



Satisfaction with Life among Nursing Students in Northern Nigeria: Implications for Counselling

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Abstract

This study was designed to assess Satisfaction With Life (SWL) among nursing students in Northern Nigeria. Four null hypotheses were postulated to guide the research. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was utilized for the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to sample 237 nursing students from 19 states classified under three Geo-political zones of Nigeria in different Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery. A structured questionnaire was adapted as tool for data collection. The main tool called Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener, et al.,(1985) was used to collect the research. The instrument consisted of 5-items structured on a Likert-scale with 7 response patterns. The tool composite reliability was computed using Cronbach alpha method and yielded an index of .892. The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The research results indicated that (SWL) among the respondents was significantly high. Both gender and age bracket did not significantly influenced (SWL) among the nursing students. Hours spent sleeping by the students positively correlated with Satisfaction with life. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the students should endeavor to have enough and adequate sleeping hours during their nursing training and education.

Keywords: Satisfaction with Life, Nursing, Students, Northern Nigeria, Counselling Implications



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Introduction

Researches on health psychological constructs have a propensity to focus on the possible effective of negative emotions on personal behaviour and interpersonal relationships (Greenglass, 2006). However, on the other hand, in recent years and modern times, psychological research related to health has tended to become more interested in positive feelings and the emotions of well-being (Valois et.al. 2006). According to Seligman and Csikszetmihelyi (2000), positive individual traits and adaptive constructs, human strength and virtues such as subjective happiness, hope, optimism and courage are very significant for improving one's quality of life and preventing and controlling psychological problems. Another construct of utmost importance in this regard is Satisfaction with Life (SWL)

Satisfaction with Life (otherwise called Life satisfaction) is a cognitive component of well-being which has been largely explored among the recent decades (Pavot & Diener, 1993; Sovet, et al., 2016). SWL has also been one of the variables that have more weight and depth within the context of recent development in the field of Positive and Social Psychology. According to Diener, et al., (1999) SWL could be considered as a reliable construct in several areas of research on well-being, involving the cross-cultural comparisons and international researches conducted on this field of knowledge.

The importance of subjective well-being extends to other domains of individual life, such as health, relationships and performance in different areas and times of the life cycle (Diener, et al., 1985, 1995). Buttressing further, Altun, et al., (2014) and Kobau, et al., (2010) cited by Useche and Serge (2016) expressed in general that the subjective well-being concerns peoples self-reported assessment of their own well-being, namely both health and quality of life. Commonly, the most frequent approach towards happiness use is to refer to pleasure, meaning and engagement. However, some researchers have associated happiness as a concept more related to life satisfaction. Based on this assertion and considering its impact on the quality of life of population especially the students' populations, SWL represent an important issue that needs to be researched upon in the field of Social Sciences (Toker, 2012, Cha, 2003).

Satisfaction with Life must be understood as a comprehensive and multidimensional construct (Useche & Serge, 2016). Life Satisfaction according to Oladipo, et al., (2013) is defined as a cognitive evaluation of one's life as a whole or of specific life domains. This cognitive assessment behaviour is based on how people believe their life should be in relation to how it is (Paschali & Tsitsas, 2009). In a nutshell life satisfaction refers to the acceptance of one's life circumstances or the fulfillment of an individual life needs as a whole. In essence, SWL is a subjective assessment of the quality of one's life (Sousa & Lyubomirsky, 2001). In the context of this research, SWL can be operationalized as the subjective assessment of the quality of nursing students as measured by their individual response to satisfaction with life scale.

Giving credence to the assertion, Uysal, et al., (2014) posit that previous researches indicated that subjective well-being which can be described as an individual experience with the positive quality in their life has two distinct constructs. The first one is an emotional component usually characterized by the presence of positive affect and the absence of negative affect (Diener, et al., 1985; Pavot & Diener, 1993; Salama-Younes, 2011; Suldo & Huebner, 2006). The second construct is a cognitive component related to a high level of life satisfaction or perceived quality of life (Andrews & Wiffey, 1976).



