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Measuring Life Satisfaction During the Pandemic Among Students of the Business Studies University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Oman

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ABSTRACT

The study's goal was to determine the level of life satisfaction among Business Studies students at one of Oman's universities. The responses are from various levels of the BSD's post-foundation, where the survey questionnaire was distributed. The survey, which was adapted from Huebner's MSLSS, was designed to assess life satisfaction in five areas: family, friends, school, living environment, and self. To examine the correlation of students' life satisfaction throughout the pandemic, the data was interpreted and analyzed using descriptive analysis such as frequency, percentage, and mean, as well as Spearman's rho coefficient. The findings revealed that gender, age, and level of studies had a significant influence on the respondents' present living conditions. The results show a significant measure of how the respondents expressed their life satisfaction during the pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

The quest to find personal happiness and fulfillment during a worldwide pandemic may be difficult, as all students throughout the world during the COVID-19 pandemic were taken off guard by the health and safety protocols, which included lockdowns and other forms of limitations. Life satisfaction was impacted by possible changes in physical activity as well as general physical and psychological well-being. Education scholars and practitioners have paid great attention to the study results of university students, particularly their psychological well-being. It's worth looking into measures to improve students' quality of life, particularly during the pandemic, when millions of students throughout the world are taking online courses from home.

The study necessitates capturing the prevalence of social isolation during the COVID-19 epidemic as well as the numerous factors that influence how isolated people of all ages feel. Social isolation was thought to be related to how people dealt with the pandemic. Finally, for people over the adult lifespan, social isolation would operate as a mediator to life happiness and fundamental trust in institutions. As a result, the study examined several variables related to the respondents' quality of life. The development of positive education strategies for students will be aided by identifying the fundamental stressors and coping mechanisms for students during the pandemic.

Various research has demonstrated an increasing interest in university students' mental health (Hunt and Eisenberg, 2010). For young individuals, going to university from late adolescence to adulthood is a significant transition (Lin, 2010). University students may experience unpleasant feelings at this time in their life, such as sadness, anxiety (Mahmoud *et al.*, 2012), loneliness, stress, and learning burnout (Lin and Huang, 2012), which can have a significant influence on their academic careers (Benner,

2011). Furthermore, university students are more likely to have mental health issues, such as insomnia, willful self-harm, and even suicidal thoughts and acts (Russell *et al.*, 2019). As a result, the issue of university students' life quality has grown in importance, and research focused on life quality has expanded dramatically in the last twenty years. Instead, they were forced to attend online courses, which may have a harmful influence on their mental health. During this difficult moment, it has become important to look for measures to improve their quality of life and lessen the bad impacts.

Life contentment is one of humanity's most enduring aspirations. According to Argyle (1987), life satisfaction is defined as a person's sensation of happiness and state of delight or pleasant emotion. Life satisfaction may be influenced by a variety of variables. Students' life happiness may be influenced by a wide range of factors, including academic standards, family, friends, social media activity, abilities, and many more. One of the good representations of well-being, according to Schwartz *et al.* (2016), is life satisfaction, which represents a person's cognitive judgment of their own life. This new world has the potential to be a force for good, promoting the finest parts of community building, opportunity, and human connection in many ways.

The sensation of happiness and the condition of joy or pleasant emotion that an individual may enjoy is referred to as life satisfaction. While the phrases happiness and life satisfaction are sometimes used interchangeably, they vary in terms of criteria. Life satisfaction, according to Veenhoven (1996), is the degree to which a person positively views the entire quality of his or her life. In other words, how much a person enjoys his or her life. Life satisfaction is an individual state of being according to one's standards, regardless of what life criteria others have.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

When the COVID-19 outbreak was deemed a global pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020, the majority of US governors issued stay-at-home directives to slow the disease's spread. Similar quarantine directives have been issued for several months in nations across Asia and Europe. As a result, a unique circumstance developed in which the majority of the global populace was confined to their homes, with just medical personnel and other necessary professionals being permitted to regularly leave their residences. Many investigations of prior quarantine events have demonstrated that the experience of physical and social isolation can result in psychological stress reactions (Brooks *et al.*, 2020).

