



Articles

A formal document that presents information, findings, analysis, or recommendations about a specific subject or topic

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| 01 | Title Page | 06 | Discussion |
| 02 | Introduction | 07 | Conclusion |
| 03 | Literature Review | 08 | References |
| 04 | Methodology | 09 | Appendices |
| 05 | Results | | |





Title Page

- Title of the Article
- Author's Name and Affiliation
- Abstract (Summary of the Article)
- Keywords



According to Perry (2008), a title should inform readers of the followings:

1. Focus of the study
 - What the study is about (research questions, hypothesis, etc.)
2. Type of article
 - Is it a primary study, a position paper or a literature review?
3. Succinctness
 - Is it short and clear?

Perry, F. L. (2008). *Research in applied linguistics: becoming a discerning consumer*. New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.



According to Perry (2008), an abstract summarize five essential as follows:

1. Purpose of the study
2. Source(s) of the data (e.g. participants)
3. Method(s) e.g. questionnaire
4. Results
5. Interpretation of the results

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 Title

Article

What Makes a School a Happy School? Parents' Perspectives

Patrícia Gramaxo ^{1,*}, Filipa Seabra ^{1,2,*} , Marta Abelha ^{1,3}  and Georg Dutschke ⁴ Authors and Affiliates

- ¹ Laboratório de Educação a Distância e E-Learning (LE@D), Universidade Aberta, 1250-100 Lisboa, Portugal; marta.abelha@uab.pt
- ² Research Centre on Education (CIEd), University of Minho, 4710-057 Braga, Portugal
- ³ Centro de Estudos Interdisciplinares (CEIS20), Universidade de Coimbra, 3000-457 Coimbra, Portugal
- ⁴ Atlântica Instituto Universitário, 2730-036 Barcarena, Portugal; dutschke@uatlantica.pt
- * Correspondence: pgramaxo@gmail.com (P.G.); filipa.seabra@uab.pt (F.S.)

 Abstract

Abstract: Well-being, equity, and inclusion are central aspects of happy schools. In this context, we aim to provide information to identify the characteristics of happy schools and Portuguese children's level of happiness at school. In total, one thousand three hundred and ninety-nine parents of children from five to twenty years old participated in this study by answering a mostly open-ended questionnaire. They indicated their perceptions of how happy their children were at school, the moments they associated with individual happiness and unhappiness, and the characteristics of schools that they found conducive to promoting happiness. The findings show that parents value the relationships their children establish at school, teachers' personal and professional skills, learning strategies, and the fact that students can be creative while learning valuable content. From the perspective of parents, unhappy schools are characterized by teachers with negative attitudes and attributes, bullying, an excessive workload, and consequent stress. Differences in terms of gender and age were not significant in this study. We found that levels of happiness at school decrease as students' ages increase.

 Keywords

Keywords: happiness; happy schools; parents' perspectives; basic education; secondary education

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Purpose of the study

Well-being, equity, and inclusion are central aspects of happy schools. In this context, **we aim to** provide information to identify the characteristics of happy schools and Portuguese children's level of happiness at school.

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Sample

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Method(s)

In total, one thousand three hundred and ninety-nine parents of children from five to twenty years old participated in this study by answering

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Result(s)

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The findings show that parents value **the relationships their children establish at school, teachers' personal and professional skills, learning strategies, and the fact that students can be creative while learning valuable content.** From the perspective of parents, unhappy schools are characterized by teachers with negative attitudes and attributes, bullying, an excessive workload, and consequent stress.

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Interpretations

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Introduction



1. Background / Context
 - ❑ Why it is important enough to be studied
2. Objectives or Purposes
 - ❑ research questions
3. Hypotheses or Research Questions
 - ❑ Predictions
4. Special Terminology to be defined

Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to develop an understanding of parents' perceptions of what constitutes a happy school.

At the same time, **we seek to** identify happy and unhappy school moments and events that parents lived with their children.

