

# EFFECT OF HAPPINESS ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN SOUTH KOREA

Kongo Choke Elizabeth<sup>1</sup>, Park Seung Woo<sup>\*2</sup>, Chung  
Yong-Kyo<sup>\*3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology, Yeungnam University, 280 Daehak-ro, Gyeongsan, Gyeongbuk 38541, Republic of Korea. Email: kongochoke@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Department of Sociology, Yeungnam University, 280 Daehak-ro, Gyeongsan, Gyeongbuk 38541, Republic of Korea. Email: swpark@yu.ac.kr

<sup>3</sup>Department of Sociology, Yeungnam University, 280 Daehak-ro, Gyeongsan, Gyeongbuk 38541, Republic of Korea. Email: ykyochung@ynu.ac.kr

**\*Corresponding Author:** swpark@yu.ac.kr and ykyochung@ynu.ac.kr  
<https://doi.org/10.55327/jaash.v10i3.338>

(Received: 6 July 2024; Accepted: 5 September 2024; Published: 30 September 2024)

---

## **Keywords:**

*Happiness; Financial Support; Social Relationship; Academic Performance; South Korea;*

## **ABSTRACT**

While academic success is undoubtedly the most important criterion for evaluating an educational structure, consideration should also be given to those aspects that can contribute to the structure's objectives. As a result, emphasis should be placed on understanding the foundations upon which the best academic success can be attained. This means that factors promoting students' mental and emotional well-being are crucial to their academic success. Hence, the main objective of this study was to investigate the effect of happiness on the academic performance of international students in South Korea. Three happiness variables were retained: social relationships, educational environments, and financial support. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. Data were collected through questionnaires from 281 international students in South Korea using

---

a purposive sampling technique. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis, and Multiple Linear regression analysis was conducted with the help of coefficients,  $R^2$ , adjusted  $R^2$ , and P-values as validation techniques in SPSS. The findings conclude that social relationships and educational environments significantly affect academic performance, while financial support is insignificant. The study therefore recommends that school administration focus more on enhancing social relationships and creating safe and welcoming environments for all, as they were found to positively influence the performance of foreign students.

---

## INTRODUCTION

Over time, the term "happiness" has been vastly debated among psychological scientists, philosophers, researchers, and even lay people. This has led to a lot of arguments, disagreements, and confusion about happiness research with regards to its definition, measurement, complexity, and attainment. Therefore, research on the effect of happiness on performance is not new given that scholars continually investigate and explore the various indicators of happiness, ranging from individual/emotional to social, environmental, and even community issues that impact students' performance in different fields of study (Mauri et al., 2021; Sezer & Can, 2020; Valiente et al., 2012).

Over centuries, scientists and philosophers agreed that happiness was based on karma and good fortune, which could be controlled and actively pursued (Kesebir & Diener, 2008). This implies that the past notion of happiness was based on divine intervention as well as luck. The Greek poet Hesiod coined the term "eudaimonia," which translates as "happiness" in English. It is a concept that represents a happy and fortunate state, as expressed in the phrase "happy and lucky the man" (eudaimon et kai olbios). The associated adjective word "eudaimon" is a combination of "eu", which means good, and "daimon", which means spirit, god, or demon. This made McMahan conclude that "eudaimonia is contained inside the concept of fortune, implying that to have a guiding spirit and a good daimon on your side means to be lucky, and an idea of divinity for a daimon is a channel by which the gods watch over each of us." As a result, in prehistoric Greece, happiness was viewed as something beyond human control, determined primarily by luck and the gods (McMahan, 2006).

However, happiness has been defined by various authors. For example, Diener (2000) describes happiness as "an emotional or mental state of

well-being characterized by positive or pleasant emotions that range from contentment to ecstasy." According to Bentham, happiness is the sum of pleasures and pains. Veenhoven also defines happiness as a feeling of gratitude for one's entire existence (Veenhoven, 2005). Alternatively, psychologists refer to it as a subjective sense of well-being or the way each individual perceives or views life. Ultimately, happiness can be seen as the state of feeling good and satisfied with life. From the above definitions, it can be noted that happiness is a complex term that is usually assessed or determined by subjective or independent well-being, which consists of life satisfaction, positive effects, and negative effects. Hence, happiness has a direct influence or effect on everyday life situations, which is why happier people tend to better confront life situations and have better performance in their daily activities as compared to unhappy people.

Academic performance, which is the investigative variable of this study, is a constant source of curiosity among university students. Intelligence, along with other aspects of the learning environment, contributes to the overall performance and success of a student. According to Dhanapala (2021), six key aspects should be implemented in the learning/teaching environment: informing, communicating, collaborating, producing, scaffolding, and managing. Simply put, the educational environment consists of the entire range of activities and modules in which learning takes place, whilst academic performance is the ability to respond to what a person has learned as a result of an instruction or training process. The value of the academic grades earned is the indicator used to evaluate academic success, and they are regarded as representations of learning achievements (Mauri et al., 2021). The presence of students in an academic institution, where they are attempting to achieve the objective of acquiring a university education, implies a persistent concern for good academic scores, which displays the daily struggle.

Academic performance describes a student's intellectual development and progress, which makes obvious the goal or drive of the educational structure entirely (Khan et al., 2020). Academic success is the greatest pointer or indicator of the judgment of the educational structure. On the other hand, academic performance depends on the support of several social factors such as academic motivation, life satisfaction, emotional regulation, emotional expressivity, educational environment, financial resources, teacher-student relationship, and many more (Ngondi et al., 2020; Matrić et al., 2019; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Regrettably, society constantly emphasizes students' academic performance without investigating the grounds or basis on which success could be achieved. Some studies show that the learning institutions that place emphasis on the function of these factors, capable of affecting academic performance by providing favorable environs to the students, end up with more hopeful and excellent results (Anyango & Sika, 2020; Leonard, 2018). For instance, research by Fritz and co-workers shows that individuals whose level of happiness is high are more active and successful in their

academics and the advancement of higher education (Fritz et al., 2017). This implies that happy students tend to have high graduation grades, attendance rates, student achievement, discipline referrals, and even teacher satisfaction. Other studies show that students are academically sound and affluent when they are happier.

