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Life Satisfaction of Secondary School Students: A Comparative Study with respect to Gender, Income and Educational Status

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ABSTRACT

Life satisfaction is an important cognitive indicator of adolescents' subjective well-being and reflects how positively they evaluate their lives in relation to their needs, expectations, relationships, and circumstances. The present study examined the life satisfaction of secondary and senior-secondary school students with respect to gender, family income, educational status, and socioeconomic status in Darbhanga district, Bihar. A quantitative, descriptive-comparative design employing the Normative Survey Method was adopted. The sample comprised 400 students, including 200 boys and 200 girls enrolled in Classes IX to XII, selected purposively from schools affiliated with recognised educational boards. Life satisfaction was assessed using the Satisfaction with Life Scale developed by Diener et al. (1985), while socioeconomic status was measured through the Socio-Economic Status Scale developed by Upadhyay and Saxena (2008). The findings revealed that girls reported significantly greater life satisfaction than boys. Students from high-income families demonstrated significantly higher life satisfaction than those from low-income families. The higher educational-status group also exhibited greater life satisfaction than the lower educational-status group. Similarly, students belonging to the high socioeconomic-status group reported substantially higher life satisfaction than their low-SES counterparts. Thus, all the hypotheses formulated for the investigation were supported. The findings demonstrate that adolescent life satisfaction is associated with an interconnected set of personal, economic, educational, and social conditions. The study highlights the need for school-based counselling, financial and academic support, career guidance, mentoring, and equitable access to learning resources, particularly for boys and students from economically, educationally, and socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Keywords: Life satisfaction, Gender, Income, Educational Status, Secondary School

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most crucial factors of a person's mental and emotional health is their life satisfaction. It is a person's subjective judgment of the goodness of his/her life based on his/her own standards. Life satisfaction differs from temporary happiness or mood, as it involves a more enduring appraisal about the extent that one's needs, aspirations, expectations and life circumstances are being met. It has been concluded by Diener et al. (1985) that life satisfaction is the cognitive aspect of subjective well-being, separate from positive and negative emotional experiences. Therefore, it shows both the positive and the negative appraisal of life experiences of people, not the feelings at a given moment. The concept has been explored primarily in adults; however, there is increasing focus on the life satisfaction of children and adolescents. Adolescents are able to make sound judgments about their lives, as well as their relationships in key areas like family, friends, school, self, and living environment (Huebner, 2004). Global life satisfaction is an individual person's general evaluation of life, while domain-specific life satisfaction is satisfaction with specific domains. In secondary schools, satisfaction with family relationship, peer interaction, academic experiences, school climate, personal abilities, physical appearance and future opportunities can combine to form a composite score of life satisfaction.

Most secondary schools are at the age of adolescence, which is a time of adult life when physical, cognitive, emotional and social growth and development is rapid. This is a time when students' sense of self, identity, interpersonal relationships, emotional regulation, expectations for learning, and plans for their future change. They also have to deal with the burden of learning, exams, expectations of parents, competition with peers, career and work uncertainty, and changing roles in the social sphere. These developmental needs could either foster maturity and competence or contribute to stress, insecurity, anxiety and dissatisfaction. Life satisfaction is particularly important during adolescence as it serves as a positive marker for students' personal, family, social and school adjustment.

Life satisfaction studies are not limited to the detection of psychological issues. When a student is not exhibiting symptoms of anxiety or depression, that does not necessarily mean that he or she has a satisfying and meaningful life. In contrast, pupils who report high levels of life satisfaction tend to have more positive emotional, interpersonal and learning characteristics. Increased life satisfaction among adolescents is associated with positive self-perception, supportive relationships, adaptive behaviour, hope, academic engagement, and positive psychological adjustment. However, lower levels of life satisfaction have been linked to loneliness, emotional problems, behavioural issues, school disengagement, and risk behaviors (Proctor et al., 2009). Life satisfaction is therefore considered to be a significant strength-based measure of positive young development and not just the lack of psychological distress. The role of the school is very significant in the life of adolescents as they spend a significant portion of their time in school. How they interact with teachers, their peers, school leadership and school content affects their self-esteem, belonging, achievement drive, and future outlook. Piko (2023) found the following correlates of adolescents' life satisfaction: family support, socioeconomic self-assessment, satisfaction with school, future orientation, and peer support. So, the life satisfaction of secondary school students is not just an individual psychological trait, it is a product of the interplay of personal traits with family, school, economic, social and cultural conditions.

