

## Brainwriting for Happiness in Learning – A Qualitative Approach

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### ABSTRACT

Happiness is the preponderance of positive emotions in an individual. Parents and teachers today care more about happy learning than mere exam results. Hence it is imperative to explore the learning experiences of children attending various teaching methods. Brainwriting is a technique that can be easily implemented in classrooms. This paper is based on a pilot study, using convenient sampling, conducted among adolescents (N=35) to explore the experiences of children who underwent online Brainwriting. The researcher adopted a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach. An in-depth interview with an unstructured questionnaire was used to collect data. Thematic analysis of data derived three main themes of experiences: 'Delighting,' 'Fascinating,' and 'Thought-provoking,' and eight sub-themes. The sub-themes under 'Delighting' were 'happiness,' 'joyful,' and 'thrilling.' The sub-themes under 'fascinating' were 'super,' 'awesome,' and 'interesting,' while the sub-themes under 'thought-provoking' were 'stimulation for thinking' and 'modification of thinking'. The study revealed that Brainwriting enhances a positive learning environment with delightful, fascinating, and thought-provoking experiences. Policy makers in academia can use the original findings of the study to enhance learning processes and teaching effectiveness.

**Keywords:** *Creative Thinking, Brainwriting, Happiness, Adolescents, Effective Teaching-Learning Process*

Positive emotions are the precursors of happiness. It is the key to success in every domain of a person's life (Lyubomirsky & Diener, 2005). Research studies suggest that positive affect leads individuals to think and behave in ways that lead to building resources for goal achievement (Lyubomirsky, 2001; Elliot & Thrash, 2002). Neuro-cognitive studies show that happiness enhances our brain to produce more Dopamine and Serotonin, which positively affect memory, learning, creative thinking, and problem-solving skills, indicating that happy students learn better (Gutierrez, (n.d.)). A recent study identified Creativity as an enabler of Self efficacy (Madaan & Hai, 2023). A study conducted in Turkey has shed light on factors influencing happiness among school students. The study was conducted among 2187 students from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade in 28 different schools. The study's results depicted that the children are happier when they get an opportunity to enjoy

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themselves with peers, make fun with others, have self-confidence, and feel safe at school. Thus teachers, parents, and managers have a crucial role in making children happy (Mertoğlu, Munevver, 2020). This study highlights the importance of inculcating teaching methods which has peer interactions and lots of fun that foster a happy learning environment.

State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), New Delhi, has introduced a happiness curriculum for their children comprising different teaching measures to make children happy in their school life. This happiness curriculum aims at the sustainable happiness of children. The happiness triad described in the syllabus includes three units named exploring happiness through learning and awareness, experiencing happiness in relationships through feeling, and happiness through active participation. The proposed methodologies for this curriculum embrace 'joyful exercises,' 'indoor games,' 'active inquiry,' 'reflective conversations,' 'storytelling,' 'role play,' and so on (SCERT, 2019). This initiative gives an insight to academicians to explore positive experiences of teaching-learning strategies to ensure the well-being of students in a classroom. Teachers must also select online methodologies to sustain children's happiness as we are in a pandemic era. The new curricular and pedagogical structure for school education mentioned in the draft National Education Policy of India 2019 states the transformation of curriculum and pedagogy by 2022 through the minimization of rote learning and encouragement of holistic development and 21st-century skills such as creativity, critical thinking, and scientific temper and so on. This movement will be an energy booster for all creativity researchers in India as they get the opportunity to study and implement newer creativity techniques among school-going children to enhance them to be successful citizens of our nation (MHRD, 2019).

A study conducted by Kyung Hee Kim, a creative researcher at the College of William and Mary, among American children in 2010 with 300000 creativity tests shows that creativity has decreased among American children in recent years; moreover, they have become less able to produce unique and unusual ideas, even they are less humorous, less imaginative and less able to elaborate on ideas (Retner, 2011).

