the level of happiness in children (Holder et al 2007). Some studies showed that schools have a strong influence on the students' academic achievement as well as well-being but with less effect on the latter (Bosker, 1990; Brookover et al., 1979; Knuver & Brandsma, 1993; Mortimore et al., 1988). The results of the above studies support the argument in this present research that suggests that schools focus more on the academic side in terms of scoring higher grades locally and internationally subsequently neglecting the emotional side of its students. This was also proven in the study conducted by Opdenakker and Van Damme (2000) on the students during their first year of secondary schools in Belgium. Researchers in this study found that the school was much more effective in terms of student achievement compared to the overall well-being of the students, which was limited. The study showed that cooperative and positive attitudes from teachers have a highly positive influence on student achievement as well as (most likely) their well-being. In the study by Jun & Shin (2015), on a sample group of 343 middle school students, it was proven that there was an indirect relationship between peer acceptance and happiness. At the same time, there was a direct relationship between family influence and happiness. The study also showed a positive relationship between friendship and school activities on student's happiness. Another research by Russ et al (2007) aimed to reduce student drop-outs and repeating grades by improving the school climate. The study found that improving the school values and teachers' attitude towards students, had a positive influence on the students' acceptance to life in general and that reflected on their emotions and overall academic success. The results of the research by Talebzadeh & Samkan (2001) on the factors that influence happiness among female students showed that voluntary activities reduce stress among students which is also supported by the results found by Schumaker

(2009) in his study "What is Happiness". Talebzadeh & Samkan (2001) also found that socialization increased happiness, because the more people are involved in social activities, the happier they are. The study also confirmed that academic achievement played a role in making individuals feel happy; it showed a direct relationship between high academic achievement and happiness. Another factor that had an effect of happiness was the safe environment of the school; the more students felt safe, the happier they were. Finally, the study showed that an overall positive and calm school climate contributed to happier students. Siming et al (2015) conducted a study to examine the factors affecting the students' satisfaction in the higher education. The study aimed to study the relationship between students' satisfaction and the teacher-student relationship. In addition, it looked at the support facilities provided to students by the campus, the experience provided to students by the institute and teacher readiness. The data collected from 200 students showed that the four factors had an effect on students' satisfaction. Therefore, it is important to focus on improving the above factors in order to increase students' satisfaction which will eventually improve students' attainment in a higher education institution. Jaques et al (2015) aimed to find out the behavioural factors that have an impact on students' happiness and to create a strategy that can detect students when they become unhappy in order to guide and help them. The study examined the students' happiness in undergrad students by applying machine learning on students. The goal of the study was to predict which individuals are at risk of being depressed and to help guide them out of depression. For one month, the students had to give continuous feedback about the way they feel and the level of their stress, health and happiness. A survey was also used to find out how certain behaviours, such as the number and duration of academic exams, exercise, participating in extra-curricular activities, time spent studying, sleeping, disruption while asleep, drinking caffeine, and alcohol could affect

happiness. The results showed that exercising and participating in social events had a largely positive impact on happiness. Checking the phone screen in the morning showed a positive relation to happiness as well. This study proves the importance of studying students' happiness to enable us to achieve a better education and to help students avoid emotional problems. Another study by Haraldsdóttir (2015), which took place in Iceland, examined 2070 students from secondary school and aimed to examine the factors of happiness. The results showed that the majority of students in secondary schools in Iceland are happy. The study proves that factors such as the financial status of parents, physical health, and supportive relationships with parents and friends had a largely positive impact on the students' feeling of happiness. Mehrdadi et al (2016) examined the factors influencing happiness for 500 students between the ages of 15 – 29, from both genders. The results showed that place of living had an impact on happiness, level of involvement in physical activities and the type of work also affected students/adults happiness. The research did not find a correlation between happiness, in relation to gender, marital status and the education level.

2.5 The Relationship Between Students' Happiness and Personal and Academic Achievement

Happy children can interact in a healthy way with friends and teachers; they are more likely to learn better, achieve goals, participate more and score higher grades. As per the Pekrun (2006) theory titled "control-value", he suggests that positive feelings improve academic achievement through the following: improving attention on tasks, improving motivations and by enriching the use of different learning strategies. Zarei (2013) says that life is more enjoyable when people feel happy and people are prone to engage in social activities when they feel happy. These findings support our research in finding out the factors affecting

students' happiness, which in turn will enable us to help school administrations and teachers to understand their students. This will reflect positively on the overall performance of the students. Hills & Argyle (2001) stated that people are more capable of making better decisions when they feel happy, and environment plays a great role in achieving this. According to Pekrun et al (2004) there is a link between positive emotions such as joy, hope and pride and students' academic interest, effort and overall achievement. Also, studies indicate that students who are experiencing anger or anxiety are less motivated and show lack of interest in participating in classroom activities (Linnenbrink, 2007). Chen and Luo Lu (2009) affirms that there is a strong positive relationship between academic achievement and general happiness. The study also confirmed that the low academic achievement had a negative effect on the student's happiness. The findings of the previous study align with what Kirkcaldy, Fumham, and Siefen (2004) found in their research aimed to study the relationship between academic performance (PISA) and health performance indicators. The data of 30 nations from World Health report was analysed and the results confirmed the presence of a positive correlation between academic achievement and happiness. Russ et al (2007) investigated the relationship between students' well-being (happiness), coping, academic success and school climate. The study was conducted in Estonia and included a sample group of students from grades 7, 9 and 12. The sample group also included 624 teachers, 120 principals and 2048 parents. The results of the study revealed a significant correlation between the students' successful function in school academic and behaviour, and their psychological well-being (happiness) and coping in school. However, Zhou et al (2010) argued that the effects of emotional factors on students' achievements could be indirect.

2.6 Summary:

The increasing importance of students' happiness has been notable recently; the number of papers found to support this present research showed that the emotional state of students represented by happiness in this case was affected either positively or negatively by different factors. Different studies focussed on different factors - while some focused on the relationships with family members, peers and students-teachers, academic achievements and extra-curricular activities, others examined the family financial status, gender, children's physical health, and being exposed to negative behavioral activities such as bullying and anxiety. Despite the angles that lead to students' happiness, each of the researchers agreed on the importance student happiness has on the educational process. They have agreed that happy students perform better, achieve higher grades and are more capable of meeting the tasks assigned for them. In this research I aimed to cover a wider range of choices by selecting different factors that I believe have an impact on children's happiness. Some are personal, such as relationships with parents, teachers and peers, academic achievement, personal achievement and some are related to school planning, such as offering a variety of activities, providing an opportunity to use the school facilities and providing a healthy and safe environment for its students. The factors selected were examined before in similar studies on either a different age group or in a different culture. Examining the awareness of the school staff of the importance of the students' happiness will enrich the research and provide a new section to the research that was not found in many similar studies that strictly focussed on studying the topic from the students' perspective.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this part of the dissertation, I will explain the research approach, the methods used, the research sample and the location in which the research took place, and the time of the dissertation. This part will also include an explanation of the quantitative approach, the questionnaire used in the research and the data collection and analyses. A summary of all parts will end this section.

3.2 Research Design

This research utilized a quantitative method to collect data needed from the targeted community of the research, due to the type of information this paper aimed to collect and the targeted community. It was satisfactory and suitable to use this method since it enabled us to collect numerical data that could be transformed into usable statistics. Using the quantitative method in a form of a questionnaire is suitable to study behaviour, opinion, and attitude and to determine the effect of one variable on another. It allows the researchers to collect data from larger group as this research is aiming. Barnham (2015) says that the goal in any quantitative research is to find out what the sample of the study are doing or what they think, then a data form is created to collect the needed information. Creswell (2012) explains the quantitative research characteristics, which were found to be close to these research objectives. in his book. He mentions that the quantitative method is used to explain a relationship between variables. This is the key objective of this research as we want to explain the relationship between different variables as it pertains to the feeling of happiness in students'. As per Creswell (2012), the quantitative method is also used to collect data from large number of groups, to answer specific questions, comparing groups. All of the

above supports the suitability of using this method to collect the data from the targeted group of participants.

Two types of questionnaires were used in this research. The first is the students' questionnaire, which aimed to collect information of the factors associated with the students' happiness. The second targeted the teachers and aimed to collect answers about the same topic.

3.3 Population of the Study

The research took place in the city of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates from April 9, 2017 to April 13, 2017. The population of the research consisted of 517 students, boys and girls from grades 4, 5 and 6 from Wesgreen International School (WIS), 490 students approximately 95% of the population completed the survey.

The students sample is demonstrated in table (1):
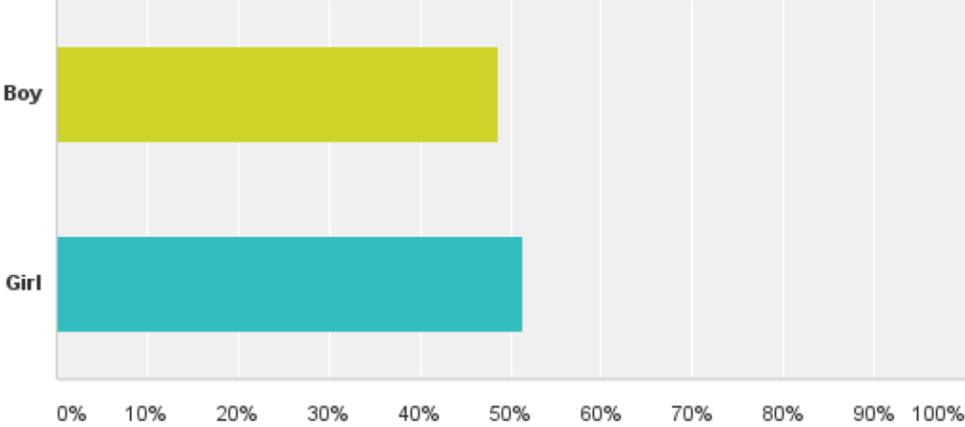
Answer Choices	Responses	
Boy	48.55%	251
Girl	51.45%	266
Total		517

Table (1) Student Participants Details

Table (2) shows the numbers of students in each grade in the research.

Answer Choices	Responses	
4	23.79%	123
5	36.56%	189
6	39.65%	205
Total		517

Table (2) Student Demography

The rationale behind choosing this school is because of the positive relationship between the researcher and the school; the researcher worked in the school previously, over a course of seven years, and was confident that it was the best candidate for such a study due to the above reasons. Another reason for choosing WIS to conduct this research is the fact that the school is familiar with such studies, as other research has been conducted on campus previously. This encouraging environment within the school management towards researchers, and the familiarity and the understanding of the process, will make the research process easy and smooth. 109 Staff members (teachers and administrators) participated in the research, of which 99 have responded fully. Staff members were eager to learn about the findings of the research to determine if they knew how their students feel and think.

Table (3) shows the details of the staff members involved in the research:
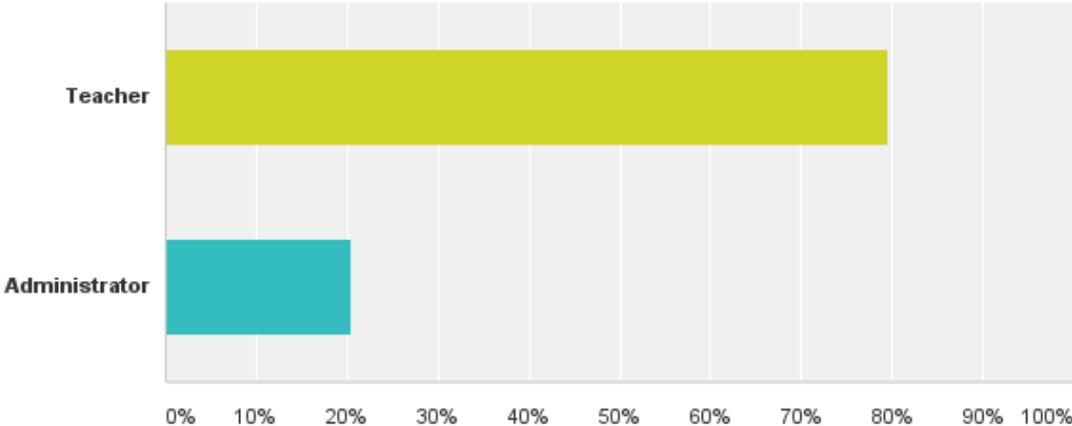
Answer Choices	Responses	
Teacher	79.63%	86
Administrator	20.37%	22
Total		108

Table (3) Staff Participants Details

Table (4) shows further information about the staff members who responded to the survey.

