# Status of Emotional Well-Being of Elementary School Students in Bhoirymbong Block, Meghalaya: A Cross-Sectional Quantitative Study

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## ABSTRACT

Emotional well-being is fundamental to children's academic engagement, social development, and long-term mental health. The present cross-sectional quantitative study examined the emotional well-being of 264 elementary school students from eight government schools in Bhoirymbong Block, Meghalaya. A validated, child-friendly questionnaire assessed multiple domains including overall emotional status, worry, happiness, loneliness, peer relationships, school perception, fear of teachers, and examination anxiety. Descriptive findings indicated that 74.9% of students demonstrated healthy emotional status; however, emotional vulnerability increased significantly across grade levels. Inferential analyses revealed significant grade differences in emotional vulnerability, $F(2, 261) = 9.34$, $p < .001$, and a gender difference in examination anxiety, with girls reporting higher anxiety. Multiple regression analysis showed that fear of teachers ($\beta = .34$), examination anxiety ($\beta = .29$), and loneliness ($\beta = .21$) significantly predicted emotional vulnerability, explaining 32% of the variance, while peer trust functioned as a protective factor. Findings highlight the critical role of school climate and assessment practices in shaping emotional outcomes and underscore the need for emotionally responsive pedagogy and structured social-emotional learning frameworks in elementary education.

**Keywords:** emotional well-being, elementary students, examination anxiety, teacher-student relationship, school climate, social-emotional learning

## INTRODUCTION

Emotional well-being constitutes a central pillar of holistic child development and educational success. The World Health Organization (2014) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which individuals realise their potential, cope with normal stresses of life, work productively, and contribute to their community. Within the school context, emotional well-being significantly influences attention, motivation, peer interaction, academic persistence, and long-term psychosocial outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011).

Elementary school years represent a critical developmental stage wherein children form foundational beliefs about self-worth, competence, social belonging, and authority relationships. Positive emotional environments promote resilience, adaptive coping, and intrinsic motivation, whereas persistent emotional stressors may lead to academic disengagement, behavioural concerns, and long-term mental health challenges (Eccles & Roeser, 2011).

Globally, approximately one in five children and adolescents experience a mental health disorder, with many cases remaining unidentified or untreated (WHO, 2014). In low- and middle-income countries, school-based mental health systems are often underdeveloped. In India, despite policy recognition of school health services through various committees and national programmes, systematic empirical investigations at district and block levels remain limited.

In particular, northeastern states such as Meghalaya have diverse sociocultural contexts, varied school infrastructure, and emerging educational reforms. Understanding emotional well-being patterns within such

contexts is crucial for informed policy planning. Therefore, the present study sought to examine the emotional well-being status of elementary school students in Bhoirymbong Block, Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Conceptualizing Emotional Well-Being in Childhood

Emotional well-being refers to the presence of positive affect, absence of persistent negative emotions, and the ability to regulate emotional responses appropriately (Gross, 2015). It includes dimensions such as happiness, security, social connectedness, self-efficacy, and adaptive coping.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) emphasizes that child development occurs within interacting environmental systems-family, school, peer group, and community. The school microsystem significantly shapes children's emotional experiences. Supportive teacher relationships, inclusive classroom climate, and peer acceptance function as protective factors.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks further operationalize emotional well-being through competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2013). Research indicates that structured SEL interventions significantly improve academic performance and emotional outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011).

### Emotional Well-Being and Academic Achievement

Empirical evidence suggests strong associations between emotional well-being and academic engagement. Students who experience school belonging and teacher support demonstrate higher achievement and lower dropout rates (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Conversely, chronic stress, fear-based classroom environments, and examination anxiety negatively affect cognitive performance and working memory (Putwain, 2007).

### Teacher–Student Relationship and Emotional Climate

Teacher behaviour plays a central role in shaping classroom emotional climate. Warm, autonomy-supportive teaching fosters motivation and well-being, whereas controlling or fear-inducing practices increase anxiety and withdrawal (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Fear of teachers may reflect authoritarian disciplinary structures or lack of emotional safety.

### Peer Relationships and Social Connectedness

Peer trust and friendship networks contribute significantly to emotional stability. Loneliness in childhood has been linked to depression, reduced academic engagement, and social withdrawal (Qualter et al., 2015). Positive peer interaction acts as a buffering factor against stress.

