

Considerations on the well-being of students at the UBB University Centre in Reșița

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Abstract

Keywords:

academic satisfaction, balance, sense of fulfilment, services, well-being

Student life is a dimension of the strategy of higher education institutions, complementary to academic learning. The social, cultural and civic aspects of student life are important for the well-being of students. This article focuses specifically on student life, which is an important part of their well-being. By “student life” we refer to activities that make up the daily life of students. This includes courses, social relationships, cultural activities, civic activities on their campus, student cafeteria, health services and other facilities. It is necessary for universities and student organizations to cooperate and act in order to improve the well-being of students. From this perspective, we aimed to evaluate the well-being of students at the UBB University Center in Reșița. Using the survey as a research method, we prepared a questionnaire structured on seven themes and a section for suggestions and comments aimed at improving the quality of their well-being. The results were analyzed taking into account the study program, and the findings were discussed in relation to ways to correlate student needs, as indicated in the dedicated section. This study completes the information regarding the well-being of students in higher education, in particular those in the Reșița education system, and offers suggestions for its improvement.

1. Introduction

It would be desirable that any person should benefit of a basic educational formation which should take into consideration both the essential learning needs (reading, writing, speaking, mathematics etc.) and the ultimate educational contents (knowledge, skills, values, attitudes) necessary to live and work with dignity, in order to fully participate in development, in order to improve life quality, in order to make informed decisions and to continue learning (Déclaration, 1990). A follow-up form of learning activity is higher education (bachelor studies, master and PhD. studies), a period when students attend multiple types of activities: courses, cultural activities, civic activities, health services and other facilities which confer them or not a certain well-being. The well-being in university refers to a certain degree of individual satisfaction in different aspects of academic life (Guimard et al., 2015). In other words, it represents a cognitive and affective assessment that the student does referring to the general satisfaction of experiences that he or she has in the academic context: academic learning, relations teacher-student, relationships with their colleagues etc. (Université de Montréal, 2022). The specialists define differently the well-being, there is no consensus in this direction.

Fraillon (2004) defines it as being “the degree in which a student functions efficiently in scholar community”. Noble et al. (2008) consider that it is “a durable state of disposition and positive attitude, resilience and self-satisfaction, fulfilment in their relations and experiences in school”. For Hascher (2008) the students’ well-being is an emotional experience characterised by the dominance of positive feelings and cognitions towards the university life. Unfortunately, the Romanian dictionaries do not include a definition for this collocation. However, we found some definitions in *Le Robert dico en ligne*: “Pleasant situation offered by the satisfaction of physical needs, absence of worries. → happiness, pleasure”, and as synonyms: “in the happiness meaning: happiness, easiness, bliss, contentment, joy, pleasure, peace, satisfaction, serenity; in the relaxation meaning: relaxation, unwinding; in the easiness meaning: easiness, comfort, prosperity”.

2. Theoretical foundation

Recent studies highlight that numerous students are confronted with problems regarding their well-being, such as psychological and emotional suffering, anxious feelings and depression and an increased risk



of professional exhaustion (Backhaus et al., 2020; Baik et al., 2019; Dopmeijer, 2021), which is materialised in the rates of school abandonment (Lipson & Eisenberg, 2018). The students psychological well-being contributes to their intellectual and emotional availability for learning (Trigwell, 2012). Hence, it is a key factor for academic success (El Ansari & Stock, 2010). Academic satisfaction corresponds to the general feeling of the experiences lived by the student in the university. Thus, the well-being in university consists in three aspects: a. academic satisfaction, b. positive affects connected to positive feelings that the student experiences during his/her academic experiences (the feeling of happiness and comfort in university) and c. negative affects marked by certain academic experiences generating negative feelings (the tendency to feel depressed, angry or bored) (CNESCO, 2017). Konu and Rimpela (2002) proposed a model of well-being which allows the specificity of different factors susceptible to influence it. In this model, the well-being is considered as a state in which the individual can satisfy three essential needs: “to have”, “to love” and “to be”.

It is expressed by simple and universal elements such as “I like the university”, “the University is interesting”, “I like to go to university” etc. There are several theoretical models of the academic well-being, among which the most consensual are those proposed by Konu and Rimpela (2002) and Guimard et al. (2015).