### **JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

Entrance to higher education has continually increased since the 2000s with the enrolment of international students in South Korea, growing rapidly over the years as statistics show 152,000 foreign students recorded as of 2021 and an anticipated government increase of 200,000 international students by 2023 (Krechetnikov & Pestereva, 2017). Government policies and actions to improve the academic sector are also being enhanced with the aim of developing students' personalities, academic activities, and managing academics (UNESCO, 2013). Although international student admissions to universities are increasing, the emphasis is on academic performance rather than the foundations on which foreign students' performances can be realized or guaranteed. No doubt, academic performance is the best marker to judge the educational structure, but consideration should also be given to those factors that can foster the attainment of the goals of this structure. Hence, the focus should be on knowing the grounds upon which the best academic performance in terms of intellectual growth can be realized. This implies that factors that contribute to the mental and emotional well-being of international students are pivotal to their academic excellence; hence, the reason why this study is carried out to study the effects of their happiness levels on their performance.

Nowadays, the academic sector has been experiencing substantial changes in its operations, and South Korea is no exemption, even more so. The sector has become more competitive due to the rise of other academic institutions in and out of South Korea and the rising need for students worldwide to achieve excellent results (Lesleyanne, 2010). These competitive conditions require schools to provide high-quality, prompt, appropriate, and comfortable services, as they are expected to perform well in serving the various needs of the world academic market and that of students, which are changing daily due to their subjectivity on what factors can make them perform well. Much of the focus has been on meeting the demands of the competitive market with little focus on making the students happy so they can better perform. Hence, academic staff need to understand factors that can lead to students' success or attainment of higher grades by probably identifying supportive academic activities and actions that can contribute to improving their academic performance, which in turn brings overall excellence to the academic institution, even in the competitive market.

According to a pilot study conducted on 25 international students, findings reveal that international students in South Korea undergo stress, particularly 'distress', which is stress that occurs due to unpleasant events

or situations that create unhappiness. They work long hours, have work overloads, and are expected to be highly productive to deliver a world-standard achievement without a corresponding increase in measures that can curb their stress levels for better academic performance. No doubt, South Korea has one of the best educational systems in the world, but there is an alarming rise in stress that affects the academic success of international students (Jeevan & Uttam, 2019). Hence, it is imperative to address such rising issues like unpleasant stress that have the possibility of hampering performance.

### **RESEARCH GAP**

It is obvious that happiness is a complex term that is assessed by subjective well-being; hence, the literature related to this phenomenon is increasingly growing. There are many opinions as to why people are happy. Some people say it's a sensation of joy, while others see it as a general sense of fulfilment with life's victories. But it is worth noting that it has a direct influence or effect on everyday life situations (be it academic achievements, employees' performance, or life satisfaction in general). Therefore, schools should always implement strategies to measure their students' happiness levels because it affects their school performance. As people, sectors, cultures, environments, the world at large, and happiness indicators evolve or change over time, the need to continuously study how happiness affects academic performance grows daily. Many studies have investigated the relationship between happiness and various types of performance, including academic performance, but none have specifically studied the effect of happiness on the academic performance of international students in South Korea, particularly in the universities under study, and especially with respect to the three determinant variables studied in this work. To this end, this study investigates the effect happiness has on the academic success of international students in South Korea, viewing happiness in the light of social relationships, the educational environment, and financial support.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Edgerton and McKechnie (2023) examined new secondary school buildings and discovered that these modern facilities were associated with increased feelings of security among students. This finding is significant in the Scottish education system because it emphasizes the importance of providing a safe and secure environment for students (Humes & Priestley, 2021). Feeling safe and secure at school has the potential to mediate the relationship between the learning environment and academic achievement, because students are more likely to concentrate on learning activities when they feel safe. The Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS) were developed by Midgely (2014) to assess students' perceptions of their motivational orientation and the classroom goal structure. This measure has been used in research to demonstrate that students' perceptions of learning goals are related to their subjective well-being, which can also be influenced by cultural factors. Similarly, secondary school students with

positive perceptions of their school environment reported higher levels of engagement and self-esteem in another study conducted in Scotland by Edgerton et al. (2011). Maxwell (2007) conducted a study that emphasized the significance of learning environments in fostering children's competence and self-esteem. According to the study, a positive learning environment can lead to higher self-esteem, which can influence student motivation and academic achievement. Student motivation serves as a bridge between the physical learning environment and academic achievement.

Mauri et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between happiness and academic performance among pedagogy students. The study included graduate students from the National Pedagogical University, with a focus on students aged 18 to 35 of both genders. The Alarcon scale, which includes 27 items and four components, was used to assess happiness. Each student's academic trajectory was examined to determine their level of academic success. To calculate the percentage of happiness and conduct Pearson correlation analysis, data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software, version 23. The findings demonstrated that the population had a low level of happiness, with positive life sense, life satisfaction, and joy of life factors at low levels, and personal achievement at a medium level. The Pearson correlation revealed a strong positive relationship between happiness variables and academic performance ( $r = 0.520$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that these variables are related, though causation cannot be inferred from the findings.

Khan et al. (2020) conducted a study on final-year medical students to investigate the impact of happiness on academic performance. The study included 186 participants from Rawalpindi Medical University in Pakistan. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was used to assess happiness, and a self-structured questionnaire was used to collect demographic information and exam scores. Participants suffering from mental or physical illnesses were excluded from the study. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.809$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) between happiness and academic achievement. There were significant differences in happiness scores between female and male students ( $p = 0.015$ ) and non-boarders and boarders ( $p < 0.001$ ). Exam results revealed significant differences in academic performance between female and male students ( $p = 0.001$ ), as well as non-boarder and boarder students ( $p = 0.001$ ). The unstandardized regression coefficient was 61.40, and the  $R^2$  value was 0.655 (65.5%). Non-boarder and female students outperformed boarder and male students in terms of academic performance and happiness. The study suggests that increasing happiness levels can improve medical students' academic performance, emphasizing the importance of implementing happiness interventions in educational settings.

