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**IDENTIFYING LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG THE STUDENTS
FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the level of life satisfaction and the differences regarding life satisfaction among the students from the University of Bucharest. In order to measure the level of satisfaction we applied an instrument designed for psychological testing – Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS). The participants selected for this research were 140 students from the University of Bucharest, both male and female. The research results were processed in SPSS. After applying the descriptive statistics and the T-test for identifying the students' differences by gender, it was noticed a higher level of satisfaction at the male students. Furthermore, there were also noticed considerable differences on the five domains of the questionnaire: family, friends, school, living environment and self. Findings of the study showed significant differences in terms of satisfaction level for the two categories of subjects, so the training and development of self-image is influenced by the four areas of the life of every individual.

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1. Introduction

Whereas life satisfaction of adults has already been the focus of numerous studies (Diener, 1994), life satisfaction in childhood and adolescence is yet to become the primary objective of scientific research. The present paper therefore comes as a result of this need to study life satisfaction in adolescence and early adulthood, since this concept exhibits multiple implications for the personality development and formation. Concurrently this paper comes in handy for those educators who seek for a legitimate and differentiated intervention upon their students, in respect of their life satisfaction level. If an adolescent learns how to be life satisfaction oriented (in other words, how to be grateful for all the

positive things in his/her life), the quality of his/her life improves considerably, the incidence of depression decreases etc. At the same time, life satisfaction is known to foster a psycho-social climate based on trust and self-content. The positive effects of a high level of life satisfaction are achieved through positive actions and favorable life experiences. These require the development of an open and empathetic attitude towards new, innovative and creative situations, all of which enable a harmonious personality development for each individual.

2. Theoretical Foundation and Related Research

A series of authors has described life satisfaction as a “global evaluation by the person of his or her life” (Pavot, Diener, 1993, p. 164). This complex assessment includes not only an emotional evaluation, but also a cognitive evaluation of one’s life. (Diener, Oishi & Lucas, 2003) Life satisfaction therefore encompasses the whole life of an individual, with all its different aspects. It implies fulfilling an individual’s needs, wishes and desires (Ardahan, 2012) and it represents the “emotional reaction of an individual to life, which is defined as work, leisure and other non-work time”. (Hong & Giannakopoulos, 1994)

The concept of life satisfaction has proved to be of great importance in understanding children and adolescents’ psychological well-being. Life satisfaction reports, for instance, have often been distinguished from other constructs, known to fall under the category of well-being, such as positive affect (Lucas et al., 1996; Huebner, 1991; Huebner & Dew, 1996; Huebner, 2001), self-esteem, depression (Lewinsohn, Redner & Seely, 1991) or others. Aside from this difference between satisfaction and well-being, life satisfaction has also been distinguished from happiness. For example, (Mohammadi, 2011, p. 1843) defines satisfaction as follows: “in contrast to the concept of happiness, which refers to emotional experience (excitements and feelings), satisfaction indicates a recalling knowledge and is definable as the perceived difference between wish and progression. This definition comprises a range which extends from success to deprivation feeling.”

Cummins and Cahill (2001) classify the factors that improve life satisfaction into three distinct categories: individual-based variables (such as personality traits), cognitive variables (control, self-esteem, optimism etc.) and socio-environmental factors (Bramson et al., 2002; Agyar, 2013). In the same train of thought, Sahin (2008) lists a series of factors that are known to influence life satisfaction, such as: health, confidence, relationship with parents, siblings and relatives, having a child and raising him/her, helping others, taking others into consideration, joining events, learning, understanding him/herself, having a job, socializing, reading, listening to music, watching movies, and participating in entertainment. As regards Sahin’s first listed factor (health), Beutell (2006) seems to share a similar view, stating that life satisfaction is tightly connected to an individual’s mental health. Thus, when individuals are satisfied with their life as a whole, their mental health will also enhance. In this case however, it is satisfaction that influences mental health and not vice versa. In addition to Sahin and Beutell’s opinion, a high level of satisfaction was also proved to attenuate family conflicts and implicitly improve a person’s psychological health level within the society. (Mohammadi, 2011)

In any event, physical health, psychological resilience and mental health remain three of the most frequent characteristics of satisfied people (W.E., 1996). At the same time, the differences between satisfied and dissatisfied people are displayed in their social skills. According to Roberts (2007), a high

level of life satisfaction is known to enhance social assertiveness and empathy, two characteristics which dissatisfied people usually lack. Research has also shown that dissatisfied people have difficulties in managing the events around them, while satisfied people are more likely to be in control of their environment. Hence, being able to control the immediate environment is definitely linked to the individual's level of life satisfaction. (Alahdad et al., 2014)

In terms of university students, life satisfaction is just as important as it is for adults. One of the links between school and positive psychology (and life satisfaction implicitly) is focusing on teaching people how to trust themselves and not to be afraid of engaging in positive experiences which bring them happiness (for instance, relationships based on love or professional success built on effort and perseverance) (Pânișoară et. al, 2016). Furthermore, life satisfaction appears to indicate an individual's ability to handle important life tasks and social roles such as work. When referring to school, this "work" is translated to academic retention and the ability to complete a degree and continue one's studies. (Frisch, 2006)