It was found that children are happier than in the pre-Covid 19 era as they enjoy their lessons and peer relationships through online teaching-learning programs. Online teaching programs have made drastic changes in the perception of learning. The present scenario makes children love learning through innovative teaching programs adopted during the pandemic crisis. Even though the present Covid pandemic is detrimental to the world, it helped enlighten teachers' and students' minds to go for much more effective learning strategies (Christakis, E, 2020).

A Brainwriting session is a group activity in which written ideas are silently shared (Heslin,2009). Brainwriting is (interactive creativity training) applicable to any classroom to generate diverse ideas. It has both individual interaction and group interaction through writing. The most popular technique of Brainwriting is Brainwriting 6-3-5 technique. This was proposed by German sales professional Bernd Rohrbach and published in a magazine named *Absatzwirtschaft* in 1968. In this technique, six group members write three ideas for 5 minutes. Brainwriting can generate ideas from a single group too. One person's ideas are transferred to the next person; they can read and generate another idea. Thus, several ideas can be produced by a group of people. Experiences of people who attended Brainwriting sessions revealed that Brainwriting promotes better social and mental well-being with the flow of diverse ideas. As Brainwriting gives little importance to speaking in front of others,

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introverts are also benefited from expressing their ideas through writing. (Murmum, C, 2017).

According to Chauncey Wilson (2013), during Brainwriting sessions, learners are free from anxiety and can generate plenty of ideas quickly. This technique suits a large group of people needing quick, creative ideas. As people write than speak about ideas, it is comfortable for people with different personalities. Brainwriting provides a stress-free environment for all, as there is no question of speaking in front of a group of many people. Experiences of people attending Brainwriting are more pleasing compared to other creativity techniques where there is a need for more verbal activities (Wilson, 2013).

It is evident that researches are plenty in the field of education to find out the effect of many teaching strategies and creativity techniques. In a seminal study conducted by Paulus & Yang (2000), Brain writing enhances creativity and innovation in organisations. Van Gundy (1984) labels Brain writing as an alternative to Brain storming. There are many supporting pieces of research to reveal the effect of Brainwriting in terms of its influence on creative thinking and learning outcome (Thompson & Wilson, 2015; Thompson, 2003), but there are very few studies explored the experiences of the learner during Brainwriting or other teaching-learning strategies. Hence the paper tries to answer the research question RQ 1: Will Brain writing provide a pleasant learning experience? The present research study aimed to explore the experiences of students who attended Brainwriting sessions, to see whether it has imparted any sort of positive learning and creative experiences for children or not, and to realize the pervasiveness of a creativity technique to the different domains of a person.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Research Design*

The research design adopted in the study was a Qualitative research design with a Phenomenological approach as this method was found most suitable for health care research (Rodriguez & Smith,2018). The present study was a pilot study among adolescents.

#### *Sample*

Data saturation was attained with 35 samples. Thus, the sample comprised of 35 adolescents in the age group of 16 to 18 years. The sampling technique was convenient sampling. The study was conducted in a selected school at Calicut district of Kerala, India.

#### *Instruments*

Two measures were used in this study,

- 1. Demographic profile:** Demographic profile consisted of four items related to gender, residing area, type of school and handedness.
- 2. Unstructured questionnaire to explore the qualitative experiences of adolescents after Brainwriting:** This research tool had explored the personal learning experiences and psychological experiences of adolescents who got opportunity to attend Brainwriting session.

#### *Data Collection Procedure*

After obtaining administrative approval from the school's principal and informed consent from students and their parents, the data was collected through an in-depth interview with an unstructured questionnaire. Ethical clearance was obtained from the authority. The interviews last from 45 minutes to 1 hour. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher explained the study's purpose and ensured the students' comfort level. The investigator

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maintained a good rapport with the children and explored their personal learning experiences and psychological experiences during Brainwriting. The interview was recorded, and the verbatim was written in a diary. Limited demographic data was obtained from the sample. The medium of the interview was both English and Malayalam.