Gender is considered one of the important demographic variables related to the level of adolescent life satisfaction. Adolescent experiences may differ between boys and girls due to differences in their biological development, gender-role expectations, socialisation experiences, personal freedom, family burdens, social and educational engagement, and body-image issues. Girls can be subjected to more limitations, safety issues, appearance issues, and also expected to take on more family responsibilities, whereas boys can be pressured to be independent, successful, have good self-control and to be economically capable. Gendered experiences can shape students' evaluations of their lives.

Not all studies have found differences between genders in adolescent life satisfaction, however. The results of the studies conducted by Dew and Huebner (1994) and Piko (2023) did not present significant differences in global life satisfaction between gender and boys and female middle and high-school students, respectively. Other evidence from around the world suggests that differences in gender become apparent over time, depending on age, social context, geographic location and historical period. In the region of early-to-middle adolescence, girls were often less satisfied with their life satisfaction than boys, with some regions having more negative differences in satisfaction than others, and some having more positive differences than others (World Happiness Report, 2024; Marquez et al., 2024). Such conflicting results highlight the importance of conducting comparative studies in different cultural contexts instead of making blanket comparisons that the one gender may be more satisfied than the other. Another important contextual factor is family income which can have an impact on students' life satisfaction. The level of income has a significant impact on the amount of material resources available to a family. Pupils from more affluent backgrounds may have more access to the good food, health care, safe homes, books, digital devices, private tuition, recreational activities, transport and supportive learning environments. These can alleviate daily stress and provide a chance for learning and growth. Students who come from low-income families, on the other hand, can face financial insecurity, poor quality educational resources, crowded living conditions, poor health resources, and demands for domestic work. These conditions can cause stress and limit their full involvement in the learning and social experiences. However, income-satisfaction link isn't solely mechanical in nature. A person may not be satisfied with a high income, and can be satisfied with a low income. Income has psychological effects that are linked to family relationships, a sense of deprivation, comparing one's situation with others, financial security, cultural norms, and how available income is used. Levin et al. (2011) conducted a multilevel study of adolescents in 35 countries and found that there was a relationship between life satisfaction and family affluence and a wider economic environment; however, the relationship varied by gender and country. The current state of international research also supports our view that satisfaction with material well-being and material deprivation are more important to adolescent well-being than income alone (Marquez et al., 2024). Comparing students from different income groups is therefore essential, whilst acknowledging that social and psychological processes help to explain the impact of economic conditions on well-being.

Another dimension related to students' life satisfaction is educational status. Ed. status in secondary school studies could be represented by grade level, educational achievement, school type, educational stream or parental ed. status. The indicators are each a different element of the students' educational situation and must be clearly explained in the study's methodology. Favorable outcomes, such as high academic achievement, can boost students' confidence, social recognition, future outlook, and self-competence, while successive academic failures can create frustration, anxiety, low self-esteem and doubt about future prospects. There is evidence that achievement and life satisfaction can be related. However, if students achieve well they can be more satisfied as achievement gives them recognition and a sense of competence. Meanwhile, when students are happy, they are likely to be more motivated, more focused, more engaged, and more persistent, and thus more likely to achieve better grades later. This bi-directional relationship between life satisfaction and school achievement has been confirmed in longitudinal studies of early adolescents (Ng et al., 2015). This does not apply evenly, though, as it can be influenced by students' expectations, family environment, school culture, parental expectations, and educational opportunities.