The stress of being concerned about catching COVID-19 and losing loved ones to the illness is in addition to any stress that could result from social isolation or being confined to the home (Brooks *et al.*, 2020; Smith and Lim, 2020). The difficulty of working from home while also taking care of children whose schools had been closed to contain the sickness adds to the stress for many families. Although social isolation's consequences have been documented in the literature, nothing is known about how it will affect people in the event of a global pandemic (Galea *et al.*, 2020; Smith and Lim, 2020; Usher *et al.*, 2020).

The inadequate number and/or quality of contacts with others, including those that take place at the individual, group, and/or community level, is a multidimensional construct known as social isolation (Nicholson, 2012; Smith and Lim, 2020; Umberson and Karas Montez, 2010; Zavaleta *et al.*, 2017). The frequency of contact or interactions with other individuals is a key component of several social isolation measurements. Other measurements pay attention to internal or perceived social isolation, which is defined as the individual's perceptions of loneliness, trust, and relationship satisfaction. This differentiation is crucial because a person may subjectively feel isolated despite having extensive interaction with others, and conversely, they may not feel solitary despite having little contact with others (Hughes *et al.*, 2004). When considering the effects of social isolation is crucial to keep in mind that the majority of recent research on the impacts of social isolation has targeted the senior population (Nyqvist *et al.*, 2016). This is probably because later adulthood is a stage where social isolation from others is more likely as a result of numerous situations like retirement and physical limitations (Umberson and Karas Montez, 2010). Many older persons' isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic has been compounded by the necessity for physical distance owing to virus mitigation efforts (Berg-Weger and Morley, 2020; Smith *et al.*, 2020), and younger adults have also been subjected to a similar experience (Brooks *et al.*, 2020; Smith and Lim, 2020).

Remarkably, various research has shown that young adults report higher levels of loneliness (perceived social isolation) despite having larger social networks (Child and Lawton, 2019; Nyqvist *et al.*, 2016; Smith and Lim, 2020);

this suggests that age may be a crucial factor to take into account in figuring out how long-term distance caused by COVID-19 will affect people's perceptions of being socially isolated.

Increased social isolation is generally correlated with worse levels of psychological well-being, higher levels of depression, and lower levels of life satisfaction, according to this research (Cacioppo and Cacioppo, 2014; Coutin and Knapp, 2017; Dahlberg and McKee, 2018; Harasemiw *et al.*, 2018; Lee and Cagle, 2018; Usher *et al.*, 2020). High levels of social isolation may cause people to think defensively of themselves, which can harm how they interact with others (Cacioppo and Cacioppo, 2014). Also, having limited social networks and feeling more socially isolated serve as mediators that cause an increase in depressive symptoms and a decrease in life satisfaction (Harasemiw *et al.*, 2018; Zheng *et al.*, 2020). The connection between psychological health and feelings of control over and contentment with one's environment (Zheng *et al.*, 2020). Social isolation and poor well-being are exacerbated by unhappiness with one's living situation, a lack of resources (such as food and personal care items), and employment insecurity (Zavaleta *et al.*, 2017).

Younger and middle-aged adults have been the subject of fewer studies, however, there is some evidence that suggests a similar pattern of more isolation being linked to unfavorable psychological outcomes for this cohort (Bergin and Pakenham, 2015; Elphinstone, 2018; Liu *et al.*, 2019; Nicholson, 2012; Smith and Lim, 2020; Usher *et al.*, 2020). There is also a lot of proof that social isolation can hurt one's physical health (Holt-Lunstad *et al.*, 2010; Steptoe *et al.*, 2013). According to Holt-Lunstad *et al.* (2010)'s meta-analysis of 148 studies that looked at the relationship between social relationships and mortality risk, social relationships have a stronger impact on mortality risk than other risk factors like smoking and alcohol use and are equivalent to other risk factors like obesity and inactivity. Similarly to this, other researchers have emphasized the negative effects of social isolation and loneliness on a variety of ailments, including cardiovascular, inflammatory, neuroendocrine, and cognitive disorders (Bhatti and Haq, 2017; Xia and Li, 2018). In order to give adult populations health advice, it is crucial to comprehend behavioral elements connected to both good and negative coping mechanisms.