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Suldo and Huebner (2002:1180) also defined Life Satisfaction as “a cognitive global appraisal that people make when considering their contentment with life as a whole or in regard to specific domain of life such as family, environment, friend or self”. While Shin and Johnson (1978:479), posit life satisfaction as “a global assessment of a person quality of life according to his chosen criteria”. Thus, a student can say he/she has high life satisfaction when he/she compared perceived life standards with self-imposed standard or set of standards. Therefore, the perception of satisfaction is related to the comparison of one’s circumstances with an approach standard that he wants to reach. Regarding empirical research outcomes, it has been documented through several research experiences that the psychological well-being has a broad importance on student’s academic performance and behaviours observed within the school environment as well as the achievement of academic goals (Sovet, et al., 2016). Besides the relationship with academic field and referring to young population in general, SWL has been correlated with social factors such as poor problems solving and resilience abilities (Kabasakai, 2015; Roesser & Eccles, 2000), violent and delinquent behaviours (Jung, et al., 2016; Valois, et al., 2006), misbehaviors using internet and information technologies and devises e.g. Smartphones, additive behaviours (Samaha & Hawi, 2016; Kabasaki, 2015), adverse peer relationships and victimization experiences (Martin, et al., 2009). Complimentarily, Tercan (2015) found that life satisfaction and family functioning are related constructs. All these correlates are indeed important variables are related to the medical education and training of nursing students.

Providing further credence, Uysal, et al., (2014) posit that studies have demonstrated that life satisfaction is positively related to mood clarity (Extremerac, et al., 2009), self-esteem (Shek, 2005), perceived social support (Edward & Loper, 2006), parental support (Suldo & Huebner, 2006), marital adjustment (Celik & Timkaya, 2012), religious belief, optimism (Accunkapikran, 2012; Turkiim, 2005), positive affection (Busseri, et al., 2007), self-compassion (Deniz, et al., 2012), self-esteem (Taysi, 2000) and openness (Sheldon & Hoon, 2007). All these become functional health care providers. On the other hand, there are negative correlations between life satisfaction and maladaptive constructs such as perceived stress, loneliness (Goodwin, et al., 2011), emotional loneliness (Salami, 2011), submissive attitudes, automatic thoughts, hopelessness (Tumkaya, et al., 2011), negative affection (Diener, et al., 2012 and neuroticism (Judge, et al., 1988).

Youth life satisfaction specifically with nursing students is more than just an outcome of various psychological states (e.g. positive affect, self-esteem), it is also one influential predictor of psychological states and psychological system (e.g. depression, physical health (Gilman, et al., 2014). Research reports has also shown that life satisfaction as a construct has been central within the positive psychology (Gilman & Guebner, 2003), (b) adolescents who have low life satisfaction are more prone to violence (Velois, et al., 2006), (c) past research in the areas of life satisfaction have been conducted within America, with most assessment measures being created and validated among the American samples (Piector, et al., 2008). Therefore, there is the need for assessment of life satisfaction across cultures, most especially in developing countries like Nigeria, with particular reference to the Northern Nigeria where the level of education and life satisfaction is not actually satisfactory. The focus of this research was to assess satisfaction with Life among nursing students in Northern Nigeria.



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According to Oladipo, et al., (2013), there are several benefits associated with high level of life satisfaction has been recurrent in the literature, for example Suldo and Huebner (2006), reported that students with high levels of life satisfaction benefited from many positive outcomes, including highest level of social support from all sources, the lowest levels of neuroticism significantly her level of academic, emotional and social self-efficacy, the lowest emotional and behavioral problems and superior interpersonal and cognitive functioning, than those with average and low satisfaction. In addition, Gilman and Huebner (2006) found high levels of adolescent life satisfaction to be positively related to grade point average (GPA), interpersonal relations, parental relations, self-esteem and hope, and to be negatively related to poor attitudes towards school, poor attitudes towards teachers, social class, anxiety, depression and external locus of control.

Satisfaction with Life has been associated with several studies with the health outcomes of people, including students in tertiary institutions of learning, in which life satisfaction plays an important role (Topaloglu, 2015). Similarly, Piko (2006) has found that younger's psychosocial health should have an important role in their life satisfaction, particularly concerning psychosomatic symptoms, depressive disorders and health behaviours such as the food and tobacco consumption, anxiety, stress and other factors which may impair the quality of life and health of this population. Furthermore, some prospective researches have stated that positive well-being influence the risk of presenting adverse medical events and even, the mortality of the individuals (Collins, et al., 2009). Although, the relationship between psychological variables health changes with age (Collins, et al., 2009; Gefiierrez & Hershy, 2000), in the case of young adults it has been identified as a set of differential impact indicators in life satisfaction, taking into account that it is for excellence, a change are especially considering that at this state, generally, the course of professional studies (like nursing profession) takes place.