Instead, **we aim to** characterize a happy school because it can impact children's happiness and well-being.

Assistant Professor Dr Sasiporn Phongploenpis
Faculty of Education | SSRU

5. Objectives and Research Questions

No studies have yet been published regarding happy schools in Portugal. The UNESCO report that fueled our interest in this matter and that is behind the structure of our data analysis was based on a study in Asia. We have noted relevant cultural differences in how happiness is perceived across countries [22,41]. Therefore, studying the Portuguese context and uncovering the aspects that are seen as crucial to a happy school in that context is a valuable contribution to the field. The Happy Schools concept and framework that we consider is the one developed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2016. This framework, developed in Bangkok, is accepted as a reference in this area of study. However, it might have some limitations when applied to different cultures. Also, it focuses on children's perspective of a happy school and does not consider the vision of other school stakeholders, such as teachers, administrative staff, and parents. This article is part of a major research project aiming to address the aforementioned limitations. Through this project, we intend to adjust the Bangkok model to the Portuguese culture and identify the items and factors that are important for a school to be happy from the parents' perspective.

The main objective of this research is to develop an understanding of parents' perceptions of what constitutes a happy school. At the same time, we seek to identify happy and unhappy school moments and events that parents lived with their children. The purpose is to gather information capable of answering the following questions:

1. What are parents' and caregivers' perceptions of their children's level of happiness at school?
2. How do their children's age and gender interplay with parents' perceptions?
3. What are the most relevant dimensions of happy experiences of parents and their children at the children's school?
4. What are the most relevant dimensions of unhappy experiences of parents and children together at the children's school?
5. From the parents' perspective, what are the characteristics of a happy school?

The purpose of this study is not to measure or analyze children's happiness or well-being. If we wanted to do so, we would have used the "School Children's Happiness Inventory" [13], which determines the factors affecting the happiness of school children. Instead, we aim to characterize a happy school because it can impact children's happiness and well-being.

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Literature Review



1. Review of Existing Research / Literature
 - Happy Schools (2)
 - Happiness at Schools (3)
 - Parents' Choice of School (4)
2. Identification of Gaps or Issues

Literature Review

Review of Existing Research/ Literature

These studies suggest that all students appreciate school environments where bullying is infrequent, making friends is relatively easy, and establishing genuine and respectful relationships with teachers is the norm [44]

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Faculty of Education | SSRU

2. Happy Schools

School has an impact on students' happiness and their happiness at school has been the subject of recent studies [39–43].

These studies suggest that all students appreciate school environments where bullying is infrequent, making friends is relatively easy, and establishing genuine and respectful relationships with teachers is the norm [44]. A happy school is one where management, teachers, and students are open to innovation, where students value the learning that is necessary for life and acquire self-related skills, and where students highly value teachers because they are knowledgeable, attentive, helpful, sufficiently demanding, and able to explain their subjects well [45].

In fact, a happy school is where students, teachers, administrators, and staff feel happy [46]. A happy school offers a learning environment that prompts students to feel happy and excited about going to school and acquiring knowledge from their teachers [47].

As Mahfooz and Normén-Smith [4] said:

“Happy schools can be sites or spaces to support social cohesion, creating communities across differences. Happy schools, too, can foster a lifelong love of learning through joyful engagement, rather than pressuring academic performance over all else to the detriment of personal well-being, which will in turn undermine learners' engagement in learning. In short, happy schools can provide the safety, support, and positive social interactivity engagement that is needed for students to learn.” (p. 5)

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Literature Review

Identification of Gaps or Issues

Schooling is essential because it prepares students for life both in the labor market and at a personal level; those who spend more time at school tend to be happier than those who spend less time there [32]. A synergy exists between happiness and learning [33]: Happy students achieve more [34–37]. Researchers have looked at happiness as an outcome; indeed, happiness should be an aim of education and a good education should contribute significantly to personal and collective happiness [38]. Our purpose is to study happiness not as an outcome but as a path, a daily experience at school. To do so, we investigated the happy school concept as it is understood by one of the key stakeholders of schools: parents. We have a holistic understanding of school that encompasses not only children—who are the reason for its existence—but also parents, teachers, and non-teaching professionals. Understanding and fostering a happy school requires engaging with the perspectives of all these participants. In the present paper, we focus on the perspectives of parents.

