

The Quality of Student Life in the Republic of North Macedonia

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Abstract

The research that is the subject of this paper is compiled in the direction of measuring the quality of life of students in the areas that are important for them, and they will show to what extent each of these areas participates in their overall quality of life.

The concept of this paper is analyzed through the current theoretical knowledge, as well as analyzes of the results in this research are carried out among the students at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics at the "Goce Delčev" University, Štip. In order to improve the quality of life of the students, and thus of a 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.

To get a complete picture, there is also a lack of valuable information on how students feel in their lives and how they behave in certain circumstances. Therefore, the analyses and researches include subjective indicators, i.e. it is measured how the students feel in their everyday life and how satisfied they are with certain aspects that affect them.

Key words: student; psychophysical health; satisfaction; quality of life; model;

JEL classification: 123, 131

1. Introduction

The student is a key element in contemporary higher education and in society. The significance of students is even greater with the fact that they represent a critical mass in the society as bearers of new ideas, perspectives and creations. The subjective well-being of the student as a concept for a superior quality of life can be understood from the hierarchy of Maslow's needs (Schnaudt, et al., 2014).

When lower order needs are met, the individual can focus on those of the higher ranks. Accordingly, increasing the quality of life satisfaction would encourage the individual - the student to be more moral and altruistic in his behavior.

If people are happier in their lives, they are more likely to contribute positively (and significantly) to the society in which they live (Benjamin, 1994; McFarland, et al., 2008). 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.

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 Delčev" University, Štip.

The need to measure the quality of the students' 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 (Audin, Davy & Barkham, 2003). 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.

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).

2. Literature review

Adults often say that youth is the most beautiful and busiest period of life (Mangelaja & 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; 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 the 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).

Brief description of the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics

The educational process of the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics (FTBL) 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 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.

Table 1: Total number of enrolled students at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics, at the University "Goce Delčev" - Štip in the school year 2018/2019

Study programs:	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

Source: Annual Report of the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics

3. Research Methodology

The main objective of this paper is the study of the quality of life of the student from a psychological point of view, primarily on his experience and self-assessment of the satisfaction of his student life. By researching the

sources in domestic and foreign literature, it is concluded that such research, with this approach, is not present in our country.

Therefore, the proposed research had the following objectives:

- To indicate the significance of the quality of life on students' mental development;
- To analyze students' satisfaction with their student life;
- To analyze the subjective indicators arising from this research, which are an important supplement to the overall assessment of the quality of life of the student and his continuous improvement and
- Give important recommendations for improving the quality of student life and applying new, mental models that will affect the overall quality of life of students.

In the direction of achieving the set objectives, the paper is methodically structured in several parts. After the introduction, the second part gives an overview of the theory that deals with the issues of quality of life among students and the concept of quality living, as well as the benefits of developing healthy generations. The third part explains the applied research methodology, while the fourth part contains the analysis and interpretation of the results of the research. The conclusions and recommendations are presented in the fifth part.

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 was 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 have 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.

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

	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

Source: Annual Report of 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 the easiest 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: Domains for Measuring the Quality of Life among students according to the Comprehensive Quality of Life Scale for Adults by Robert. A. Cummins (1994), that is, the section that refers to the subjective quality of life that measures satisfaction.

The instrument consists of a scale from 0 to 10 used to measure student satisfaction from "life as a whole" through selected domains of living, happiness and other issues related to social well-being. 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 (Cummins, 2003; Cummins, 2013).

4. Analyses of the Results

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 that were measured were intended to determine the current level of quality of life among students at the Faculty of Tourism and Business Logistics (FTBL).

The intention was to identify whether enrolled students in the higher years were more or less satisfied with their lives in relation to students in the lower years and vice versa (Cummins, 2003; Cummins, 2013). We made scales based on the results of factor analysis; with ten measures called life satisfaction. Measures that we call the quality of life are:

1. Personal well-being and happiness;
2. Student life;
3. The environment where the student lives (community affiliation);
4. Events during the last 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 scale of 11 points 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.

