



# The Relationship between Perceived Happiness and Academic Anxiety among High School Students in Danang City

Nguyen Thi Minh Chau<sup>1</sup>, Dang Quang Nhan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Nguyen Thuong Hien highschool, Vietnam

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<b>Published Online:</b> 10 December 2024	The topic, "The Relationship Between Perceived Happiness and Academic Anxiety Among High School Students in Da Nang City", was chosen to explore the psychological factors influencing students' mental well-being. This relationship can vary depending on individual, cultural, and environmental factors, as well as how each person manages their emotions. Understanding this connection helps improve quality of life and paves the way for developing new psychological intervention methods to enhance overall mental health. The research results indicate a high average level of happiness (75.8%); however, the proportions of students with above-average and high levels of happiness are very low (9.9% and 2.6%, respectively). Meanwhile, above-average and high levels of anxiety are observed in 47% of the students.
<b>Corresponding Author:</b> Nguyen Thi Minh Chau	Based on these findings, recommendations are proposed for measures to foster happiness and reduce stress in the school environment for high school students.
<b>KEYWORDS:</b> Happiness, Anxiety, Perceived Happiness, Anxiety in High School Students, Happiness in High School Students	

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of modern society, the mental well-being of students is gaining increasing attention, particularly at the high school level during adolescence, a time characterized by significant psychological and social changes. Two key psychological factors that significantly influence students' mental health, academic performance, and overall development are happiness and academic anxiety.

Robert A. Cummins (2014), in the study "Understanding the Well-Being of Children and Adolescents Through Homeostatic Theory," approaches the concept of children's happiness by examining their homeostatic balance. The author argues that a significant proportion of adolescents in Western countries face specific mental health issues. In Australia, for example, Sawyer et al. (2000) estimated that approximately 14% of adolescents aged 13–17 could be classified as having mental health issues, as identified by the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1991). This tool is used to assess behavioral and emotional problems as well as competencies. However, it heavily emphasizes measuring illness through constructs such as anxiety and aggression. Similar findings have been reported

for American youth (e.g., Keyes, 2006). The authors of these and similar reports refer to their results in terms of "well-being." The theory of subjective homeostasis (Cummins, 1995, 2010) suggests that, similar to how the body regulates temperature, the stability of subjective well-being is controlled and maintained by automatic neural and psychological processes.

According to Aldwin, C.M. (1994), and García-Fernández, Inglés, et al. (2008), academic anxiety is defined as a type of response triggered by stressful situations in school that students perceive as threatening and/or dangerous (Gurung, M., Chansatitporn, et al., 2020). This response includes cognitive symptoms (distressing thoughts and fear), physiological symptoms (heightened arousal), and behavioral symptoms (avoidance and/or escape behaviors).

Currently, academic-related anxiety and stress among students range from 17% to 20%, manifesting in various physical, psychological, and behavioral symptoms (Anthony Yeo, 1993). According to a study by Nguyen Thi Van (2018), academics are the primary and most frequent cause of anxiety and stress in students, followed by other factors such as family, the students themselves, and social relationships.

## 2. SUBJECTS AND RESEARCH METHODS

### 2.1. Subjectives

Variables		Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	402	42,5
	Female	523	55,3
	Others	21	2,2
Grade	10	319	33,7
	11	330	34,9
	12	297	31,4
Academic performance	Very good	440	46,5
	Good	406	42,9
	Satisfactory	86	9,1
	Unsatisfactory	14	1,5

A total of 1,058 students from grades 10 to 12 in Da Nang City participated in the survey. The total number of students from grades 10 to 12 in Da Nang City was 1,058. During the information processing phase, the research team excluded 111 students for not meeting the study's requirements. Therefore, the final sample size for drawing scientific conclusions was 946 students.

In terms of gender, there were 402 male students (42.5%) and 523 female students (55.4%).