Matric and colleagues (2019) conducted a study on the role of social relationships in children's vigorous learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study was conducted in seven schools in rural

Slovenia, and data were collected from 535 elementary school students aged 11 to 14 across 35 classes (grades six to nine). Each school's participation was voluntary, and the sample included 51.8% girls and 48.2% boys. The study's main goal was to investigate the relationship between measures of students' satisfied need for relatedness, such as perceived academic and personal peer support, as well as teacher-assessed social acceptance, and measures of active EFL engagement and EFL anxiety. The research also looked into potential gender differences in an EFL learning environment. According to the findings, the need for relatedness had the highest predictive value for emotional and teacher-assessed EFL learning engagement, followed by behavioral engagement and EFL anxiety. Students who reported higher levels of peer support and were perceived by their teachers as more socially accepted demonstrated higher levels of engagement, both as self-assessed by the students and as assessed by their teachers. Furthermore, they reported lower levels of EFL anxiety. The study also discovered that, with the exception of anxiety levels, all measures of active learning were higher for girls than for boys. This suggests that girls are more engaged in EFL learning activities than boys. Overall, the study emphasizes the importance of social relationships in encouraging active participation and reducing anxiety in children's EFL learning. It also implies that there may be gender differences in vigorous learning behaviors.

Leonard (2018) investigated the relationship between money and happiness in college students. The study assessed participants' subjective well-being with a 5-item survey assessing overall life satisfaction and a 20-item survey capturing positive and negative emotions. The sample included 116 fully mature adult college students, with 110 females (94.8%) and 6 males (5.2%), an average age of 20.65, and a standard deviation of 4.05. The study hypothesized that there was a strong positive relationship between overall life satisfaction and financial satisfaction among college students. The findings showed significant correlations between various aspects of financial satisfaction and a variety of happiness indicators, including positive effect, negative effect, and overall life satisfaction. However, there was a weak correlation between the positive effect, negative effect, and overall satisfaction with financial questions related to the amount of money owed in debt. Overall, the study discovered that higher levels of financial satisfaction were linked to higher levels of overall life satisfaction among college students. This supports the initial research hypothesis that money influences college students' happiness. The study did, however, point out that only certain aspects of financial satisfaction had an effect on overall happiness.

Robbins et al. (2010) investigated the reliability and validity of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire, a relatively new measure of happiness based on the older Oxford Happiness Inventory. The questionnaire and an abbreviated version of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised were completed by 131 undergraduate students. The study came to three major conclusions. First, the questionnaire's internal consistency reliability

was supported by a high alpha coefficient ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and item rest-of-test correlations. However, upon closer inspection, four items were discovered to have correlations with the sum of the other items that were less than .30. Statements about intense interest in other people, perception of the world as a good place, finding beauty in things, and fitting everything into one's life were among these items. Second, correlations with scores from the abbreviated Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised supported the questionnaire's construct validity. The findings corroborated two theoretical assumptions. First, the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire assesses the same construct as the Oxford Happiness Inventory, which has previously been linked to high extraversion and low neuroticism on Eysenckian personality scales. Second, the link between happiness and high extraversion and low neuroticism is theoretically consistent with the questionnaire's assessment of happiness. Based on the empirical literature reviewed above, it is clear that happiness has an impact on academic performance; thus, the researcher believes it is necessary to investigate the effects of happiness on the academic performance of international students in South Korea, with the research hypothesis testing three happiness factors that influence students' academic performance.

## **CONCEPTUAL LITERATURE AND FRAMEWORK**

### **Academic Performance**

Every academic institution operates or functions through the support of humans, materials, money, and machines. The main component of the academic sector is its human capital, that is, "students or people". The human capital serves as the central, life, and key generating resource compared to other non-living resources. Hence, improvement in students' well-being and performance has become a central issue in present-day academic success. Academic performance refers to a student's level of knowledge and achievement as measured by assessments such as specific educational objectives or teacher-assigned grades that students and teachers strive to meet within a given timeframe. It indicates how far students have progressed in their academic pursuits in terms of knowledge and skills (Ngondi et al., 2020 ).

Academic performance can be defined as the extent to which educational institutions, teachers, and students have met their intended educational goals within a given timeframe, regardless of whether those goals are short-term, medium-term, or long-term in nature. It serves as a gauge of success and achievement in achieving educational goals. It is the product of learning, according to several authors. Some causes of poor academic performance include inadequate study time, financial constraints, broken home, debt, poor learning environment, poor teacher-student and student-student relationships, discouragement, and more. Therefore, Academic achievement or triumph is essential for the successful advancement and growth of youngsters in every society. It is also vital



because it is strongly associated to the positive results we value. Students who perform well in school have better advantages and can best fit into the opportunities of later life and realize economic and occupational success. Working with people requires training from higher levels of education in order to handle the industrially demanding occupations of the future; thus, there is need for a post-secondary education that can facilitate or guarantee to an extent a job. The study measured academic performance using a composite index made up of a number of performance indicators such as assignment rates, attendance rates, punctuality rates, graduation grades, teacher satisfaction, and study habits.