Results according to the scale of importance and satisfaction are expressed individually for each scale, and the average result of values represent the total measure of subjective measurement of quality of life. The instrument has good metric features (Cummins, et al., 1994). In the interpretation of the

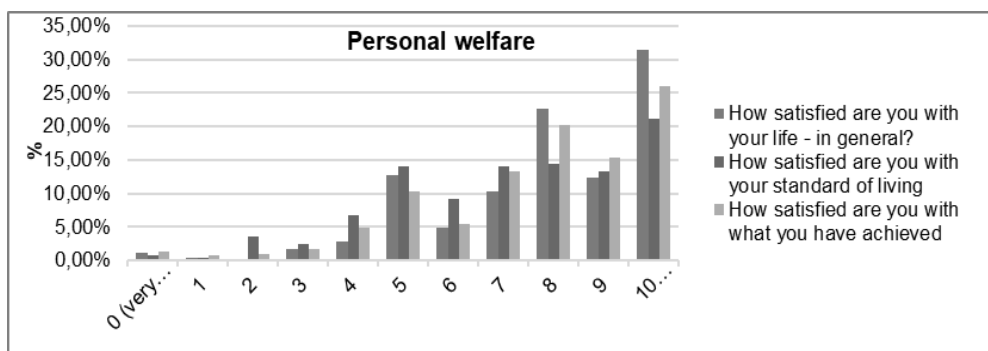
mean values of the results, in the quantification of the influence factor, the following scheme was applied: 0.00-2.80 (very low); 2.81-4.60 (low); 4.61-6.40 (medium); 6.41-8.20 (high); and 8.21-11.00 (very high).

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.

Level of satisfaction with the indicators for measuring the students' life quality

In Figure 1, the cumulative results for questions related to the level of personal well-being among students are presented. Namely, it can be noted that only 31,51% of students are considerably satisfied with life in general, and 25,94% of them, from what they have achieved in their lives.

Figure 1: Level of personal well-being among students

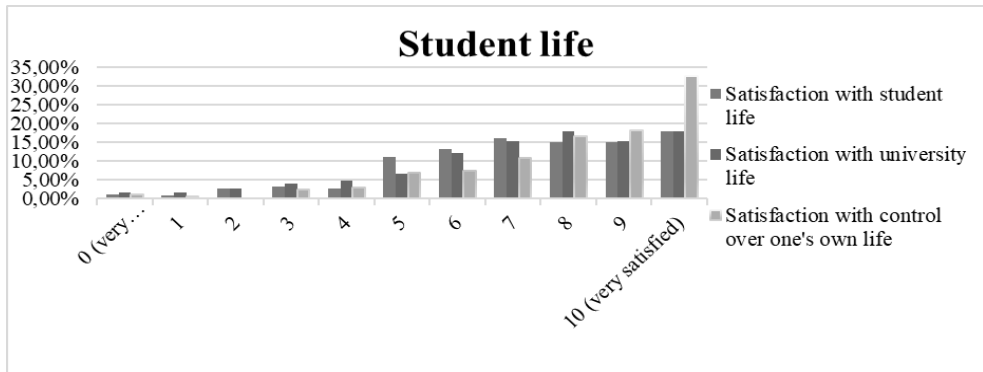


Source: survey (2018)

Reasons can be sought in the dangers that lurk in the environment that are multiplied in the direction of violating human integrity, making the student often confronts with fears and concerns, as well as for the uncertain future. Everyday disruptions to the ecological setting are the more frequent wars that spread throughout the world, existential insecurity, disruptions in family and social relations, and so on, become real and lasting sources of stress.

Figure 2 shows visually the aggregate results for questions related to the level of student life satisfaction among students, and it can be concluded that the student life is not very satisfactory since only 18,04% of the respondents are present.

Figure 2: Level of satisfaction with student life

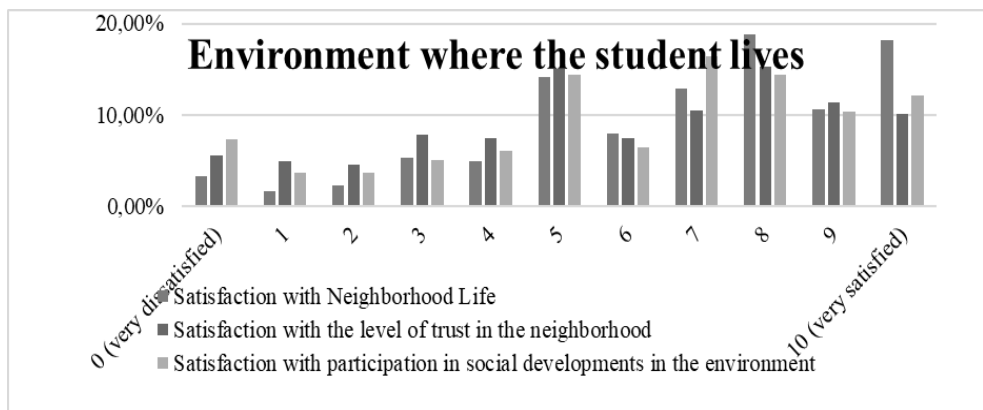


Source: survey (2018)