In Civitci's opinion (2015), life satisfaction is part of the subjective well-being, also known as "happiness", which is one of the positive indicators of adjustment to be altered by the students' stressful everyday lives. For example, not few are the situations in which students who go to university are forced to leave home and change their residence. Thus they have to rapidly get used to an abundance of new people and places. (Ozgun et al, 2010) In this case, the difference between previous expectations and actual facts points out the level of life satisfaction gained throughout the accommodation process. In other words, satisfaction can be regarded as an individual's success in achieving his/her goals. (Topaloglu, 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Objective

The primary objective of this research is to identify the level of life satisfaction and the differences in terms of life satisfaction on five specific domains (family, friends, school, living environment and self) among the students from the University of Bucharest. A secondary objective of this study is to analyze the previously identified level of satisfaction among the students from the University of Bucharest, alongside with the differences between each of the domains under discussion.

3.2. Hypotheses

- H1. There is a high level of life satisfaction at the students from the University of Bucharest.
- H2. There are differences by gender regarding the students' level of satisfaction.
- H3. There are significant differences in terms of students' satisfaction on the following five domains: family, friends, school, living environment and self.

3.3. Subjects

The participants selected for this research were 140 students: 70 male students and 70 female students. The participants were selected randomly, without taking into account their specialization.

3.4. Methods

The instrument designed for psychological testing – Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS) – is aimed to offer a multidimensional profile of how children and adolescents perceive life satisfaction. The results obtained after applying the test are meant to assist specialists in the processes of diagnosis, prevention and intervention. The MSLSS was particularly designed for: (a) providing a multidimensional profile on children and adolescents’ satisfaction, based on particular domains of their life (e.g. school, friends, living environment) and (b) determining their general level of life satisfaction.

For this study it was used the MSLSS Version 200, designed by Scott Huebner. The 40-item MSLSS is designed for being used on students both individually or in groups. This type of differentiated assessment leads to a more precise diagnostic, prevention and intervention.

4. Results

The results were introduced and processed using the SPSS software for statistical analysis.

In order to identify the level of life satisfaction for all the subjects selected for this study, we used the descriptive statistics (number of subjects, sum, mean and standard deviation) from Table 1. Considering the indicators’ limits within the questionnaire, we can state that the mean = 122.2714 shows a high level of the students’ life satisfaction, which confirms the first hypothesis of this study. A high level of life satisfaction involves self-content, as well as appreciation of life and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the participants in this study are psycho-emotionally balanced and this supports their personality development and social integration.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics - satisfaction level

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
satisfactionlevelsum	140	82.00	183.00	16698.00	122.2714	12.83310
Subject	140	1.00	140.00	9870.00	70.5000	40.55860
Valid N (listwise)	140					

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics which confirm the third hypothesis, according to which there are statistically significant differences in terms of students’ life satisfaction for each of the five domains of this concept. We can notice the high scores of the male subjects, on the “friends” domain (mean = 30.42), which indicate a higher level of self-content and social adaptation within the boys’ groups of friends. Furthermore, it is interesting to note the lower scores achieved by both categories of subjects on the “family” and “friends” domains, although they represent two fundamental elements of interpersonal life.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics- five domains

Group Statistics	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
family	female	70	22.1000	3.60816	.43126
	male	70	23.0714	4.33831	.51853
friends	female	70	27.3714	4.97580	.59472
	male	70	30.4286	3.97664	.47530
school	female	70	22.0714	4.73446	.56588

	male	70	23.1286	5.57146	.66592
livingenvironment	female	70	24.1000	4.89054	.58453
	male	70	25.6143	4.84930	.57960
self	female	70	22.1143	3.09063	.36940
	male	70	25.9286	3.87232	.46283

Table 3 shows the descriptive results of the life satisfaction level for the two categories of subjects. We can notice how the male subjects have a higher mean than the female ones. In Table 3 it can be noticed a mean of 126.4857 for the boys' level of satisfaction, which is approximately 8 decimals higher than the girls' mean and which concurrently allows for the assertion that boys' perspective upon life is more likely to include traits such as independence, autonomy and self-confidence.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics – satisfaction level by gender

satisfactionlevel			
gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
female	118.0571	70	9.34815
male	126.4857	70	15.53653
Sum	122.2714	140	12.83310

The second hypothesis will also be confirmed by the T-test for independent samples in Table 4. Table 4 illustrates the T-test results for independent samples, that confirm the second hypothesis, according to which there are statistically significant differences by gender regarding the students' level of satisfaction. The value of $p=.044$, which means that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups, therefore the second hypothesis can be accepted. Considering the differences between the male and the female students in terms of life satisfaction, we can state that the male students perceive their relationships and the events around them as being favorable for their personal and professional development.