Literature Review

Identification of Gaps or Issues: Happy Schools (2)

We see a consensus when we analyze the main assumptions of the HSP and the results of the other studies. To guide a school through the HSP “is a way of thinking [about] what makes a school a happy place” [4] (p. 9). According to the authors, this project provides tools that help teachers and school leaders understand how to support, monitor, and assess student, classroom, and school-level happiness. These tools were developed to give teachers and school leaders in the Asia-Pacific region on-the-ground tools to implement the framework by prioritizing happiness in their daily teaching and learning experiences.

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Methodology



1. Sample

- Participants/objects and rationale
- Ethical Considerations

2. Research Design

- Qualitative vs quantitative

3. Data Collection and Analysis

- DC tools e.g. questionnaire, interview, observations, etc.
- DA tools e.g. content analysis, statistics, etc.

4. Procedures followed

Sample: Who?



1. Participants

- students

2. Objects

- position papers

Sample (Participants)

In the study reported in this paper, **a sample of 1809 parents of children** aged between 5 and 20 years old, attending eight Portuguese public school clusters (35 schools in total), gave consent to participate in the study.

Among these, **1399 (76%)** completed the questionnaire, while **419 participants** were excluded from the research because their forms were incomplete.

The following socio-demographic measures were collected: **child's age, level of education, and sex.**

6. Materials and Methods

We have conducted a descriptive and correlational exploratory study, given the absence of previous studies about happy schools in Portugal. We chose a quantitative approach and applied a mostly open-ended questionnaire to parents of school children. This resulted in qualitative data that were subjected to content analysis, categorized, and quantified. The resulting quantitative data were then subjected to quantitative analysis.

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The following socio-demographic measures were collected: child's age, level of education, and sex.

Parents were asked to rate how they perceived their children's happiness at school on a Likert scale from 1 (very unhappy) to 5 (very happy).

Sample (Participants)

The ages of the participants' children ranged between 5 and 20 ($x = 11.86$, $SD = 3.25$).

To permit comparisons between age groups, age clusters were formed according to the stages of Portuguese education: **Preschool (3–5)**, **1st Cycle of Basic Education (CBE; 6–10)**, **2nd Cycle of Basic Education (11–12)**, **3rd Cycle of Basic Education (13–15)**, and **Secondary Education (16 and above)**.

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Table 4. Age, sex, and school cluster distribution of the participants' children.

		Sex			
		Female		Male	
		Count	%	Count	%
Age	3 to 5	28	2.0%	29	2.1%
	6 to 10	194	13.9%	185	13.2%
	11 to 12	163	11.7%	163	11.7%
	13 to 15	248	17.7%	201	14.4%
	16 to 20	97	6.9%	91	6.5%

Table 4. Cont.

		Sex			
		Female		Male	
		Count	%	Count	%
School Cluster	AE 1	140	10.0%	131	9.4%
	AE 2	8	0.6%	11	0.8%
	AE 3	95	6.8%	99	7.1%
	AE 4	51	3.6%	39	2.8%
	AE 5	18	1.3%	17	1.2%
	AE 6	90	6.4%	90	6.4%
	AE 7	120	8.6%	107	7.6%
	AE 8	208	14.9%	175	12.5%

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Sample: Rationale & Ethical Considerations

Parents were informed

of the study's objectives and that data would be used only for research purposes.

Their collaboration was **voluntary**, and participants could drop out of the study at any time.