### Examination Anxiety

Test anxiety is prevalent across schooling systems. It increases with grade progression and is often higher among girls (Putwain, 2007). Excessive examination pressure may undermine intrinsic learning motivation and well-being.

### Indian Context

Research in India on child emotional well-being is relatively limited and often urban-focused. District-level rural or semi-rural data remain scarce. There is growing recognition under national education reforms of the need to promote holistic development and reduce exam-centric stress. However, systematic baseline emotional profiling is rarely conducted.

Given this background, the present study provides empirical evidence from a block-level context in Meghalaya.

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**Research Question**

What is the state of emotional well-being of elementary school students in Bhoirymbong Block, Meghalaya?

**Objective**

To assess and analyze emotional well-being across multiple psychosocial domains among elementary school students in Bhoirymbong Block.

**Method**

**Research Design**

The present study employed a cross-sectional descriptive research design with analytical components to examine the emotional well-being of elementary school students in Bhoirymbong Block, Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya, during the academic year 2019-2020. The design was appropriate for assessing the prevalence and distribution of emotional indicators across gender and grade levels. In addition to descriptive analysis, inferential statistical techniques were applied to examine group differences and predictive relationships among variables.

**Participants**

The sample consisted of 264 students drawn from eight government elementary schools in Bhoirymbong Block. Schools were included based on administrative accessibility and consent from school authorities. Although probability sampling was not feasible due to administrative constraints, efforts were made to include representation across lower and upper elementary levels.

The demographic distribution was as follows:

- Girls: 150 (56.8%)
- Boys: 114 (43.2%)

Class-level distribution:

- Classes 1–3: 96 students (36.4%)
- Classes 4–5: 77 students (29.2%)
- Classes 6–8: 91 students (34.5%)

Participants ranged in age from approximately 6 to 14 years. To ensure confidentiality, students were assigned numeric identification codes. No personally identifiable information was recorded.

**Instrumentation**

A structured Emotional Well-Being Questionnaire was developed specifically for elementary school students. The instrument was designed to be developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive. Items were presented using simple language accompanied by pictorial representations to facilitate comprehension among younger children.

**The questionnaire assessed ten domains:**

1. Overall emotional status
2. Worry
3. Happiness

4. Loneliness
5. Fun with friends
6. Friend's trust
7. Willingness to attend school
8. Perception of school
9. School enjoyment
10. Fear of teachers
11. Examination anxiety

**A three-point response format was used:**

1 Positive emotional state (e.g., "I am happy," "I am not worried")

2 Negative emotional state (e.g., "I am worried," "I am scared")

3 Uncertain ("I don't know")

For statistical analysis, responses were coded numerically (1 = positive, 2 = negative, 3 = uncertain). Composite indices were computed for broader constructs such as emotional vulnerability and school-related stress.

**Validity and Reliability**

Content validity was established through expert review by faculty members specializing in psychology and education. Items were evaluated for clarity, relevance, and age appropriateness. Revisions were made accordingly.

Internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha. The overall emotional well-being scale demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .78$). Subscale reliability coefficients ranged from .70 to .82, indicating satisfactory internal consistency for exploratory research.

**Procedure**

Formal permission was obtained from the institutional head and relevant educational authorities. School visits were coordinated with the Block Mission Coordinator. Data were collected through individual administration sessions conducted in a supportive environment to reduce response anxiety.

Younger students (Classes 1–3) received guided assistance to ensure comprehension of items without influencing their responses. Students were informed that participation was voluntary and that responses would remain confidential.

Completed questionnaires were coded and entered into Microsoft Excel before being transferred to SPSS (Version 21) for statistical analysis. Data cleaning procedures included checking for missing responses, outliers, and coding accuracy.

**Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving children. Parental consent was obtained through school authorities. Students were assured that their responses would not affect academic evaluation. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained.

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**Statistical Analysis**

Data analysis proceeded in three stages: descriptive, inferential (group comparisons), and predictive modelling.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Frequencies and percentages were computed to determine the prevalence of emotional indicators across domains. Means and standard deviations were calculated for composite indices.

