Model for Improving the Quality of Student Life in the Republic of North Macedonia

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Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to measure the quality of student life as one of the major factors that can affect students' prosperity not only on the professional level, but also on their individual development. The concept in this paper is analyzed through the current theoretical knowledge, as well as analyzes of the results of the research carried out among the students at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics at the "Goce Delchev" University, Shtip.
The conclusions that come out offer a model for improving psychophysical health, in order to improve the quality of life of the student, thereby promoting the social progress and contributing to the strengthening of the links between society, family, institutions and scientific research work.

Keywords: student; psychophysical health; satisfaction; quality of life; model.

1. Introduction

The student is a key element in contemporary higher education and in society. To promote social progress, it is necessary to improve the quality of life of people and their satisfaction with life, with a special emphasis on the student needs (Schaufeli, Maslach & Marek, 1993).

The concept of quality of life is very broad, and in this project we decided to focus on studying the quality of life of the student from a psychological point of view, primarily on his own experience and self-assessment. The concept in this project is analyzed through the current theoretical knowledge, as well as analyzes of the results of the research carried out by the students at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics at the "Goce Delchev" University, Shtip.

The need to measure the quality of student life arises as a result of the notion that many institutions and research are concerned with issues related to negative psychological conditions and their consequences (Benjamin & Hollings, 1995; McFarland, et al., 2008). These researches deal with the causes, consequences, and preventive measures in order to alleviate or eliminate negative conditions such as depression, anxiety or other psychosocial deviations (Audin, Davy & Barkham, 2003).

In order to improve the quality of life of the student, and thus of one nation and forming a larger social and health policy, it is not enough to take into account and measure only the economic and social indicators (Keith & Schalock, 1994). There is also a lack of valuable information on how students feel in their lives and how they behave in certain circumstances in life (Lewis, 2011; Ibrahimov, 2015).

2. Literature review

Adults often say that youth is the most beautiful and busiest period of life (Mangeloja & Hirvonen, 2007; Gibbs & Dean, 2014). Realistically, as much as a youth has a magic in itself, it also brings about the difficulties and challenges that young people face. Under the pressure of time and activities, or under the pressure of passing exams, the student faces a series of problems (Bouillet & Gvozdanović, 2008).

Osteoporosis, diabetes, heart disease, and various psychiatric disorders often occur (Schaufeli, Maslach & Marek, 1993; Jašić & Kaluđerović, 2015). Student life is interesting and entertaining for someone but difficult and painstaking for others. Student life is an experience that has a lasting impact on their lives. Lectures in the early hours, sleepless nights and long hours spent over a book, student parties, hanging out with colleagues, spreading new acquaintances, stressed life, free lessons for patience and so on.

One who has passed the student life or is still a student knows exactly what this means because he experienced it on his own skin. It may be said that studying has both positive and negative aspects. In addition to getting to know new friends, friendships and independent living, during the student life, students are also faced with problems (Orlando, 2006; Vrkić Dimić, 2005).

When not accepted by adults, it is one of the factors that bring young people into a stressful situation because they are very important to them as experienced by adults.

There are also a great number of significant changes among young people in transition periods such as transition from elementary to high school, as well as moving from secondary to higher education when taking more responsibilities and decisions that need to be made. This may include student failure, which is often the source of additional troublesome situations as a conflict with parents.

The uncertainty of the future, the overwhelming expectations of parents, the ending of an affair, the conflict with friends and many other are just a series of possible aspects that affect the young population (Bakker, et al., 2002; Oginska-Bulik, 2005; Sulea, et al., 2015). In many countries, in recent years, the pressure on students has increased as a result of competitiveness, financial demands of society, increased aspirations for material

security, and so on. All this raises the need for greater support for students, as well as social support that have an important role in the quality of student life and their daily functioning.

Based on data from the Cummins students' quality of life survey (2003) that made a meta-analysis of national research involving 35 countries, interesting results were obtained. The results of the survey in Western countries (USA, UK and Australia) showed that students have a lower quality of life than the wider population.

The results are even shocking as it is a population that has a certain status in the society as a carrier of progress in the future. The possible explanations of such conditions are in the relatively poor financial situation and the students' dependence on the domestic budget and the delayed inclusion of students as a working active population. Regardless of the reasons, the situation is almost identical in the developed and underdeveloped countries (Benjamin & Hollings, 1995). The Basic Questionnaire of the European Social Research (ESR) involves measuring the two most frequently considered domains for the subjective quality of life that measure satisfaction: happiness and life support. These measures were set every two years from 2002/2003 (Schnaudt, et al., 2014).