### **Happiness**

Happiness has been defined differently by different researcher. Happiness, according to Deiner, is a state of emotional or mental well-being characterized by the experience of pleasant or positive emotions. These feelings can range from contentment to extreme joy or ecstasy. (Diener, 2000). Happiness is an enduring feeling of well-being characterized by pleasure with pleasant, excellent, and significant parts of life (Scott, 2015). According to this idea, there are three types of happiness: the good life (engagement), the meaningful life, and the pleasant life (pleasures). In another report, happiness was regarded as a multifaceted structure that encompasses happy feelings, a sense of purpose in life, positive relationships, responsibility, and success (López-Pérez & Fernández-Castilla, 2017). Happiness, according to Lyubomirsky, is defined as positive feelings about life (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Individual sentiments such as joy, cheerfulness, hope, bodily and spiritual well-being can also be classified as happiness (Sezer & Can, 2020). Happiness, according to Ruut, is defined as an overall appreciation of life (Ruut, 2009). Individuals' perceptions and understanding of what happiness is and how it is experienced are central to the concept of happiness. It is concerned with people's beliefs and ideas about the nature of happiness and the factors that contribute to a happy and fulfilling life (Wong & Yuen, 2022). The findings of Kumalasari et al. (2020) also suggest that people make decisions and make choices based on their beliefs and perceptions of what will bring them the most happiness. In other words, when making decisions in various aspects of their lives, people take their subjective understanding of happiness into account. Hence, happiness can depend on several intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as social relationship, health, security, environmental conditions, social support, freedom, moral values, income level, attainment of basic needs, family life, love, communication, trust, school success, and recognition. Happy people see the world as safe, have high self-confidence, cooperate more easily, make decisions easily, are more tolerant in their relationships, and are more productive in their dealings of life (Sezer & Can, 2020). The balance of feelings is that everyone experiences both negative and positive emotions, moods, and feelings, although happiness is generally connected to the experience of more positive feelings than negative ones. This study focusses on three

main determinants of happiness that either positively or negatively affect academic performance of international students in South Korea, as discussed below:

### **Social Relationship**

Social relationship is a comprehensive term used to describe interactions that concern two or more people, groups, or organizations. Individual social relationships constitute an enormous number of verbal, physical, and social relations that create an avenue where ideas and feelings can be exchanged. Social interactions lower rates of depression and anxiety, increases self-esteem, ensure cooperative and trusting relationships, greater empathy, improve learning by enhancing knowledge of literacy and teaching, and improve critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Hence, extracurricular activities that strengthen social interaction between students and allow them to learn different cultures can guarantee better class performance. Teacher-student relations and student-student relations were assessed to ascertain the social position of students. Several studies have found that students who enjoy interpersonal relationships with their teachers and peers are more likely to engage in desirable behaviors. (Matrić et al., 2019). Students benefit from a sense of belonging and acceptance because it encourages them to embrace the goals and values of their environment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to research, psychologically accepted students demonstrate characteristics such as responsibility, effective problem-solving, reduced aggression, increased sociability, and the ability to form meaningful relationships with their peers (Matrić et al., 2019). Cagran et al. stress the significance of a reciprocal conversation between teachers and students in promoting active learning because it allows students to freely express their ideas (Čagran et al., 2011). Hence, when students engage in active book learning, they become more engaged, supportive, and cooperative in their learning process, which improves academic performance. Active learning has been linked to improved social skills, higher grades, long-term knowledge retention, and increased self-sufficiency in students (Matrić et al., 2019).

### **Educational Environment**

Intelligence, including other aspects of the learning environment, contributes to the overall performance and success of a student. According to a report by Dhanapala (2021), six key aspects should be implemented in the learning/teaching environment: informing, communicating, collaborating, producing, scaffolding, and managing. Simply put, the educational environment consists of the entire range of activities and modules in which learning takes place. In addition, the learning environment refers to different settings, beliefs where students learn, and physical places. It encompasses different ways of teaching, approaches of learning, learning equipment, know-how, and collective connections worldwide. Since learning is the only way to make the best minds work productively, a good learning environment is essential to offer a safe platform for learners. Before learners can successfully perform well

academically, they should be able to feel a sense of safety both physically and mentally. Furthermore, factors such as a good and safe learning space, good facilities (equipped library, clean toilets, comfortable dormitories, and cafeteria), active and caring teachers and more were all assessed to understand how they contribute to creating a safe learning atmosphere for learners.

### **Financial support**

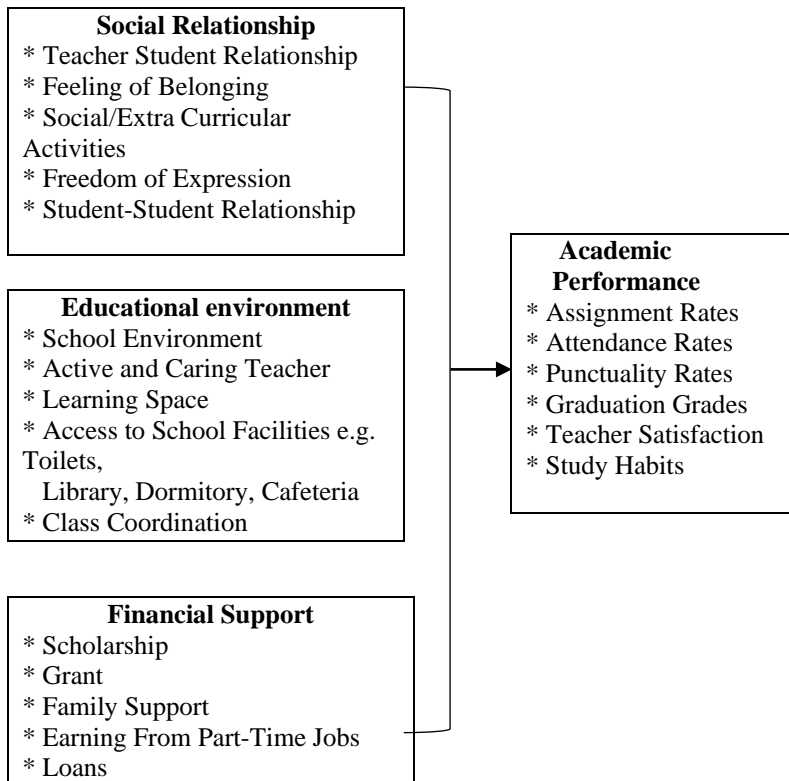
As the cost of higher education rises, educational policies have shifted in focus. Rather than focusing solely on increasing access to higher education, there is now a greater emphasis on improving graduation rates. This shift is motivated by the realization that a significant proportion of students who enroll in college do not complete their degree, and that others face extended timelines for degree completion due to financial constraints. Student financial aid or support is financial support given to individuals who further their education, and it can come in several forms, including scholarships, grants, family support, work-study programs, and others. These five forms of financial support were assessed in this study to determine their effect on academic performance.