Parental education levels may also affect adolescents' life satisfaction, as it could impact the intellectual climate of the family, parental attitudes, communication, parental guidance and education, and cultural and social resources. Well educated parents

have a better opportunity to help their children study, comprehend the academic needs of their children, and give them information about future education. However, very high expectations of the parent can also put pressure on where students are not achieving to a level that is expected. In addition, Crede et al. (2015) identified that the educational level of mothers also moderated the association between academic achievement and adolescents' life satisfaction, suggesting that educational status can affect the significance given to academic success in addition to just opportunity. These factors of gender, income and education should not be considered as mutually exclusive. Their actions can be intertwined and interdependent. The effects of family income can be different depending on the education level of the parents, for instance, and the value of education resources can be different for boys and girls due to gender-based expectations or opportunities, for example. Likewise, pupils within the same school will have different educational experiences due to their social position, family resources and cultural background. Studies on Indian adolescents have shown that academic achievement continues to be linked with social status even after controlling for the school environment, suggesting the need to evaluate academic outcomes both within and beyond an economic framework (Kunnel John et al., 2020).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Divya and Paul, (2016) studied the socioeconomic status and well-being of early adolescents. The sample comprised of 280 students (140 boys, 140 girls) between the ages of 14 and 16 years studying in Tamil and English medium government and private schools in Chennai and Madurai. The researchers employed Socio-Economic Status Scale and the Personal Well-Being Index–School Children. The results showed that there was no significant socioeconomic status correlation with students' well-being. The differences between students from high, middle and low socioeconomic groups were also statistically insignificant. But there was a large gender gap, with girls experiencing greater well-being than boys. The study, which focused on the well-being index: sat life as a whole; standard of living; achievement; relationships; safety; community; and future security, is relevant to the present investigation. It implies that gender can also produce a difference in satisfaction with life even if there is no significant difference between the socioeconomic factors.

Rath and Patra (2018) studied the influence of parental attachment and gender on the life satisfaction of high-school students. The sample consisted 240 students, 120 boys and 120 girls from Classes IX and X of six schools in urban areas of Khordha district, Odisha. These participants were aged between 14 and 15 years and the purposive sampling technique was used to select them. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment was administered as well as the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale. High attachment with parents had significant higher satisfaction with family, friends, school, living environment, and life than Low attachment with parents. Overall life satisfaction and satisfaction with friends, self and living environment were not significantly different between boys and girls, except that girls were more satisfied with their family and school than boys. The study shows that gender may be a domain specific issue and that family relationship can be more significant than gender on the life satisfaction level.

Sunil Kumar and Babu (2023) conducted a study on the life satisfaction of higher secondary class students with regard to gender and residential status of the parents. Out of higher secondary schools 220 students comprising 106 boys and 114 girls were selected by random sampling. Of the participants, 78 came with non-resident Indian parents and 142 with parents that were in India. The Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (SLS) developed by a researcher was used which measures satisfaction of students along 11 domains. Relatively few students had average or below-average levels of life satisfaction and relatively few students had above-average levels of life satisfaction. The results showed that there is a strong gender difference, as girls were more satisfied with life than boys were. But parent's residential status did not significantly affect life satisfaction. The study confirms the need to consider gender as a comparative factor and reveals that a family's residence or work situation does not necessarily affect the students' subjective perceptions of life.

Mistry, Banerjee and Adhikari (2024) compared the levels of achievement motivation, self-concept and academic life satisfaction among male and female school-going adolescent students of class XI and XII of government schools in Khordadad, Jalalabad, and Takharian districts of North-Western Province, Afghanistan. The study used descriptive survey research design, involving 1,027 students from Classes IX and X of Bengali speaking schools from South 24 Parganas district, West Bengal, who were in the age group 14–16 years. The researchers adopted three instruments for data collection: the Deo–Mohan Achievement Motivation Scale, Self-Concept Inventory and Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale. Pupils overall had high achievement motivation, positive self-concept and high academic life satisfaction. In all three variables female students achieved significantly higher scores than male students, including life satisfaction. The results revealed that gender is related to students' attitudes to their academic and personal lives. This study is important as it relates life satisfaction to educational factors like achievement motivation and self-concept.