In addition to social support and general health, mental health is particularly important for the quality of life. The World Health Organization recognized the importance of mental health and one of the main activities of this organization is the development of positive mental health (WHO report, 2004). Positive mental health involves self-esteem and a positive image of oneself, the ability to maintain close relationships with others, respect for diversity in relation to others, self-awareness and empathy for others, capacity to deal with problems and stresses without serious dysfunctions, involvement in constructive community activities, use of talent and giftedness, ability for self-development, ability of the student to defend himself from commercial pressures for risk behaviors, critically analyzed information and a good percentage making decisions and developing creative ways to solve problems.

Based on the popularity of the topic – the quality of life of the students, this study has conducted research with students from higher education in order to determine the impact of all these aspects on their mental development. What follows in this paper is in which areas students have higher satisfaction from life, and in which they have lower life satisfaction (Seligson, et al., 2003; Murat & Yildirim, 2016).

3. Brief description of the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics

The educational process of the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics at the University "Goce Delchev", Shtip, takes place through the realization of five (5) study programs in the first cycle of studies: Tourism, Business Logistics, Gastronomy, Nutrition and Dietetics, Business Administration

	Total number of enrolled students in the first year	Total number of enrolled students in the second year	Total number of enrolled students in the third year	Total number of enrolled students in the fourth year
Business logistics	143	60	45	24
Business administration	62	48	38	22
Gastronomy, nutrition and dietetics	26	54	29	36
Hotel-restaurant	41	38	29	34
Tourism	42	45	21	5
Total	314	245	162	121

Table 1. Total number of enrolled students at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics, at the University "Goce Delchev" – Shtip in the school year 2018/2019
Source: Annual Report of the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics

and hotel-restaurant direction with the possibility of three and four years of study. The second cycle studies are taught in two study programs: international tourism and business logistics, while the third cycle studies are taught in the study program Tourism and Hospitality. In the school year 2018/2019, there are 842 full-time students enrolled in the faculty, subject to research in this paper, Table 1.

4. Methods in the research and analyses of the results

For the purpose of the research, qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The qualitative approach includes a review of the literature of many publications that generally address the issues of quality of life among students and the creation of mental models for improving the quality of life of students. At the same time, many websites were followed, where there were information about initiatives to improve the quality of life of students in higher education.

The quantitative approach consisted of a survey designed for students of all study years and all study programs at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics. The survey was conducted in December 2018. The survey was voluntary and anonymous. Students filled out the questionnaire in the faculty premises.

The sample was made according to the list obtained from the student service at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics (Table 2). In the survey that was conducted in December 2018, out of the total number of 842 full-time students enrolled at the faculty, answers were received from 318 students. The participation of students in the survey is 37.8% of the total number of enrolled full-time students, which is a good basis for analyzing the quality of life results for students from higher education.

	Total number of enrolled students	Total number of surveyed students	Percentage data display (%) per study year
The first year	314	83	26,1
The second year	245	79	24,8
The third year	162	57	17,9
The fourth year	121	99	31,1
Total	842	318	37,8

Table 2. Dispersion of results per student year at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics

The survey is a powerful weapon for data collection and is one of the most used research methods, as it is the easiest way to carry out and collect information that arrives in a form that is easy to analyze.

The survey consisted of a questionnaire structured in two parts:

Part I: General data (gender, marital status, year of study and study program they study, place of residence, number of family members);

Part II: Indicators for Measuring Quality of Life among students according to the Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale for Adults by Robert. A. Cummins (1997), that is, the part that refers to the subjective quality of life where the satisfaction is measured by the scale.

The instrument consists of a scale for assessing the importance of the indicators of quality of life from 0 to 10.

The questions in the questionnaire are compiled for the measurement of 10 indicators selected from the numerous indicators previously applied and discussed by many authors for determining the quality of life of students.

By obtaining the results of the questionnaire from the student survey – test for the quality of student life, an excellent basis for a quantitative analysis of the quality of life among students is obtained. In general, the survey concluded that the students surveyed had different views on the research topics, and the asked questions and indicators measured were intended to

determine the current level of quality of life among students at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics.

The intention was to identify whether enrolled students were more or less satisfied with life based on an analysis of ten measures we called life satisfaction. Measures that we call the quality of life are (Cummins, et al., 1994; Cummins, 2013):

1. Personal well-being and happiness;
2. Student life;
3. The environment where the student lives (community affiliation);
4. Events during the past week;
5. Intimacy (close relationships with others, friends and / or family;
6. Confrontation with problems that arise in life;
7. Something or more about yourself;
8. Expectations for the future;
9. Type of person;
10. Life in relation to the available aspects.

