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Dubai students are happy to be in school: KHDA survey

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First-of-its kind survey, 'School of Hearts', focussed on positive education and wellbeing of students. Children were quizzed about breakfasting habits, physical activity and bullying, among others.

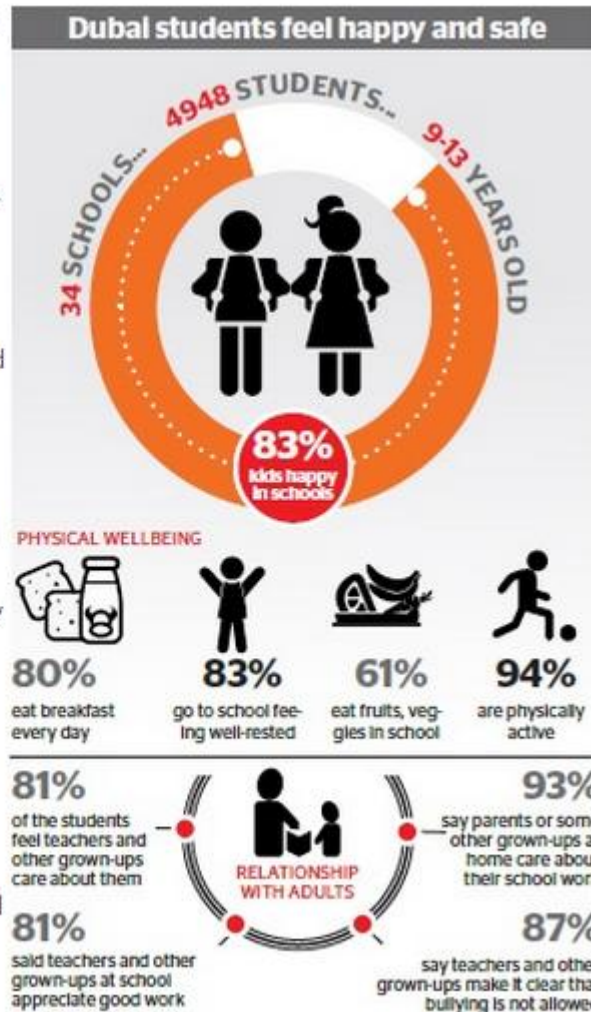
They are well-rested, have breakfast daily and love the outdoors.

Most students in Dubai are happy with their school, according to new findings announced by Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA).

Focusing on positive education and wellbeing of students, results of the first-of-its kind survey 'School of Hearts' initiative was unveiled on Saturday.

The school regulatory authority interviewed students from two age groups: Elementary and Middle school students. Among 12 to 16 year old students, 78 per cent said they were happy with their school; while younger children, between the age group 9 to 13 years, reported a higher happiness level at 83 per cent. The survey interviewed more than 9,000 students from more than 35 schools. Students shared their views in three broad categories: Physical wellbeing, relationship with adults and relationship with other students.

Students were quizzed about their breakfast eating habits, physical activity, fruit and vegetable eating habits, relationships with teachers, etc. The survey also paid close attention to bullying and child safety in school. Almost 67 per cent of the students in Elementary school said other students try to stop bullying when they see it happening. Also, 85 per cent of elementary schools students said they feel safe in school and 76 per cent of middle-schoolers said they feel safe in school.



Why some students are sad

However, in the middle school category, an alarming 34 per cent of the students surveyed said they feel sad, demotivated, and stopped doing unusual activities at some point in their school lives. School teachers and KHDA officials told Khaleej Times students in the teenage years are generally more vulnerable to sadness as compared to students in the elementary classes.

Speaking about the initiative, Hind Al Mualla, Chief of Creativity, Happiness and Innovation at KHDA, said, "Being happy and healthy at school is an enabler of good education. A child's emotional health is one of the most powerful predictors of adult-life satisfaction and the school environment plays a big role in influencing children. We want schools to support and promote emotional development of students."

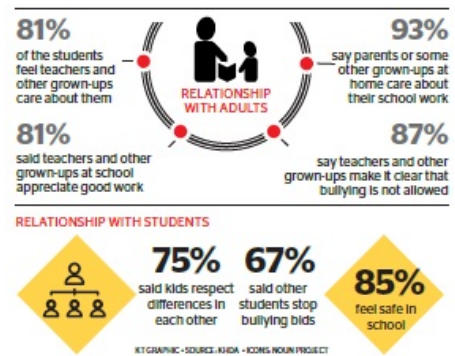
Speaking about the demotivation factor, Al Mulla said most outstanding and good schools already have a strong psychological support system. "There are currently systems in place to iron these issues out among kids, but this study brings awareness among the teachers and the student community ... If schools and teachers are aware of a student's problems, it is the first step to rectifying the problem itself," she said.

Al Mulla said data will make school performances better. "If students feel safe at school, welcomed at school, are treated with respect and given opportunities to learn, mature and grow, they will meet their potential and learn positive social lessons."

Rianne Selwyn, an English teacher coordinator at JSS Private School, said: "In the case of mental well-being among middle schoolers, a sound parent-teacher relationship is mandatory."

Selwyn stated that in case the child is withdrawing from their daily routine, a teacher or parent must intervene to figure out the core problem.

Arpita Jani, the counsellor at Delhi Private School, Dubai, said: "Most parents make the mistake of placing a lot of pressure on their children (in) this age group ... Students must be given the freedom to make their own choices."



In the second phase of the initiative, each participating school will receive an individualised report from KHDA that will help schools to discuss the happiness of students by hosting 'listening circles' to bring together students, teachers and school leaders.

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The resident transport and traffic expert, with a touch of music, culture, and youth. I report on everything from rent hikes to traffic jams, from 'most expensive' experiences to tallest buildings, from encouraging upcoming talents to camels laughing. I've been a journalist for seven years and I am ridiculously passionate about music, books, internet memes, Facebook procrastination, and the occasional sport activity (candy crush).