Kumari and Ali (2025) investigated the Gender and Grade differences of subjective wellbeing among Secondary-school students. 300 students were selected with a purposive sampling technique, which included 160 girls, 140 boys, matriculation level 178, and intermediate/higher-secondary level 122. Use of standardised measures was employed to capture life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect. Female students had significantly higher levels of life satisfaction than male students, but also higher levels of negative affect. There was also a significant difference between educational levels, with the satisfaction of matriculation students being higher than that of intermediate students. The researchers suggested that this was due to heightened academic expectations, competitive tests, career choices, and more educational duties among

intermediate students. There is direct support provided in the study for gender and educational status comparisons of life satisfaction.

Dew and Huebner (1994) examined the quality of life that 222 adolescents perceive in U.S. schools in Grades 8, 10, and 12. The Students' Life Satisfaction Scale and measures of self-concept were used to examine the demographic and psychological correlates of life satisfaction. There was no significant relation found between age, grade, and gender with life satisfaction across the globe. But there was a moderate association between socio-economic status and life satisfaction. The family-related self-concept was found to be a better predictor of satisfaction than academic and peer-related self-concept. The results indicated that the economic conditions and family experiences could be more significant for adolescents' life satisfaction than gender and educational grade respectively. The study also provides examples of the fact that some differences in the population can vary from one to another.

Levin et al. (2011) examined family affluence, national income, income inequality and life satisfaction in 13-year-old boys and girls. The researchers looked at data from 58,352 adolescents in 35 countries, gathered from the Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children survey in 2006. The following statistical analyses were conducted: Multilevel linear and logistic regression. The results showed that family affluence, even after controlling for family structure, was significantly related to adolescent life satisfaction. There were more socioeconomic inequalities in economically poorer countries and countries with unequal income distribution. Relationships were found to be curvilinear and varying by national context. The study found that household economic resources and economic situation all influences adolescent life satisfaction. It has good international support for comparison with students of other income groups.

Crede et al. (2015) assessed academic success and life satisfaction of 411 high-school students in Germany. Student academic performance was used as a proxy for student academic achievement (GPAs in 5 subjects) and mothers and fathers' education was used as a proxy for family socioeconomic status. The researchers examined whether parental education was a moderator of the links between academic achievement and life satisfaction. The relationship between mothers' education and children's age was found to be statistically significant while the relationship between fathers' education and children's age was not. The positive correlation between life satisfaction and academic achievement was observed only among the students whose mothers had the same or higher educational level as the students were expected to have. The results suggest that parental education does not directly affect satisfaction with life, but it may affect satisfaction with life indirectly via its impact on parental expectations, academic support, and academic performance salience.

Ng, Huebner and Hills (2015) examined the bi-directional link between life satisfaction and academic achievement in middle school students in the United States (U.S.). A short-term longitudinal design with two time points of data collection about 5 months apart. Life satisfaction was assessed, as well as school related emotional experience and GPA. The results showed that there was a positive reciprocal relationship: higher levels of life satisfaction in earlier years of life were related to higher levels of academic achievement in later years of life, and higher levels of academic achievement in earlier years of life were related to higher levels of life satisfaction in later years of life. These relationships remained significant after controlling for demographic characteristics, positive and negative affect, and initial levels of the study variables. The relationship between achievement and life satisfaction was mediated by negative emotional experiences at school. The result shows that there is an interaction between educational status and life satisfaction, because one does not affect the other.