Regarding demographic characteristics of persons, men and women have been found to be similar in their overall levels of life satisfaction (Diener, et al., 1995), although women have been noted to report more positive and negative affect. Married people are more satisfied with their lives and those with life-long marriages appear to be most satisfied (Evans & Kelly, 2004). Toker (2012) also found that female academicians were more satisfied with their life than male counterparts in the tertiary institutions field. With the trend in literature, a gap exists with respects to the variables/constructs that have been explored that can influence life satisfaction among tertiary institutions adolescents and particularly in Nigeria as a nation. It is on this premise that this study embarked to assess satisfaction with Life among nursing students in Northern Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study consist of the following:

1. To determine whether levels of Satisfaction with Life among the nursing students would be significantly high.
2. To reveal whether a significant difference exist between male and female nursing students as it relates to their levels of Satisfaction with life.
3. To investigate whether age bracket groups would significantly influence the levels of satisfaction with life among the nursing students.
4. To assess the relationship between Satisfaction with Life and the independent variables.



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Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated and tested at .05 alpha levels to guide this study

1. The levels of Satisfaction with Life among the nursing students would not be significantly high.
2. There is no significant difference between male and female nursing students as it relates to their levels of Satisfaction with life.
3. Age bracket groups would not significantly influence the levels of satisfaction with life among the nursing students.
4. There is no significant relationship between Satisfaction with Life and the independent variables.

Methodology

The descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used for this study. Cross-sectional survey research design according to Kpoloive (2010) collects and analyzes data on certain attributes of varying sets of people who are at different ages or levels at about a particular time for description of situations and establishment of frequencies in most cases about the entire population rather than for determination of casual patterns or cause-and-effect relationships in the population. For this to be done successfully done, the specific population under investigation must be explicitly defined to clearly and accurately show the number of people of each of the subunits of the population in line with the variables under study and the various age levels or other progressive categories of the entire population.

The target population of the study comprised all student nurses enrolled in Schools/Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery programmes in Northern Nigeria. Northern Nigeria is composed of 19 States classified into three Geo-political Zones. From each Zone, two states were simple-randomly sampled and two Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery were sampled. In North-West Zone, Kaduna and Kano were selected. In North-East Zone, Gombe and Bauchi were selected while in North-Central, FCT and Niger were selected. A total of 237 respondents were recruited for the study.

A structured questionnaire was used as tool for data collection. The self-report questionnaire consists of two parts. Section A elicited the demographic profile of the respondents' such as sex, age bracket, hours spent for studying/day, hours of sleeping/night. Section B: This is an internationally validated tool called Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). This scale is a short questionnaire designed to measure global cognitive judgments of satisfaction with one's life (Diener, et al., 1985; Vasquez, et al., 2012). The SWLS is a unifactorial life satisfaction scale and consists of 5 items or statements. Participants should indicate the degree of agreement with each presented statement, using a Likert scale of 7 levels from (1= strongly disagree, to 7=strongly agree). Total scores can range from 5 to 35 points, meaning the higher the scores,, the greater is satisfaction. According to Diener et al., 1985, 1993, 1995), the final scores of the scale can be classified and understood as (5-9)= Extremely dissatisfied, (10-14)= Dissatisfied, (15-19)= Slightly below average in life satisfaction, (20-24)= Average score, (25-29)= High Score, (30-35)=Very high score or highly satisfied with life. In addition a score of 20 is the middle point, so higher scores indicate high life satisfaction.

In terms of internal consistency reliability coefficients of the instrument, several studies have documented high Cronbach alpha coefficient in different populations by researchers. Cassidy



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and Essa (2009) obtained a coefficient of .88, Resengren, et al., (2015) had a coefficient of .90. For the current study a reliability of .892 was computed via Cronbach alpha method. This value is above the threshold cut-off-point of .70 recommended by scholars. (Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Pallant, 2005).

Prior to administering the copies of the questionnaire, the purpose of the study was explained to the participants. Participation was voluntary and there was no incentive attached to participation. Respondents can decide to withdraw at any point of the data collection process.. Anonymity was also assured by asking participant not to write their names on the questionnaire form. Confidentiality of the respondents was maintained throughout the investigation.

