
MEASURING HAPPINESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ENGINEERING STUDENTS' INSIGHTS BASED ON AN ADAPTATION OF THE OXFORD HAPPINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

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ABSTRACT

Awareness of student well-being is even more relevant to higher education with the initiatives that universities are taking toward cultivating inclusive, empathetic, and caring learning communities [1, 2, 3, 4]. This study examined engineering students' experience of happiness at the Instituto Superior de Engenharia de Coimbra using the Portuguese translation of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire [5] and a brief demographic and academic questionnaire.

186 students across educational levels and fields of study volunteered for the study. The sample characteristics were varied in the demographics: 86% of the participants indicated they were Portuguese and 44% indicated they resided in urban areas. In their personal lives, 52.2% indicated that they had not had a romantic relationship while in school. The outcomes indicated large differences in the perceived happiness based on the year of study, course being pursued, and students' level of academic satisfaction.

Item analysis revealed that while most students responded positively to questions on frequent laughter, regular joy, and sense of positive influence on others, others experienced low self-esteem, confusion concerning personal identity, and indecision. Many of the students provided equivocal responses to queries on optimism regarding the future, restfulness, and a sense of purpose in life, indicative of emotional challenges not necessarily evident from their academic performance.

These findings provide evidence for the inclusion of mental well-being assessment in higher education practice and institutional tools that assess and support students' social and emotional adjustment. Inducing a general learning approach that coordinates emotional well-being with academic achievement is the key to producing resilient, motivated, and satisfied students.

Keywords Student happiness · Well-being · Engineering education · Oxford Happiness Questionnaire · Academic satisfaction

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