

A Study of Factors Influencing High School Students' Quality of Life

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ABSTRACT: The present study aims at recognizing and analyzing the relationship among variables such as stress, social capital, self esteem and the locus of control that affect the high school students' quality of life in Fars province, Iran. To this end 224 high school students from Shiraz, Kazerun, and Marvdasht were selected as participants based on Cluster Sampling. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire used, while its validity was determined through Item Analysis and expert consensus. The research findings indicated that there was a significant and positive correlation among such variables as self-esteem, locus of control, social capital and the students' quality of life, while variables such as the quality of life and stress revealed a negative correlation. All coefficients at $p < 0.05$ level were significant. The Beta for locus of control, self – esteem, social capital, and stress were 0.28, 0.23, 0.21, - 0.18 respectively. Locus of control plays a crucial role in the students' quality of life. This is to say that internal locus of control means a better quality of life and living standards. All coefficients were significant at $p < 0.05$.

Keywords: *Quality of life, Self-esteem, Control of stress, Social capital, Students*

INTRODUCTION

The quality of life has become a major concern to the western scientists following the advent of modern era. The process of industrialization has led to the introduction of a wide selection of consumer goods and products as well as the offering of various services. These changes in life style have affected modern man by bringing up a vast number of challenges to tackle with, e.g., air pollution and damaging natural habitats. The negative impact of these issues has shown itself in form of an ever-increasing stressful living in metropolitan centers. This is why scientists and other experts tried to study the question of the quality of life with an eye to improving life standards (Rabbani khorasani and keyvanpour, 2007).

The quality of life is the sum total of all welfare services that safeguard an individual's well being within the society. There is no unified and generally

accepted definition for the quality of life and the only point of common consensus is the idea that quality of life is reflected in both personal (including spiritual material life) and social life. In fact, each individual thinks of different elements as being of importance in his/ her well-being, but it is a common belief that health is the backbone of a high quality life (Pasandede, 2007).

The world Health Organization has defined "Quality of life" not in terms of health and sickness' but in term of physical, psychological and social stability. It is believed that those who have a higher life standard are less under stress, consequently higher life satisfaction (Chen et al, 2007). The extensive research has indicated that quality of life and psychological factors/ variable such as stress, social capital, and self- esteem are interrelated (Asadi Sadeghi Azar et al., 2006; Pasandede, 2007; Chen et al., 2007; Roslan et al., 2010).

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Generally speaking, the quality of life plays an important role in all aspects of human life, and it has a particular effect on students' lives; based on the review of previous literature, most of the research have been conducted on patients 'quality of life.

As there is little comprehensive research encompassing various psychological variables among the students, the present study aims at investigating the effective factors which influence high school students' quality of life in Iran.

Literature Review

Flangan (1987) has defined quality of life in terms of 5 major components and 15 subordinate factors, which are as follow:

- 1- Material and physical well-being, (Economic Security, Health and Security).
- 2- Relation and interaction with others, (marital relations, Bringing up children, Family relation, Friendship).
- 3- Social and community involvement. (Helping and encouraging others, Participating in local and governmental affairs).
- 4- Personal quality / characteristics and achievements, (IQ, achieving personal goals, interest, value and productivity, experience and intuition).
- 5- Recreation (Getting along with others, Passive and observant activity involved in recreational activities).
- 6- After studying quality of life in 20 countries, Schalock et al. (2002), have identified a number of main measures: Emotional health, personal interaction, health, marital relationship, personal growth, physical health, decision making on personal and non- personal issues. (Hoffman, 2002 as cited by Rezaei et al., 2008)
- 7- Coleman (1988) introduced the concept of social capital within the political context of North America. Putnam continued his studies in Europe. Social Capital refers to a measure of trust, cooperative activities, networks and associations in any given society (Knowles, 2005).
- 8- Majedi and Lahsaeizadeh (2007) studied the relationship between social capital and quality of life and concluded that higher social capital leads to more satisfaction and better living conditions. Roslan et al. (2010) researched the same area and found that these two factors had a positive impact on each other. Requena (2003) studied the relation between social capital, life quality, and job satisfaction and stated that individuals with higher social capital have a higher life

quality consequently. Nilsson et al. (2006) established a relationship between low social capital and low quality of life.