Regarding grade level, students from grades 10 to 12 were surveyed, with the highest proportion coming from grade 11 (34.9%), followed by grade 10 (33.7%) and grade 12 (31.4%).

Regarding academic performance, the highest proportion of students achieved very good results, accounting for 46.5%. This was followed by students with good results (42.9%), students with satisfactory results (9.1%), and students with unsatisfactory results (1.5%).

### 2.2. Research Methodology

**Research Method:** Survey with a Questionnaire The questionnaire consists of 1 question and 16 statements. The official survey was conducted online via Google Forms.  
**Scoring Method:** For the level of agreement regarding measures that contribute to increasing perceived happiness and reducing stress, each response corresponds to the following score: Strongly disagree - 1, Disagree - 2, Neutral - 3, Agree - 4, Strongly agree - 5.

#### - Psychometric Method

+ The happiness scale by Martin Seligman, consisting of 20 statements. The structure of the scale includes: Positive emotions (P), Engagement (E), Relationships (R), Meaning (M), and Accomplishment (A).

#### \* Scoring Method

Each response corresponds to the following score: Strongly agree - 5, Agree - 4, Neutral - 3, Disagree - 2, Strongly disagree - 1.

#### \* Key to the Scale:

- $P = \text{Average}(P1 + P2 + P3)$

- $E = \text{Average}(E1 + E2 + E3)$
- $R = \text{Average}(R1 + R2 + R3)$
- $M = \text{Average}(M1 + M2 + M3)$
- $A = \text{Average}(A1 + A2 + A3)$

\* **Happiness Index** = Average (P1 + P2 + P3 + E1 + E2 + E3 + R1 + R2 + R3 + M1 + M2 + M3 + A1 + A2 + A3 + 16)

#### \* Classification of Happiness Level

The level of perceived happiness is classified as follows:

- $< \text{Average} - 2SD$ : Low level of happiness
- $\text{Average} - 2SD \leq M \leq \text{Average} - 1SD$ : Below average level of happiness
- $\text{Average} - 1SD \leq M \leq \text{Average} + 2SD$ : Average level of happiness
- $\text{Average} + 1SD \leq M \leq \text{Average} + 2SD$ : Above average level of happiness
- $> \text{Average} + 2SD$ : High level of happiness

#### B.N. Philips' Anxiety Scale

This scale consists of 58 questions about situations that may cause anxiety in students at school, divided into 8 factors:

- **General Academic Anxiety:** Questions 2, 3, 7, 12, 16, 21, 23, 26, 28, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58.
- **Social Stress:** Questions 5, 10, 15, 20, 24, 30, 33, 36, 39, 42, 44.
- **Frustration in Achievement Needs:** Questions 1, 3, 6, 11, 17, 19, 25, 29, 32, 35, 38, 41, 43.
- **Self-Expression Anxiety:** Questions 27, 31, 34, 37, 40, 45.
- **Anxiety Related to Knowledge Testing Situations:** Questions 2, 7, 12, 16, 21, 26.
- **Worry About Not Meeting Others' Expectations:** Questions 3, 8, 13, 17, 22.
- **Low Stress Resilience:** Questions 9, 14, 18, 23, 28.
- **Teacher-Student Relationship Anxiety:** Questions 2, 6, 11, 32, 35, 41, 44, 47.

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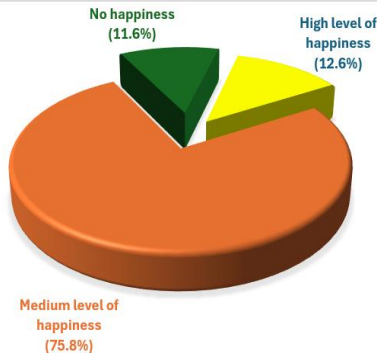
**Requirements for Students:** Students are required to answer the questions honestly, quickly, and without

overthinking. If students agree, please mark “+” in the "Yes" column; if they disagree, mark “-” in the "No" column.