It can be concluded that the modern student is strongly influenced by many factors. He is under constant pressure to maintain the adaptation to fast changes in the environment and in his organism.

While Figure 3 shows the comprehensive results obtained from the answers to the questions concerning the level of satisfaction among the students from the environment in which they live, where only 10,10% of the respondents are satisfied with the level of confidence that is created with the environment.

Figure 3: Level of satisfaction with the student living environment

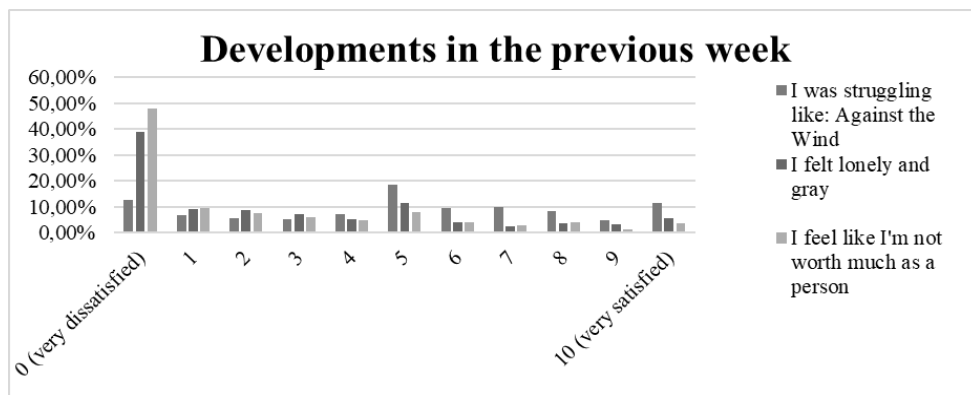


Source: survey (2018)

The reasons for the low level are required in the human organism, which with its limitations comes in a state that it cannot overcome all the tasks that life sets before it and comes in a certain stressful state. Because stress has a significant impact on health and is impossible to avoid, the question is how to deal with it.

Figure 4 summarizes the results of last week's issues related to the events that worry about the fact that 38, 83% of the respondents feel blue and lonely, and 47, 75% feel that they do not value themselves as individuals.

Figure 4: Level of satisfaction of students with past events

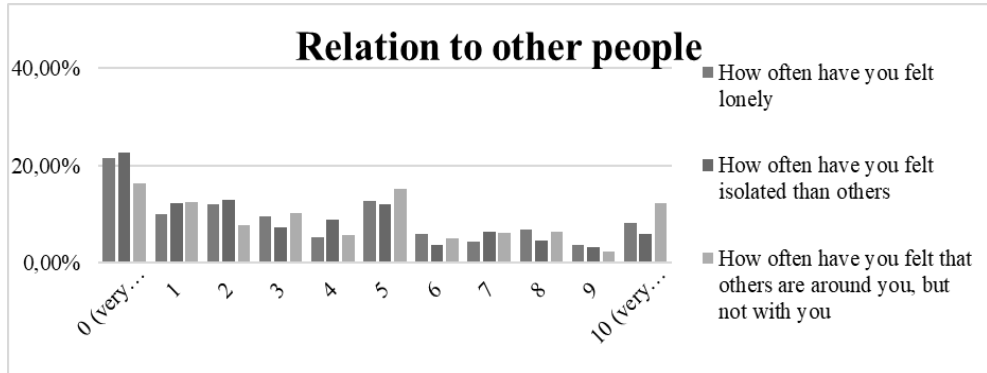


Source: survey (2018)

This condition can be defined as a physical, chemical and emotional stimulation from the environment that in the individual - a student causes inability to adjust and physical tension that can lead to the onset of illness.