Piko (2023) examined psychological and school-related factors, socioeconomic factors, family impact, and social factors that relate to adolescents' life satisfaction. A cross-sectional study comprised of 2239 public-school students (age: 11-18 years) in the city of Szeged, Hungary. The Satisfaction with Life Scale was used to measure life satisfaction. There were significantly higher levels of life satisfaction among boys than girls and higher scores of depressions among girls. Being supported by family members was the most robust positive predictor of life satisfaction. Other factors that positively correlated were subjective SES, future orientation, school satisfaction, religious participation, and peer support, while depression negatively correlated with satisfaction. The study is relevant to the current study as it involved the analysis of the four variables of gender, socioeconomic status, school achievement and satisfaction at school simultaneously. It shows that there is a complex network of demographic, economic, educational, psychological, and social factors that affect adolescent life satisfaction.

3. RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Life satisfaction is a crucial cognitive part of subjective well-being and is related to a person's overall appraisal of their life quality based on his or her own personal standards and expectations (Diener et al., 1985). As children reach the teen years, this evaluation is influenced by the family, school, peers and the surrounding socioeconomic environment. Physical, emotional, cognitive and social development of secondary school students are significant and increased with the introduction of examinations, academic competition, parental expectations, peer pressure, identity development and career related uncertainty. Therefore, it is crucial to examine their life satisfaction in order to gain insights into their overall adjustment and positive development. The relevance of the present study is that, it is an effort to investigate students' well-being from demographic, economic and educational point of view. A positive mental health research approach is research into students' experiences of life satisfaction because it extends beyond the scope of psychological problems to examine the factors that

allow students to feel a sense of contentment, purpose, belongingness and hope. Children and adolescents can be reliably assessed on life satisfaction when they rate their overall life and life satisfaction of important areas like family, friends, school, self and living environment (Huebner, 2004). Hence, the current research can give an overall picture of the perception of life of the secondary school students.

There are a number of significant psychological, social and educational outcomes associated with life satisfaction. The higher satisfaction with life, the more positive self-concept, adaptive coping, supportive interpersonal relationships, school engagement, and favourable psychological adjustment, students would be arranged. In contrast, low level of life satisfaction has been linked to loneliness, emotional problems, dropout from school, behavioural problems, and health risk behaviors (Proctor et al., 2009). The current study may serve as an assessment of students' life satisfaction which can be used in identifying groups of students that are psychologically vulnerable without being able to show signs of mental illness. It can thus be used to facilitate preventive and developmental interventions in school settings. The study is very important because it looks at the life satisfaction by gender. Boys and girls might have different social norms, roles, opportunities, pressures, risks and social support expectations within the family. Yet, earlier studies on gender gap have found mixed results. Even though there was no significant difference in satisfaction with life between boys and girls, girls were more satisfied in family and school domains (Rath and Patra, 2018). Female students were found to be more satisfied with their life in comparison to male students by Sunil Kumar and Babu (2023), and Kumari and Ali (2025). The findings are contrasted with Piko (2023) who discovered that boys had higher life satisfaction. Different outcomes indicate that there are gender effects due to cultural, educational, familial and socioeconomic factors. The present study can contribute context-specific evidence on whether there are differences between boys and girls in life satisfaction and what aspects this might be. Another key aspect of the study is the comparison of students on the basis of family income. Income impacts on access to educational materials, digital resources, healthcare, nutrition, secure housing, private tuition, transportation, and recreation. Students who come from low-income families can feel financially insecure, limited options in the educational system, have to compare themselves to others, and feel pressured to help for the household. It is possible that these conditions can cause them to be less satisfied with their lives. However, economic resources are not the only factor that affect well-being as positive family dynamics, personal goals, resilience, and satisfaction with resources can buffer the impact of economic disadvantage.