It shows years of experience as well the participants gender.

Answer Choices	Responses	
0 − 1	6.42%	7
2 − 5	31.19%	34
6 − 10	31.19%	34
11 − 20	20.18%	22
Over 20	11.01%	12
Total		109

Answer Choices	Responses	
Male	36.11%	39
Female	63.89%	69
Total		108

Table (4) Years of Experience and Gender of Staff Members

3.4 Participants

The participants selected to respond to the first questionnaire were students, boys and girls from the higher primary section (grades 4, 5 and 6). This age group was selected because they can describe their feelings and explain the factors that make them either happy or unhappy. This age group was selected to streamline the differences in thinking between younger children and older ones. Students in the higher and lower classes have different characteristics and interests. The other group of participants were male and female teachers and administrative staff from various sections in the school.

3.5 Research Instrument

The research instruments used in this research were two questionnaires. The first two questions in the students' questionnaire were selected from a pre-designed question known as the Subjective Happiness Scale by (Lyubomirsky, S. & Lepper, H. S. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. Social Indicators Research, 46, 137-155). The rest of the questions were designed by the researcher to answer the research objectives and to provide specific information pertinent to the study. The research aimed to study the effect of specific elements on the level of happiness in students. The first questionnaire targeted students. It was comprised of 30 questions designed to test

five main elements: human factor (relationships), personal factor (self-confidence and personal achievement), school activities and facilities, personal and academic achievements, and extra circular activities. The questions were designed in a closed-end style, made simple and straight forward, suitable for students aged 9 – 11 to understand and respond to. The first two questions were aimed to find out how the students felt at the time of the survey. The two answers happy – unhappy were given to choose from to avoid confusion. The rest of the questions were designed on a 5-point scale starting from disagree strongly to agree strongly. The average time for answering the questions was about 15 minutes. The students completed the questionnaire during their Information and Communication Technology (ICT) lessons under the supervision of teachers they were familiar with.

The second questionnaire targeted the teachers and aimed to question if they knew what made the students happy and to examine if there was a correlation between teachers and students in the way in which both research groups look at the factors that affect happiness. The questionnaire was made up of 10 questions on a 5-point scale, and was designed to be finished in five minutes. The electronic link of the questionnaire was sent to staff members through the school email and teachers were given a period of one week to respond.

Both questionnaires were uploaded on Monkey Survey site in which WIS is a current active member.

3.6 Validity and reliability

The first two questions in the students' questionnaire were selected from a pre-designed question known as the subjective Happiness Scale by (Lyubomirsky, S. & Lepper, H. S. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness: Preliminary reliability and construct validation. Social Indicators Research, 46, 137-155).

The questionnaires were also approved by the dissertation supervisor as appropriate to collect the data needed for this type of research.

Validity and reliability of the questionnaire was also tested through a pilot study; a group of 10 staff members and 10 students answered the questionnaires to examine the suitability of some factors, such as the time needed to answer the questionnaire and clearance of the questions. Students and staff members showed convincing satisfactory feedback on the level of understanding in regards to the instructions and the questions. The time spent on answering the questionnaires was suitable - less than 10 minutes for the staff and around 15 minutes for the students. All of the above made the researcher confident to start the research.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

The data collecting process started with the researcher approaching the management of WIS represented by the Headmasters to suggest conducting the study on the students and explaining the goals and benefits behind the research. The Headmaster gave his full support enlisted other members of the school management to aid the researcher in conducting the research. The Deputy Headmaster as well as the Curriculum Coordinator got involved to aid in the completion of the research. A meeting was held with the deputy Headmaster where legal and ethical conditions were discussed and agreed upon. The researcher submitted the following to the Headmaster: an official letter from the British University in Dubai to the school requesting their help and support, and a letter to the school management. A research application form designed by the school had to be filled out and signed by the researcher and his professor and stamped by the British University in Dubai, as required by the school management. Thereafter, the two questionnaires were sent via email to the Deputy Headmaster as well as the school Curriculum Coordinator. The Curriculum Coordinator

then uploaded the questionnaires on the school account using the Monkey Survey site. All the above was achieved during March of 2017. All the letters and application forms are provided in the appendixes.

The students and teachers were then asked to answer the questions during the second week of April 2017. The data was collected from the site and analysed automatically by the site features. Using this method was supported by other researchers such as Walliman (2010) who affirms the importance of using questionnaires to collect data as an easy and flexible tool. Fraenkel et al (2015) also confirms that using the quantitative method is appropriate and a good tool collect data from a large group of people in a short time.

3.8 Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This delimitation of a study usually starts by identifying the problem itself, setting the objectives and designing the questions of the research, followed by deciding on the population. Limitations are the weaknesses in the study, which are out of the researchers control (Simon 2011). It is normal to have limitations in any research; usually the researcher does not have a control over these limitations and must mention them in the research (Price 2013). This research was limited to one school only due to the accessibility reasons and the sensitivity of the topic as the researcher felt that school might feel the risk of finding negative results about their students' feelings which they might see as a bad marketing. However, WIS management extended great support to the researcher. Another limitation to the study was the selected test factors. The researcher selected some factors that could affect students' emotions as the following:

- Human Factor (Relationship).

- Personality factor (self-confidence, personal achievement).

- School activities and Facilities.

- Personal and Academic achievements.

- Extra Curricular Activities.

Although there many other factors in other studies such as, family income, parent's involvement, nationality, ethnic background, and type of school the students attend, the researcher preferred to focus on these five factors as they were more school focused and it allowed data to be in close relation to each other. This enabled the researcher to be more specific on the reasons behind the students' feelings that appeared in the results. Also, it will make it easier and more focused to analyse and provide recommendations the school.

3.9 The Role of the Researcher

The researcher's vast experience in the educational field played a big role in helping him to decide the topic of research. Students' emotions are often neglected and overlooked, over shadowed by other aspects in the educational field. The researcher has been working in schools in different countries since the1998 and felt it is very important to focus on students' happiness as a main goal for schools. The excellent relationship between the researcher and WIS as a former employee helped to receive full support in all the phases of the research. Being a teacher, the researcher knows the importance of students' feelings on the outcomes of the educational process. However, without data, information is just an opinion. Therefore, there was a need for a scientifically measured and designed research to collect the needed information to support the research hypothesis with data.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

To protect the students and the teachers who participated in the research and to respect the rules and regulations of Wesgreen International School, while making sure the research is well conducted, the researcher paid several visits to the school before and during the process of data collection. The first visit was to meet the school's Headmaster, to outline the idea of the research and the objective behind conducting the study. This was followed by a meeting with the Deputy Headmaster and the Curriculum Coordinator, to go through the technicality of conducting the research as well as discussing the rules and regulations of the school in order to protect the privacy of the institution. Forms and letters were filled out and submitted to the school, to ensure the above (included in the appendixes). It was explained to the school's management that the questionnaires did not require any names or nationalities. None of this information have a relation to the research objectives. The teacher's questionnaire was sent to the teacher's emails which enabled them to answer it individually without discussion among each other. The students' questionnaire was conducted in the school premises in the ICT lab under the supervision of their teacher who ensured that the students put answers they felt appropriate, without discussing the question with each other. In the final stages, the researcher shared the findings with the school management before using it and received permission to proceed. This step was done out of respect to WIS management for their encouraging, supportive and welcoming environment they provided throughout the research stages.

All the above steps were taken to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the school in order to avoid any mistakes that could cause harm to the organization itself. Gajjar (2013) talks about the importance of respecting ethics in civilised societies and explains the difference between law and ethics. An action may be legal but unethical, and the opposite.

He lists many of the ethical principles in research such as honesty, objectivity, integrity, openness, confidentiality, responsible publication and many others.

3.11 summary:

This chapter explained the method that was used to collect the data and the research population and participants. After that a thorough explanation of the instrument used was given and the steps taken to test the validity and reliability of the questionnaires. Later on in the chapter, the researcher stated the steps that were taken during the data collection process and the delimitations and limitations of the research. Then, the researcher explained the role played by him to ensure good monitoring of the data collection through explaining the role of the researcher before and during the process of the research. Finally, it was important to address the ethical consideration of the research as part of the process of any scientific research.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present data extracted from the student and staff surveys. It will show the results and comment on the findings.

4.2 The Survey's Data

The students' survey starts with demographic data: gender of the participants and the grade of the students (age). The first two questions determine in which category the student puts him or her self; Happy or Unhappy, when compared to classmates. The following set of questions start to cover the surveys' five key objectives: relationship/human actor (questions 3 – 9), self-confidence/personal achievement (questions 10 – 15), school activities and facilities (questions 16 – 21), personal and academic achievements (questions 22 – 27), and extra circular activities (questions 28 – 32).

The staff survey also starts with demographic data such as: gender, years of experience and type of work in the education field whether teaching or management. This is followed by 9 questions to gather information about their opinion on the research topic and the items that play a significant role in the feeling of happiness in their students. Survey Monkey is an easy and useful tool for collecting and analysing data. It allows researchers to design their own survey completely, and gives a variety of data generating options, which depend on the goals of the research. The tool also creates graphs and tables that allow for an overall visual effect which help in the discussion of the results. It enables one to reach a big crowd in a short period of time and to have sufficient security of its data (Rivera 2017). Harrison also lists similar pros of using survey monkey as a tool. In addition, it is a tool used by the

Australian government on their websites where they seek to find answers, thus I felt confident it was trustworthy and reliable.

4.2.1 Students' Survey Results

The first question of the survey indicates whether the student feels either happy or not. The question provides the researcher with a focal point to start from before moving on to the following questions that measure happiness factors. It is also important to the school, as it provides very important information about the feelings of its students. Table 5 shows the percentage of the students who answered being happy against the ones who stated the opposite.
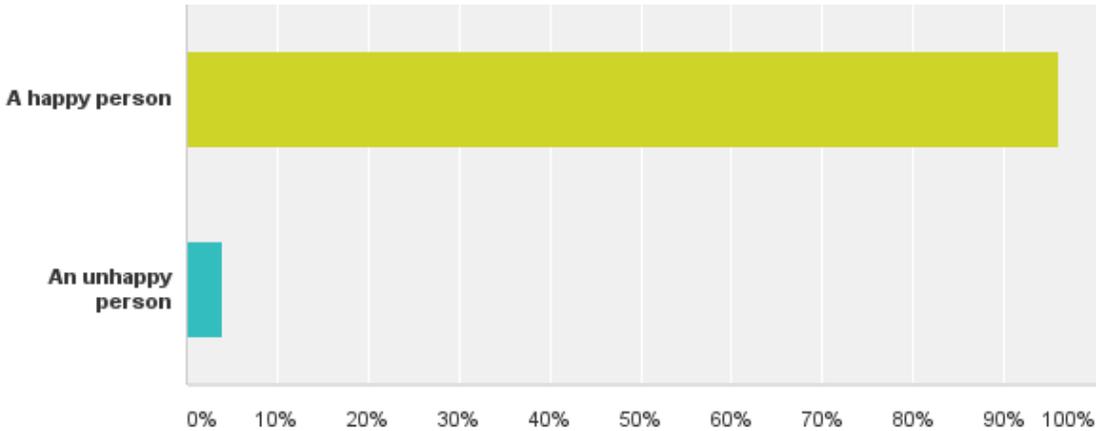
Answer Choices	Responses	
A happy person	96.10%	493
An unhappy person	3.90%	20
Total		513