Grants and scholarships offer various types of incentives to students pursuing higher education. Grants are typically awarded on the basis of financial need, whereas scholarships are frequently awarded on the basis of merit. Scholarships awarded on the basis of merit can motivate students to excel academically in order to be chosen or retain their scholarship. Grants and scholarships both help to reduce the financial burden of higher education, which can reduce the need for students to work while attending classes.

According to a study conducted by Canton and colleagues, as the cost of education falls, students rely less on loans and employment, allowing them to focus more on their studies and achieve greater success (Canton & Blom, 2009). Students whose parents pay their tuition and fees may respond to the financial incentive provided by their parents. Students who finance their education through savings or earnings, on the other hand, may prioritize passing their courses over striving for exceptional performance in order to avoid having to retake and pay for them.

The scheme below represents the conceptual framework of the study, which shows the independent and dependent variables and how each of them was measured. The dependent variable (academic performance) was measured using a composite index of six sub-variables (assignment rates, attendance rates, punctuality rates, graduation grades, teacher satisfaction, and study habits), while the independent variable (happiness) was measured using social relationships, educational performance, and financial support, as shown in the scheme below

**Representative scheme showing the conceptual framework.**



**RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

The hypotheses explain the relationship between happiness and academic performance. They are stated below.

H<sub>1</sub>: Social relationships positively affect the academic performance of international students in South Korea.

H<sub>2</sub>: Educational environment significantly influences the academic performance of international students in South Korea.

H<sub>3</sub>: Financial support affects the academic performance of international students in South Korea.

**Methodology**

Primary data were collected through questionnaires issued to international students of the three main and other universities under study with closed-ended semi-structured questions that were ticked (Adejimi et al., 2010). This study used a descriptive survey research design to describe the characteristics of the population or phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The target population for this study comprised international students from KNU, YU, DU, and other universities in South

Korea (Hussein, 2021). It is noted that analysis is best when conducted on samples that are still fresh (Sotirios, 2013). Therefore, the purposive sampling technique was used to select a portion of the target population since it was impractical to select all foreign students. The anticipated sample size for this study was 300 respondents from the three main and other universities under study, but only 281 were successfully collected.

After ensuring completeness and consistency through proper editing of completed questionnaires, codification was done to transform the data into a form suitable for analysis. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis and multiple linear regression analysis with the help of coefficients,  $R^2$ , adjusted  $R^2$ , and P-values as validation techniques on SPSS version 25 to relate one dependent variable and three independent variables (Sileyew, 2019). A 95% confidence level was regarded as significant for the observed variables, and a P-value  $\leq 0.05$  was deemed significant. The association between happiness and academic performance of international students was shown in multiple linear equations since the study focused on assessing the relationship between one dependent variable and three independent variables. Herein, academic performance represents the dependent variable, and happiness is the independent variable, which was broken down into three sub-variables as shown in the equation below:

$$AP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 SR + \beta_2 EE + \beta_3 FS + \varepsilon$$

where AP is the dependent variable (Academic Performance),  $\beta_0$  is the regression coefficient,  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ , and  $\beta_3$  are the slopes of the regression equation, SR is Social Relationships, EE is Educational Environment, FS is Financial Support and  $\varepsilon$  is the error term in the independent variables.

### RELIABILITY TEST OF MEASURES

**Table 1. Reliability Results of Variables**

Variable	N° of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients
Social Relationship	5	0.810
Educational Environment	5	0.736
Financial Support	5	0.602
Academic Performance	6	0.899

Before proceeding with the analysis, the reliability test was performed using Cronbach's Alpha (Cronbach, 1951; Hair et al., 2006). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are shown in the Table 1 below. The

reliability of the scales in this study ranged from 0.602 to 0.899. All variables achieved a sufficient level of dependability. Cronbach's alpha was at a good level of reliability because the coefficients were all greater than 0.60.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION ANALYSIS

**Table 2. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis of the influence of Social Relationship, Educational Environment, Financial Support, and Academic Performance (N=281)**

Variable	$\sum x$	$\sum x^2$	$\sum y$	$\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	$\Gamma_{xy}$	p-value
Social relationship (x)	5405	108131	148347	0.416	0.000		
Educational environment (x)	5509	109699	150591	0.407	0.000		
Financial support (x)	4002	60038	108456	-	0.209	0.075	
Academic performance (y)	7632	210610					

$p^* < 0.05$ ;  $df = 279$ ; critical  $\Gamma_{xy} = 0.138$  (for Social Relationship and Educational Environment).

$p^* < 0.05$ ;  $df = 279$ ; critical  $\Gamma_{xy} = -0.075$  (for Financial support).

### Hypothesis One

**$H_01$** : Social relationships have no significantly positive effect on academic performance.

**$H_a1$** : Social relationships positively affect academic performance.

The independent variable in this hypothesis was social relationships, while the dependent variable was academic performance. The scores of the independent variable were obtained from the responses recorded for the five items (teacher-student relationship, feeling of belongingness, social/extra-curricular activities, freedom of expression, and student-student relationship) of a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that measured social relationships. The scores of the dependent variable were obtained from the responses recorded for the six items of a five-point

Likert scale questionnaire that measured academic performance. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was done to evaluate this idea statistically.