Past research has yielded mixed results on the relationship between socioeconomic status and adolescent health. Divya and Paul (2016) did not find any significant relationship between socioeconomic status and well-being of Indian adolescents. Dew and Huebner (1994), on the other hand, found moderate relationships between socioeconomic status and adolescent life satisfaction. To determine the association between inequalities in family affluence and inequalities in life satisfaction, a study by Levin et al. (2011) used data from 58,352 adolescents from 35 countries and found that inequalities in family affluence were associated with inequalities in life satisfaction. Inconsistencies in the results have made it necessary to explore if there are differences among students from different income groups with regard to life satisfaction in the particular social and educational setting of this study. The study is also important because it takes into account education as a comparative factor. Depending on how educational status is defined, students' grade level, academic performance, school type, educational stream, and parental educational levels could be employed. The educational level of students may have different levels of academic pressures, career uncertainty, competition, and parental expectations. An increase in the academic and career-related pressure at the higher secondary level might affect students' life satisfaction, as matriculation students had higher life satisfaction than intermediate students as found by Kumari and Ali (2025). Life satisfaction and academic performance can also affect each other. Success can foster competence, confidence, recognition and positive expectations for the future, while academic failure can lead to feelings of failure, anxiety and low self-esteem. In the meantime, students who are content with their lives are likely to be more motivated, involved and persistent in their learning. The results of Ng et al. (2015) indicated a reciprocal relationship between academic achievement and life satisfaction, where higher life satisfaction was related to higher academic achievement in the later years and vice versa. As such, an analysis of educational status could help to make sense of whether pupils' place and experiences in education help account for inequalities in their wider wellbeing. The intellectual and emotional climate in the family may also influence students' life satisfaction, depending on their parents' educational attainment. Parents who are more educated can offer more academic guidance, more educational resources, more information about careers, and support for future planning. They can have high expectations, however, which result in academic pressure. In an investigation by Crede et al. (2015), it was determined that the association between academic achievement and life satisfaction among adolescents was moderated by maternal education, but not paternal education. This suggests that education could influence life satisfaction indirectly rather than directly, via complex processes in the family and school.

Objectives of the Study

i. To compare the life satisfaction of boys and girls at the secondary-school level.

ii. To compare the life satisfaction of secondary-school students belonging to high- and low-income groups.

iii. To compare the life satisfaction of secondary-school students having higher and lower educational status.

iv. To compare the life satisfaction of secondary-school students belonging to high and low socioeconomic-status

groups.

Research Design

The present investigation adopted the Normative Survey Method as the most appropriate strategy. The target population for the present investigation comprised all students enrolled in Classes IX to XII in secondary and senior secondary institutions affiliated with the Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB), the Secondary Board of School Examination, the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE), and other recognised boards functioning within the Darbhanga district of Bihar. . For the present study, a sample of 400 students enrolled in Classes IX to XII at the secondary and senior secondary levels was selected from schools within Darbhanga district by adopting purposive sampling technique. On the basis of gender, 100 male students and 100 female students were included in the sample. In the present investigation, the Socio-Economic Status Scale developed by Upadhyay and Saxena (2008) was employed to assess the socio-economic status of secondary school students and to assess the Life Satisfaction, the Life Satisfaction Scale developed by the Diener et al. (1985) has been used.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Table No. 01 Mean Difference of Life Satisfaction of Boys and Girls Students

S. No.	Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	df	t-value	p-value
1.	Life Satisfaction	Boys	200	22.15	5.32	398	2.34	0.020*
2.		Girls	200	23.48	5.41			

*Significant at 0.05 level

Analysis and Interpretation: Table No. 01 presents the comparison of Life Satisfaction scores between boys' and girls' students. The analysis was conducted on a sample of 400 students, comprising 200 boys and 200 girls. The mean score of life satisfaction for boys was found to be 22.15 with a standard deviation of 5.32, whereas the mean score for girls was 23.48 with a standard deviation of 5.41. The results indicate that girls reported slightly higher life satisfaction compared to boys. To examine whether this observed difference was statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The calculated t-value was 2.34 with 398 degrees of freedom. The corresponding p-value was 0.020, which is less than the conventional level of significance of 0.05. Since the obtained p-value is lower than 0.05, the difference between boys and girls in terms of life satisfaction is statistically significant. This finding suggests that gender plays a significant role in influencing life satisfaction among students in the present study. Specifically, girls appear to experience a comparatively higher level of life satisfaction than boys. In conclusion, the analysis reveals a statistically significant gender difference in life satisfaction, with girls demonstrating higher satisfaction levels than boys.