Figure 5 shows the summary results for questions related to the attitude of others to students, where 21, 58% of the respondents often feel lonely, and 22, 59% of them feel isolated in relation to the environment.

Figure 5: Level of satisfaction with other people attitude toward students

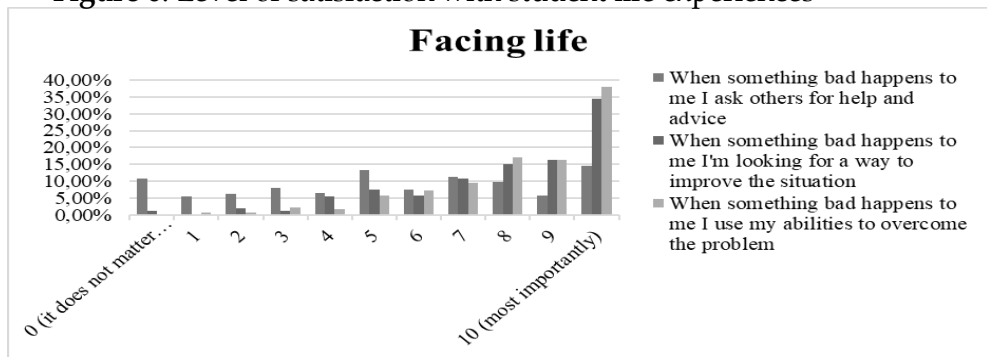


Source: survey (2018)

The student is under constant pressure to maintain the adaptation to the fast changes in the environment and in his or her body.

Figure 6 presents the summary results for questions related to the level of student satisfaction with the encounters in life. It is interesting that only 14,71% seek help in solving problems, and even 38,01% of them use their abilities to overcome problems.

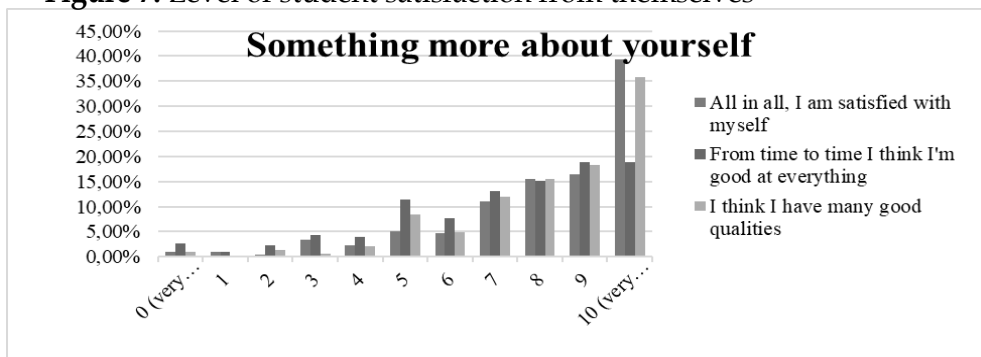
Figure 6: Level of satisfaction with student life experiences



Source: survey (2018)

Figure 7 shows the summary results obtained from the answers to questions concerning the level of student satisfaction from them, where 39, 26% of the respondents are satisfied with themselves, and 35, 79% think they have kind personality traits.

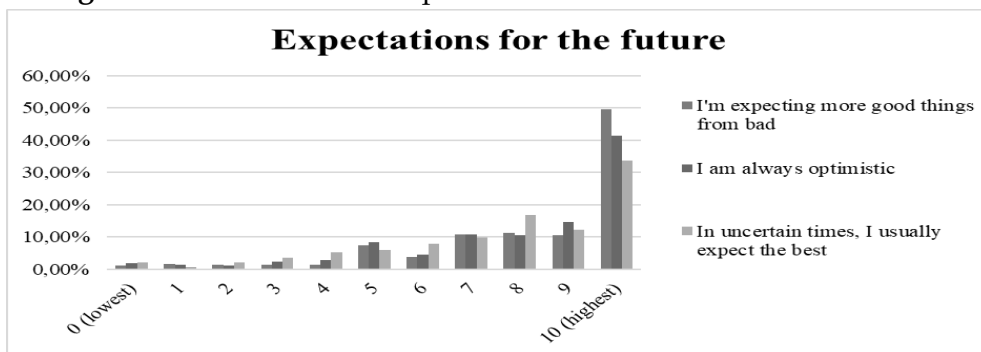
Figure 7: Level of student satisfaction from themselves



Source: survey (2018)

Figure 8 shows the aggregate results obtained from the answers to questions about the level of expectations for the future, where 49,48% expect that nice things will happen in the future, and 41,40% are optimistic about the future.