It is considered that people are integrated into systems. In the educational context, the theory of ecological systems supposed that individuals interact with four levels of their environment, which influence their development and their general well-being. The first level, microsystem contains the educational context, family and friends. The second level, mesosystem consists of academic contexts and the domestic environment. The ecosystem aims the policies of the educational institution whose elements can have an indirect impact on the individual and the macro- system, the last level represents the larger culture, here they included the attitudes and norms which are present in the other systems. This theory qualifies the well-being as being multidimensional (Douwes et al., 2023).

The well-being is close to the fulfilment notion which is to be found in more and more official texts, being associated with the educational purpose: “School education promotes the children’s

development, allows them to acquire culture, prepares them for professional life and for the exercise of their responsibilities as citizens. It prepares them for education and lifelong professional formation. It develops knowledge, skills and culture necessary for the exercise of citizenship in the contemporary society of information and communication (Dizerbo, 2019).

The purpose of the present study is to assess the students well-being in the University Center UBB in Reşiţa. The established objectives are: 1. To identify the level of the students well-being by the assessment of their perception regarding the life and study conditions in the University Center UBB in Reşiţa and 2. To identify the needs concerning the improvement of student life quality in CU UBB Reşiţa, implicitly of their well-being. Thus, we state two research questions whose answers are to be found by the end of the study: Q1: What is the students well-being level in CU UBB Reşiţa? and Q2: What are the needs regarding the improvement of student life quality in CU UBB Reşiţa?

3. Research methodology

As research method we have used the inquiry. We have drawn up a questionnaire structured in seven themes and a section of suggestions and comments aiming the quality improvement of the students well-being. A questionnaire regarding their satisfaction about the student life is an assessment instrument conceived in order to collect the students’ opinions concerning the diverse aspects of their well-being and their experience in an educational environment. This questionnaire proposes to assess the students’ satisfaction concerning their campus life, the balance between studies and personal life, the services offered and the general learning conditions. The results guide our efforts to improve the students’ life quality and the learning climate.

Before filling-in the questionnaire, the participants have expressed their verbal consent for participation and were informed about the aim of the study. The first section includes the identification data (year of study, program of study, level of study, age and gender). The following themes come in a row: accommodation and environment, assistance and services, academic satisfaction, balance life-study, fulfilment feelings, social and cultural life, balance and well-being. The last section is drawn up in order to give the students the possibility to offer suggestions, comments, proposals concerning the improvement of life quality in the University Center UBB in Reşiţa. The students were invited to answer by selecting one of the options

and the items were closed type. These were measured by Likert scale in 5 or 3 steps of type 1= in a very high degree and 5=in a very low degree/ 1=Yes, always, 3= Never, or the participants had the possibility to choose from several answer variants.

For the rendering/presentation of some results we have also used the graphical method.

4. Results

221 answers were handed in by students from six faculties. From these only 217 were taken into consideration, the others being too few in order to represent relevant information about 2 faculties to whom they belong. Those 217 valid answers come from 159 women and 58 men students from the study programs of four faculties allotted as it follows (Table 1, Figure 1):

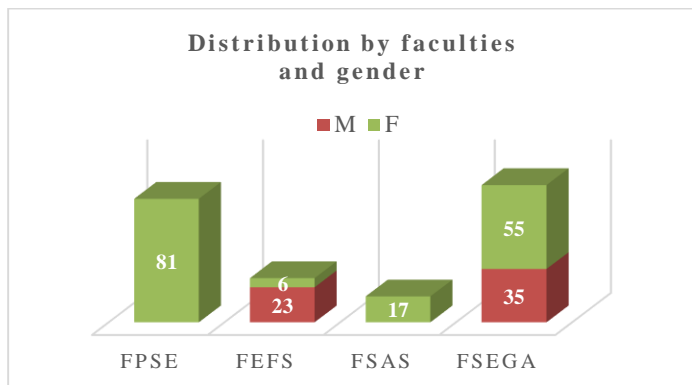
Table 1

Distribution by age

Faculty/ Age	18- 20	21- 25	26- 30	31- 35	36- 40	> 40	Total
FPSE	33	33	6	4	1	4	81
FEFS	16	10	0	1	2	0	29
FSAS	5	4	2	3	1	2	17
FSEGA	49	25	8	5	0	3	90
Total	103	72	16	13	4	9	217