Table No. 02

Mean Difference between Life Satisfaction of high- and low-income groups of Students

S. No.	Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	df	t-value	p-value
1.	Life Satisfaction	High Income	200	24.62	4.98	398	4.87	0.000**
2.		Low Income	200	21.14	5.63			

**Significant at 0.01 level

Analysis and Interpretation: Table No. 02 presents the comparison of life satisfaction scores between students belonging to high-income and low-income groups. The total sample consisted of 400 students, with 200 students in each income group. The mean score of life satisfaction for students from the high-income group was 24.62 with a standard deviation of 4.98, whereas the mean score for students from the low-income group was 21.14 with a standard deviation of 5.63. The results clearly indicate that students belonging to the high-income group reported higher levels of life satisfaction compared to those from the low-income group. The slightly higher standard deviation in the low-income group suggests greater variability in life satisfaction among economically disadvantaged students. To determine whether this difference was statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The obtained t-value was 4.87 with 398 degrees of freedom. The corresponding p-value was 0.000, which is less than 0.01. Since the p-value is lower than the 0.01 level of significance, the difference between the two income groups is statistically significant at the 1 percent level. This finding indicates that income level has a significant influence on life satisfaction among students. Students from high-income families tend to experience greater life satisfaction compared to students from low-income families. In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates a highly significant difference in life satisfaction based on income level, highlighting the important role of socio-economic conditions in shaping students' overall well-being.

Table No. 03 Mean Difference between Life Satisfaction of Higher and Lower-educated Students

S. No.	Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	df	t-value	p-value
1.	Life Satisfaction	High Educated	200	24.05	5.10	398	3.96	0.000**
2.		Low Educated	200	21.89	5.47			

**Significant at 0.01 level

Analysis and Interpretation: Table No. 03 presents the comparison of life satisfaction scores between students belonging to higher-educated and lower-educated groups. The total sample consisted of 400 students, with 200 students in each group. The mean score of life satisfaction for the higher-educated group was found to be 24.05 with a standard deviation of 5.10, whereas the lower-educated group obtained a mean score of 21.89 with a standard deviation of 5.47. The results indicate that students from the higher-educated group reported comparatively higher levels of life satisfaction than those from the lower-educated group. The slightly higher standard deviation in the lower-educated group suggests relatively greater variability in life satisfaction among these students. An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine the statistical significance of the observed difference. The calculated t-value was 3.96 with 398 degrees of freedom. The corresponding p-value was 0.000, which is less than the 0.01 level of significance. Since the p-value is lower than 0.01, the difference between the two groups is statistically significant at the 1 percent level. This finding clearly indicates that educational level has a significant influence on life satisfaction among students. Students belonging to the higher-educated group tend to experience greater life satisfaction compared to those in the lower-educated group. In conclusion, the analysis reveals a highly significant difference in life satisfaction based on educational level, suggesting that education plays an important role in enhancing students' overall well-being and satisfaction with life.