## 3. RESULTS

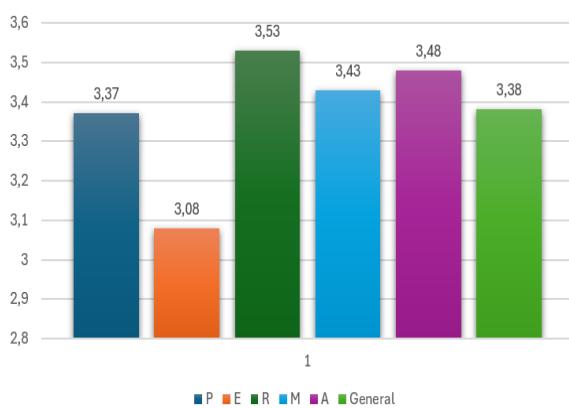
### 3.1. General Evaluation of the Current State of Perceived Happiness Among High School Students

Chart 3.1. Perceived Happiness Levels Among High School Students



The research findings (Table 3.1) indicate that the largest group of students fall within the average happiness level, comprising 717 students (75.8%). This is followed by students who report a high level of happiness, with 119 students (12.6%), and the group who feel unhappy, with 110 students (11.6%). Overall, a significant majority of students (88.4%) report having an average or higher level of perceived happiness..

Chart 3.2. Aspects of Perceived Happiness Among High School Students



The research findings (Chart 3.2) reveal that the highest average score for perceived happiness is in the "relationships" aspect (Mean = 3.58), while the "engagement" aspect has the lowest average score (Mean = 3.08). To better understand these differences, the research team will conduct a detailed analysis of each aspect of perceived happiness to provide further clarification.

### 3.2. Manifestations of Perceived Happiness Among High School Students

Table 3.1. Manifestations of Perceived Happiness Among High School Students

1. Positive emotions		Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Ranking
P1	When studying at school, you feel happy.	3,60	0,930	1
P2	When studying at school, you feel energized.	3,21	0,919	3
P3	When studying at school, you feel satisfied.	3,32	0,917	2
<b>Total Mean and SD</b>		<b>3,37</b>	<b>0,788</b>	
2. Engagement		Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Ranking
E1	You invest a lot of effort in your studies.	3,30	0,958	1
E2	You feel interested in your studies at school.	3,24	0,921	2
E3	You get so absorbed in studying that you lose track of time.	2,69	1,005	3
<b>Total Mean and SD</b>		<b>3,08</b>	<b>0,729</b>	
3. Relationships		Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Thứ bậc
R1	At school, you receive help from others when you need it.	3,62	0,953	1
R2	At school, you feel cared for.	3,37	0,989	3

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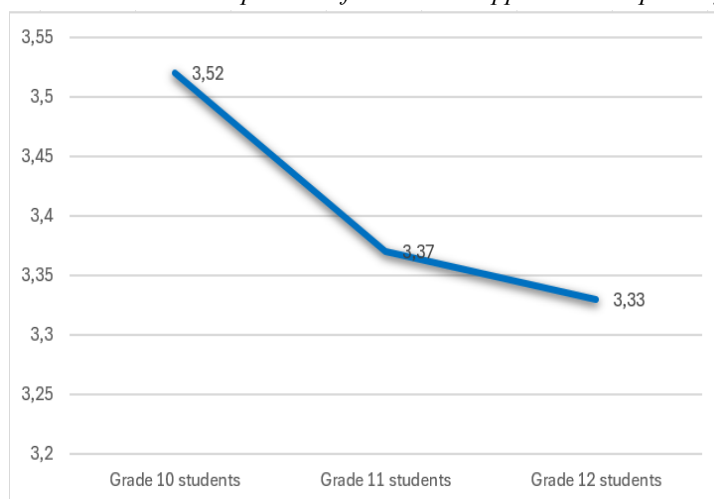
R3	You are satisfied with your personal relationships at school.	3,60	0,986	2
<b>Total Mean and SD</b>		<b>3,53</b>	<b>0,839</b>	
<b>4. Meaning</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (SD)</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
M1	You feel that your life has direction and meaning.	3,40	1,011	2
M2	Studying at school creates value for your life.	3,59	0,962	1
M3	You have developed in line with the goals you set.	3,29	0,918	3
<b>Total Mean and SD</b>		<b>3,43</b>	<b>0,818</b>	
<b>5. Achievement</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation (SD)</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
A1	When studying at school, you feel that you are making progress.	3,52	0,911	2
A2	You achieve the academic goals you set.	3,33	0,886	3
A3	You complete your academic responsibilities.	3,59	0,927	1
<b>Total Mean and SD</b>		<b>3,48</b>	<b>0,784</b>	