The importance of each indicator is measured with a 0-10 scale with defined endpoints. Values range from 0 (not at all important) to 10 (most importantly) or from 0 (not at all worthwhile) to 10 (are completely valuable). Satisfaction is measured on a 10-point scale with defined endpoints of 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied) or extremely unhappy to extremely happy. The original values are transformed into a standardized form and are displayed in the form of a percentage of the scale maximum (% CM). A total of more than half the points is an acceptable quality of life.

The results according to the scale of importance and satisfaction are expressed individually for each scale, and the average result of values is expressed through five satisfaction scales representing the total measure of subjective measurement of quality of life. The instrument has good metric features (Cummins, McCabe, Gullone, and Romeo, 1994).

In doing so, when interpreting the mean values of the results in quantifying the influence factor, the following scheme was applied: 0.00-2.80 (very low); 2.81-4.60 (low); 4.61-6.40 (medium); 6.41-8.20 (high); and 8.21-10.00 (very high).

The research conducted by the students of FTBL will be presented and directed towards the importance of the psychological health of the quality of life of students measured through 10 indicators.

5. Level of satisfaction with the indicators for measuring quality student life

In terms of indicators, Macedonian students are most satisfied with personal prosperity, student life, life expectations and expectations in the future, and a little satisfied with the intimacy and close relationships with family and friends, as well as with community satisfaction, and the least satisfied with the developments over the last week.

Table 3 presents the aggregate results for questions related to the quality of life of students that relate to 37 particles for assessing the quality of life by 10 indicators.

Indicators for assessment of the quality of life level among students at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics	Average grade
I. Personal well-being and sense of happiness	
1 How satisfied are you with your life - in general?	7.87
2 How satisfied are you with your standard of living?	6.14
3 How satisfied are you with what you have achieved in your life?	7.63
Arithmetic mean of values	**7.21**
II. Student life	
4 How satisfied are you with your student life as a whole?	7.14
5 How satisfied are you with your life at the University?	7.12
6 How satisfied are you with your control over your own student life?	7.98
Arithmetic mean of values	**7.41**
III. The environment in which the student lives (community affiliation)	
7 How satisfied are you with life in your neighborhood as a whole (environment)?	5.91
8 How satisfied are you with the level of trust in your neighborhood?	5.86
9 How satisfied are you with your participation in social events in the neighborhood?	6.06
Arithmetic mean of values	**5.94**
IV. Events during the past week	
10 I was struggling like: " Against the Wind "	5.11
11 I felt gray and lonely	2.84
12 I feel as if I'm not worth much as a person	2.37
Arithmetic mean of values	**3.44**
V. Relation to other people	
13 How often have you felt lonely?	3.84
14 How often have you felt isolated from others?	3.49
15 How often have you felt that others are around you, but not with you?	4.26
Arithmetic mean of values	**3.86**
VI. Facing life	
18 When something bad happens to me, I ask others for help and advice	5.40
19 When something bad happens, I'm looking for a way to improve the situation	7.88
20 When something bad happens to me, I use my abilities to overcome the problem	8.20
Arithmetic mean of values	**7.16**
VII. Something more about yourself	
21 All in all, I am satisfied with myself.	5.71
22 From time to time, I think I am good at everything.	7.13
23 I think I have many good qualities.	8.14
Arithmetic mean of values	**6.99**
VIII. Expectations for the future	
24 Generally, I expect to do more good things than bad ones.	8.28
25 I am always optimistic about my future.	8.00
26 In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	7.64
Arithmetic mean of values	**7.97**
IX. Type of person	
27 I see myself as extroverted and enthusiastic.	6.90
28 I see myself as anxious and easily troubled.	4.48
29 I see myself as reserved and calm.	6.21
30 I see myself as calm and emotionally stable	7.14
Arithmetic mean of values	6.18

X.	Assessment of life in terms of different aspects	
31	Do you get what you want from life?	6.90
32	Are you satisfied with what you receive from life in relation to the average of people of your age	7.17
33	Do you have life (do you live your life) that you deserve	6.89
34	Do you have a kind of life that you need?	7.21
35	Are you satisfied with the current situation in terms of what you expected three years ago	7.09
36	Are you satisfied with the situation you expect in the next five year	6.92
37	Whether the life you have now is the best you had, in terms of the past?	6.61
	Arithmetic mean of values	**6.97**
	Arithmetic mean of all indicators	6.31