Table 5 – Question 1 Results

The findings of the answers show that 493 students (96.10%) of the research community stated that they consider themselves happy children. While only 20 students (3.90%) said they feel unhappy. The findings reveal important and valuable information about the research community. The high percentage of 96% boys and girls stating they are happy, shows a positive result for the school. Only 20 students said they feel unhappy – within that group, 7 were female and 13 male.
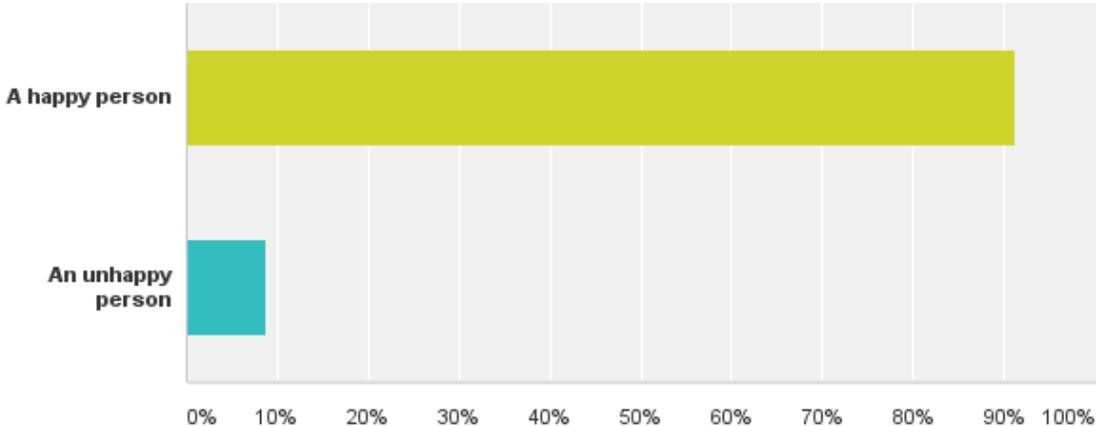
Answer Choices	Responses	
A happy person	91.23%	468
An unhappy person	8.77%	45
Total		513

Table 6 – Question 2 Results

When students were asked to compare their feelings to their friends or classmates, the percentage changed. 468 students (91.23%) said they are happy compared to their friends,

while the percentage of the students who felt unhappy compared to their friends increased to 45 students (8.77%). 18 of them were girls 27 boys.

4.2.2 Relationship, Human Factor:
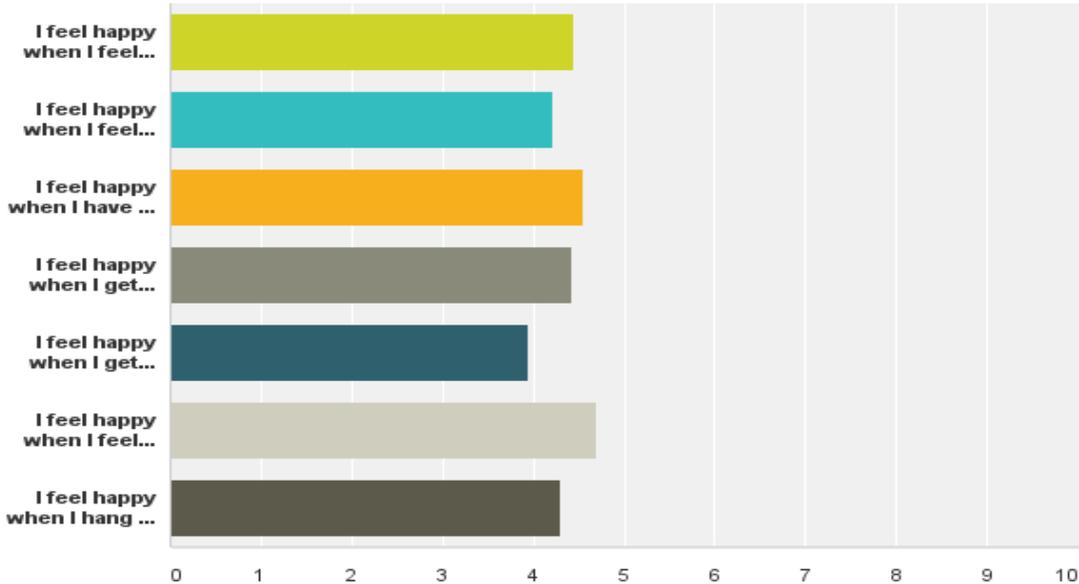
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral (don't disagree or agree)	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
I feel happy when I feel that my teachers care about me.	1.79% 9	1.00% 5	7.17% 36	31.47% 158	58.57% 294	502	4.44
I feel happy when I feel that the School Management cares about me and my needs.	3.01% 15	2.41% 12	11.85% 59	35.94% 179	46.79% 233	498	4.21
I feel happy when I have a lot of friends.	1.21% 6	1.41% 7	4.64% 23	25.20% 125	67.54% 335	496	4.56
I feel happy when I get along well with my class mates.	1.22% 6	3.46% 17	4.89% 24	32.59% 160	57.84% 284	491	4.42
I feel happy when I get along with my close friends even if I don't get along with the rest of my class mates.	5.26% 26	6.68% 33	17.61% 87	29.35% 145	41.09% 203	494	3.94
I feel happy when I feel loved at home by my parents and siblings.	1.21% 6	0.81% 4	3.23% 16	16.13% 80	78.63% 390	496	4.70
I feel happy when I hang out with my friends during break time even if we don't play.	3.88% 19	3.47% 17	8.37% 41	27.35% 134	56.94% 279	490	4.30

Table 7 – Questions 3 – 9 Results

The first factor the survey was to measure the effects of relationships between students and their teachers, peers and family. The first question was designed to measure the impact that teachers can make on their students' feeling of happiness. 90% of the students answer between agreed and strongly agreed that they feel happy when their teachers show care towards them. Less than 3% disagreed with this while 7% didn't feel that teachers level of care towards them make a big impact on their feelings of happiness. In response to the

second question, 82% of the students either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the behaviour of the school management have a big impact on their level of happiness while the number of students who didn't agree with this slightly increased to be 5% comparing to the impact of teachers on effect on students which was 3%. Moving to the effect of friends and peers, 92.7% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that they feel happier when they have a lot of friends. The results show that having a lot friends was the second most important reason to make students happy. The most important reason for happiness to students was feeling loved at home from their parents and siblings by 94.76%. Although it seems that the difference is only 2% between both, when we compare the students who chose to answer strongly agreed for both questions (effect of friends and effect of family) we notice that 67.54% of the students chose strongly agreed to the effect of friends while 78.63% of them chose the same answer when it came to the effect of parents and siblings. Another indicator of the importance of the family relationship on students' feelings is the number of students who chose to disagree with this statement. Less than 3% of the students chose to strongly disagree or disagree with this.

When asked about the classmates who are not necessarily close friends, students showed that they still care about their relationships with their classmates. 90.43% of the students wanted to get along with their class mates and stated that when this happens it makes them happy. To confirm the results of this question, the students were asked if they feel happy when they get along with their close friends despite their relationship with their classmates. Only 70.44% strongly disagreed or agreed with this.

4.2.3 Self-confidence, Personal Achievement; Personal factor:
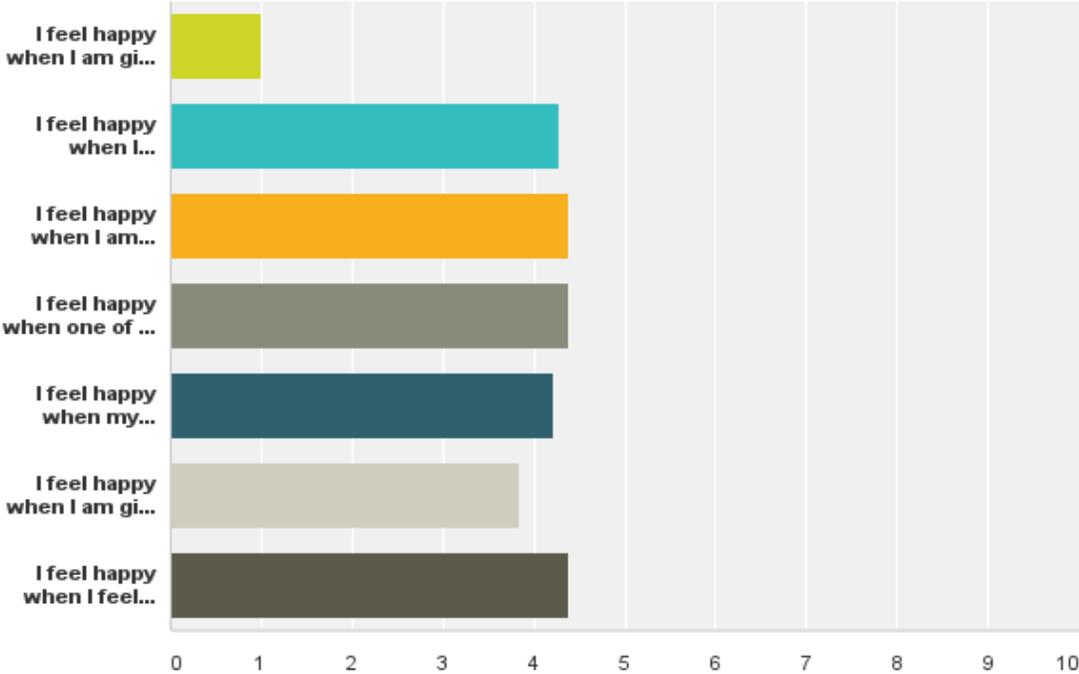
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral (don't disagree or agree)	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
I feel happy when I am given the opportunity to participate in the morning assembly.	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1	1.00
I feel happy when I represent my class in competitions.	2.62% 13	2.62% 13	11.47% 57	30.99% 154	52.31% 260	497	4.28
I feel happy when I am chosen to play for school teams.	1.81% 9	2.82% 14	9.68% 48	26.01% 129	59.68% 296	496	4.39
I feel happy when one of my parents picks me up from school.	2.64% 13	1.42% 7	10.34% 51	25.96% 128	59.63% 294	493	4.39
I feel happy when my teachers complement my work in front of the class.	4.85% 24	4.65% 23	9.29% 46	27.47% 136	53.74% 266	495	4.21
I feel happy when I am given the opportunity to participate in the morning assembly.	5.24% 26	7.66% 38	21.57% 107	29.03% 144	36.49% 181	496	3.84
I feel happy when I feel safe in school.	4.46% 22	1.62% 8	7.30% 36	24.75% 122	61.87% 305	493	4.38

Table 8 – Question 10 - 16 Results

The second factor in this research was the personal factor which includes self-confidence, personal achievement and the feeling of being safe in school. 83.33% of the students said that they feel happy when they are given the opportunity to represent their class in a competition and the percentage increases to 85.69% when students are selected to represent the school in sports events.

When asked about how participation in the morning assembly affects students' happiness, only 65.52% said it makes them happy.

81.21% agreed that receiving positive feedback and compliments from teachers on their work makes them happy, compared to the result from the previous factor where the 90% of the students said they feel happy when the teachers show care about them.

Finally, 86.62% of the students agreed that being safe in the school makes them feel happy. Which shows the importance of this aspect on students' happiness.