In terms of positive emotions, students report feeling the happiest while studying at school, with a mean score of 3.60. Regarding engagement, they put forth the most effort in their studies at school, scoring an average of 3.30. When it comes to relationships, students feel that they receive support from others when needed, achieving a mean of 3.62. In the aspect of meaning, students believe that their school studies bring value to their lives, reflected in a mean score of 3.59. Finally, in terms of achievement, students express a strong sense of completing their academic responsibilities, also with a mean score of 3.59.

**3.3. Comparison of Students' Perceived Happiness by Gender, Grade Level, School Type, Academic Performance, Place of Birth, and Family Monthly Income**

The results of the ANOVA analysis indicate that there is no significant difference in the level of happiness among students based on their place of birth. However, significant differences in happiness levels were observed in relation to grade level, school type, academic performance, and monthly family income.

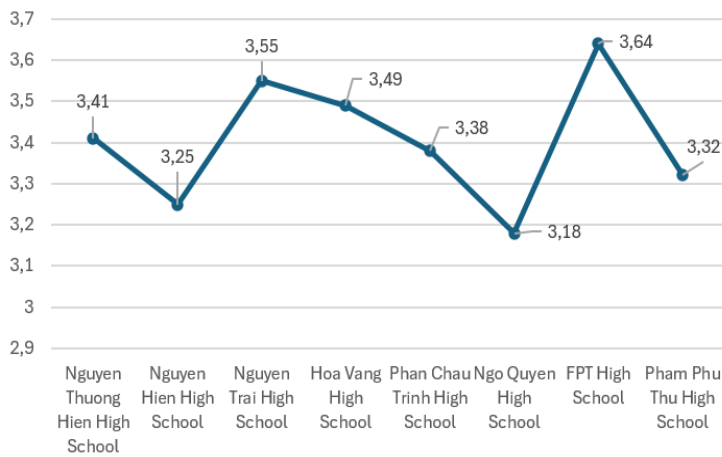
Chart 3.3: Comparison of Students' Happiness Perception by Grade Level



The results show that **Grade 10 students** have the highest level of perceived happiness, with an average score of **3.52**. In contrast, **Grade 12 students** report the lowest level of happiness, with an average score of **3.33**. This difference is statistically significant, with a confidence level of **p = 0.001**.

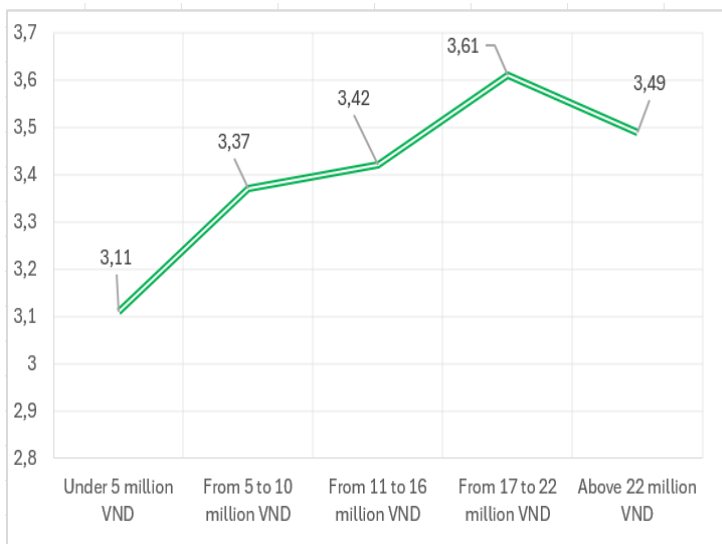
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Chart 3.4. Comparison of students' happiness perceptions based on school criteria