9- Palmer and Copper (2007) believed that an individual's sense of value for his/ her abilities can be referred to as self- esteem. Generally, an individual's evaluation of his/ her personal qualities is revealed in form of self- esteem. It is also said that self – esteem is related to the degree of importance one attributes to himself/ herself.

10- Theunissen and Winderman (2002), Zaki (2008) stated that there is a meaningful positive relationship between children's self – esteem and the life quality; this is to say that a higher quality of life leads to stronger self- esteem. In addition, Marriage and Gummins (2004) stated that self- esteem could be an indicator of students' quality of life. Kermode and MacLean (2001) studied the relationship between self- esteem, health and quality of life and concluded that students with higher self – esteem attend their classes more regularly and receive better marks; they have a better quality of life in comparison with others.

11- Nikbakhat Nasrabadi et al. (2009), found out that there was a negative relationship between university students' worries and their quality of life, as the students become increasingly worried and their quality of life decreases.

12- Tuinman et al. (2004) and Shafipour et al. (2008), found the negative relationship between stress and quality of life, a better quality of life reduces an individual's stress. Burk and Schwartzberg (1996) realized that individuals with locus of control take the responsibility of what they have done and this affects the quality of their life.

Therefore, the Literature review shows that the factors that influence the quality of life are mainly the followings: Locus of control, Social capital, self – esteem and stress. This study has investigated above variables and their effects on high school students' quality of life.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method was descriptive – correlational. The population in this research came from high schools in Fars province in Iran. Based on cluster sampling 224 students – 96 female and 128 male students- from high schools in Shiraz, Kazerun and Marvdasht were selected; The two primary reasons for choosing cluster sampling was feasibility and economy (table 1).

Table 1: characteristics of the research sample

City	Frequency	Girl	Boy
Kazerun	82	35	47
Marvdasth	55	26	29
Shiraz	87	35	52
Total	224	96	128

Measures

Quality of Life

The study was conducted using WHO quality of life questionnaires (WHOQOL). The original questionnaire includes 26 items, which was reduced to 18 items (each a 5 degree scale from very low to very high) after determining validity and reliability.

Social Capital

This scale, in line with Haghighatian et al. (2009) and Paxton's (1999) questionnaire was constructed.

Stress

Cohen and Williamson's (1988) a ten-item questionnaire was used to measure this factor.

Locus of Control

Router's questionnaire (1966) as modified by Pettijohn (2006) was used to measure this factor.

Self-Esteem

Rosenberg (1989) 10-item questionnaire based on 5-degree scale was used to measure self-esteem.

Validity and Reliability

The validity was calculated through item analysis and expert consensus. The correlation coefficient of each item was compared with the total mark and the indices at the level of $p < 0.05$ and below were meaningful. All correlation coefficient were over 0.25.

Reliability of all questionnaires was calculated through Cronbach's alpha. For Quality of life, stress, locus of control, self-esteem and social capital Cronbach's alpha was 0.84, 0.81, 0.76, 0.79, and 0.72 respectively.

Research Questions

1- Is there a meaningful relationship between variables (quality of life, self-esteem, locus of control) and the social capital of high school students?

2- Do these variables (self- esteem, locus of control, stress and social capital) have meaningful impacts on the students' quality of life?

3- Which one of the variables (self- esteem, locus of control, stress, and social capital) has had the greater impact on the students' quality of life?

Statistics

The statistical method used for question 1 was Pearson's Coefficient of correlation. In addition, for questions No 2 and 3 multiple regressions was used.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSSION

Table 2 presents the findings based on questions 1. As shown in table 2, all variables other than stress have a significant relationship with students' quality of life. Stress, has a negative relationship with quality of life and higher quality of life reduces its impact and vice- versa.

Questions 2 and 3

Multiple regressions were used to answer the above-mentioned questions. Tables 3 and 4 represent the findings of research. The F value in this model equal 32.64 which was significant at $p < 0.05$.

The coefficient of multiple Correlations (Multiple R) in this model was 0.634, therefore, self-esteem, stress, locus of control and social capital variables predict 40% of the quality of life.

As indicated in table 4, the figure of locus of control shows that this variable plays an important role in the students' quality of life, as one unit of change in standard deviation leads to 0.28 Beta variation in the quality of life. The other important variables are social capital (Beta 0.23), self- esteem (Beta 0.21) and stress (Beta 0.18) respectively. The findings of the research are as follows:

1- There is a positive and significant relationship between the quality of life and self- esteem, locus of control and social capital, while this relation is negative and significant in case of stress.