Table 4. Independent Samples Test

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Interval Difference Lower	Confidence of the Upper
Satisfaction level sum	Equal variances assumed	8.016	.044	1.121	138	.264	2.42857	2.16720	6.71378	1.85663
	Equal variances not assumed			1.121	113.171	.265	2.42857	2.16720	6.72211	1.86497

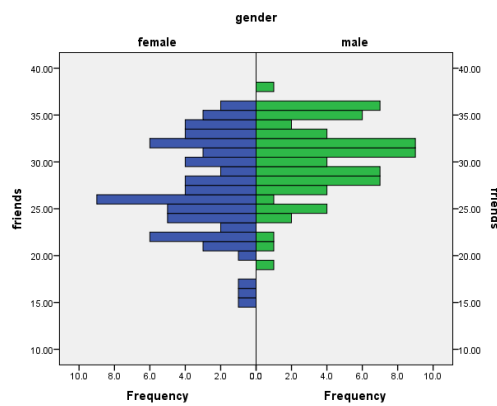


Figure 1. Histogram for friends

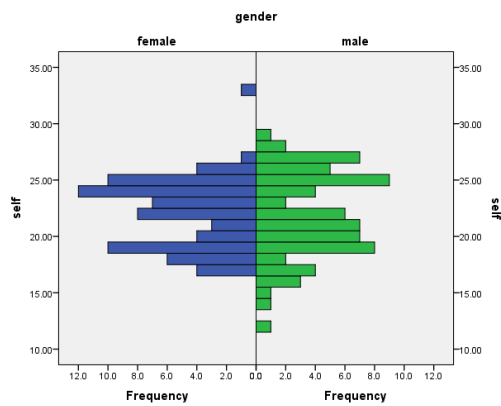


Figure 2. Histogram for self

The histograms from Figures 1-4 illustrate graphically the differences between students on four domains of life satisfaction. In Figure 1 we can notice that boys have higher scores than girls on the “friends” domain. Therefore, the main role of these graphs is to highlight the confirmation of the hypotheses through the explicit scattering degree of the answers.

Figure 2 reveals similar scores in terms of self-satisfaction, therefore both categories of subjects show an appropriate level of self-confidence and self-content. The answers’ mean for the two categories of subjects, in point of the level of self-satisfaction, ranges from 20 to 25% of all answers.

The histograms from Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the students’ satisfaction towards their living environment and school. As concerns the satisfaction towards school, this domain received the lowest scores, compared to all the other domains. These results deserve special attention for further research, as the subjects of this study pertain to different faculties and the results of school satisfaction were generally low.

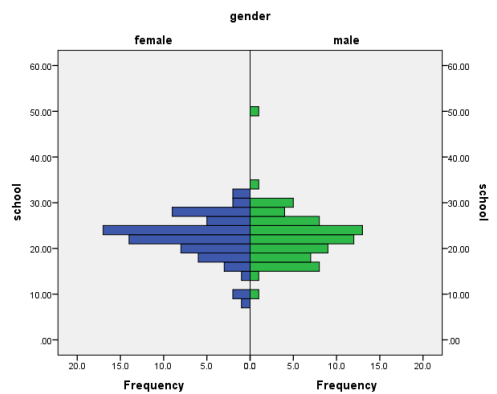


Figure 3. Histogram for school

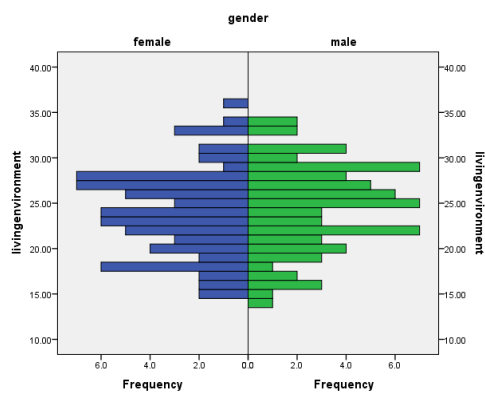


Figure 4. Histogram for living environment

5. Conclusions

Life satisfaction is the main indicator of psychological and socio-emotional balance for each individual. Our personality, seen as a social construct, requires a permanent adjustment to social demands, thus the domains of life satisfaction – family, school, living environment, friends and self – represent personal and professional constituents of each individual’s self-regulation. A high level of life satisfaction requires the development of several abilities, such as self-motivation, involvement, the wish

to succeed or the pursuit of the positive aspects in one's life, in other words the development of positive thinking. At the same time, students who prove a low level of satisfaction in terms of family experiences require different methods of intervention compared to those students who show a low level of satisfaction in terms of school experiences. Therefore, this study proves its usefulness not only through its theoretical value for further scientific research, as life satisfaction in adolescence and early adulthood has not yet been one of its frequent objectives, but also for those educators who are inquiring how to and where from to begin their different approach on students.

Students are a particular type of young adults: they are not yet involved in the field of work or fully responsible for their lives. Nonetheless we can conclude that these young people (responsible for a part of their life, including academic development for their future active life) show their satisfaction towards specific activities and areas of interest, which make them happy, enthusiastic and appreciative.

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