### Data Analysis

Each transcribed data was subjected to coding and developing themes and sub-themes using thematic analysis by Braun and Clark' (2006) method of thematic analysis. Repeated reading and listening of verbatim and highlighting of similar verbatim expressed by sample were done to generate themes and sub-themes. Data saturation occurred with 35 samples. Finally, there are three themes and eight subthemes.

## RESULTS

Demographic data analysis revealed that most of the sample (71.428%) were girls, and 28.572% were boys. Half of the sample (50%) resides in urban areas, 20% of the sample resides in a semi-urban area, and 30% of the sample resides in a rural area. All students belong to a private school. Only one student (2.8%) had left-hand dominance.

Qualitative data analysis derived three themes of experiences: 'Delighting,' 'fascinating,' and 'thought-provoking,' and eight sub-themes.

### Theme 1: Delighting experience

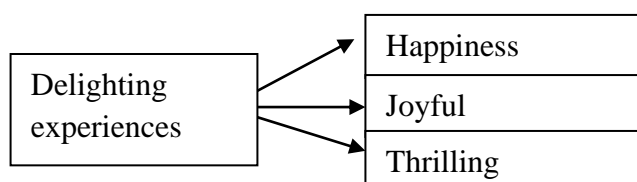
All participants expressed their joyful experiences of the Online Brainwriting session uniquely. Following are some vital verbatim expressed by students related to delightful experiences.

*Table No. 1 Verbatim of the sample under theme 1*

Student	Verbatim
Student1	"I have got some happiness with this creativity training."
Student2	"I felt that it was not an academic session. I was happiest as I realized I, too, have some ideas inside my brain."
Student3	"I was happy interacting with friends through chatting and expressing ideas."
Student4	"It was a joyful session, without any tension in learning."
Student5	"I was extremely happy during Brainwriting sessions; I prayed that the session should not end."
Student 6	" My inner child was dancing when some new ideas were flowing."
Student 7	"There was lots of fun when we made some stupid ideas."
Student 8	" I feel I had some thrilling experiences, too during the Brainwriting session"
Student 9	" Happy to study something in this way."
Student 10	" My happiness enlightens my parents too."

The sub-themes derived from verbatim were as follows: '**Happiness**' '**Joyful**' and '**Thrilling**.'

*Figure No 1: Theme 1 and subthemes*



**Theme 2: Fascinating experiences**

Following are some vital verbatim related to theme 2: fascinating experiences

**Table No2: Verbatim of the sample under theme 2**

Student	Verbatim
Student1	"Excellent"
Student2	"This type of training is fabulous"
Student3	"I feel I am attracted to this type of training."
Student4	"It was awesome."
Student5	"The sessions were mind-blowing."
Student 6	"This type of training catches the attention of students very easily."
Student 7	"I did not feel that I was learning something; it was a super-duper learning experience."
Student 8	"I am fascinated to express my ideas by writing"
Student 9	"Fantastic idea generation platform"
Student 10	"Ideas of others attracted me"

The sub-themes under ‘fascinating experiences’ were ‘super’, ‘awesome,’ and ‘interesting.’

**Theme 3: Thought-provoking experiences**

All participants expressed that Online Brainwriting sessions had stimulated their thinking capacities. Some necessary verbatim is given below:

"Now my brain started to think something."

"Thinking in this way is nice."

"This training helped me to think from many angles."

"I changed my thinking and started to think from different angles."

I have got some spark to think differently.

"Hope we can study some subjects this way because it stimulates brainpower."

"All like to sit in such sessions rather than monotonous lecturing as it helps to think from a different angle."

"My brain works now better than before."

"I could not think that I could produce some unique ideas."