4.2.4 School Activities and Facilities:
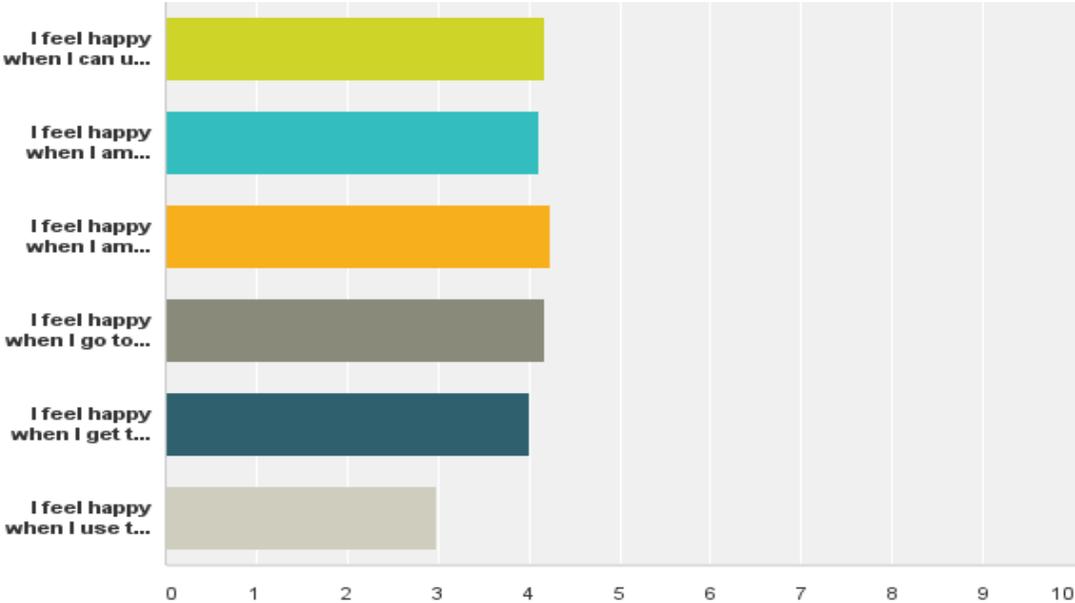
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral (don't disagree or agree)	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
I feel happy when I can use the school sports facilities.	2.43% 12	2.64% 13	15.62% 77	34.08% 168	45.23% 223	493	4.17
I feel happy when I am allowed to go to the school library.	2.04% 10	3.26% 16	17.52% 86	35.44% 174	41.75% 205	491	4.12
I feel happy when I am allowed to use the ICT lab.	2.64% 13	2.23% 11	13.59% 67	32.45% 160	49.09% 242	493	4.23
I feel happy when I go to the Art room.	6.50% 32	4.88% 24	8.94% 44	22.97% 113	56.71% 279	492	4.18
I feel happy when I get to eat from the school canteen.	3.70% 18	5.75% 28	20.12% 98	28.13% 137	42.30% 206	487	4.00
I feel happy when I use the school bus to come to and go from school.	24.39% 119	12.91% 63	23.36% 114	17.62% 86	21.72% 106	488	2.99

Table 9 – Question 17 - 21 Results

In this factor the researcher aims to find the relationship between the using different facilities in the school and the level of students' happiness. The students were asked if using the school facilities such as: the school library, the ICT lab, canteen, the Art room, the Sports facilities and school transportation makes them happier. In response to this, the biggest number of students chose using the ICT lab with 81.54% who agreed on this followed by using the Art room with 79.68. However the highest answers with strongly agree went to using the Art room with 56.71% comparing to 49.09% to the ICT lab. Slightly below using the Art room is using the Sports facilities with a percentage of 79.31% followed by using the school library with 77.19%. The last two facilities showed quite a difference in its effect

on increasing students' happiness. Only 70.43% of students said that using the school canteen makes them happy and noticeably low was when it came to the using school transportation at 39.34%.

The percentage of students feeling happy when using the school canteen drops to around 70%.

The lowest rating was for using the school transportation to go to and from school. Results indicate that 86% of students stated that it would make them happy if their parents dropped and picked them up from school.

4.2.5 Personal and Academic Achievements:
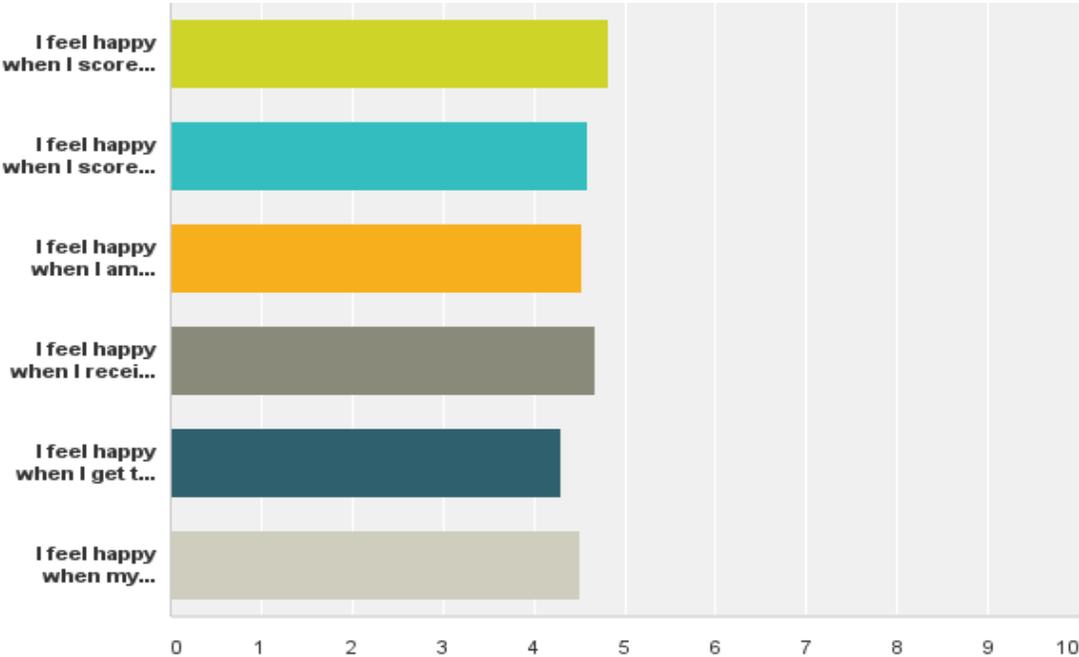
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral (don't disagree or agree)	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
I feel happy when I score high marks in all subjects.	1.42% 7	0.20% 1	0.61% 3	9.31% 46	88.46% 437	494	4.83
I feel happy when I score high marks in the subjects I like.	2.64% 13	1.42% 7	4.26% 21	18.05% 89	73.63% 363	493	4.59
I feel happy when I am rewarded in front of the rest of the students.	2.65% 13	1.83% 9	6.11% 30	19.55% 96	69.86% 343	491	4.52
I feel happy when I receive awards or certificates.	1.43% 7	1.02% 5	3.88% 19	15.10% 74	78.57% 385	490	4.68
I feel happy when I get to do practical experiments.	2.04% 10	2.65% 13	11.43% 56	29.80% 146	54.08% 265	490	4.31
I feel happy when my teachers write positive comments in my diary to my parents.	3.07% 15	2.66% 13	5.94% 29	16.60% 81	71.72% 350	488	4.51

Table 10 – Question 22 - 27 Results

In this factor, the aim was to measure the effect academic and personal achievements has on the level of happiness in students at WIS. The answers show that scoring high marks is highly important to the students, with 97.77% "agreed" answers to the statement that scoring high marks in all subjects make students happy. The percentage goes down to 91.68% in response to the statement that they only want to score high in their favorite subjects.

In relation to being awarded in front of other students, 89.41% stated that this makes them happy; however, the results show that the academic achievement represented by scoring high marks was valued a lot higher than the acknowledgment in front of others. Furthermore, receiving personal awards or certificates was valued high at 93.67%.

The students gave a lower value to being given the opportunity to participate in practical experiments at 83.88% compared to marks and personal awards.

4.2.6 Extra circular activities:
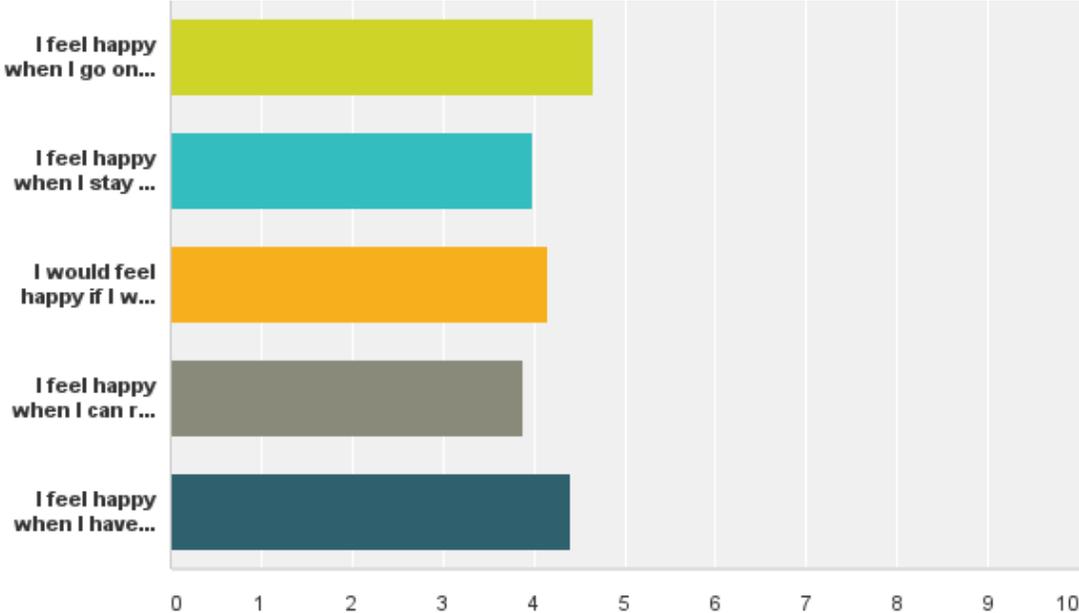
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral (don't disagree or agree)	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
I feel happy when I go on school trips.	1.84% 9	0.61% 3	3.07% 15	18.85% 92	75.61% 369	488	4.66
I feel happy when I stay for after school activities.	4.53% 22	7.00% 34	17.28% 84	27.16% 132	44.03% 214	486	3.99
I would feel happy if I were allowed to stay for overnight camps at School.	7.80% 38	6.57% 32	8.01% 39	18.48% 90	59.14% 288	487	4.15
I feel happy when I can read stories and books that are not related to the curriculum.	5.95% 29	6.78% 33	20.33% 99	27.31% 133	39.63% 193	487	3.88
I feel happy when I have different activities to join.	1.44% 7	2.06% 10	11.11% 54	25.93% 126	59.47% 289	486	4.40

Table 11 – Question 28 - 32 Results

The last factor of the research was extra-curricular activities. In this factor, the researcher aimed to examine the effect of school activities on the feeling of happiness in students. With a clear lead, students chose going on school trips as the number one activity that makes them happy, 75.61% of the students strongly agreed with this statement and a total of 94.46% agreed on this. The second activity that had a big impact on happiness with 85.40% agreed answers, came from the variety of activities offered by the school for students to choose from. Staying in school for overnight camps came after that with 77.62% as well as the highest percentage of strongly disagree at 7.80%. The number of students who feel happy when they got the chance to stay after school for school activities was also low at only

71.19%. Only 66.94% student agreed that reading books outside of the school curriculum makes them happier.