Regarding the influence of social relationships on academic performance (see Table 2), the obtained estimated absolute value of 0.416 for the  $xy$  variable is much higher than the critical value of 0.138 at a significance level of 0.05 and with 279 degrees of freedom. Furthermore, the  $p$ -value of 0.000 is less than the significance level of 0.05. The null hypothesis was thus rejected, while the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This result, therefore, means that social relationships have a substantial effect on the academic performance of international students in the schools under study. Since there is a noteworthy relationship between social relationships and academic performance, further examination showed that the  $\Gamma_{xy}$  -value = **0.416** was moderately positive.

The study's findings provide compelling evidence that there is a positive association between social relationships and academic performance. The findings show that as social relationships strengthen, academic performance improves. This result demonstrates unequivocally that students enrolled in the chosen schools have positive relationships with both their teachers and their peers. These relationships foster a harmonious environment in which individuals, regardless of cultural or national differences, treat each other with respect. These relationships, most importantly, instill a sense of safety and support among the students. The study findings also show that the selected schools are free of racism, tribalism, and favoritism. Furthermore, foreign students at these schools have a strong sense of belonging and are encouraged to freely interact with students of various races and nationalities, especially during extracurricular activities. Teachers, students, and other staff members all work together to create an inclusive and welcoming environment. These schools place an emphasis on activities other than traditional lectures, allowing students to interact, learn from one another, and grow together. Furthermore, students have the right to express themselves freely and report any instances of harassment or racial abuse to school authorities. Positive dynamics in these schools have created an ideal learning environment that promotes easy learning, reduces behavioral issues, and ultimately leads to higher academic achievement. Furthermore, the students' behavioral patterns are shaped by these positive social relationships, which contribute to their overall personal development.

The present findings of the study are consistent with the findings of Matric and colleagues (2019) on the role of social relationships in children's vigorous learning of English as a Foreign Language. The research was conducted in seven rural schools in Slovenia. The study emphasizes the importance of social relationships in encouraging active participation and reducing anxiety in children's learning. It also suggests that there may be gender differences in active learning behaviors. According to Matric's findings, students who feel socially accepted take on more responsibility, have better problem-solving skills, are less

aggressive, have higher sociability, and have better peer relationships (Matric et al., 2019). They also reported that when students engage in active book learning, they become more engaged, cooperative, and supportive in their learning process. This active learning approach improves students' grades, social skills, self-sufficiency and long-term retention of knowledge. Furthermore, Cagran and colleagues' research emphasizes the importance of reciprocal conversations between teachers and students for active learning to take place. Such interactions allow students to freely express their ideas and opinions, creating an environment that encourages active participation (Cagran et al., 2011).

### **Hypothesis Two**

**$H_02$** : There are no significant effects of educational environment on academic performance.

**$H_a2$**  : Educational environment significantly influences academic performance.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is educational environment, while the dependent variable is academic performance. The scores of the independent variable were obtained from the responses recorded from the five items (school environment, active and caring teachers, learning space, access to school facilities like toilets, library, dormitory, cafeteria, etc., and class coordination) of a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that measured educational environment. The scores of the dependent variable were obtained from the responses recorded from the six items of a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that measured academic performance. This notion was statistically evaluated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis.

Results obtained in Table 2 regarding the influence of educational environment show that the estimated absolute value of 0.407 for the  $\gamma_{xy}$  variable is much higher than the critical value of 0.138 at a significance level of 0.05 and with 279 degrees of freedom. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.000 is less than the significance level of 0.05. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected as a result of this study, and the alternative hypothesis was retained. This result, therefore, means that educational environment has a substantial effect on academic performance. An  $\Gamma_{xy}$  – value of **0.407** reveals a moderately positive relationship between the educational environment and academic performance. Therefore, the school environment and learning space in the investigated schools were found to be safe for learning; students can freely use facilities such as the library, restroom, dormitory, cafeteria, and so on; and bullying, harassment, violence, and intimidation are not a problem in these schools. Students reported that their learning environment improves their attention in class, reduces emotional frustration, decreases anxiety, and improves their grades. This suggests that a more conducive educational environment promotes higher academic performance. As a result, students are more likely to succeed academically if they feel safe both physically and mentally. A good and safe learning environment, good facilities such as an



equipped library, clean toilets, comfortable dormitories and cafeteria, active and caring teachers, and other positively influencing factors all contribute to the safety of students while they learn. The current study's findings are consistent with previous research by Edgerton and McKechnie (2023), Edgerton et al. (2011), Midgley (2014), and Maxwell (2007). These studies collectively suggest that the physical learning environment has a significant impact on students' well-being and academic achievement. In particular, research on new secondary school buildings indicates that modern facilities are associated with increased feelings of security among students, which is important in the Scottish education system, which prioritizes a safe and secure environment. When students feel safe at school, they are more likely to focus on learning activities. Furthermore, research using the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS) has found that students' perceptions of learning goals are related to their subjective well-being, with cultural factors potentially influencing this relationship. Furthermore, positive school environment perceptions have been linked to higher levels of engagement and self-esteem in secondary school students. Finally, Maxwell's research highlights the importance of learning environments in fostering children's competence and self-esteem, which can influence student motivation and academic achievement.

### **Hypothesis Three**

**$H_03$ :** There are no significant effects of financial support on academic performance.

**$H_a3$ :** Financial support affects academic performance.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is financial support, while the dependent variable is academic performance. The scores of the independent variable were obtained from the responses recorded from the five items (scholarship, grant, family support, earnings from part-time work, and loans) of a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that measured financial support. The scores of the dependent variable were obtained from the responses recorded from the six items of a five-point Likert scale questionnaire that measured academic performance. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to quantitatively examine this concept. In the case of financial support, the estimated absolute value of -0.075 for the xy variable is much higher than the critical value of 0.138 at a significance level of 0.05 and with 279 degrees of freedom. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.209 exceeds 0.05. The null hypothesis was retained as a consequence of this study, while the alternative hypothesis was rejected. Most of the students reported that they depend on their family and friends for financial support, live on loans, or have to do part-time work in order to raise money to cover their educational and other living expenses. This result, therefore, means that financial support has no significant effects on academic performance, which contravenes the findings reviewed in the literature by Leonard, on the "relationship between money and happiness among college students."