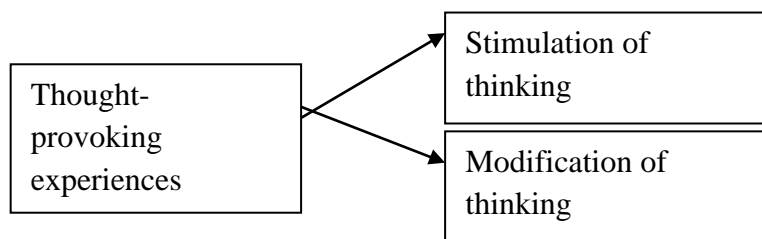
"It boosted up my thinking ability-I think so."

"I came to know that my brain has some content."

"I am stimulated to think now onwards."

"I like to think differently whenever I get some life scenarios mentioned in the training."

**Figure No2: Theme 3 and sub-themes**



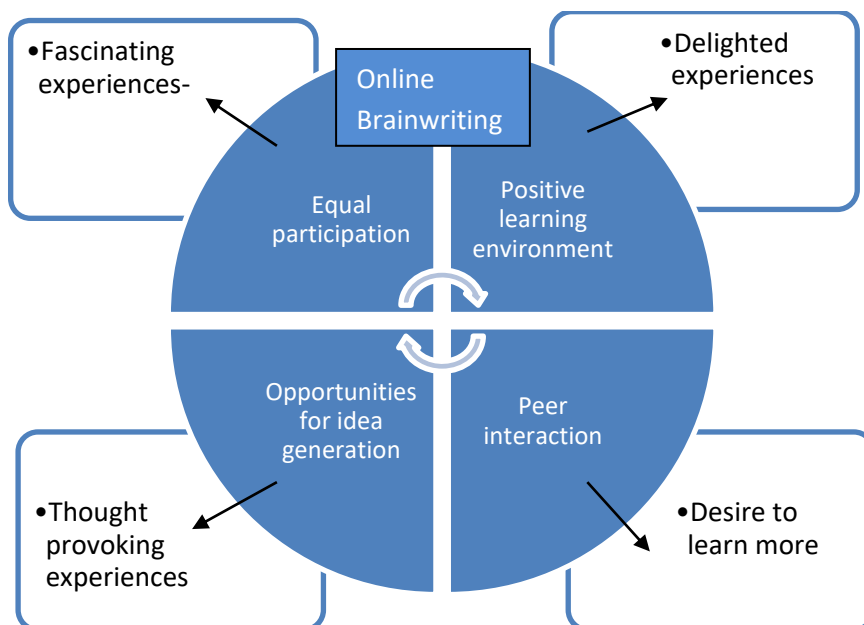
The sub-themes under 'thought-provoking experiences' were ‘stimulation for thinking’ and ‘modification of thinking’.

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The study revealed that Online Brainwriting enhances a positive learning environment with delightful, fascinating, and thought-provoking experiences.

### *Development of Conceptual Framework*

A conceptual framework has been developed from the themes and subthemes derived from this qualitative study which connects the learner, the learner's environment, and learning experiences.



**Figure 3:** a conceptual framework derived from the present study in compilation with Brainwriting concepts adopted from Murmum (2017)

The conceptual framework in Figure 3 shows that when the learner is treated with Online Brainwriting with peer interaction, opportunities for idea generation, a positive learning environment, and equal participation of all students made some experiences to the learner in terms of delighted, fascinating, and thought-provoking experiences. Moreover, the learner expressed interest and desire to learn further.

## **DISCUSSION**

The present study highlighted the three themes of 'fascinating', 'delighting', and 'thought-provoking' qualitative experiences of adolescents during Brainwriting sessions. This study finding is consistent with the findings of Wilson; C emphasized that Brainwriting creates a pleasing and stress-free environment for learners. The findings are also congruent with a study by Murmum (2017), which emphasized the psycho-social well-being and idea generation of learners who attended Brainwriting. The probable explanation for the association of happiness and creative thinking could be attributed to the feeling of a safe environment which makes the individual to want to try out newer ways of doing things.