4.3 Analysis of the Factors of Happiness by its Importance to Students
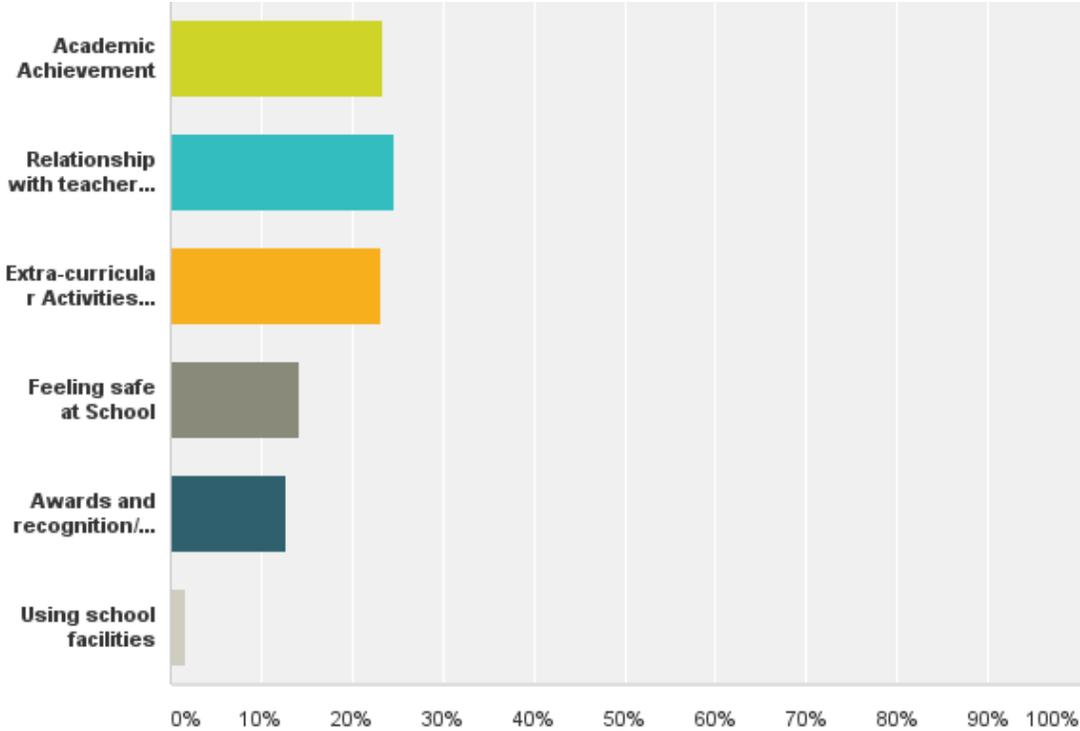
Answer Choices	Responses	
Academic Achievement	23.47%	115
Relationship with teachers and peers (class mates)	24.69%	121
Extra-curricular Activities and school trips	23.27%	114
Feeling safe at School	14.29%	70
Awards and recognition/personal and character building	12.65%	62
Using school facilities	1.63%	8
Total		490

Table 12 – Question 33 Results

The last question asked the students to put the factors that have an influence on their happiness in order of importance. 490 students answered this question, they had to select the most important factor to them. The 6 factors were: academic achievement, relationship with teacher, peers and family, extra-curricular activities, feeling safe in school, receiving awards, and using the school facilities. The answers showed that the 6 factors were divided into three distinct ranges. The first range with very close percentage included the relationship with teacher, peers and family, academic achievement and extra-curricular activities with the percentage of 24.69%, 23.47% and 23.27% accordingly. With a big gap in percentages came, feeling safe in school and receiving awards with 14.29% and 12.65% accordingly and lastly came using the school facilities with only 1.63%.

4.4 Analysis of the Factors of Happiness by its Importance to Staff
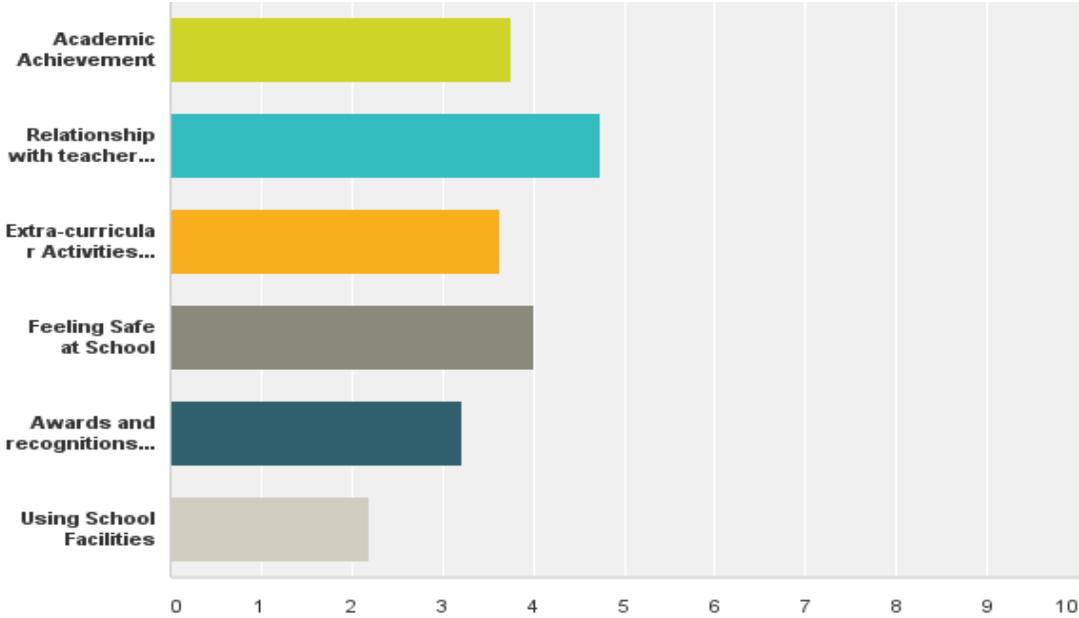
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Score
Academic Achievement	16.00% 12	17.33% 13	22.67% 17	22.67% 17	13.33% 10	8.00% 6	75	3.76
Relationship with teachers and peers	37.50% 27	31.94% 23	9.72% 7	13.89% 10	1.39% 1	5.56% 4	72	4.74
Extra-curricular Activities and School Trips	12.82% 10	16.67% 13	24.36% 19	20.51% 16	17.95% 14	7.69% 6	78	3.63
Feeling Safe at School	29.27% 24	14.63% 12	17.07% 14	10.98% 9	23.17% 19	4.88% 4	82	4.01
Awards and recognitions/personal and character building	7.32% 6	13.41% 11	18.29% 15	24.39% 20	26.83% 22	9.76% 8	82	3.21
Using School Facilities	5.56% 5	5.56% 5	11.11% 10	11.11% 10	14.44% 13	52.22% 47	90	2.20

Table 13 – Staff Question 1 Results

The educational process contains not only the students but also the teachers. Powell and Kusuma-Powell (2011) said "Knowing students means more than merely acquiring social or administrative information—students' names and ages, something about their friendship circles, a bit about their family backgrounds, a few statistics from their academic record. To maximize learning, we need to dig deeper than this superficial acquaintance." Therefore, at this stage of the research, it was important to know what the staff at WIS think and know about their students. The same question was addressed to the staff, and the results show a correlation about what matters to the students and which factors make students happier more than the others. The staff members thought that the relationship between students and their teachers and peers had the biggest effect on students and has a great impact on their feeling of happiness; therefore it was their number one choice in relation to the other factors with a score value of 4.74. However, while students' second choice of factors that affect their

feeling of happiness was academic achievements, the teachers chose the safety factor with a value score of 4.01. The third most important factor for teachers was 'academic achievements' with a score value of 3.76, which was the students' second choice. Following that, the teacher chose 'extra-curricular activities' with a score value of 3.63, which was the students' third choice. The last two factors that the teachers thought have the least effect on the students' feeling of happiness, was the 'personal awards' with a score value of 3.21 and 'using the school facilities' with a score value of 2.20, which the students had the same opinion about.

4.5 Analysis of the staff survey
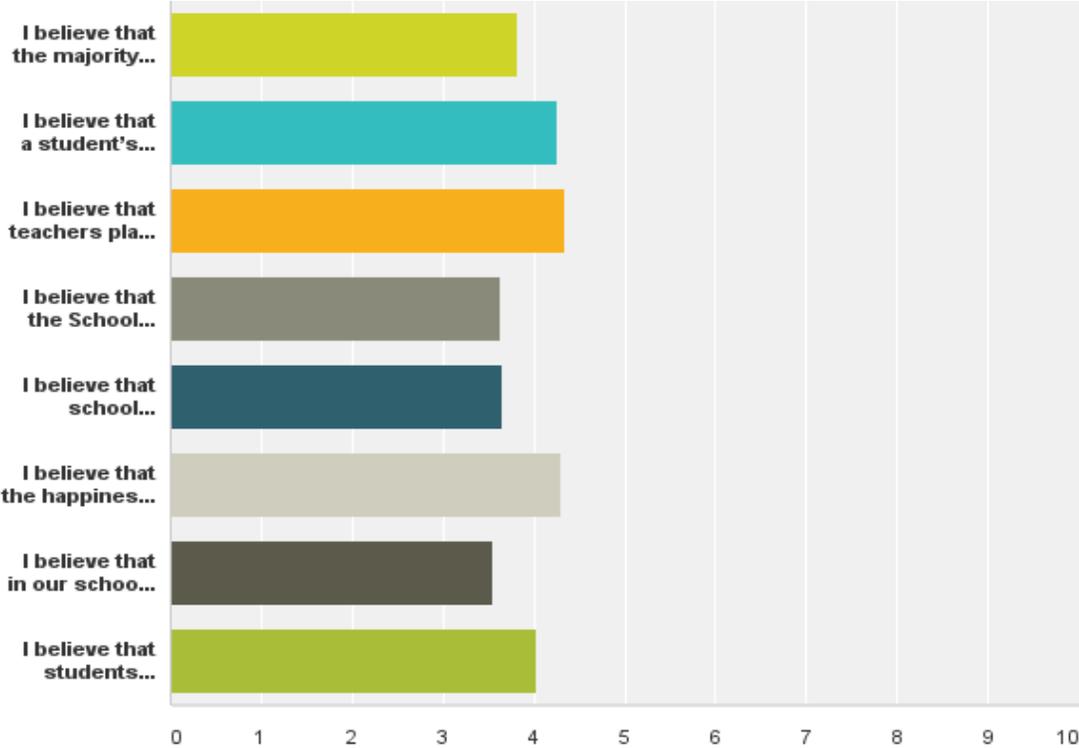
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total	Weighted Average
I believe that the majority of our students feel happy at our school.	5.15% 5	4.12% 4	16.49% 16	51.55% 50	22.68% 22	97	3.82
I believe that a student's happiness is as important as a student's academic achievement, safety and personal development.	8.25% 8	3.09% 3	4.12% 4	24.74% 24	59.79% 58	97	4.25
I believe that teachers play a big role in making students happier.	8.25% 8	0.00% 0	3.09% 3	25.77% 25	62.89% 61	97	4.35
I believe that the School Management plays a bigger role in making students happier.	10.31% 10	6.19% 6	23.71% 23	29.90% 29	29.90% 29	97	3.63
I believe that school structure and facilities play a bigger role in making students happier.	6.19% 6	4.12% 4	25.77% 25	45.36% 44	18.56% 18	97	3.66
I believe that the happiness of students should be a priority in schools.	7.22% 7	2.06% 2	4.12% 4	26.80% 26	59.79% 58	97	4.30
I believe that in our school we do enough to make our students happy.	7.37% 7	8.42% 8	26.32% 25	38.95% 37	18.95% 18	95	3.54
I believe that students happiness is directly connected to their achievement, personal development and behaviour.	7.29% 7	2.08% 2	8.33% 8	44.79% 43	37.50% 36	96	4.03

Table 14 – Questions 2 - 9 Results

The staff survey contained a few questions aimed to gather information about their views on this topic and the findings, lead to a comparison on how the other part of the research group looked into the topic of happiness. In response to the first question which asked the staff if they think that most the students at WIS are happy, 74% of the staff either strongly agreed or agreed on this, while 16% could not decide and 9% either strongly disagreed or disagreed. While the results from the students affirm that 96% of the students in grade 4 – 6 in the school feel happy. The second question asked if they believe that student's happiness is as important as student's academic achievement, safety and personal development. 84.53% of the staff agreed on this while 8% did not.

The next statement was that teachers play a big role on their students' happiness; 88.66% of the teachers agreed with this statement while 8% disagreed. The percentage of staff members who disagreed on this is high and is worth further investigation. When asked if they believe that the school management play a bigger role in making the students happy, only 59.8% of the staff agreed. 23.7% couldn't decide and 10% disagreed. In response to the statement that school facilities play the bigger role in making the students happy, only 63.92% agreed with this while 25.77% could not decide and 10% disagreed.

86.59% agreed that students' happiness should be a priority in school which shows the importance of how students should feel in school per staff members. 7% of the disagreed on this which is again worth further investigation to explore the reasons these staff members feel it is not important. Only 57.9% of the staff said that the school at a whole is doing enough to make its students happy. 15.79% disagreed and 26.32% could not decide.

The last statement aimed to find out if the staff members believe that students' happiness is directly connected to their academic achievements, personal development and behaviour.

82.29% stated that they think it is directly connected while 9.37% didn't think that way and 8.33% could not decide.