The hypothesis was that financial contentment among college students would have a high positive correlation with overall life satisfaction. Many characteristics of financial contentment and various measures of happiness among college students, particularly aspects of financial satisfaction connected to the quantity of money accessible, were found to have remarkable and statistically significant relationships in the study's findings. Overall, financial contentment was found to be positively correlated with overall life satisfaction. As a result, his findings backed up his original study's assumption that money has an impact on college students' happiness (Leonard, 2018). According to a report by Canton and colleagues (2009), as the cost of education decreases, students become less reliant on alternative sources of income such as loans or jobs while attending school. As a result, they can allot supplementary time and energy to their studies, leading to greater levels of academic success. In other words, lower schooling expenses allow students to focus more on their studies, which improves their overall achievement.

### Findings and Discussion of Regression Analysis

**Table 3. Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	17.051	1.509		11.301	0.000
SR	0.237	0.057	0.265	4.167	0.000
EE	0.423	0.091	0.302	4.625	0.000
FS	-0.192	0.056	-0.183	-3.398	0.001
Happiness					
R					
R <sup>2</sup>			0.497		
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>			0.247		
R <sup>2</sup>			0.239		

Dependent Variable: Academic performance

As shown in Table 3, happiness is moderately correlated to academic performance ( $R = 0.497$ ) and explains 24.7% of the variation in the academic performance ( $R^2 = 0.247$ ). From the unstandardized coefficients, it is seen that an increase in academic performance is caused by a corresponding increase in happiness in terms of social relationships by 0.237 ( $\beta = 0.237, p = 0.000$ ), educational environment by 0.423 ( $\beta = 0.423, p = 0.000$ ), and financial support by  $-0.192$  ( $\beta = -0.192, p = 0.001$ ), and these are globally statistically significant at 5% level. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated there is no significant effect of happiness on academic performance of international

students in South Korea was rejected in favor of the alternative. Considering that social relationship (SR), educational environment (EE) and financial support (FS) all act on academic performance (AP) of international students in South Korea at the same time, the regression analysis was necessary to evaluate their coefficient of impact from  $AP = \beta_0 + \beta_1SR + \beta_2EE + \beta_3FS + \varepsilon$

From Table 3, the constant ( $\varepsilon$ ) = 14.567,  $\beta_0 = 17.051$ ,  $\beta_1 = 0.237$ ,  $\beta_2 = 0.423$  and  $\beta_3 = -0.192$

The prediction equation thus obtained:  
 $AP = 17.051 + 0.237SR + 0.423EE - 0.192FS + 14.567$

This equation indicates that the academic performance of each international student in South Korea can be determined if the values of  $SR$ ,  $EE$ , and  $FS$  for that individual are known. If  $SR = EE = FS = 0$ , then the student will have an average performance of 14.567. Furthermore, the equation indicates that academic performance will be enhanced if there is a reasonable increase in social relationships and educational environment, while academic performance will drop if financial support is relatively huge.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the objectives of this study, which are to assess the effect of happiness on the academic performance of international students in South Korea, the findings clearly show that happiness variables were found to influence the performance of students in KNU, YU, DU, and other universities in South Korea. The study revealed that these academic institutions prioritize the well-being of their foreign students accurately by ensuring that social interaction between teachers and students and between students and their friends is good. The academic environment was also said to be safe and healthy for students' learning, as they are recorded as having access to good dormitory facilities, equipped libraries and cafeterias, and free usage of other facilities like toilets, etc. Hence, social relationship and educational environment variables both indicated a significant level of influence on students' performance levels, while financial support was said to have an insignificant effect on foreign students' performances. This means that the academic institutions investigated prioritized the psychological well-being and needs of foreign students without any discrimination. Therefore, it can be concluded that the objective of this study was achieved, which proves that happiness influences the academic performance of foreign students in South Korea. Hence, the study recommends that school administrations enhance social relationships and create safe and welcoming environments for all, since they are capable of influencing the performance of students.

### REFERENCES

Adejimi, A., Oyediran, O. S., & Ogunsanmi, E. B. (2010). Employing

- Qualitatively Enriched Semi Structured Questionnaire in Evaluating ICT Impact on Nigerian 'Construction Chain Integration'. *The Built & Human Environment Review*, 3(1), 49-62.
- Anyango, P. O., & Sika, J. O. (2020). Idiographic leadership style and their influence on the learning motivation and student's academic performance in migori sub - county, Kenya. *European Journal of Research and Reflection in Educational Sciences*, 8(6), 1-7.
- Alam, S., & Islam, M. Z. (2015). Offensive statements on social networking platforms with the special reference to cyber defamation: a comparative analysis between Malaysia and Bangladesh. *Journal of Asian and African Social Science and Humanities*, 1(3), 40-57.
- Čagran, B., Lidija, S., & Milena, I. G. (2011). Experimental examination of the effects of project teaching in the subject Environmental Studies. *Journal of Elementary Education*, 4, 5-22.
- Canton, E., & Blom, A. (2009). Student support and academic performance: experiences at private universities in Mexico. *Education Economics*, 18(1), 49-65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09645290801931766>.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. *Sage publications*. <https://doi.org/10.1453/jsas.v4i2.1313>.
- Cronbach, L. J. (1951). "Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests.". *psychometrika*, 16(3), 297-334.
- Dhanapala, R. M. (2021). The effect of learning environment on academic performance from students' perspective. *Global Scientific Journal*, 9(3), 1-8.
- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 34-43. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.55.1.34>.
- Edgerton, E., McKechnie, J., & McEwen, S. (2011). Students' perceptions of their school environments and the relationship with educational outcomes. *Educational & Child Psychology*, 28(1), 33-45.
- Edgerton, E., & McKechnie, J. (2023). The relationship between student's perceptions of their school environment and academic achievement. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 959259. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.959259>.
- Fritz, M. M., Walsh, L. C., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2017). Staying Happier. In *The Happy Mind: Cognitive Contributions to Well-Being* (pp. 95-114). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58763-9\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58763-9_6).
- Hair, E., Halle, T., Terry-Humen, E., Lavelle, B., & Calkins, J. (2006). Children's school readiness in the ECLS-K: Predictions to academic, health, and social outcomes in first grade. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 431-454. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.09.005>.
- Humes, W., & Priestley, M. (2021). Curriculum reform in Scottish Education: Discourse, narrative and enactment. In *Curriculum making in Europe: Policy and practice within and across diverse contexts* (pp. 175-198). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83867-735-020211009>.
- Hussein, A. M. (2021). An investigation into teacher characteristics and school effectiveness in relation to academic performance of class VIII students in mandera west sub-county, republic of Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(1), pp 52-69. <https://doi.org/10.47941/jep.576>.
- Islam, M. A., Islam, M. Z., & Anzum, R. (2022). Smart Farming: Legal Issues and