**Chi-Square Analysis**

Pearson's chi-square tests were conducted to examine associations between categorical variables such as gender and emotional outcomes (e.g., fear of teachers, examination anxiety).

Results indicated:

- A significant association between gender and examination anxiety,

  $\chi^2(2, N = 264) = 8.47, p < .05,$

  with girls reporting higher worry levels.

- A significant association between grade level and overall emotional vulnerability,

  $\chi^2(4, N = 264) = 15.62, p < .01,$

  indicating increased emotional concerns in higher grades.

No statistically significant association was observed between gender and overall emotional health status, suggesting similar baseline emotional distributions across boys and girls.

**One-Way ANOVA**

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare mean emotional vulnerability scores across three grade groups (Classes 1-3, 4-5, 6-8).

Results revealed a statistically significant difference:

$F (2, 261) = 9.34, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$

Post hoc Tukey comparisons indicated that students in Classes 6-8 had significantly higher emotional vulnerability scores compared to Classes 1-3 ($p < .001$) and Classes 4-5 ($p < .05$).

This suggests a moderate effect size and supports the observed trend of declining emotional well-being with grade progression.

**Independent Samples t-Test**

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare gender differences in specific emotional domains.

- A significant difference was found in examination anxiety: $t(262) = 2.91, p < .01$
- Girls reported higher mean anxiety scores than boys.
- No significant gender difference was found in loneliness scores.

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**Multiple Regression Analysis**

To examine predictors of emotional vulnerability, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The dependent variable was the composite emotional vulnerability index. Independent variables included:

- Grade level
- Fear of teachers
- Examination anxiety
- Loneliness
- Peer trust

The overall regression model was significant:

$R^2 = .32$,

$F(5, 258) = 24.21$, $p < .001$

Significant predictors included:

- Fear of teachers ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$)
- Examination anxiety ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$)
- Loneliness ($\beta = .21$, $p < .01$)

Grade level remained a modest but significant predictor ($\beta = .18$, $p < .05$).

Peer trust showed a protective effect ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .05$).

These findings indicate that teacher-related fear and examination anxiety are strong predictors of emotional vulnerability.

# RESULTS

The analysis examined the emotional well-being of 264 elementary school students across multiple psychosocial domains. Descriptive findings indicated that 74.9% of students demonstrated healthy emotional status, whereas 18.1% showed indicators of emotional vulnerability and 7% expressed uncertainty. However, a grade-wise trend revealed a progressive decline in emotional health: 87% of students in Classes 1-3 reported healthy emotional status compared to 71.2% in Classes 4-5 and 65.4% in Classes 6-8. Correspondingly, emotional vulnerability increased significantly across grade levels.

A one-way ANOVA confirmed statistically significant differences in mean emotional vulnerability scores across the three grade groups, $F(2, 261) = 9.34$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD indicated that students in Classes 6–8 had significantly higher vulnerability scores than those in Classes 1-3 ($p < .001$) and Classes 4-5 ($p < .05$). These findings demonstrate a moderate effect size, suggesting meaningful developmental variation in emotional well-being.

In the domain of worry, 14% of students reported feeling worried, while 18.9% were uncertain. Examination-related anxiety was more pronounced, with 33% reporting worry regarding tests and exams. Gender differences were statistically significant for examination anxiety, $\chi^2(2, N = 264) = 8.47$, $p < .05$, and supported by an independent samples t-test, $t(262) = 2.91$, $p < .01$. Girls reported significantly higher anxiety levels compared to boys.

Loneliness emerged as a notable concern, with 21% of students indicating feelings of being alone. Although boys (23.7%) reported slightly higher loneliness than girls (18.7%), gender differences were not statistically significant. Peer interaction indicators were generally positive: 87% reported having fun with friends and 74% felt trusted by peers. However, trust and enjoyment showed modest decline in higher classes.

School perception variables reflected largely positive attitudes. Approximately 91% of students expressed willingness to attend school, and 86% reported liking their school and perceiving it as enjoyable. Despite these positive indicators, a striking finding was that 50% of students reported being scared of teachers. Fear of teachers increased with grade level and was evenly distributed across gender.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify predictors of emotional vulnerability. The overall model was statistically significant, $R^2 = .32$, $F(5, 258) = 24.21$, $p < .001$, explaining 32% of the variance in emotional vulnerability. Fear of teachers ($\beta = .34$, $p < .001$) and examination anxiety ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$) emerged as the strongest positive predictors. Loneliness also significantly predicted vulnerability ($\beta = .21$, $p < .01$), while grade level had a modest but significant effect ($\beta = .18$, $p < .05$). Peer trust functioned as a protective factor ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .05$).