In older persons, life happiness is correlated with feelings of social connection and belonging (Hawton *et al.*, 2011; Mellor *et al.*, 2008; Nicholson, 2012; Victor *et al.*, 2000; Xia and Li, 2018). While physical separation measures were put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 and save lives, these findings indicate that social isolation can have detrimental effects on both mental and physical health that may go past the mitigation orders (Berg-Weger and Morley, 2020; Brooks *et al.*, 2020; Cava *et al.*, 2005; Smith *et al.*, 2020; Usher *et al.*, 2020).

As a result, it's critical to track how common social isolation has been during the COVID-19 epidemic, as

well as the different elements that affect how isolated people of all ages feel when they must maintain physical distance for a long period. It was predicted that feelings of social isolation would not just affect older adults. Also, it was predicted that how well people handled the pandemic would be connected to their perception of social isolation. Finally, it was proposed that for people across the adult lifespan, social isolation would operate as a mediator between life pleasure and fundamental trust in institutions.

Life satisfaction may be influenced by a variety of variables. Students' life happiness may be influenced by a wide range of factors, including academic standards, family, friends, social media activity, abilities, and many more. Students may not, however, rate their life happiness on the same scale. It is a worldwide evaluation of a person's quality of life according to his selected criteria, as Shin and Johnson (1978) define it. Covid-19-related lockdowns were linked to a slew of negative psychological impacts, including an uptick in negative emotions, sleeplessness, tension, anxiety, and sadness, all of which led to a drop in work performance and family functioning, as well as an increase in financial difficulties. According to a study done on students at Czech University by Kvintova, Kudlacek, and Sigmundova (2016), an active lifestyle may have a favorable impact on the overall level of life satisfaction. This study aims to measure life satisfaction among business studies students of UTAS, Shinas, Oman. The study also seeks to determine the profile of the respondents based on age, gender, and year level. It will measure the life satisfaction of the business studies students of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Shinas, Oman during the pandemic

METHODOLOGY

This study used quantitative method research to measure the life satisfaction of the students of business studies at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences which includes Diploma to Bachelor students involving 74 students.

The data was collected using a survey questionnaire based on Huebners's Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS), a 40-item instrument for children and adolescents, aimed at measuring both overall life satisfaction and satisfaction across five domains: family, friends, school living environment and self. The questionnaire was created using the google form where the link was sent to students taking a common course at the diploma level.

The data was collected during Semester 3, AY 2021-2022, between May and June 2022. The main factors considered were the domain of family, self, friends, and school environment.

The study adopted from Huebner's MSLSS aimed at measuring life satisfaction and satisfaction across five domains: family, friends, school, living environment, and

self. The data generated were interpreted and analyzed using descriptive analysis such as frequency, percentage, mean, and Spearman's rho coefficient to measure the correlation of students' life satisfaction during the pandemic among the students of the Business studies of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha.

The profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender, and level of studies was analyzed. It shows that the age that the gender response is almost equally distributed with males slightly lesser with 36 (46.6%) to 38 (51.4) among females. Based on the age distribution 21 (28.4%) are 18 years old and below, 22 (29.7%) are 19 years old, 19 (25.7%) are 20 years old, and 12 (16.2%) are 21 years old and above. The results also show that 25 (33.8%) are Diploma I, 20 (27%) are Diploma II, 23 (31.1%) are Advanced Diploma, and 6 (8.1%) were classified as Bachelor level.

The study used Cronbach alpha to determine the reliability of the survey questionnaire used, it shows that

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.767	40

the questionnaire item when through SPSS are reliable with a .767 reliability result.

RESULTS

Results showed that both male and female respondents are mildly satisfied with their current student life. As per the level of study, the results show that all levels are mildly satisfied with their current student life.

The result shows that 'I have a lot of fun with my friends' registered the highest weighted mean of 5.1351 with a verbal interpretation of MA or mildly agree. Conversely, 'I have a bad time with my friends' posted a 1.7027 weighted mean interpreted as MD or moderately disagree. The composite mean shows a 3.939195 weighted mean which is verbally interpreted as MIA or mildly agrees.

The results reflect the life satisfaction of the respondents according to 5 domains namely, Family, Friends, School, Living Environment, and Self. The result shows that the students are most satisfied with the domain name 'Family' with a 4.583029 average (moderately agree). The domain on 'Self' posted a 4.090743 weighted mean with a verbal interpretation of 'mildly agree'. The domain on 'Friends' showed a 3.89964 weighted mean with a mildly agreed verbal interpretation. The results show that the domains on 'School' showed a 3.753375 weighted mean or mildly agree as verbal interpretation. Meanwhile, 'Environment' posted a 3.528533 weighted mean with a mildly agreed verbal interpretation.