They also answered three open-ended questions: (a) mention three happy moments/events you and your child experienced at your child's school; (b) mention three unhappy moments/events you and your child experienced at your child's school; and (c) in your opinion, what are the characteristics of a happy school? The questionnaire was filled out online. To ensure that only the intended respondents could access the questionnaire, the school director emailed the link to the parents. Parents were informed of the study's objectives and that data would be used only for research purposes. Their collaboration was voluntary, and participants could drop out of the study at any time. The questionnaire's introduction stated that participation was not mandatory and that there would be no consequences for those who chose not to answer. The answers were visible only to the researchers and not to the teachers, thereby avoiding any kind of coercion. The questionnaires were anonymous. Ethical concerns were, therefore, present at all stages of the research process [58]. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix A.

The questionnaire's introduction stated that participation was **not mandatory** and that there would be **no consequences** for those who chose not to answer. The answers were visible only to the researchers and not to the teachers, thereby avoiding any kind of coercion. The questionnaires were **anonymous**. Ethical concerns were, therefore, present at all stages of the research process [58].

Research Design

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Data Collection & Analysis

We chose a quantitative approach and applied a **mostly open-ended questionnaire** to parents of school children.

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In the study reported in this paper, a sample of 1809 parents of children aged between 5 and 20 years old, attending eight Portuguese public school clusters (35 schools in total), gave consent to participate in the study. Among these, 1399 (76%) completed the questionnaire, while 419 participants were excluded from the research because their forms were incomplete.

The following socio-demographic measures were collected: child's age, level of education, and sex.

Parents were asked to rate how they perceived their children's happiness at school on a Likert scale from 1 (very unhappy) to 5 (very happy).

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The following socio-demographic measures were collected: child's age, level of education, and sex.

Parents were asked to rate how they perceived their children's happiness at school on a Likert scale from 1 (very unhappy) to 5 (very happy).

They also answered three open-ended questions: (a) mention three happy moments/events you and your child experienced at your child's school; (b) mention three unhappy moments/events you and your child experienced at your child's school; and (c) in your opinion, what are the characteristics of a happy school? The questionnaire was filled out online. To ensure that only the intended respondents could access the questionnaire, the school director emailed the link to the parents. Parents were informed of the study's objectives and that data would be used only for research purposes. Their collaboration was voluntary, and participants could drop out of the study at any time. The questionnaire's introduction stated that participation was not mandatory and that there would be no consequences for those who chose not to answer. The answers were visible only to the researchers and not to the teachers, thereby avoiding any kind of coercion. The questionnaires were anonymous. Ethical concerns were, therefore, present at all stages of the research process [58]. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix A.

Procedures (DA)

An a priori **category** scheme was constructed based on the 22 variables of the HSP framework [49,59,60]—those presented in **Table 1**. This scheme was applied **to the two open questions related to happiness**.

The open question related to unhappy moments was **coded** based on emergent categories, related to the same framework but with the items reversed.

Assistant Professor Dr Sasiporn Phongploenpis
Faculty of Education | SSRU

The resulting data were predominantly qualitative. An *a priori* category scheme was constructed based on the 22 variables of the HSP framework [49,59,60]—those presented in Table 1. This scheme was applied to the two open questions related to happiness. The open question related to unhappy moments was coded based on emergent categories, related to the same framework but with the items reversed. Only four categories were created: (i) School environment prone to bullying; (ii) Excessive workload and stress due to assessment and evaluation; (iii) Teachers with negative attitudes and attributes; and (iv) Bad relationships with teachers and/or peers. 1399 responses were categorized and coded using MaxQda 11.2.5 (software for qualitative data analysis in academic research) [61]. The qualitative responses were coded according to the 22 previously defined categories. A nominal scale was used to transform those qualitative data into quantitative data. When a parent's answer revealed that the parent valued one of the categories, the category was marked with a 1 (presence/valuing of that category). When this was not evident in the parent's answer, the category was marked with a 0. The resulting quantitative data and the quantitative data stemming from the closed questions were subsequently analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0.0.0. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, including hypothesis testing, were used. This analysis was used to validate (or not) the 22 variables of the HSP framework [49] as they apply to Portuguese parents.