Note: The impact factor is represented visually by color according to the following legend:

0.00-2.80 (very low)	2.81-4.60 (low)	4.61-6.40 (medium)	6.41-8.20 (high)	8.21-10.00 (very high)

Table 3. Summary results obtained from the answers to the questions related to the indicators
for assessment of the quality of life of students (average grade)

The current Measuring National Well-being Program of the ONS uses a scale of 0-10 in terms of measuring quality of life. Our problem is the individual differences in the use of the scales and how to treat them in the analysis. Our view is that life satisfaction on a scale of 0-10 is a constant, not variable, and it is always around 7.8. Although in Macedonia, the influence factor is **6.31**, which means that the satisfaction of the student life is in the middle zone.

Due to the fact that people have always wondered what good life means and what it consists of, it shows that human nature is such that it is not satisfied only with basic existential needs but requires higher levels of pleasures. National di-fferences in life satisfaction point to two conclusions. The first is that the degree of satisfaction is under the full influence of cultural values that differently affect the quality of life, and the other that the level of satisfaction of the individual depends on his or her compliance with the norms and expectations of the community in which he lives.

From Table 3 it can be seen that there is a small number of indicators where the quality of life of students is low, and this is related to the issues of trust, socialization and frustrations of the young population. Table 4 presents those indicators for asse-ssing the quality of life of students in higher education who are high on the scale for the quality of life level.

Indicators for assessment of the quality of life level among students at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics	Average grade
Personal well-being and sense of happiness	
1 How satisfied are you with your life - in general?	7.87
3 How satisfied are you with what you have achieved in your life?	7.63
Student life	
4 How satisfied are you with your student life as a whole?	7.14
5 How satisfied are you with your life at the University?	7.12
6 How satisfied are you with your control over your own student life?	7.98
Facing life	
18 When something bad happens, I'm looking for a way to improve the situation	7.88
19 When something bad happens to me, I use my abilities to overcome the problem	8.20
More about yourself	
21 From time to time, I think I'm good at everything.	7.13
22 I think I have many good qualities.	8.14
Expectations for the future	
23 Generally, I expect more good things to happen than bad ones.	8.28
24 I am always optimistic about my future.	8.00
25 In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	7.64
Type of person	
26 I see myself as extroverted and enthusiastic.	6.90
29 I see myself as calm and emotionally stable.	7.14
Assessment of life in terms of different aspects	
30 Do you get what you want from life?	6.90
31 Are you satisfied with what you receive from life in relation to the average of people of your age?	7.15
32 Do you have life (do you live your life) that you deserve?	6.89
33 Do you have a life that you need?	7.21
34 Are you satisfied with the current situation in terms of what you expected three years ago?	7.09
35 Are you satisfied with the situation you expect in the next five years?	6.92
36 Whether the life you have now is the best you had, in terms of the past?	6.61
Arithmetic mean of all indicators	**6.13**

Note: The impact factor is represented visually by color according to the following legend:

6.41-8.20 (high)	8.21-10.00 (very high)

Table 4. Collective results obtained from the answers to questions related to the indicators for assessing
the quality of life level (high and very high) in students (average grade)

While Table 5 shows the extreme indicators regarding the quality of life level, from very low to the highest level, as well as the arithmetic mean of the values of all indicators, which is 6.31, which according to the factor of influence is in the middle zone. The current Measuring National Welfare program uses a scale of 0-10.

Our problem is the individual differences in the use of the scales and how to treat them in the analysis. My view is that life satisfaction on a scale of 0-10 is a constant, not a variable, and it is always around 7.8. Although in Macedonia, the influence factor is 6.31, which means that the satisfaction of the student life is in the middle zone.

Indicators for assessment of the quality of life level among students at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics		Average grade
11	I felt gray and lonely	2.84
23	Generally, I expect more good things to happen than bad ones	8.28
Arithmetic mean of all indicators		6.13

Note: The impact factor is represented visually by color according to the following legend:

0.00-2.80 (very low)	2.81-4.60 (low)	4.61-6.40 (medium)	6.41-8.20 (high)	8.21-10.00 (very high)

Table 5. Collective results obtained from the answers to questions related to the indicators for assessing the quality of life level (very low, medium, and very high) among students (average grade)

6. Conclusion

This research seeks to identify approaches under which Macedonian students will become happy and satisfied in the process of higher education. The objective assessment of the quality of life, on the basis of statistical models, made by various specialized institutions, often cannot answer the question of subjective well-being and the satisfaction of the individual, nor give a true and complete picture of the quality of life, especially when it comes to for specific populations as students. Therefore, the subjective assessment of the quality of life obtained on the basis of a representative sample of one population is relevant to obtaining a picture of the quality of life of a population.