Table No. 04 Showing Mean Difference between Life Satisfaction of high and low-SES students

S. No.	Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	df	t-value	p-value
1.	Life Satisfaction	High SES	200	25.18	4.72	398	6.12	0.000**
2.		Low SES	200	20.76	5.89			

**Significant at 0.01 level

Analysis and Interpretation: Table No. 04 presents the comparison of life satisfaction scores between students belonging to high and low socio-economic status (SES) groups. The total sample comprised 400 students, with 200 students in each SES group. The mean score of life satisfaction for students in the high SES group was 25.18 with a standard deviation of 4.72, whereas students in the low SES group obtained a mean score of 20.76 with a standard deviation of 5.89. The results clearly show that students belonging to the high SES group reported substantially higher levels of life satisfaction compared to those from the low SES group. The higher standard deviation in the low SES group indicates greater variability in life satisfaction among economically disadvantaged students. To determine whether the observed difference was statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was applied. The calculated t-value was 6.12 with 398 degrees of freedom. The corresponding p-value was 0.000, which is less than the 0.01 level of significance. Since the p-value is lower than 0.01, the difference between high and low SES groups is statistically significant at the 1 percent level. This finding indicates that socio-economic status has a highly significant influence on life satisfaction among students. Students from higher socio-economic backgrounds tend to experience greater life satisfaction compared to those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. In conclusion, the analysis reveals a highly significant difference in life satisfaction based on socio-economic status, highlighting the strong role of economic and social resources in shaping students' overall well-being.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings revealed significant differences in the life satisfaction of secondary-school students with respect to gender, income, educational status, and socioeconomic status, thereby supporting all the hypotheses formulated for the study. Girls demonstrated higher life satisfaction than boys, suggesting that gender-related socialisation, emotional expression, academic engagement, and support received from family, teachers, and peers may influence how students evaluate their lives. This finding is consistent with Rath and Patra (2018), Sunil Kumar and Babu (2023), Mistry et al. (2024), and Kumari and Ali (2025), who reported comparatively favourable life satisfaction or well-being among female students, although it differs from Piko (2023), who found higher life satisfaction among boys, and Dew and Huebner (1994), who observed no significant gender difference. Students from high-income families also experienced greater life satisfaction than those from low-income families, indicating that financial security and access to educational materials, healthcare, technology, safe housing, recreational facilities, and future educational opportunities contribute to students' well-being. The result supports Levin et al. (2011) and Piko (2023), who identified economic circumstances as an important correlate of adolescent life satisfaction, but contrasts with Divya and Paul (2016), who found no significant relationship between socioeconomic status and adolescent

well-being. Students belonging to the higher educational-status group showed greater life satisfaction than those in the lower educational-status group, possibly because educational advancement promotes competence, confidence, maturity, social recognition, and positive expectations about future education and employment. This finding supports Ng et al. (2015), who established a reciprocal relationship between academic achievement and life satisfaction, and Crede et al. (2015), who demonstrated that parental education influenced the association between academic achievement and adolescent life satisfaction. Finally, students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds displayed greater life satisfaction than those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, highlighting the combined influence of family income, parental education, occupation, housing conditions, social position, and access to cultural and educational resources. The comparatively stronger influence of socioeconomic status may be explained by its multidimensional nature, as it encompasses more than financial income alone. Collectively, the findings demonstrate that life satisfaction is shaped by an interaction of personal, economic, educational, familial, and social conditions. They underline the need for schools to provide counselling, scholarships, remedial instruction, career guidance, mentoring, peer support, and equitable access to learning resources, particularly for boys and students from low-income, lower-educational-status, and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

6. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that gender, family income, educational status, and socioeconomic status are significantly associated with the life satisfaction of secondary and senior-secondary school students. Girls reported comparatively greater life satisfaction than boys, while students belonging to high-income, higher-educational-status, and high-socioeconomic-status groups demonstrated more favourable life satisfaction than their respective counterparts. These findings show that students' well-being is shaped not only by personal characteristics but also by access to economic resources, educational opportunities, parental support, and favourable social conditions. The study therefore highlights the need for schools, families, and educational authorities to provide targeted counselling, financial assistance, academic support, career guidance, and inclusive well-being programmes, particularly for boys and students from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. As the investigation employed a cross-sectional survey and purposive sampling, the findings indicate group differences but do not establish causal relationships. Nevertheless, the study contributes valuable evidence for promoting equitable educational environments in which students' academic development and life satisfaction receive equal attention.

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