Students at FPT High School reported the highest level of happiness (Mean score = 3.64), while students at Ngo Quyen High School reported the lowest level of happiness (Mean score = 3.18). This difference is statistically significant with a confidence level of  $p = 0.001$ .

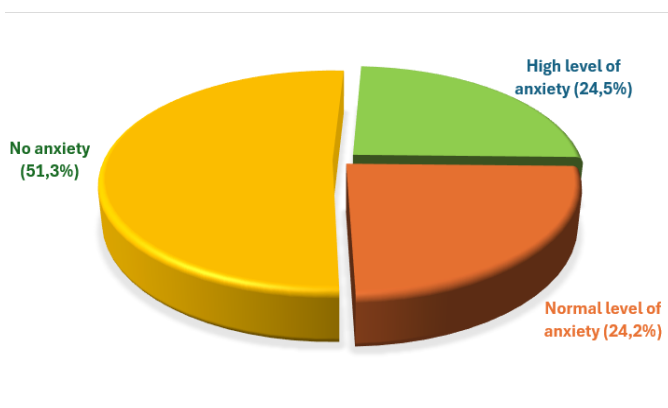
Chart 3.5. Comparison of students' happiness perceptions based on parents' monthly income criteria



Students whose parents have a monthly income of 17–22 million VND reported the highest level of happiness (Mean score = 3.61), while students whose parents earn less than 5 million VND per month reported the lowest level of happiness (Mean score = 3.11). This difference is statistically significant with a confidence level of  $p = 0.001$ .

### 3.4. General Assessment of High School Students' Academic Anxiety

Chart 3.6. The Level of School Anxiety among High School Students



The research results, as shown in Figure 3.6, indicate that out of a total of 946 students who participated in the test, 485 students (53.0%) reported experiencing no school-related anxiety. In contrast, 229 students (24.2%) reported higher-than-normal levels of anxiety, while 232 students (24.5%) experienced high levels of anxiety.

**Table 3.2. Anxiety Levels of High School Students Across Different Factors**

Anxiety	No Anxiety		Higher-than-Normal Anxiety		High-Level Anxiety	
	Frequencies	Percentage (%)	Frequencies	Percentage (%)	Frequencies	Percentage (%)
1. General academic anxiety	537	56,8	194	20,5	215	22,7
2. Social stress	605	64,0	151	16,0	190	20,1
3. Disappointment from unmet achievement needs	541	57,2	250	26,4	155	16,4
4. Self-expression anxiety	552	58,4	266	28,1	128	13,5
5. Anxiety related to knowledge testing situations	497	52,5	336	35,5	113	11,9
6. Anxiety from not meeting others' expectations	509	53,8	250	26,4	187	19,8
7. Low resilience to physiological stress	492	52,0	339	35,8	115	12,2
8. Anxiety related to teacher-student relationships	538	56,9	198	20,9	210	22,2

The research results presented in Table 3.2 indicate notable differences among various factors in terms of both levels and manifestations of anxiety. Specifically, regarding general academic anxiety, of the 946 students studied, 20.5% experience anxiety at a level higher than normal, while 22.7% of students report experiencing high levels of anxiety.