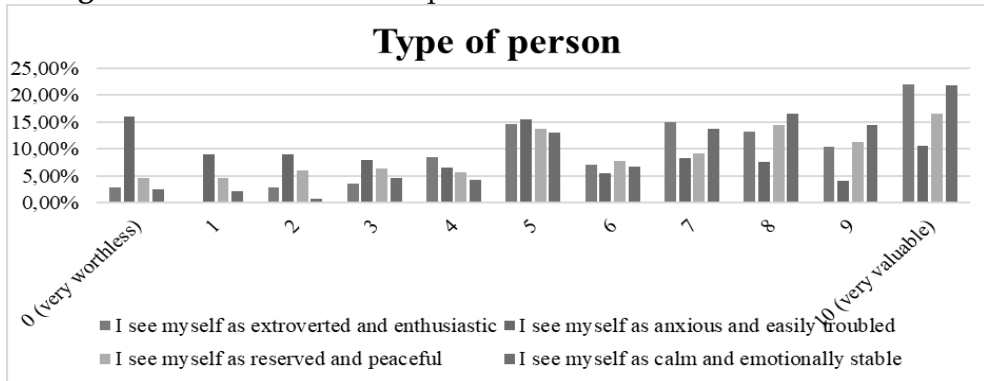
Figure 8: Level of student expectations of the future



Source: survey (2018)

Figure 9 shows the aggregate results obtained from the answers to the questions about the level of self-esteem, where 15, 94% feel anxious and easily upset, and only 22, 06% as extroverted and enthusiastic.

Figure 9: Level of student's opinion about themselves



Source: survey (2018)

The fast dynamics of developments in the environment and the conditions to be adapted create greater barriers to the possibilities of meeting internal needs, which is perceived as a state of more frequent frustration.

The aggregate results obtained from the answers to the questions concerning the level of satisfaction with life in relation to different aspects show: from 19.66% to 20.69% of respondents are satisfied with different aspects of life that refer to the satisfaction of the current situation, expectations, support, etc.

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 36 particles for assessing the quality of life by 10 indicators.

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)

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	
1.How satisfied are you with your student life as a whole?	7,14
2.How satisfied are you with your life at the University?	7,12
3.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)	
1.How satisfied are you with life in your neighborhood as a whole (environment)?	5,91
2.How satisfied are you with the level of trust in your neighborhood?	5,86
3.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	
1.I was struggling like: " Against the Wind "	5,11
2.I felt gray and lonely	2,84
3.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	
1.How often have you felt lonely?	3,84
2.How often have you felt isolated from others?	3,49
3.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	
1.When something bad happens to me, I ask others for help and advice	5,40
2.When something bad happens, I'm looking for a way to improve the situation	7,88
3.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	
1.All in all, I am satisfied with myself.	5,71
2.From time to time, I think I am good at everything.	7,13
3.I think I have many good qualities.	8,14
Arithmetic mean of values	6,99
VII.Expectations for the future	
1.Generally, I expect to do more good things than bad ones.	8,28
2.I am always optimistic about my future.	8,00
3.In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	7,64
Arithmetic mean of values	7,97
VII.Type of person	
1.I see myself as extroverted and enthusiastic.	6,90
2.I see myself as anxious and easily troubled.	4,48
3.I see myself as reserved and calm.	6,21
4.I see myself as calm and emotionally stable	7,14
Arithmetic mean of values	6,18
VII.Assessment of life in terms of different aspects	
1.Do you get what you want from life?	6,90
2.Are you satisfied with what you receive from life in relation to the average of people of your age	7,17
3.Do you have life (do you live your life) that you deserve	6,89
4.Do you have a kind of life that you need?	7,21
5.Are you satisfied with the current situation in terms of what you expected three years ago	7,09
6.Are you satisfied with the situation you expect in the next five year	6,92

7. 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

Source: survey (2018)

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)
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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 differences 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.

5. 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 Delčev" University, Štip 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.

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