2- All the variables studied have an impact on the students' quality of life and locus of control is the most important one. As locus of control becomes more central, the quality of life improves considerably.

Table 2: Pearson's coefficient of correlation among variables

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation	Self esteem	Stress	Locus of control	Social capital
Quality of life	50.49	8.89	0.467 P=00001	-0.427 P=0001	0.523 P=0001	0.291 P=0001

Table 3: ANOVA for checking the model

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean of squares	F	Sig.
Regression	485803	4	1450.87		
Error	6623.29	194	44.45	32.64	P=0.0001
Total	14426.78	198	---		

Table 4: Parameters of the model

Model	Un standardized coefficient	Standard deviation	Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
constant	18.06	6.07	---	2.97	P=0.003
Self- esteem	0.323	0.09	0.21	3.32	P=0.001
Stress	-0.236	0.08	- 0.18	-2.93	P=0.004
Locus of control	-0.31	0.06	0.28	4.48	P=0.0001
Social capital	0.24	0.06	0.23	3.98	P=0.0001

This article has attempted to answer these questions:

1- Is there a meaningful relationship between variables (quality of life, self-esteem, locus of control) and the social capital of high school students?

2- Do these variables (self- esteem, locus of control, stress and social capital) have meaningful impacts on the students' quality of life?

3- Which one of the variables (self- esteem, locus of control, stress, and social capital) has had the greater impact on the students' quality of life?

The following conclusion can be reached through the analysis of the findings:

There is a positive and meaningful relation between students' self- esteem ($R=0.467$, $P=0.0001$). This finding

is in line with research done by Kermodes et al. (2001), Asadi Sedghi Azar et al. (2006), Zaki (2008), Theunissen and Duvdevany (2010) and stating that high self- esteem is a predictor of good quality of life. It can be concluded that high self- esteem leads to being more confident and self- reliant. Also according to Hydari et al. (2007), the youngsters who have higher self- esteem handle their problems more effectively and have higher quality of life than others have. According to the Pearson's coefficient here is a negative and significant relationship between students' stress ($R=0.427$, $P=0.0001$) and their quality of life. This finding is in line with Bond et al (2010). They concluded that anxiety and depression were significantly and negatively associated with the quality of life total score

as well as its subscales: general quality of life, general health, and physical, psychological, social, and environmental quality of life. Based on the Ames et al. (2001), stress would be predictable to have a direct impact on quality of life indicators such as psychological symptoms, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction. That is to say, that high quality of life reduces an individual's stress. This finding is similar to the conclusion reached by Gupcub (2004), Asadi Sedghiazar (2006), Marshal et al. (2009) and Nikbakht Nasrabadi et al. (2009). They believe that stress has a negative impact on the individual's performance all the time. Those who are less- stressed out perform to their capacity and it is an important factor contributing to their high quality of life.

CONCLUSION

There is a positive and significant relationship between students' locus of control and their quality of life. Kermodes (2001) states those who have internal locus of control accepts the responsibility of what they have done and this is what gives them the ability to improve their quality of life. These individuals do not relate their achievement of failure to external factors; therefore, they have a better quality of life. Those with a high internal locus of control have better control of their behavior, tend to show more effective behaviors, and are more likely to attempt to influence other people than those with a high external (or low internal respectively) locus of control. Students with a high internal locus of control are more likely to assume that their efforts will be successful. Therefore, they are more active in their lives and quality of life.

There is a positive and meaningful relation between social capital and the quality of life. Ghaffari and Unagh (2008) established this relationship in the case of individuals with 99% confidence level. Whitman (2006) realized that people with high social capital have a better quality of life. Stoneman (2006) believed that there was a relationship between high social capital and the possibility of securing a job. According to Cantor and Land (1985), low levels of social capital lead to higher rates of crime and generally low quality of life (Clark and Oswald 1994). Baker (2004) states that there is a direct relationship between social capital and goals set in one's career as shown by research in the area of psychology.

Pasandideh (2008) has also established the relationship between the quality of life and social capital

in case of adults; his findings are in line with Roslan et al. (2010) results. Thus, it can be said that high social capital brings about a sense of personal achievement and satisfaction to the students. Regarding Beta index, it becomes clear that students with internal locus of control do not rely on chance happenings; therefore, they enjoy a higher quality of life.

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