Social stress, particularly concerning peer relationships, significantly impacts the emotions of high school students. According to reports, 64.0% of students experience no anxiety, 16.0% report anxiety at levels higher than normal, and 20.1% experience high levels of anxiety.

The anxiety stemming from unmet achievement needs creates a challenging emotional environment that hinders students' desire for success and their ability to perform well academically. According to the data, 57.2% of students report feeling no anxiety, while 26.4% experience anxiety at levels that are higher than normal, and 16.4% report experiencing high levels of anxiety. This anxiety may arise from the pressures to achieve high grades, which are often imposed by the educational environment itself. Teachers have high expectations for students to excel academically, and parents also desire their children to perform well in order to "bring honor to the family". Many students aspire to achieve high academic results to earn the approval and affection of their parents, teachers, and peers. In an interview, V.H.G.H., a female student in grade 10 at Nguyen Thuong Hien High School, shared, "What worries me the most about my studies is the overwhelming amount of knowledge, the challenging

curriculum, and my ineffective study methods. These factors make it difficult to understand the lessons and maintain concentration. Teachers can easily apply pressure on students. My family places too much importance on grades without considering my desires, which adds to my pressure".

Anxiety related to meeting others' expectations is quite common among students. Specifically, 26.4% of students experience anxiety at levels that are higher than usual, while 19.8% report high levels of anxiety. This indicates that a significant number of students are concerned about how others evaluate their academic performance, actions, and self-worth, leading to a fear of judgment. Consequently, the pressure to achieve high grades and academic success largely stems from external expectations. As a result, 67.5% of students report, "I am afraid to speak in class because I worry about saying something wrong," and 55.2% express, "I find it difficult to achieve the high grades my parents expect".

A significant percentage of students experience anxiety related to knowledge testing situations: 35.5% exhibit anxiety levels that are higher than usual, while 11.9% face high levels of stress. Students often feel anxious in various situations, such as when the teacher announces a test to assess their understanding and retention of the material. They may also feel uneasy when answering questions or completing exercises in class, worry after finishing a workout, be unsure whether their answers are correct, and frequently wish they could be less nervous when asked questions or tested on their homework.



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The anxiety related to teacher relationships has a minimal impact on students' emotions at school and their academic performance. Specifically, 20.9% of students show higher-than-usual anxiety levels, while 12.2% experience high levels of anxiety.

Anxiety related to the ability to cope with physiological stress affects students in the following ways: 52.0% of students experience no anxiety, 35.8% have anxiety levels that are higher than normal, and 12.2% experience high levels of anxiety.

Consequently, anxiety stemming from unmet expectations of others, difficulty in coping with physiological

stress, and knowledge assessment situations are significant sources of stress for students.

### 3.5. Comparison of Students' Perceived Happiness by Gender, Grade Level, School Type, Academic Performance, Place of Birth, and Family Monthly Income

A question arises regarding whether the level of academic anxiety differs among students with varying demographic characteristics. To address this question, the research team conducted an ANOVA analysis, examining independent variables such as grade level, type of school, place of birth, and monthly parental income. The results obtained (see Table 3.3) are as follows:

**Table 3.3. Comparison of the difference in academic anxiety levels among students by grade level**

Grade	Factors of academic anxiety		
	Social stress	Self-expression anxiety	Anxiety from not meeting others' expectations
10	4,88	6,75	2,27
11	4,55	6,53	2,26
12	5,09	7,20	2,53

**Regarding grade levels:** There is a significant difference in the levels of anxiety related to social stress, anxiety related to self-expression needs, and anxiety related to unmet expectations from others among students in different grade levels. Students in grade 12 have higher levels of anxiety related to social stress (mean = 5.09), anxiety related

to self-expression needs (mean = 7.20), and anxiety related to unmet expectations from others (mean = 2.53) compared to students in grades 10 and 11. This difference is statistically significant with confidence levels of  $p = 0.018$ ,  $p = 0.013$ , and  $p = 0.020$ , respectively.