- Challenges. *Journal of Asian and African Social Science and Humanities*, 8(2), 31-37.
- Jeevan, K., & Uttam, G. (2019). Challenges of International Students from PreDeparture to Post-Study: A Literature Review. *Journal of International Students*, 9(2), 560-581. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i2.673>.
- Kesebir, P., & Diener, E. (2008). In pursuit of happiness: Empirical answers to philosophical questions. *Association for Psychological Science*, 3(2), 59-74. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2350-6\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2350-6_3).
- Khan, T. M., Mansoor, S., Kaleem, M., Zafar, M. S., Shoail, A., Nauman, S., ....., & Mansoor, H. (2020). Evaluation of Impact of Happiness on Academic Performance among Medical Students of Rawalpindi Medical University, Pakistan. *European Journal of Medical and Health Sciences*, 2(6). <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejmed.2020.2.6.603>.
- Krechetnikov, K. G., & Pestereva, N. M. (2017). A Comparative Analysis of the Education Systems in Korea and Japan from the Perspective of Internationalization. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, 6(1), 77-88. <https://doi.org/10.13187/ejced.2017.1.77>.
- Kumalasari, A. D., Karremans, J. C., & Dijksterhuis, A. (2020). Do people choose happiness? Anticipated happiness affects both intuitive and deliberative decision-making. *Current Psychology*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-020-01144-x>.
- Leonard, R. (2018). Money and Happiness for College Students.
- Leslyanne, H. (2010). Demography, Migration and Demand for International Students.
- López-Pérez, B., & Fernández-Castilla, B. (2017). Children's and Adolescents' Conceptions of Happiness at School and Its Relation with Their Own Happiness and Their Academic Performance. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 19(6), 1811-1830. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-017-9895-5>.
- Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change. *Review of General Psychology*, 9(2), 111-131. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.9.2.111>.
- Matrić, M., Brumen, M., & Košir, K. (2019). The Role of Social Relationships in Children's Active EFL Learning. *Psychology of Language and Communication*, 23(1), 302-329. <https://doi.org/10.2478/plc-2019-0014>.
- Mauri, A. R., Saucedo, L. C., & Beltrán, S. B. (2021). Happiness and academic performance in students of the degree in pedagogy. *International Journal of Educational Policy Research and Review*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.15739/IJEPRR.21.003>.
- Maxwell, L. E. (2007). Competency in child care settings. *Environment and behavior*, 39(2), 229-245. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0013916506289976>.
- McMahon, D. M. (2006). Happiness: A history. *Grove Press*.
- Midgley, C. (Ed.). (2014). *Goals, goal structures, and patterns of adaptive learning*. Routledge.
- Ngondi, R., Khasakhala, L., & Yugi, P. (2020 ). Socio-Demographic Predictors of Academic Performance among Adolescents in Selected Private Secondary Schools in Athi-River Sub-County, Kenya. *African Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 3(2), 1-14.
- Robbins, M., Francis, L. J., & Edwards, B. (2010). Happiness as stable extraversion: Internal consistency reliability and construct validity of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire among undergraduate students. *Current Psychology*, 29, 89-94. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-010-9076-8>.
- Ruut, V. (2009). "How do we assess how happy we are? Tenets, implications and

- tenability of three theories." Happiness, economics and politics. *Edward Elgar Publishing*, 45-69.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, 68. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68>.
- Scott, C. (2015). In pursuit of happiness: Moving our communities toward a sustainable and happy future. *International Journal of Social Sustainability in Economic, Social, and Cultural Context*, 11, 24-40.
- Sezer, S., & Can, E. (2020). School Happiness: A Grounded Theory. *Educational Policy Analysis and Strategic Research*, 15(1), 44-62. <https://doi.org/10.29329/epasr.2020.236.3>.
- Sileyew, K. J. (2019). Research Design and Methodology. *Cyberspace. Rijeka: IntechOpen*, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.85731>.
- Sotirios, S. (2013). Social Research. *Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan*.
- UNESCO. (2013). The International Mobility of Students in Asia and the Pacific. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2011.630726#>.
- Valiente, C., Swanson, J., & Eisenberg, N. (2012). Linking Students' Emotions and Academic Achievement: When and Why Emotions Matter. *Child Development Perspectives*, 6(2), 129-135. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2011.00192.x>.
- Veenhoven, R. (2005). Inequality Of Happiness in Nations. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 6(4), 351-355. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-005-0003-x>.
- Wong, W. L. L., & Yuen, C. K. J. (2022). Associations between fragility of happiness beliefs and subjective well-being among Chinese: Inconsistent mediation by valuing happiness. *Current Psychology*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-02897-3>.