4.6 Summary

This research primarily aimed to study the factors associated with students' happiness in Wesgreen International School of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. It also aimed to examine the school's staff knowledge, students' needs, and their opinion about the importance of the topic of students' happiness in the school. 517 students from grades 4 – 6, boys and girls, were asked to fill out the survey; 490 of them responded fully to the survey. A total of 109 staff members started responding to the survey and 99 of them finished it completely. The survey was uploaded on the schools' Survey Monkey account and all participants responded to it electronically. The results of the study helped to identify the most important factors associated with students' happiness and students' opinion. The results also helped to reveal how the school's staff value this topic and the level of understating of their students. In the proceeding chapter, we will discuss the results, link it the previous studies in this field and analyse and explain the results.

4.7 Discussion

This research investigates the factors associated with students' happiness in Wesgreen International School in Sharjah, UAE. The first survey targeted both male and female students from Grades 4 – 6 and aimed to find out if students feel happy and to reveal their opinion on which of the five selected factors (relationship/human factor, self-

confidence/personal achievement school activities and facilities, personal and academic achievements and extra-curricular activities) have a bigger impact of their level of happiness.

The highest percentage of students who said they feel happy (96%), prove that school can be and essentially *is* a happy place. This result supports the argument Lopez (2012) mentions in his article "Schools could be the happiest places on Earth." He states that schools in America are designed to be happy places. He believes that most teachers care about their students and with a little help from parents and the community, schools could be the happiest places on Earth. In 2010, Gallup Student Poll, four positive emotions were measured to evaluate the students from Grades 5 − 12 and their level of happiness on the previous day of the school. The results revealed that 77% were treated with respect, 89% smiled or laughed a lot, 76% learned or did something exciting and 86% had the energy to work.

Moving to the results that tested which factors are more likely to have a bigger positive impact on students' happiness, they revealed that there was a very close gap for three of the suggested factors which the students have stated affect them the most. These three factors are, the 'relationship with their teachers, peers and family', 'academic achievements' and 'extra curricular activities'. 121 students (24.69%) said that the positive relationship with their teachers, friends, classmates and family make them happy having a great effect on their feelings. A close number of students at 115 (23.47%) said that the number one factor that affects their feelings and makes them the happiest, is their academic success and scoring high marks in school. Almost the same number of students, with only one student less at 114 students (23.27%) chose the extra-curricular activities to be the factor they feel makes them the happiest. Many studies showed the importance of these three factors on the feeling

of happiness. For example, the importance of friendship is deeply rooted in us. Friends are close, and support each other and this has a great impact on people (Oxford University Press, 2014). Buysse et al. (2003) states that having friends has a positive impact on children's development. It helps children to perform better academically; it improves their social skills and enables them to interact better with others. A study conducted by Uusitalo-Malmivaara and Lehto (2013) on 737 12-year-old students in Finland, aimed to find a relationship between depression and happiness. The results proved that boys and girls who have two or more close friends are more likely to be happy and are less exposed to depression. Seligman et al. (2005) mentions than not only does friendship have a positive effect on one's happiness, but also that happy children seem to be able to build more positive relationships and lead better social lives. On the academic level, it has been proven that emotions and personality influence children's ability to learn in school (Duckworth et al. 2012). Blazar and Kraft (2015) argue that due to the long time that teachers spend with students, they may have a strong impact on developing their students' persistence, behaviour and mindsets. Other studies also supported the idea that teachers affect their students beyond academic achievements; they proved that teachers have an effect on student mindsets and behaviours. (Chetty et al. 2011; Jackson 2012; Jennings and DiPrete 2010; Koedel 2008; Ruzek et al. 2014). This result gives an indicator that the human factor represented by the relationship with teachers, peers and family alongside the academic success and the joyful school climate represented by many activities for the students played the biggest role in making the students at WIS happy. By acknowledging this, the school can invest more into these areas to make sure it meets the students' needs.

The fourth factor students selected to have an impact on their happiness, was 'feeling safe at school'. The main reason for students to feel unsafe in school is bullying; this feeling has

a negative impact on children and could lead to anxious temperament, lack of confidence, feeling of insecurity, lack of having friends and being emotionally reactive (Pearce & Thompson, 1998). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2014) confirms that bullying is connected to suicidal behaviour. The results of students' opinion about the importance of feeling safe in relation to the feeling of happiness came in fourth place. Only 70 students (14.29%) have said it is their first choice. Children in this young age are usually less violent compared to those older. Bullying and insecurity appear more in higher grades. International Schools in UAE generally provide safe environments for their students. Students in WIS are not exposed to violent behaviour, which would most likely make them feel unsafe. This feeling of being safe makes this factor low in the student survey, another positive indicator to the climate of safety in the school.

Second to last, we find the 'personal recognitions and character' factor. Only 62 students (12.65) have said that receiving personal compliments or getting the opportunity to participate in the assemblies or represent the class in an event makes them happier. Students at this age are still building their self-confidence and speaking in front of hundreds of people could be intimidating at this age. Usually, only a selected group of students are chosen to speak and present in the morning assemblies. However, encouraging everyone in the class to take part in the morning assemblies at some point in the school year will have a positive impact on their self-confidence which will increase their self-satisfaction.

The last factor listed as an option for students to select on the questionnaire is, 'using the schools' facilities', with only 8 students (1.63%) selecting this as their choice. This is an area that perhaps needs further studying by the school. The low number of students who have said that having the opportunity to use the different school facilities increases their

feeling of happiness, could be either a positive or negative indicator. The only way to find out is to ask the students directly. It is a positive sign, if the students have easy access to school facilities and they are using them freely, which will make this factor available all the time and is not considered something the students are missing and trying to obtain. However, if the students don't enjoy using the school facilities for one reason or the other, then it could be a negative sign.

This research also tried to dig a little deeper in each factor to find out more information about what the students valued the most. Results revealed some interesting information, starting with the first factor 'relationship with friends, peers and family.' Having the biggest impact on students' happiness was the influence of family. A positive and loving climate at home with parents and siblings was the most important statement for the students in this factor, with 94.76% of the students agreeing with it. Also, it scored the lowest number of students disagreeing at 1.21%. This result aligns with many other studies. For example, Cauce & Srebnik (1990) and Chu, Saucier & Hafner (2010) confirm that happiness of children is affected by three main factors, family, school and peers. The relationship and support from parents and family members, teachers and the positive relationship with peers and friends create a positive climate that increases happiness. The results of this research showed that 92% of the students stated that having a lot of friends is a main reason behind their happiness and 89% of the students said it makes them happy when they have a good relationship with their teachers and when they feel that their teachers care about them. Jung, Yu, & Shin (2008) mentions that happiness is effected by two main factors, school life and home life. The family at home and student to student and student to teacher relationship shapes the personality of children and has a great impact on their feeling of happiness. The effect of family, peers and teachers on students' happiness has been proven by many other

studies. Won's (2009) study supports the idea that family has an impact on children's achievement as well as self-development. Factors within the family, such as the parents' education level and income also play a role in the impact of children. Lee and Lee (2009) mention that a positive and healthy relationship between parents and adolescents' is related to the level of parental participation in their children's school life when they are younger. Kim and Cho (2011) affirm that the development of personality, values and emotional factors of adolescents are affected by the positive relationship with their family members when they are young. They mention that the absence of a positive relationship at a young age causes different problems such as negative behaviour and mental instability.

Another result of this research shows that the students believe the school's teachers have more impact on them compared to the impact of school management, as only 82.7% said they feel happier when they feel that the management cares about them. This proves that students look for care and support from their teachers more than they do from the school management. This is proof of the importance of the teacher's role in making a positive impact on the students' happiness and life in general. The students also stated that they love to have a good and positive relationship with their classmates, even if they were not close friends. In fact, none of the statements in the relationship factor scored a low percentage. This proves how relationships affect students' emotional side and can make either a positive or a negative impact on them for years to come.

The second important factor to the students was their 'academic achievement'. In this factor, 97.7% of students said that scoring high marks in all subjects make them very happy, more than just in their favorite ones which scored 91.6% this shows the competitive types of students in the school. This result is supported by others in the same area such as Jung, Yu,

& Shin (2008) and Verkuyten & Thijs (2002) who affirmed the relationship between school success and happiness. The very high percentage of students who wish to score high marks shows that the students own their learning process and feel the importance of learning for their future. 93% said that receiving certificates increases their feelings of happiness more than having a written, positive comment in their book by their teachers, which scored 88%.

Going on school trips scored the highest in the 'extra-circular activities factor' with 94.4% indicates that changing the learning environment is useful and brings joy and happiness to the students. Previous studies showed the importance of student activities in independent happiness as well as in their overall feelings of satisfaction towards school life. (Gilman, 2001; Kim & Kim, 2013; King, Huebner, Suldo, & Valois, 2006). Therefore, schools could make a use of such a fact in bringing more happiness into their students' lives. Also, offering a variety of activities left a strong impact on students as it covers the desires of the majority, and ensures every student finds something he or she likes to do. Staying in school for a sleepover also made a positive impact; it provided a unique experience where many aspects of happiness came together such as: self-confidence, responsibility, independence, being with friends and teachers, and getting to enjoy different activities.

Although feeling safe scored fourth on the overall six factors, when asked about this aspect specifically, 86.6% confirmed that feeing safe at school makes them happy. This proves that students realise the importance of being safe at school and by choosing to rank it in the fourth spot between factors, was not due to their ignorance of the importance of this element, rather than what was argued previously, which was being in a safe school climate made it not a priority for the students at this stage.

The highest number of students said they enjoy using the ICT lab with 81% followed by using the P.E facilities with 79%, the Art room with 78% and the library with 76%. The close gap between these different kinds of facilities shows the diversity in the students' interests and demonstrate that availability of these facilities for the students use. The use of the canteen was a little bit less desirable for students with a percentage of 70% agreed on the statement that it makes them happy to use it. It has been proven that the school's infrastructure has a positive impact on students' attendance as well as their wellbeing (Cuyvers et al. 2011). Making the lessons exciting and enjoyable creates a fun learning environment that would positively affect the students' feelings towards using the facilities related to these lessons. The findings show that this is present in the Art and ICT department, followed by the Physical Education Department. These three types of facilities have more teacher-involvement than the other three. This fact supports that teachers play a crucial role in affecting the students' level of happiness. It shows that when teachers care about their students and try to create an enjoyable learning environment, students will be engaged, and thus feel much happier in school.

Some researchers argue that smaller schools are better for students as they could provide a safe, positive and challenging environment, this leads to better satisfaction for families, students, and teachers (Nathan and Febey, 2001). A very low number of students said they feel happy to use the school buses with only 39% of the votes and 37% disagreeing on this. The schools' busses in general is a point of concern due to way it is monitored. Students usually don't like to spend a lot of time touring around to drop other students off at the end of the day when they are very tired and wish to go home quickly. They would rather to be picked up by their parents and go home directly. Another fact that could affect the students'

opinion about using the school buses is the poor behaviour from a few students on the school busses.

When it comes to the personal achievements and personality aspects, 85% said that playing for the school teams makes them happy, this builds students self-confidence as well as their self-esteem by being popular and known. The same percentage said it makes them happy to be picked up by their parents which increases the feeling of being loved by their family and helps strengthen their self-satisfaction. 81% of the students stated that they feel happy when their teachers complemented on their work, this in turn makes them more confident and proud. It also encourages them to put more effort in their work and learn better. This proves that students look forward to events that make them contribute more towards the school. It builds their personality and makes them more confident. Therefore, teachers should be aware of the importance in allowing each student to be part of activities and events in the school in one way or another. Every child has something to show – teachers and administrators should be aware of this factor and create opportunities for their students which allow them to participate in these kinds of events.

Staff members in schools, especially the teachers play a crucial role in children's development, not only academically, but also emotionally and socially. It is very important for teachers to know how children think and feel, and what makes them happy or sad. It is not enough for teachers to know different teaching, and assessment techniques. They should also be knowledgeable in child psychology to make a better, more positive impact on their students' lives. The Alberta Health Services proposed a lesson titled "Understanding Feelings and Moods" to be a part of the children's curriculum proving the importance of knowing how children think and feel in schools. It is crucial for teachers to learn more about

students' emotions as it will enable them to motivate their students in achieving their tasks (Boekaerts1995; Pekrun, 1992; Schutz & Davis, 2000; Skinner, 1995).