The present study revealed that Brainwriting enhances happiness. Thus, creativity has a pivotal role in promoting happiness. This finding is consistent with a research study conducted in Singapore among one hundred teachers, which depicts that creativity significantly correlates with happiness (Tan & Majid, 2011).

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Creativity has significant influence on happiness. This finding is also congruent with a study conducted among 330 school teachers in Iran, which showed a significant relationship between happiness, subjective well-being and creativity. People with high level of creativity possess happiness and subjective well-being (Jalali, & Hidari, 2016).

A study conducted in Iran among second-grade high school students is consistent with the present study findings. The study depicts that there is a significant correlation between the happiness and creativity of the sample. Creativity's Fluidity and innovation components are considered strong predictors of happiness. This research study emphasized the importance of creativity education, which directly impacts students' happiness (Tamannaefar, & Panah, 2019).

The present study finding is inconsistent with a research study conducted among 420 students in Pennsylvania. The investigator examined the correlation of creativity with happiness. The findings revealed no significant relationship between creativity and happiness; however, creativity is related to positive and negative affect. The study suggests more research in this area, and individual difference is probably the reason for the insignificant relationship between creativity and happiness. People can be creative during happy or sad situations based on the nature of individuals (Ceci, & Kumar, 2015).

Empirical data of the present study very strongly poses that optimism is related with physical and mental health. Optimistic individuals have fewer physical and psychological complaints with their life. If there is any problem like illness of her child then also, mothers with optimistic outlook help themselves to cope with the situation.

### ***Study Implications***

Since the qualitative analysis shows the association between Happiness and creative thinking, academic Policy makers can consider improving students' Happiness quotient to improve creativity. The study also contributes to the research on Happiness and creativity with Brainwriting as a new dimension.

In India, creativity researchers are very few. This study will contribute a lot to the creativity area of Indian Psychological research. Recently, our nation has planned for curricular innovation with strategies to enhance creative thinking and other skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. SCERT, New Delhi, had put forward a happiness curriculum, in which there is the promotion of creative thinking of students. This study will help teachers and students adopt a creative technique for happy learning in the school environment with scientific evidence and aid in participating in National Education Policy 2020.

Brainwriting techniques can be useful for managers in different disciplines to do creative problem-solving. Happiness in the working environment is also a significant concern of this century. Happiness enhances creativity, and creativity impacts happiness among employees. Thus, these two concepts are mutually related.

Psychologists can adopt Brainwriting as a creative technique to enhance creativity among people of any age. As creativity is related to the psycho-social well-being of individuals with joyful and fascinating experiences, psychologists can take such techniques to ensure people's mental well-being.

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Brainwriting helps teachers to identify the creative thinking skills of both extrovert and introvert students in their classrooms. Thus, everyone feels happiness as they get equal participation of expressing and implementing creative ideas. Moreover, Online Brainwriting compiles creative ideas of people in different nations with variant cultures and beliefs, facilitating the trans-cultural transformation of diverse ideas.

### CONCLUSION

Learning is a lifelong process. Many students think learning is a threatening rather than enjoyable event; it is necessary to introduce different teaching and training sessions that enhance creative thinking, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, etc. The majority of research focuses on the effect of methods of teaching but puts less concern about the learner's experiences during those methodologies. An exemplary academician has to think about the happiness of their students in learning along with intellectual, social, emotional, and psychological development. The present study dealt with the exploration of experiences of students about the Brainwriting method. This research is a motivation for conducting further qualitative and quantitative studies.

### Scope for Future Research

Since the study on Happiness, Brainwriting, and creativity is not much explored, an empirical study can follow the qualitative research. Survey research using validated survey instruments to measure the study constructs can be explored. Since there are not many mediation studies in this area of research (Lyubomirsky & Diener, 2005), that angle could be explored. More research can be conducted to examine the impact of creativity techniques on happiness, motivation, and emotional intelligence. More mixed method research is recommended to find out the effect of creativity technique with an exploration of individual's positive and negative experiences about the research interventions.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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