Figure 1

Distribution by faculties and gender



The first theme, *Accommodation and environment* contains three items. The first one “How would you evaluate the quality of student accommodation from the point of view of comfort, accessibility and safety?”, has obtained 211 favourable answers (excellent, very good and good) only six students appreciating the quality as being acceptable. We must say that 43% of respondents consider it as very good, 35% excellent and 19% good (Figure 2).

The second item “To what degree do you consider our university campus as conducive to a fulfilled student life?”, 81% agree that this is conducive in a

high or very high degree (33%), the rest (19%) considering it conducive in a certain or low degree. The last item of this theme “Do you have access to facilities such as relaxing areas, green spaces and sport equipment?”, indicates over 60% for the answer “Yes, always” and 32% for “Sometimes” (Figure 3). These answers determine us to state that the degree of satisfaction of the respondents is very high regarding the accommodation and the university campus of CU UBB in Reşiţa, which is hopeful if we take into consideration that generous investments were done by the university board in order to offer the students very good conditions of accommodation and relaxation.

Figure 2

Quality of accommodation

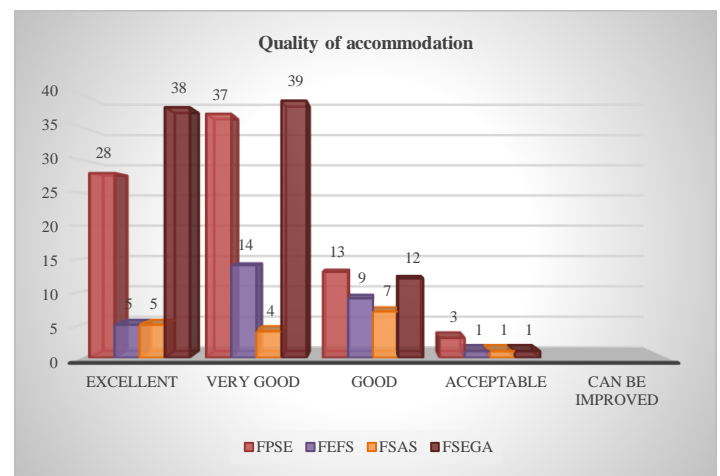
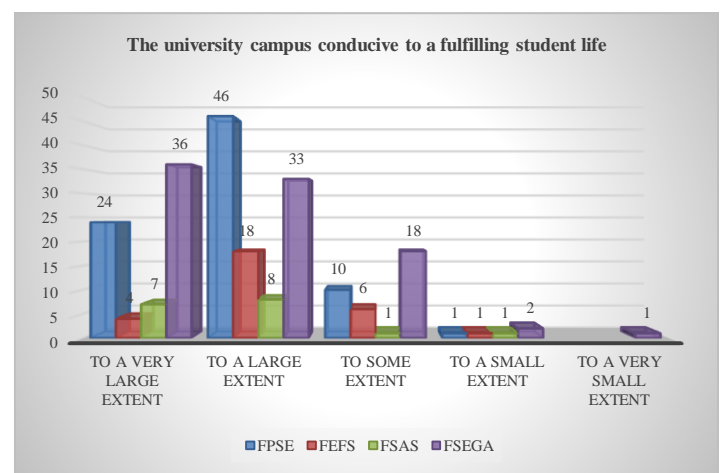


Figure 3

The university campus conducive to a fulfilling student life



The second theme refers to *Assistance and services* offered to the students in Reşiţa. The access to health services, counselling and psychological assistance in our institution is 75%, accessible (42%) and very accessible (33%), 25% considering them acceptable and less acceptable (Table 2). The other aspect has aimed the access to financial aid, meditations or resources for academic guidance. 37% of the students

did not have access to such an aid (Table 3). If we consider the students in the first year, then the percentages are understandable: very often the students need academic guidance especially in the terminal years, for drawing up the licence or dissertation paper and the respondents of this study come especially from the licence programs in the 1st and 2nd year. Likewise, it is possible that the students who have indicated that they did not have access to financial aid are part of families with decent income, thus, not coming under this category who benefits of social scholarships.