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Results



- Presentation of Research Findings
- Tables, Figures, Graphs, etc.

Sentence starter:

The result section is organized according to the previously defined research questions.

RQ1

7.1. What Are Parents' Perceptions of Their Children's Level of Happiness at School?

Parents assessed their children's happiness at school on a 5-point Likert scale. The result was positive but with a high dispersion ($\bar{x} = 3.98$, $SD = 0.843$), indicating very diverse levels of satisfaction, though most children are considered to be happy at school.

Past Tense

Parents assessed...

..., though most children are considered

Present Tense

The result was...

RQ2

7.2. Do Parents' Perceptions Vary According to Their Children's Age or Gender?

To answer this question, we performed a one-way ANOVA comparing the age groups with regard to the levels of happiness estimated by the parents. We found significant differences ($F = 10.77, p < 0.01$, effect size considering partial eta squared 0.03). Post-hoc Sheffé tests revealed significant differences between younger children (3 to 5 and 6 to 10) and older children (11 and above) as depicted in Table 5 and visually represented in Figure 1.

Past Participle

...comparing the age groups...

Present Participle

*...considering partial eta square
0.03)*

...as depicted in Table 5 and visually represented in Figure 1

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The use of number

($F = 10.77, p < 0.01, \dots 0.03$)

*... young children (3 to 5 and 6 to 10)
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RQ3

7.3. What Are the Most Relevant Dimensions of Happy Experiences Lived Together by Parents and Children at School?

Most parents (89%) referred to at least one happy moment at school with their children.

With regard to that moment, most references were related to “Process” (64%); only about 30% referred to “People,” and very few involved the dimension “Place” (Figure 2).

Be specific (Hedging)

Most parents (89%)...

... **most** references were related to “Process” (64%); only about 30% referred to “People”, and **very few** involved the dimension “Place”

RQ3

Capitalization

...(Table 6), ...

Extracurricular
Activities and School
Events (Process)

Friendships and
Relationships (People,
mentioned by 712 parents)

With regard to the details of parents' accounts of happy experiences they had with their children at their school (Table 6), Extracurricular Activities and School Events (Process) take the lead, being mentioned by 712 parents, and are followed by Friendships and Relationships (People, mentioned by 326 parents), Sense of Achievement and Accomplishment (Process, 198 references), Positive Teacher Attitudes and Attributes (People, mentioned by 158 parents), and Fun and Engaging Teaching and Learning (Process, 138 mentions). Aspects related to learning experiences and relationships are therefore at the forefront of their positive experiences through which families can participate in school. This participation is low [63] except on festive days that schools celebrate, such as end-of-the-year barbecues, as reported here by parents, especially among younger children referring to close relationships. This might help explain the salience of extracurricular activities in parents' accounts.

Fun and Engaging Teaching
and Learning (Process, 138
mentions)

Sense of Achievement and
Accomplishment (Process,
198 references)

Positive Teacher Attitudes
and Attributes (People, 158
parents)

RQ4: Variety of SS

7.4. What Are the Most Relevant Dimensions of Unhappy Experiences Lived by Parents and Their Children at the Children's School?

When we asked parents to recall the unhappy moments at school that their children shared, about 60% did not recall any. When analyzing the specific categories those experiences fall into, People is the most prominent dimension, including Bad relationships with teachers or peers, and Teachers' negative attitudes. Place appears second, with references to an Unsafe school environment prone to bullying. Finally, there were references related to Excessive workload and stress (Table 7).

Complex Sentence

*When we asked parents to recall the unhappy moments at school that their children shared, **about 60% did not recall any.***

*When analyzing the specific categories those experience fall into, **People is the most prominent dimension,** including Bad relationships with teachers or peers, and Teacher's negative attitudes.*

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Simple Sentence

Place appears second, with references to an Unsafe school environment prone to bullying.