Table 2: Composite Means of the 5 Domains

Composite Means of the 5 Domains of MSLSS		
Domains	WM	VI
Family	4.583029	MA
Self	4.090743	MIA
Friends	3.8964	MIA
School	3.753375	MIA
Environment	3.528533	MIA

Legend: Verbal Interpretation (VI)
 6 (5.50-6.00) - Strongly Agree (SA)
 5 (4.50-5.49) – Moderately Agree (MA)
 4 (3.50-4.49) – Mildly Agree (MIA)
 3 (2.50-3.49) – Mildly Disagree (MID)
 2 (1.50-2.49) – Moderately Disagree (MD)

1 (1.00-1.40) – Strongly Disagree (SD)
 There is a significant correlation between age and year level with a p-value of .000, school and self with a p-value of .000, family and friends with a p-value of .029, environment and school p-value is .001, and environment and self with a p-value of .000

Table 3: Correlation: p-value

		Gender	Age	Level	FR	SE	SC	FA	EN
Gender	Pearson's	1	.018	-.031	.196	-.199	-.144	-.146	.073
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.878	.790	.094	.089	.220	.216	.538
Age	Pearson's	.018	1	.844**	-.065	.189	.041	.141	.215
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.878		.000	.585	.107	.728	.231	.066
Level	Pearson's	-.031	.844**	1	-.070	.177	-.063	.126	.167
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.790	.000		.553	.131	.593	.286	.156
FR	Pearson's	.196	-.065	-.070	1	.200	-.017	.254*	.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.094	.585	.553		.087	.884	.029	.786
SE	Pearson's	-.199	.189	.177	.200	1	.469**	.404**	.397**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.089	.107	.131	.087		.000	.000	.000
SC	Pearson's	-.144	.041	-.063	-.017	.469**	1	.185	.410**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.220	.728	.593	.884	.000		.115	.000
FA	Pearson's	-.146	.141	.126	.254*	.404**	.185	1	.201
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.216	.231	.286	.029	.000	.115		.085
EN	Pearson's	.073	.215	.167	.032	.397**	.410**	.201	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.538	.066	.156	.786	.000	.000	.085	

CONCLUSION

This study is focused on the business studies students of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Shinas, Oman during the pandemic where respondents' gender were categorized are male 36 (46.6%), and 38 (51.4) female. The respondent's major age bracket is 18 years old and below number 21 (28.4%), 22 (29.7%) are 19 years old, 19 (25.7%) are 20 years old, and 12 (16.2%) are 21 years old and above. Most respondents are in the Diploma 1 level numbering 25 (33.8%), followed by Diploma II with 20 (27%), there were 23 (31.1%) Advanced Diploma, and the remaining 6 (8.1%) are Bachelor level.

Across the age bracket and level of studies, shows that respondents are mildly satisfied with their student life during the pandemic. Results showed that the p-value to determine if there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables is equivalent to 0.045. Thus, there

is a statistically significant relationship between gender and the current life situation of the students, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

There is a significant correlation between age and year level, school and self, family and friends, and environment and self where their p-value is not more than .005. The study was measured based on the five domains and surprisingly the overall results showed that respondents are mildly satisfied with their life during the pandemic. Across all gender, ages, and year levels in between groups and in the group, all have responded mildly satisfied with life situations during the pandemic. Based on the domain, the respondents indicated that they are moderately satisfied with the "family" with the "environment" least satisfied domain having a verbal interpretation of mildly satisfied. Family support is the primary source of satisfaction during the pandemic among the respondents. It can be encouraged that to cope with frustration and

anxiety during the pandemic and beyond the domain, in an environment least satisfied response can be enhanced with the provision of a healthy environment with more activity and engagement.

The findings show that family is important in the coping mechanism during the pandemic particularly in addressing mental health. Amidst the pandemic, the five domains show that they contribute as a whole to achieving a mildly satisfying life situation. Finally, the study leads the authors to conduct a further study using the result in proposing a positive education; which is positive psychology and classroom Intervention.

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