Table 2

Access to health services

	FPSE	FEFS	FSAS	FSEGA	TOTAL
To a very large extent	26	4	6	33	69
To a large extent	34	15	8	35	92
To some extent	19	9	2	15	45
To a small extent	2	1	1	6	10
To a very small extent				1	1

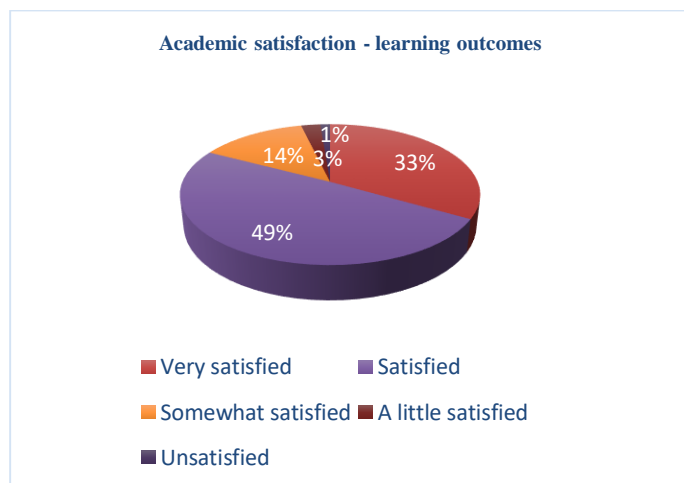
Table 3

Access to financial aid

	FPSE	FEFS	FSAS	FSEGA	TOTAL
Yes, always	18	10	11	30	69
Sometimes	34	10	1	35	80
Never	29	9	5	25	68

Figure 4

Academic satisfaction - learning outcomes



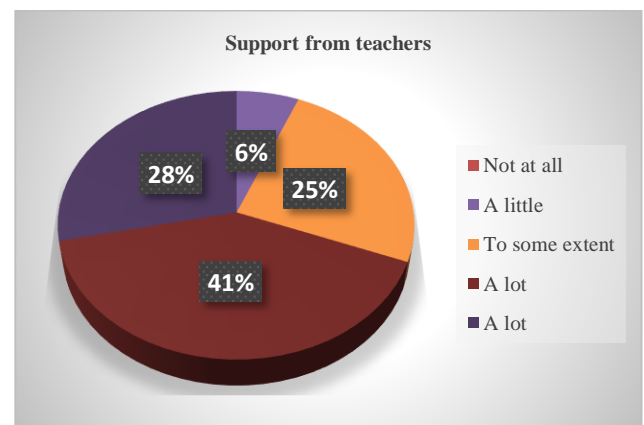
Analysing the academic satisfaction of students, contained in the third section, 102 students (47%) declared they are content of the way they learn and their results 39% - very content, and 14% are content in a certain degree, less content and even malcontent. Also here, 70% of students declare that they benefit much or very much from the didactic staff support, 24% consider that they benefit of it in a certain degree. Undoubtedly, these answers must be correlated to the

students 'attendance to the courses and seminar activities and to their involvement in the didactic activity.

Regarding the balance life-study, 141 students succeed to organise their time thus, they can both relax and study in a certain degree, small degree or even at all, while 35% succeed to do this in a high or very high degree. For 43% of students, relaxation means to listen to music, 21 % relax by reading and doing sport, 34% by walking, and 15% by meeting their friends.

Figure 5

Support from teachers



The fulfilment feeling is another criterion. 84% of respondents feel that what they do makes sense for them in a high or very high degree and the level of optimism in connection to their professional future is in proportion of 81% good or very good.

The students find satisfactory and very satisfactory in proportion of 74%, and 25% acceptable the opportunity to attend the social, cultural and community activities in the university center, 59% feeling that they belong to a vibrant and inclusive student community. A sufficient number of respondents do not feel this thing (9%) or they feel it in a certain degree (32%).