All the participants for the study were administered the research instrument in their classes with the teachers in the respective Colleges after permission and approval was obtained. Six research assistants, who are student-tutors on teaching practice exercise carefully, explained the essence of each scale to the student-nurses and this helped in reducing invalid responses. Enough time was given to the respondents to patiently fill the instrument.

The data were entered and coded into SPSS versions 23. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of normality, linearity and homogeneity of variance, as well as check for outliers. Descriptive statistics of frequency, percentage, mean and standard as well as parametric tests (t-test, ANOVA and PPMCC) were used to test the null hypotheses.

Results

Hypothesis 1

The levels of Satisfaction with Life among the nursing students would not be significantly high.

Table 1: One sample t-test analysis of levels of Satisfaction with Life among the nursing students

Variable	Sample Mean	Sample SD	Reference T t-value	T	Sig	Remark
Levels of Satisfaction with Life	21.14	8.57	20	2.05	<.001	S

In testing the first null hypothesis, the respondents scores on Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) measured by 5 items were summed up.. The researcher reasoned level of Satisfaction with Life to be considered significantly high, the scores made on the scale should be significantly higher than 20 (which is the midpoint between strongly disagree and strongly agree which implies 4 X 5 the number of items measuring the construct. The null hypothesis is that the mean score representing nursing students levels of Satisfaction with Life is not significantly higher than 20 (HO: $\mu = 20$, H1: $\mu > 20$). The hypothesis was tested with a t-test of one sample (otherwise called population t-test).

The results are presented in Table 1. A critical look reveals that the results indicates a statistically significant high level of Satisfaction with life among the nursing students (M=21. 14, SD= 8.57), $t(236) = 2.05$, $p < .001$. The magnitude of the difference in the mean = 1.14, 95% CI: = .04 to 2.24, was very small (eta squared = .02). With these results, the first hypothesis is hereby not supported and hence rejected for alternative. This implies that the levels of Satisfaction with life among nursing students were significantly high.



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Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant difference between male and female nursing students as it relates to their levels of Satisfaction with life.

Table 3: An Independent t-test analysis between male and female nursing students on Satisfaction with Life

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	P	Remark
Male	37	21.46	8.99	.247	.81	NS
Female	200	21.08	8.50			

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the levels of Satisfaction of Life between male and female nursing students. The results indicated in Table 3 shows that there was no statistically significant differences in the Satisfaction with Life levels of male students ($M=21.46$, $SD = 8.99$) compared to their female counterparts ($M=21.08$, $SD = 8.50$), $t(235) = .247$, $P = .81$. The magnitude of the difference in the means = .379, 95% CI: = -2.65 – -3.41, was very small (eta squared = .0002). With the results of this analysis, the second null hypothesis was therefore supported and hence upheld. This implies that there is no significant difference in the levels of Life Satisfaction between male and female nursing students.

Hypothesis 3

Age bracket groups would not significantly influence the levels of satisfaction with life among the nursing students.

Table 4: One-way ANOVA results between Satisfactions with life and Age bracket of nursing students.

Variable	Age Bracket	N	M	SD	F	P	Remark
Satisfaction with Life	13-16 years	11	22.36	8.59			
	17-20 years	59	20.12	7.99			
	21-24 years	68	21.04	8.32	.369	.83	NS
	25-28 years	45	21.51	9.41			
	29 years & above	54	21.81	8.16			
	Total	237	21.14	8.59			

One-way ANOVA was used to examine whether there was any difference in the levels of Satisfaction with life among the nursing students according to their age bracket groups. The results presented in Table 4 reveals that there was no statistically significant difference in levels of Satisfaction with life among the nursing students according to their age bracket groups $F(4,232) = .368$, $P=.831$. It can then be concluded that there is no any influence of age bracket groups of the nursing students on their Levels of Life Satisfaction.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant relationship between Satisfaction with Life and the independent variables.



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Table 5: Pearson correlation coefficient between Satisfaction with Life and three other variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1.Life Satisfaction	21.14	8.57	1	-.044	.158*	-.015
2.Hrs spent studying	1.97	.739		1	-.044	.085
3.Hrs spent sleeping	2.47	.614			1	
4. Daily Facebook Hours.	1.80	.853				1

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level

Pearson Product moment correlation coefficient was employed to determine the relationship between Satisfaction with Life and other three variables among the student nurses. The results in Table 5 reveals a statistically significant and weak positive relationship between Satisfaction with Life and Hours spent sleeping $r(235) = .158, P=.015$. This implies that as nursing students increase their sleeping hours, their satisfaction with life also increases. The other two variables hours spent studying and daily Facebook hours did not produced statistical significant relationship with satisfaction with life.