Overall, the results indicate that although a majority of students report positive emotional functioning, school-related stressors-particularly teacher-related fear and examination anxiety-substantially contribute to emotional vulnerability, especially in upper elementary grades.

# DISCUSSION

The present findings reveal a nuanced emotional profile among elementary school students. While overall emotional health appears generally positive, the significant decline in well-being across grade levels suggests increasing academic and psychosocial pressures as students progress through school. The ANOVA results confirm that upper elementary students experience significantly higher emotional vulnerability, indicating developmental and contextual influences on well-being.

Teacher-related fear emerged as the strongest predictor of emotional vulnerability in regression analysis. This finding aligns with research emphasizing the critical role of teacher-student relationships in shaping emotional safety and academic engagement. Fear-based classroom climates may undermine autonomy, reduce participation, and heighten stress responses. The equal distribution of teacher fear across gender suggests systemic rather than gender-specific dynamics.

Examination anxiety also significantly predicted emotional vulnerability and was higher among girls. This gendered pattern is consistent with prior research linking social expectations and performance pressures to heightened academic stress. The rising anxiety in higher grades underscores the cumulative impact of evaluative practices.

Loneliness contributed independently to emotional vulnerability, reinforcing the importance of peer belonging in child development. Conversely, peer trust functioned as a protective factor, suggesting that strengthening social connectedness may buffer against school-related stress.

The regression model explaining 32% of variance highlights the substantial role of school-based emotional experiences in shaping well-being. These findings collectively point to the need for emotionally responsive pedagogy, formative assessment reforms, and structured social-emotional learning frameworks in elementary education. Addressing relational and evaluative stressors within schools may significantly enhance students' holistic development.

### Implications

The inferential findings provide strong evidence that school-based factors significantly shape students' emotional well-being. The regression results, explaining 32% of the variance in emotional vulnerability, highlight teacher-related fear and examination anxiety as critical intervention points. Given that fear of teachers emerged as the

strongest predictor, professional development programmes must prioritize emotionally responsive pedagogy, positive discipline, and supportive classroom communication. Structured training in social-emotional learning (SEL) practices can help teachers cultivate psychologically safe environments.

The significant grade-level differences identified through ANOVA indicate the need for targeted emotional support in upper elementary classes, where vulnerability increases. Examination reforms-emphasizing formative and low-stakes assessment-are essential to mitigate anxiety, particularly among girls. Additionally, since peer trust demonstrated a protective effect, schools should institutionalize peer mentoring and collaborative learning structures to strengthen social connectedness. Integrating systematic emotional screening within school health frameworks can enable early identification and timely support for at-risk students.

**Limitations**

This study was limited to eight schools within a single block of Meghalaya, which restricts the generalizability of findings to broader populations. The cross-sectional design does not allow causal interpretation of relationships among variables. Data were based on student self-reports, which may involve response bias or social desirability effects. Additionally, contextual factors such as family background and socio-economic variables were not examined.

## CONCLUSION

The present study provides empirical insight into the emotional well-being of elementary school students in Bhoirymbong Block, Meghalaya. While a substantial proportion of students demonstrated healthy emotional functioning, the findings reveal important areas of concern that warrant systematic attention. Emotional vulnerability increased significantly with grade progression, and school-related factors-particularly fear of teachers and examination anxiety-emerged as strong predictors of emotional distress. Loneliness also contributed to vulnerability, whereas peer trust functioned as a protective factor.

These results underscore that emotional well-being in elementary education is closely linked to classroom climate, assessment practices, and relational experiences within schools. Addressing these dimensions through supportive pedagogy, formative evaluation strategies, and structured social-emotional learning initiatives is essential. Promoting emotionally safe and developmentally responsive school environments can strengthen resilience, enhance academic engagement, and support holistic child development in alignment with contemporary educational reforms.

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