**Table 3.4. Comparison of differences in school anxiety levels among students based on school criteria**

School criteria	Factors of school anxiety						
	General school anxiety	Social stress	Disappointment from unfulfilled achievement needs	Anxiety related to knowledge testing situations	Anxiety from not meeting others' expectations	Low physiological stress resilience	"Anxiety related to relationships with teachers"
HS Nguyen Thuong Hien	8,80	4,94	6,88	3,31	2,32	2,46	4,22
HS Nguyen Hien	8,85	4,58	6,87	3,47	2,52	2,63	4,05
HS Nguyen Trai	8,57	4,69	6,95	3,31	2,29	2,29	4,26
HS Hoa Vang	8,61	5,21	7,11	3,15	2,29	2,27	4,42
HS Phan Chau Trinh	8,78	4,89	6,84	3,24	2,27	2,19	4,32

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HS Ngo Quyen	9,07	5,36	7,50	3,41	2,91	2,55	4,64
HS FPT	6,01	3,71	4,81	2,03	1,66	1,53	3,25
HS Pham Phu Thu	9,93	5,53	7,32	3,69	2,65	2,87	4,72

Considering factors of academic anxiety, including general academic anxiety, social stress, frustration from unmet achievement needs, anxiety related to testing situations, anxiety from failing to meet others' expectations, anxiety due to low resilience to physiological stress, and anxiety linked to teacher relationships in different schools. Regarding general academic anxiety (Mean = 9.93), anxiety

from unmet achievement needs (Mean = 7.32), anxiety related to testing situations (Mean = 3.69), and anxiety due to low resilience to physiological stress (Mean = 2.87), Pham Phu Thu High School recorded the highest mean scores. These differences are statistically significant with a confidence level of  $p = 0.000 - 0.005$ .

Table 3.5. Comparison of the difference in school anxiety levels among students based on parents' income level

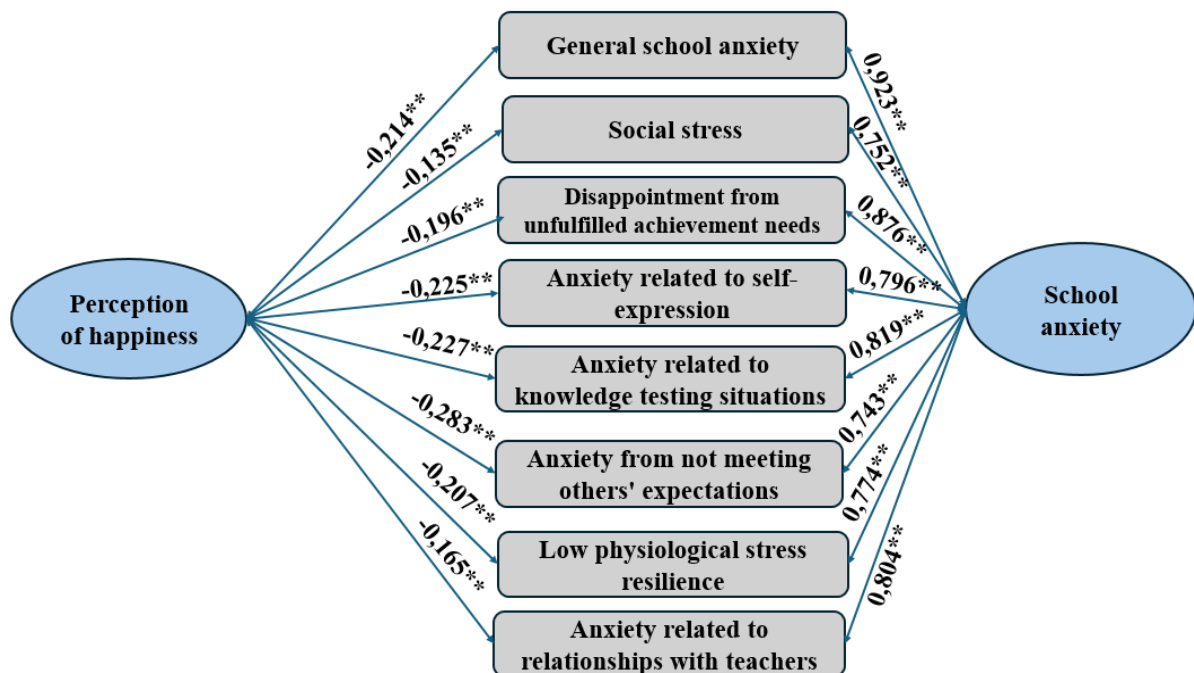
Parents' monthly income level	Factors of school anxiety		
	General school anxiety	Anxiety related to knowledge testing situations	Low physiological stress resilience
Under 5 million	9,30	3,51	2,47
From 5 to 10 million	9,22	3,59	2,61
From 11 to 16 million	8,32	3,16	2,38
From 17 to 22 million	7,80	2,84	1,98
Above 22 million	8,15	2,85	2,23