The survey conducted at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics at the "Goce Delchev" University, Shtip gave an interesting picture of the quality of life of the student population. Namely, most students expressed satisfaction with life, standard of living and achieved results in life, as well as student life as a whole. Pleasure in life in relation to neighborhood / environment is not rated at such high grades, but it is still at a satisfactory level.

In direct contact with the students, they stated that they are seeking the solution in alcohol, drugs or cigarettes or food – eat either too much or too little. Some, however, passively sit in front of the TV or in front of the computer. But such habits do not only elicit the real problem, but they can make it worse.

A somewhat vague situation was obtained in the field attitude toward community. Very low assessments were given on the issue of relations and the community / society, while a number of them gave very low, but also average grades. Therefore, for a final conclusion on this topic, a larger sample is needed in order to provide a greater degree of objectivity and reliability of the results. What is commendable and certainly very important for the relevance of the results obtained is the fact that most students showed an optimistic attitude towards the future and they themselves described themselves as optimists.

Based on the previous analysis, it can be concluded that the students at the Faculty are generally satisfied with the quality of life, yet still need to make comparisons with other faculties of this University and other Universities in the country to obtain better and more objective results in order to comply with the results of the assessment of the student populations of the surrounding countries.

This research could be a starting point for thinking about some other models of studying of regular students who are alarmingly exposed to stress, which can negatively affect not only the results of studying, but also the ability to work and even their health.

Positive effects in the student population can be caused by relaxation techniques, autogenous training, biofeedback, Jacobson's progressive relaxation method, yoga, meditation, and so on. These techniques are most often combined with visualization techniques that the student applies with the feeling that he leaves school with successfully passed exams and a nice day.

Some studies have shown that positive emotions in the body cause effects other than the effects of stress. It is therefore advisable to practice various exercises of positive psychology that improve satisfaction, happiness, optimism, hope. During pauses before and after learning, activities that do not mentally burden are needed. Physical activities are recommended, but they must not be exhausting in order to have energy to continue learning.

It is also an essential element to strengthen self-esteem and reinforce the spirit.

How can students manage their lives?
If students are surrounded by friends, family, and other friendly people, they are more likely to find support for their problems, and might have the opportunity to help others with similar problems.

Find a trusted person who they can talk to and tell their problems, especially when they become unbearable. Most often it is someone from a close family, a friend or a professional who can be trusted.

Maintain a constant physical fitness regardless of whether professionally or not involved in sports in a student's life, any physical activity has a positive effect on the student's mental health.

Incorporate healthy foods in diet with balanced meals.

To make a balance between the duties of the faculty and the private life, especially by putting emphasis on various forms of hobbies, socializing with friends; all that is not related to the faculty.

Faculties should provide pre-requisites for students to have positive first experiences in studying. Too often, a negative experience, such as a confusing enrollment / registration process or hostile personnel will deter the student from enrolling.

Student engagement should be in many and different forms where students openly feel that they are part of the community. Most faculty websites are incredibly confusing when visiting and even for employees. Faculties should engage students on suggestions for redesigning their website and to teach students what information they need most and how to approach them.

Creating groups of students with similar interests on Facebook sites allow same-minded people to approach and discuss together the issues that matter most to them. At the university, these platforms are perfect for students to form close links outside the faculty.

Not all students study the same way, many decide to stay quiet at lectures, make notes and preserve their questions and opinions. With access to online forums, students can continue their learning at their own pace, work together on group projects and exchange knowledge with different considerations about their course topics. Not all student groups are the same, and the role of the teacher is to understand their pulse before applying the teaching method.

There are many teaching techniques and strategies that deliver impressive results in improving student learning. The Dean Administration also needs to offer assistance to support teachers in implementing advanced and creative teaching strategies.

With the advancement of mobile technology and digital education, smart faculty software and educational applications play an important role in student life. Parents also have the same responsibility to provide a comfortable environment and productive support to their children to help them have a pleasant learning environment.

The student should not understand life too seriously neither too carefree. In each activity, a certain amount of humor should be included, especially in moments of failure.

The student should make a timetable of obligations. In this way, there will be full control over the servicing of obligations that would be distributed over a timeframe without any additional pressure.

The student should pay more attention to health because

long-term exposure to stress will cause negative effects on the health condition. If the obligations are too many, it is not a disgrace to reduce the goals and criteria.

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