This research aimed to find out if the staff members: management and teachers at WIS have similar views as their students on the important factors that could affect the students' happiness. Furthermore, it aimed to collect information about how the staff perceive this topic and the level of awareness of its importance in the students' life.

108 staff members started the survey in which 86 of them are teachers and 22 administrative staff. A total of 99 of them completed it. With a range of years of experience from new recruits to those with a span of over 20 years in the field of education, the research will have rich data that contains opinions from different generations of educators. Female staff members were the biggest group of participants at 63.8% while the male staff were at 36.1%. The first question for the staff was like the last question for the students; it aimed to find out if staff members would have similar results in the research on students' happiness. The results revealed very close results between staff members and students. Staff members thought that the 'relationship factor' was the most important factor that has an impact on their students' happiness. This was a match to what the students said, which proves that teachers are aware of the importance of a positive and healthy relationship that is built on care, support, help and guidance towards the students. It is evident that teachers at WIS gives this factor a lot of importance. This could be one of the major reasons behind the high percentage of students who said they feel happy in school. Staff members selected 'safe environment' to be the second most effective factor; this choice didn't match with the second choice for the students which was 'academic achievement'. However, it could be looked at from a positive angle as educators usually value this factor and understand its

importance in children's life. This is a point that is worth putting further research into. Although at first it seems as if there is disagreement or a difference of understanding of the students' needs to make them happy, but it just confirms that teachers at WIS are caring and give a lot of attention to safeguarding their students. When teachers rank students' safety at the top of the list in such research, it means they are aware of the importance of creating a safe environment, which will lead to fostering a happy, nurturing learning climate in school. The 'academic' factor did not go far down; it was ranked third in the list they realise how important it is for the students. This proximity in ratings highlight that teachers and students are on the same page when it comes to the importance of learning. 'Extra-curricular activities' came fourth in the list followed by a matching opinion with the students by having the awards and recognitions factor second to last and last was using the school facilities.

In response to the statements in the survey, the research finds that staff members did not feel that the students at the school are very happy as the students' survey revealed, only 74% of the staff agreed that many the students are happy in the school. This shows a big gap as 96% of the students stated that they felt happy. Talking sessions between staff and students could be useful to close this gap in opinion. Although there is difference of opinion in this regards, the students' feelings were on the positive side which is encouraging and reflect a healthy school environment. This information is important for the staff to know as it will have a positive impact on them personally and will encourage them to do more to maintain their students' level of happiness.

88.66% of the staff believed that teachers play a bigger role on their students' happiness while only about 60% believed that the school management played the bigger role. This result confirms that staff gives more importance to the close relationship between teachers and students compared the role of management which is more connected to planning and

implementing curriculum. This result proves that the staff and, mainly teachers, believe that their role as educators have an enormous impact on the students' feeling of happiness compared to the role management plays in regards to the students. The teachers realise the responsibility they carry in making their students happy and the tremendous effect they have on them, despite the influence of management. On the other hand, school management, should interact with teachers to explain the efforts made by the management to meet this goal and the effort they are making to provide the students a healthy and joyful learning environment. Some teachers might not be aware of the importance of the role of management in achieving this goal, therefore, they need enlightenment in this regard.

In regards to the importance of students' happiness compared to other elements in the educational process such as: academic achievement, safety and personal development only 84% of staff agreed that happiness is as important as the rest of the above-mentioned elements. 16% of staff either disagree or could not decide this, it is almost the same percentage of staff who stated that the students' happiness should be a priority in schools. This result reveals that the topic of happiness needs to be introduced and further explained to educators in the school due to the modernity of this topic.

The results of the last two statements could be because some of the staff members do not believe that the students' emotional side represented by happiness in this case is directly connected to their achievements. The assumption is clear from the response to the last statement, as only 82% of the staff think that both are directly connected. This could explain why there was not a bigger percentage of the staff members that believed happiness is as important as the other educational elements or that it should be a priority in schools. Again,

more training to staff members could be very useful in changing their understanding of the importance of this topic.

Finally, almost 58% of the staff said the school is doing enough to make students happy and the rest of the staff either did not agree or could not decide.

Chapter Five: Conclusion & Recommendations

5.1 Summary of the research

The main aim of this research was to study the factors of happiness of grade $4-6$ students from mixed genders at Wesgreen International School in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates. The research mainly aimed to learn about the students' opinion in this regard, then to learn about the staff's opinion and which factors are most important to them. The objectives were to have a better understanding of the students' emotional status at school and to understand their needs. To help achieve the research goals and objectives, the researcher used two surveys designed for the students and the staff. The research community was the students and the staff of the school and the sample was the boys and girls from grades $4-6$ and several male and female teachers and administrative staff.

5.2 Results of the research

- The results of the research showed that 96% of the students in grades $4-6$ boys and girls in Wesgreen International School in Sharjah, UAE are happy.
- The top three factors for student that affected their happiness in order were, the relationship with family members, friends and teachers, followed by academic achievement, and finally, participating in extra-curricular activities.
- The factor of least importance for students was using the school facilities, followed by receiving personal awards.
- The students enjoy using the Art room, ICT lab, Library, P.E facilities and the school canteen with a weighted average above 4.00 for all of them.

- Using the school transportation to travel to and from school scored a low weight average at 2.99.

- School trips have the highest impact on students' happiness with an average weight of 4.66 followed by having variety of activities to choose from with an average weight of 4.40.

- There was a gap in the opinion between students and teachers in evaluating the students' level of happiness in the school. 96% said they feel happy, where only 74% of staff thought the students were happy.

- 85% of the staff supported the idea that happiness is as important as academic achievement, students' safety, and personal development.

- 87% of the staff supported the idea that happiness should be a priority in school.

- 89% of the staff members see the correlation between happiness and student achievement.

- 82% Teachers and Administrative staff agreed that the teachers play a significant role in the level of happiness of students.

5.3 Recommendations

1. Improve the transportation service.

2. Open speaking forums between staff and students to know more about the way the students feel.

3. Educate the staff (especially teachers) more on the importance of students' emotional well- being and happiness.

4. Conduct workshops for the teachers on how to positively affect their students' happiness and how to make a positive impact in their lives.

5. Offer different activities that encourage students to use the school facilities especially the least popular ones.

6. Use the information in this research to increase the students' happiness by focusing on the factors that leave biggest impact on students in future school plans.

7. Further study the factors and areas that had a low impact on the students' happiness and introduce an action plan to improve them.

8. Conduct more studies in this area, which aim to expose students' feelings in order to reveal other factors (not questioned in this research), that could impact their happiness.

5.4 Further Research

This research focused on identifying the factors related to students in grades $4 - 6$ happiness and which factors are more likely to affect student happiness. It also aimed to examine the staff member's knowledge and opinion on the same topic. Future studies could focus on how to use the outcomes of this research in improving the students' happiness in school, by providing constructive changes to the areas that have little impact on students' happiness. Another area of research is to involve parents in such studies as it is important to gather information from parents to further understand children.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The Students' Survey

Students Questionnaire

It is very important to be happy in school, there are many things that affects student's happiness. In the following questionnaire I am trying to collect more information about these things in order to help school management to understand the student's needs and to provide conditions that will make them happier. The questions will take around 10 - 15 minutes. Please read each question carefully and make sure you select the best answer for you. Please don't ask your friends about their answers as this should be completely personal.

I am a: Boy ☐   **Girl** ☐

I am in grade: 4 ☐   **5** ☐   **6** ☐

For each of the following statements and/or questions, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.

1. In general, I consider myself:

    1   2   3   4   5

Not a very happy person   A very happy person

2. Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself:

    1   2   3   4   5

Less Happy   More Happy

3. I feel happier when I feel loved and cared about by my teachers.

	1	2	3	4	5

1   2   3   4   5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

4. I am happier when I feel loved and cared about by the school supervisors.

1   2   3   4   5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

5. I feel happier when I have as many friends as possible.

1   2   3   4   5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

6. I feel happier when I get along well with my class mates.

1   2   3   4   5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

7. I feel happier when I get along with my small group of close friends despite the rest of my class mates.

1   2   3   4   5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

8. I feel happier when I feel loved at home from my parents and brothers and sisters.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

9. I feel happier when I hang out with my friends during break time even if I don't play.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

10. I feel happier when I am given the opportunity to participate in the morning assembly.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

11. I feel happier when I represent my class in competitions.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

12. I feel happier when I am chosen to play for school teams.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree Strongly   Agree Strongly

13. I feel happier when one of my parents picks me up from school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree Strongly   Agree Strongly

14. I feel happier when My teachers complements my work out loud.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree Strongly   Agree Strongly

15. I feel happier when I feel safe in school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree Strongly   Agree Strongly

16. I feel happier when I can use the school sports facilities.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

17. I feel happier when I am allowed to go to the school library.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

18. I feel happier when I am allowed to use the ICT lab.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

19. I feel happier when I go to the Art room.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

20. I feel happier when I get to eat from the school canteen.

1   2   3   4   5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

21. I feel happier when I use the school bus to go to and from school.

1   2   3   4   5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

22. I feel happier when I score high marks in all subjects.

1   2   3   4   5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

23. I feel happier when I score high marks in the subjects I like.

1   2   3   4   5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

24. I feel happier when I am rewarded in front of the rest of the students.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

25. I feel happier when I receive awards or certificates.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

26. I feel happier when I get to do practical experiments.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

27. I feel happier when my teachers write positive comments on my diary to my parents.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

28. I feel happier when I go on school trips.

😦	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

29. I feel happier when I stay for after school activities.

😦	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

30. I feel happier when I stay for overnight camps.

😦	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

31. I feel happier when I can read stories and book that are not related to the curriculum.

😦	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

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| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

33. From our student's point view, what is the most important thing that makes them happy (chose one only):

☐ Academic Achievement.

☐ Relationship with teachers and peers.

☐ Extra-curricular Activities and school trips.

☐ Feeling safe.

☐ Awards and recognitions/personal and character building.

☐ Using school facilities.

Questionnaire Key:

The rest of the questions are designed by the researcher to serve the purpose of this specific research. The questions were designed to gather information around 5 main factors that have impact of children feelings. Below are the factors that were covered in the questionnaire.

Human Factor (Relationship): Questions from 3 – 9

Personal factor (self-confidence, personal achievement): Questions from 10 - 15

School activities and facilities: Question from 16 - 21

Personal and Academic achievements: Questions from 22 - 27

Extra circular activities: Question from 28 - 32

Appendix 2: The Staff Survey

Teachers/ Management Questionnaire

It is very important to be happy in school, there are many things that affects student's happiness. In the following questionnaire I am trying to collect more information about these things in order to help school management to understand the student's needs and to provide conditions that will make them happier. These questions will take around 10 - 15 minutes. Please read each question carefully and make sure you select the best answer for you. Please don't discuss the questions with other colleagues to insure better results.

I am a:

Teacher ☐

Management member (directors, deputy directors and supervisors) ☐

Teacher's / Management gender:

Male ☐

Female ☐

Years of experience:

0 – 1 ☐

2 – 5 ☐

6 – 10 ☐

11 – 20 ☐

Over 20 ☐

From your point view, could you put the following statements in the order from the most important to the less (number 1 is the most important)

1. In your opinion, what makes your students happy (in order from 1-6, number 1 being the most important)

☐ Academic Achievement.

☐ Relationship with teachers and peers.

☐ Extra-curricular Activities and school trips.

☐ Feeling safe.

☐ Awards and recognitions/personal and character building.

☐ Using school facilities.

2. I believe that the majority of our students feel happy in our school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

3. I believe that student's happiness is as important as student's academic achievement, safety and personal development.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

4. I believe that teachers play the bigger role in making students happier.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

5. I believe that management play the bigger role in making students happier.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

6. I believe that school structure and facilities play a bigger role in making students happier.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

7. I believe that student's happiness should be a priority in schools.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

8. I believe that in our school we do enough to make our students happy.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

9. I believe that student's happiness is directly connected to their achievement, personal development and behaviour.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

Appendix 3: Application for Consent

March 5, 2017

Subject: Application for Consent

To: Wesgreen International School, Sharjah – UAE

Dear Headmaster,

I hope the letter finds you well. My name is Mohammad Nasif Elayyan and I am a student at the British University in Dubai studying Masters of Education. I am writing this letter to seek your permission to conduct my research at your school. My study's topic is focusing on students' happiness and the factors associated with it. This is an important area to all members of the educational field: students, parents, teachers and school management. It will help educators better understand the students' needs and enable schools to consider these factors in their improvement plans.