The balance between studies, extracurricular activities and spare time is assessed as balanced and very balanced by 70% of students and regarding the access to resources or events which aim the promotion of mental health and well-being, 47% have answered affirmatively, 42% indicating that only sometimes they have access to them.

The answers received from the students show that they appreciate positively, in a high or very high degree the elements under analysis, which justifies us to state that we can speak of a high level of the well-being of our students in the University Center UBB in Reşița.

5. Discussions

Official recent documents both at European level and national level award a significant importance to the well-being in the educational system. The decree no. 4042/2024 of 22 March 2024 for the approval of the Methodology concerning the organisation and functioning of the counselling and orientation in career centers in the institutions of higher education in Romania stipulate for the organisation of information sessions concerning mental health and the well-being of students, the relationship between students and the higher education institution.

For our study we had two objectives: 1. The identification of the level of the students well-being by evaluating their perception concerning the life and study conditions in CU UBB Reşiţa and 2. The identification of the needs concerning the improvement of the students' life quality in CU UBB Reşiţa, implicitly their well-being.

The answers received show that the students who learn in Reşiţa appreciate the life and study conditions, they are important or very important for their well-being. The universities offer a high number of services and departments and the University Center UBB din Reşiţa does not make any exception. 25% of students who consider them acceptable or unacceptable either they do not use these services or they do not know that they exist. This is the reason why, the institutions of higher education should find ways to notify the students about the existence of these services, the place they can be found, their offer etc. (WISE Project, 2023).

There are numerous elements which should be taken into consideration in order to assess the students' well-being. We have chosen the variant which proposes questions which are strictly linked to aspects referring to the life quality of the students in Reşiţa center. The well-being at university level refers to the degree of individual satisfaction in different aspects of academic life (didactic activities, friendships etc.) (Guimard et al., 2015). In other words, it is the cognitive and affective evaluation done by the student concerning the general satisfaction of experiences that she or he has in academic context as well as in other contexts (assistance and services, balance life-study etc.). The academic satisfaction is a predictor of the students well-being, the definitions awarding sometimes priority to cognitive, affective or attitudinal dimensions (Wach et al., 2016). The students who have good academic results declare that they are content with their program of study and the way they

learn (Wach et al., 2016). Thus, we observe the connection between the academic competence and the academic satisfaction. The school identification or appurtenance to the educational institution is defined as the measure in which the university "becomes a significant group for its members" (Tong et al., 2019), this appurtenance/connection being achieved by the participation in social, cultural, sport and community activities (Martinez et al., 2016; McNeely et al., 2002). Hence, a predictor of the identification is represented by the group appurtenance (Dunstone et al., 2024). The students who feel that they are part of a group, the students involved in extra-curricular activities have an appurtenance feeling and a more powerful connection with the university (Martinez et al., 2016). In this way, we must understand those few proposals stated by the respondent students referring to a larger number of student activities and exchanges with students from foreign countries. Here, the mission of the Students League, the representatives of the Erasmus program for students and the didactic staff step in.

6. Conclusions

The results of this study indicate an increased well-being level of our students in the University Center UBB in Reşiţa. The students who consider that the level is medium/average or under medium/average could be those who work, have families and children, live far away from Reşiţa and consequently, come rarely to the courses, participating rarely or at all in the activities organised in the institution. It is interesting that most of the students declared themselves content with what they are offered now, declaring that they would not change anything. Their needs refer to the setting up of other relaxation spaces besides the existing ones. For Agnès Florin (2016), emeritus professor in child's psychology and education, a good educational institution will be one which will improve the life quality of those who learn there and consequently, the academic results. In order to do this possible, we need co-operation between all the organisations, all the factors responsible with the activity in higher education: ministries aimed, students' association, services for students (which already exist and those that need to be set up), didactic staff, students, people responsible of different directions within the university, people in charge with practice etc. because, eventually, the students well-being is a collective challenge.

Conscious of our study limits (the reduced number of respondents, the questionnaire variant which does not include aspects regarding the physical and/or

mental health of our students, the students dose of subjectivism in choosing the answers to the questions etc.), we plead for the continuation of such endeavours in the following years, trying to achieve correlation between the declared satisfaction level of the students and the level of abandonment in the University Center UBB in Reșița.

Authors note:

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