Discussion of findings

The main purpose of this research was to assess satisfaction with life among nursing students in Northern Nigeria. There has not been so much focus on the study of life satisfaction among undergraduates in Nigeria, most especially among health related students. A few foreign studies reviewed have examined demographic and psychological variables and their impact on life satisfaction among the respondents. The first finding of this research revealed that nursing students in Northern Nigeria are satisfied with their life. It could be seen clearly from the statistical analysis that majority of the nurses are satisfied with their life, despite the tedious nature of their nursing training and education. This finding is consistent with the submission of Suldo and Huebner (2006) and Gilman and Huebner (2006) that found high levels of adolescent t life satisfaction to be positively related to grade point average (GPA), interpersonal relations, parental relations, self-esteem and hope, This is a good development in that the students would be able to sustain the momentum to graduate and contribute towards the health workforce in the region.

The second finding of this study revealed that there was no significant difference in the life satisfaction between the male and female student-nurses. This indicates that irrespective of gender, the students are enjoying high profile life satisfaction as they navigate their medical training and education. This finding is similar to the research result of Diener, et al.,(1995)who submitted that men and women have been found to be similar in their overall levels of life satisfaction, A positive explanation may be that the students' needs are being provided by both their parents and the school managements as far as their training is concerned.

The third finding of this study revealed that there was no significant difference in the satisfaction with life based on the students' age brackets. It could be seen that from the younger to older nursing students; life satisfaction is rally high among the various age groups. This is a welcome development in that students are motivated and encouraged to perform to their best academic capability, enjoying sound and robust life style during training. The last finding of this research revealed that there was only positive relationship between life satisfaction and hours spent sleeping. This implies that as hours of sleeping increases, there is a corresponding increase in life satisfaction. However, life satisfaction and daily Facebook hours and hours spent for reading did not produce any significance.



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Implications for Counselling

In the context of the present study, counselling based on improving quality of life has gained an immense popularity. Frisch cited in Zahra et.al. (2019) believes that modern therapies should focus on promoting the quality of life, facilitating empowerment, and enhancing people's life satisfaction. Similarly, positive psychology and health psychology relate the development of mental disorders to the poor quality of life of individuals; consequently, they posit that in order to treat affected people, one has to modify their quality of life, expand their capabilities, and foster their life satisfaction and well-being both individually and collectively (Ghasemi, et.al. 2011). One way to achieve this goal is through group therapy (Zahra, et.al. 2019). Group therapy is based on improving quality of life which consistently seeks to bring about change and enhance life quality via certain cognitive-behavioral exercises. Also, utilizing various strategies of the CASIO (Circumstance Attitude Standards of fulfillment Importance Overall satisfaction) model of therapy can help clients maximize not only their distinct satisfaction but also their overall satisfaction with life (Frisch, in Zahra, et.al. 2019). Many authors have established the effectiveness of this method on life satisfaction and quality of parents with obsessive-compulsive children (Abedi & Vostanis, 2010), psychological well-being (Mitchell, et.al. 2009), satisfaction and happiness of wives (Padash, et.al. 2011), quality of life of individuals with substance use problem (Porzour, et.al. 2015), mental health of blind girls (Khademi & Abedi, 2015), sexual self-efficacy and marital satisfaction (Nouripour, et.al. 2013) and life satisfaction in family caregivers of individual with substance use problem (Zahra, et.al. 2019).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to assess life satisfaction among nursing students in Northern Nigeria. The results showed that the student-nurses satisfaction with life was high and very satisfactory, with no any gender and age bracket differences. Daily hours spent sleeping positively correlated with life satisfaction. Thus, it is recommended that students should endeavor to have enough and adequate sleeping hours during their nursing training and education in order to continue enjoying sound life satisfaction.

Recommendations

1. Mental health counsellors should empower nursing students in order to effectively utilize their talents necessary for life satisfaction.
2. Quality of life therapy should be administered by counsellors for nursing students in Northern Nigeria.
3. Applying the quality of life therapy intervention by mental health counsellors can reduce stress and increase life satisfaction of students.
4. Health counsellors should play a synergistic role in the process of consolidating and maintaining SWL being enjoyed by nursing students in the study area.



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