The study will contain two surveys: one for students and the other for staff (teachers and admin). The research community will be boys and girls from grades 4 – 6 and as many staff members as possible. The results of the study will be shared with the school prior to publishing, out of ethical and respect to the school's rights.

Your approval will enable me to complete the final requirement of my Masters' Degree and will contribute to the educational community in the city of Sharjah.

Looking forward to hearing from you and will be available at any time to meet and discuss the research steps further.

Best regards,
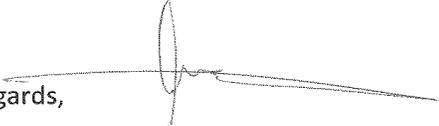
Mohammad Nasif Elayyan

Student of Masters in Education - the British University in Dubai.

Appendix 4: University Support Letter

The British University in Dubai
الجامعة البريطانية في دبي
www.buid.ac.ae
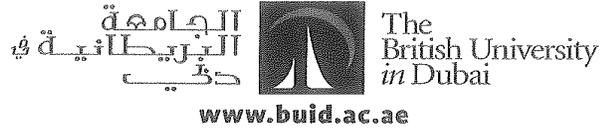
06 March 2017

<u>*To Whom It May Concern*</u>

This is to certify that **Mr Mohammad Nasif Elayyan** with ID number **2015101108** is a registered full-time student on the **Master of Education** programme in **The British University in Dubai** since **September 2015**.

Mr Elayyan is currently working on his dissertation. He is required to gather data through questionnaires. Your permission to conduct his research in your organisation is hereby requested. Further support provided to his in this regard will be highly appreciated.

This letter is issued on Mr Elayyan's request.

Yours sincerely,

Amer Alaya
Head of Student Administration

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Appendix 5: Wesgreen International School Ethical Contract

Statement of Research/Practicum Ethics: Wesgreen International School (WIS)

Student's Name:	Mohammad Nasif Elayyan
Institution:	International School of Creative Science
Title of Assignment:	Factors associated with student's happiness at Wesgreen International School, Sharjah, UAE.

Duration of Research/Practicum	From:	To:

TOEFL Score: *(Min. Requirement is 20 in Listening and 20 in Speaking. Proof to be attached.)*	IELTS Score: *(Min. Requirement is 7 in Listening and 7 in Speaking. Proof to be attached.)*

To be completed by the Student

Briefly outline the aims of your research question/practicum

The objectives of this research is to identify the areas that make students happy, and what areas are more important and have a bigger impact on overall happiness. Another objective is to find out if school management and teaching staff are aware of what makes students happy. The researches aims to:

- Find out the most important factors of students happiness in the school.
- Find out if the school management and teachers have full understanding of students needs in this area.
- provide school management and leaders with scientific and measured information of their student's feelings to help them planning for the future.

Briefly outline your proposed methods of gaining experience at WIS and your proposed methods of sampling (if any)

The data will be collected from students and teachers and management as below:
- The students will respond to a 32 questions survey that is designed to measure their happiness against five factors. The survey is designed to encourage student in the targeted age to respond. The estimated time to answer the questions is 15 minutes at the most.
- The teachers and management will respond to 11 questions survey that is designed to measure their understanding of the students' needs in the targeted area. The survey should not take more than 10 minutes at the most.

		✓
1.	My identity will be revealed to the Management of Wesgreen International School. (Emirates ID Card and School ID Card)	
2.	I will abide by the expected code of conduct at Wesgreen International School. I will adhere to all policies and procedures of the school including but not limited to: the use of mobile and other electronics, communication, dress code, social media, data protection, and confidentiality.	
3.	I will adhere to the staff timings and will be responsible for signing in and out at reception. I will notify the school in advance if I will be absent on any particular day.	
4.	I will invite no guests to visit me at WIS.	
5.	I understand that visiting students are permitted to wear an abaya; however, facial coverage is not permitted within the school.	
6.	Research/practicum will only be carried out during an approved timeframe. I understand that the school reserves the right to contact my supervisor at any time in relation to any aspect of the research/practicum.	
7.	The dignity and interests of the Wesgreen Community will be respected at all times.	
8.	Special efforts will be made to be sensitive to differences relating to age, culture, disability, race, gender and religion when planning, conducting and reporting on the research/practicum.	
9.	At all times during the research/practicum I will behave in an appropriate and professional manner, and take steps to ensure that no one is placed at risk because of me.	
10.	Child safety and safety of others will remain one of my top priorities during my research/practicum at WIS.	
11.	I have considered carefully to what extent, if any, my research/practicum might expose me to any kind of risk to my personal safety. I have also discussed this with my supervisor.	
12.	Undue pressure will not be placed on individuals or the school to participate in research activities.	
13.	I understand that data gathering activities (if any) will be carried out only upon my supervisor's request to the school and subsequently with the approval of the Headmaster.	
14.	I will treat any collected data in the strictest confidence and will only report it in an anonymised form. I understand that the school reserves the right to take legal action against me in case of any breach on my part.	
15.	If required by the school, I will provide the school with a summary of research findings and a debriefing after taking part in the research/practicum.	

Student's Signature:

Date: March 5, 2017

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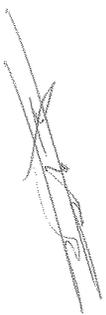
For Supervising Tutor

I have discussed the proposed research outlined on this form with the student and I am satisfied that the work will be carried out with due regard to ethical protocols and school's interests.

I understand the school's expectation that:

- Instructors supervising and observing students visiting the Early Years Campus must be female;
- No male students will be accepted for practical experience at the Early Years Campus;
- Students accepted to complete a research/practicum at WIS would be required to sign this agreement. Any breach of this agreement would result in immediate removal of the visiting student from the school;
- For a practicum, a student will not be permitted to have her practical experience in the same year group where there is a member of her family studying.

Supervisor's Name: DR ABDULAI ABUKARI

Supervisor's Designation: ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Supervisor's Signature:

Date: 05 March 2017

Headmaster's Signature:

Date:

Note: The school will require a letter of acknowledgement from the Supervising Tutor/Institution upon completion of a research/practicum.

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Appendix 6: Staff's Survey (Pilot)

Teachers/ Management Questionnaire

It is very important to be happy in school, there are many things that affects student's happiness. In the following questionnaire I am trying to collect more information about these things in order to help school management to understand the student's needs and to provide conditions that will make them happier. These questions will take around 10 - 15 minutes. Please read each question carefully and make sure you select the best answer for you. Please don't discuss the questions with other colleagues to insure better results.

I am a:

Teacher ☑

Management member (directors, deputy directors and supervisors) ☐

Teacher's / Management gender:

Male ☑

Female ☐

Years of experience:

0 – 1 ☐

2 – 5 ☑

6 – 10 ☐

11 – 20 ☐

Over 20 ☐

From your point view, could you put the following statements in the order from the most important to the less (number 1 is the most important)

1. In your opinion, what makes your students happy (in order from 1-6, number 1 being the most important)

   [2] Academic Achievement.

   [1] Relationship with teachers and peers.

   [4] Extra-curricular Activities and school trips.

   [3] Feeling safe.

   [5] Awards and recognitions/personal and character building.

   [6] Using school facilities.

2. I believe that the majority of our students feel happy in our school.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | (4) | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly
Agree Strongly

3. I believe that student's happiness is as important as student's academic achievement, safety and personal development.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | (4) | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly
Agree Strongly

4. I believe that teachers play the bigger role in making students happier.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | (4) | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly
Agree Strongly

5. I believe that management play the bigger role in making students happier.

| 1 | 2 | (3) | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly
Agree Strongly

6. I believe that school structure and facilities play a bigger role in making students happier.

| 1 | 2 | (3) | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly
Agree Strongly

7. I believe that student's happiness should be a priority in schools.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | (4) | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly
Agree Strongly

8. I believe that in our school we do enough to make our students happy.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree
Strongly
                                                            Agree Strongly

9. I believe that student's happiness is directly connected to their achievement, personal development and behaviour.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree
Strongly
                                                            Agree Strongly

Students Questionnaire

It is very important to be happy in school, there are many things that affects student's happiness. In the following questionnaire I am trying to collect more information about these things in order to help school management to understand the student's needs and to provide conditions that will make them happier. The questions will take around 10 - 15 minutes. Please read each question carefully and make sure you select the best answer for you. Please don't ask your friends about their answers as this should be completely personal.

I am a: Boy ☑   Girl ☐

I am in grade: 4 ☐   5 ☑   6 ☐

For each of the following statements and/or questions, please circle the point on the scale that you feel is most appropriate in describing you.

1. In general, I consider myself:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Not a very happy person · · · A very happy person

2. Compared with most of my peers, I consider myself:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Less Happy · · · More Happy

3. I feel happier when I feel loved and cared about by my teachers.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Disagree Strongly · · · Agree Strongly

4. I am happier when I feel loved and cared about by the school supervisors.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

5. I feel happier when I have as many friends as possible.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

6. I feel happier when I get along well with my class mates.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

7. I feel happier when I get along with my small group of close friends despite the rest of my class mates.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

8. I feel happier when I feel loved at home from my parents and brothers and sisters.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly
                                                    Agree Strongly

9. I feel happier when I hang out with my friends during break time even if I don't play.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly
                                                    Agree Strongly

10. I feel happier when I am given the opportunity to participate in the morning assembly.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly
                                                    Agree Strongly

11. I feel happier when I represent my class in competitions.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Disagree
Strongly
                                                    Agree Strongly

12. I feel happier when I am chosen to play for school teams.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree
Strongly
Agree Strongly

13. I feel happier when one of my parents picks me up from school.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree
Strongly
Agree Strongly

14. I feel happier when My teachers complements my work out loud.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree
Strongly
Agree Strongly

15. I feel happier when I feel safe in school.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree
Strongly
Agree Strongly

16. I feel happier when I can use the school sports facilities.

:(	:|	:|	:)	:)
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

17. I feel happier when I am allowed to go to the school library.

:(	:|	:|	:)	:)
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

18. I feel happier when I am allowed to use the ICT lab.

:(	:|	:|	:)	:)
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

19. I feel happier when I go to the Art room.

:(	:|	:|	:)	:)
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

20. I feel happier when I get to eat from the school canteen.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

21. I feel happier when I use the school bus to go to and from school.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

22. I feel happier when I score high marks in all subjects.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

23. I feel happier when I score high marks in the subjects I like.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

24. I feel happier when I am rewarded in front of the rest of the students.
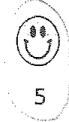
😦	😐	😑	🙂	😃
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

25. I feel happier when I receive awards or certificates.

😦	😐	😑	🙂	😃
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

26. I feel happier when I get to do practical experiments.

😦	😐	😑	🙂	😃
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

27. I feel happier when my teachers write positive comments on my diary to my parents.

😦	😐	😑	🙂	😃
1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

28. I feel happier when I go on school trips.

😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
1	2	3	4	(5)

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

29. I feel happier when I stay for after school activities.

😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
1	2	3	(4)	5

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

30. I feel happier when I stay for overnight camps.

😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
1	2	3	(4)	5

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

31. I feel happier when I can read stories and book that are not related to the curriculum.

😞	🙁	😐	🙂	😃
1	2	(3)	4	5

Disagree
Strongly

Agree Strongly

32. I feel happier when I have different activities to join.

1	2	3	4	5

Disagree   Agree Strongly
Strongly

33. From our student's point view, what is the most important thing that makes them happy (chose one only):

[ ] Academic Achievement.

[ ] Relationship with teachers and peers.

[✓] Extra-curricular Activities and school trips.

[ ] Feeling safe.

[ ] Awards and recognitions/personal and character building.

[ ] Using school facilities.