Finally, **there were mentions of Process** related to Excessive workload and stress (Table 7)

RQ5: Passive Voice

7.5. *From the Parents' Perspective, What Are the Characteristics of a Happy School?*

When asked about the general characteristics of a happy school, parents placed People in the lead, with 76% indicating this. Processes were referenced by 34% and Places by 37%. As can be seen in Figure 3, the number of references in each category and subcategory is more balanced than for happy experiences, and all the subcategories are represented in at least one parent's answer. Only 6% of parents did not refer to at least one characteristic.

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RQ5: Active Voice

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Discussion

- Interpretation of Findings
- Relation to Previous Research
- Implications and Limitations



Conclusion

- Summary of Key Findings
- Limitations
- Recommendations

Key Findings

Variety of Tenses

Past Tense

We intended to verify whether the framework [49], when constructed in a very different cultural environment, would remain relevant in the Portuguese context. Other studies [22] referred to cultural differences in how these constructs are experienced, which makes this analysis particularly relevant. We have found that, generally, the framework remains relevant for Portuguese parents, although the People and Process dimensions are more salient than the Place dimension. Having confirmed the relevance of these dimensions through a more exploratory study, we now intend to create a closed-question questionnaire exploring these three dimensions (People, Process, and Place) and the twenty-two variables associated with them (Table 1), which can be applied to parents as one of the means of assessing the general level of happiness in a school and identifying key aspects to improve, in order to elevate a school's level of happiness. Also, the fact that we found differences in what parents of children of different age groups value is relevant to targeting the most salient aspects for each age group in interventions. Therefore, we believe that the current study has relevant practical implications.

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Limitations

9. Conclusions

We begin the discussion section by acknowledging the limitations of our study. One such limitation concerns the fact that the current study considered only parents' perspectives. A happy school should consider the perspectives of all major stakeholders—not just parents but also students, teachers, and non-teaching professionals. Therefore, we intend to extend this study to include other perspectives.

One Paragraph: One Idea (Limitations)

Limitation 1: ***One such limitation concerns the fact that the current study considered only parent's perspectives.*** [Topic Sentence] A happy school should consider the perspectives of all major stakeholders...[Supporting Sentence: Explanation]...

Limitations

Also, the fact that the sample was non-probabilistic means that the results cannot be generalized to the Portuguese population. However, the fact that we gathered data from a large number of participants who included parents from all three age groups in non-higher education, via a qualitative questionnaire that allowed participants to express their feelings in their own words, is in itself innovative and valuable. Furthermore, the fact that the distribution of happiness includes several outliers, can lead to difficulties in data interpretation. We chose not to eliminate such outliers, as this study is interested in

One Paragraph: One Idea (Limitations)

Limitation 2: ***Also the fact that the sample was non-probabilistic means that the results cannot be generalized to the Portuguese population*** [Topic Sentence]

However, the fact that we gathered data from a large number of participants who ...is in itself innovative and valuable [Supporting Sentence: Explanation]...

Recommendations

We can conclude that Portuguese parents consider People and Process to be more relevant than Place. Interestingly, students have the same opinion on this matter, as they answered similarly to parents [62]. As we mentioned previously, when drawing a complete picture of a happy school, one should consider the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups. Evaluating the similarities and differences between the perspectives of those groups is a promising avenue for research and is critical to informing policy and practice.

To parents, an unhappy school is one where bullying happens, students have an excessive workload, teachers have negative attitudes and attributes, and bad relationships exist. This is in line with previous findings and the Happy Schools framework.

...**one should consider** the perspectives of multiple stakeholder groups.

Evaluating the similarities and differences between the perspectives of those groups is a promising avenue for research and is critical to informing policy and practice.



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Appendices

- Supplementary Material

Assistant Professor Dr Sasiporn Phongploenpis
Faculty of Education | SSRU

Appendices

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