Regarding general academic anxiety, the highest levels were observed among students from households with an income below 5 million VND (Mean = 9.30). In contrast, anxiety related to testing situations was most prevalent among students with an income between 5 and 10 million VND

(Mean = 3.59). Additionally, anxiety stemming from low resilience to physiological stress was also highest in the 5-10 million VND income group (Mean = 2.61). These differences are statistically significant, with confidence levels ranging from  $p = 0.000$  to  $p = 0.037$ .

3.6. The Correlation Between Students' Perceived Happiness and Academic Anxiety

Diagram 1. The Correlation Between Students' Perceived Happiness and Academic Anxiety



(Note: \*\* $p < 0,01$ ; \* $p < 0,05$ )



Considering various factors of academic anxiety, including general academic anxiety, social stress, anxiety from unmet achievement needs, anxiety related to self-expression, anxiety in testing situations, anxiety from failing to meet others' expectations, low resilience to physiological stress, and anxiety linked to teacher relationships across different schools: General academic anxiety has the highest mean (Mean = 0.923), followed by anxiety from unmet achievement needs (Mean = 0.876), anxiety in testing situations (Mean = 0.819), anxiety linked to self-expression (Mean = 0.796), and anxiety related to teacher relationships (Mean = 0.804). Factors such as social stress (Mean = 0.752), low resilience to physiological stress (Mean = 0.774), and anxiety from failing to meet others' expectations (Mean = 0.743) scored lower. In conclusion, general academic anxiety is identified as the most significant factor influencing students' perceived happiness. On the other hand, anxiety stemming from failing to meet others' expectations has no noticeable impact on students' happiness.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Research on the perception of happiness and school anxiety among high school students is not a new topic, but the history of this issue has not been extensively and comprehensively studied, especially in terms of practical solutions to increase happiness and reduce school anxiety for high school students. The results of this study have clarified the following key issues:

The level of happiness perception among high school students in Da Nang city is mostly average.

When researching in 8 areas, the authors found that nearly 50% of high school students exhibited anxiety levels higher than normal or at a high level, which is concerning.

The main causes related to happiness perception and school anxiety are: general school anxiety, social stress, disappointment from unmet achievement needs, anxiety related to self-expression, anxiety related to knowledge testing situations, anxiety from not meeting others' expectations, low physiological stress resilience, and anxiety related to teacher-student relationships. When facing stress pressure, students do not have appropriate ways to cope and overcome it. Timely intervention measures are needed to help students overcome psychological difficulties, maintain a positive attitude, and achieve good academic results. The organization of teaching, learning, and activities in the school environment needs to be changed to reduce anxiety for students, helping to balance academic activities and recreation. Through the survey results, the study contributes to the general understanding of mental health among students, aiming to build and develop suitable healthcare programs to improve and enhance the quality of life.

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