The role of perceived social support in predicting subjective well-being in Lebanese college students

Lübnanlı üniversite öğrencilerinde, algılanan sosyal desteğin öznel iyi oluş üzerindeki yordayıcı rolü

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the role of perceived social support (PSS) on subjective well-being (SWB) in Lebanese college students. All students were undergraduate students and followed the American educational system. Life satisfaction was assessed using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and the affective dimension of well-being was measured using the Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). The degree of PSS was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). Findings suggested that Lebanese college students were generally satisfied with their lives general and experienced more positive than negative affect. Female participants experienced more negative affect (NA) than male participants. The high income level group scored greater on the SWLS scale and perceived higher PSS. Lebanese youth perceived great levels of PSS and PSS was found to be an important positive predictor of subjective well-being. In conclusion, these findings reconfirm the importance of perceived social support as predictor of subjective-well-being among youth.

Keywords: Perceived social support, satisfaction with life, subjective well-being

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Lübnanlı üniversite öğrencilerinde, algılanan sosyal desteğin öznel iyi oluş üzerindeki yordayıcı rolünü incelemektir. Çalışmaya katılan tüm öğrenciler, Amerikan eğitim sistemine dayalı olarak eğitimlerine devam etmektedirler. Çalışmada Yaşam Doyumu Ölçeği (YDÖ) ve öznel iyi oluşun duyuşsal boyutunu ölçmek için Pozitif-Negatif Duygu Ölçeği (PNDÖ) kullanılmıştır. Algılanan sosyal desteği ölçmek için ise, Çok Boyutlu Algılanan Sosyal Destek Ölçeği (ÇBASDÖ) kullanılmıştır. Araştırma bulguları Lübnanlı öğrencilerin genel olarak yaşamlarından memnun olduklarını ve pozitif duyguları negatif duygulardan daha çok yaşadıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Kadın katılımcıların negatif duyguları daha fazla deneyimledikleri sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Yüksek gelir düzeyine sahip öğrencilerin yaşam doyumu ve algılanan sosyal destek puanlarının daha yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Lübnanlı öğrencilerin yüksek düzeyde sosyal destek aldıkları ve algılanan sosyal desteğin öznel iyi oluşun, pozitif yönde önemli bir yordayıcısı olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Sonuç olarak bu sonuçlar, sosyal desteğin, öznel iyi oluş açısından önemli bir değişken olduğunu belirlemiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Algılanan sosyal destek, yaşam doyumu, öznel iyi oluş

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Introduction

The role of perceived social support (PSS) and its relationship to mental and physical well-being has been the subject of considerable attention and research in recent years. Generally defined, PSS consists of social resources that individuals perceive as accessible and offered to them (Cronkite & Moos, 1995). Research shows robustly that PSS is associated with positive physical and mental health (Ben Ari, & Gil, 2004; Clara, Cox, Enns, Murray, & Torgrude, 2003; Cohen, 2004; Sarason, Sarason, & Gurung, 2001; Uchino, Cacioppo, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 1996). In turn, limited PSS could have serious health deficits including physical and psychological health (Dennis et al., 2005). For example, Holahan, Valentier, and Moos (1995) reported that first year students with higher levels of perceived parental support scored higher on well-being and happiness and showed less depression and anxiety than students with low perceived parental support.

Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as the people's evaluation of their own lives associated with positive feelings (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2000). SWB refers to a construct that includes emotions, domain satisfactions, and overall judgments of life satisfaction (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999, Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005). SWB includes two main components: cognitive judgments and affective experiences. Cognitive judgments are the individual's satisfaction with life. Affective component consists of positive and negative emotions including positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA) (Diener & Lucas, 1999; Lucas, Diener, & Suh, 1996). It is important to measure SWB by investigating both the affective and cognitive components because each of these components could be influenced in different ways and by different variables (Chamberlain, 1988). People experience SWB when they are satisfied with their lives, and experience more positive and desirable emotions than unpleasant ones. There is general agreement that PSS and SWB are positively related (Cohen, Gottlieb, & Underwood, 2000). Some research has also suggested that PSS is indispensable for SWB (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Diener & Seligman, 2002).

Measures of SWB have been found to be positively associated with individual difference variables, such as income (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002), gender and education (Argyle, 2001; Diener et al., 1999) that could influence the level of SWB in individuals. Generally, more educated people tend to be more efficient in safeguarding their SWB from adverse conditions using external (money) and internal (coping strategies) (Piquart & Sorensen, 2000). Research findings also suggest a positive correlation between income and SWB (Diener, 2009; Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995; Howell & Howell, 2008; Karlsson & Archer, 2007) where high income individuals reported slightly higher levels of SWB. However, when income within countries increased, people did not report more happiness. That is, when people have more money, they are not necessarily happier. In other words, the effect of income on SWB occurs only at the level of poverty (Howell & Howell, 2008). In contrast, few studies suggested a moderate correlation between SWB and SES (Diener, Suh, et al., 1995) or no relation between the two (Myers, 2000). In fact, Biswas-Diener and colleagues (2004) reported differences in SWB between two homeless populations (Calcutta and U.S.A) suggesting no correlation between SES and SWB but a strong correlation between family support and SWB.

Several studies explored the effect of gender on the level of SWB showing that females report higher level of NA (Diner, 2009; Tesch-Romer et al., 2008). However, research findings for positive affect and satisfaction with life are still inconclusive. While some studies showed that women experience greater PA and satisfaction with life, other findings reported no gender differences in PA and satisfaction with life (Diener, 2009; Karlsson & Archer, 2007; Tesch-Romer et al., 2008). Biological and social factors have been identified to account for gender differences in SWB, with women generally scoring lower (Karlsson & Archer, 2007; Tesch-Romer et al., 2008). In fact, research

findings indicated that reaching personal goals increases satisfaction with life and makes individuals happier (Diener, 2000).

Moreover, the level of SWB varies across different cultures. Different cultures differ in the positivity level, individual goals, coping patterns, degree of regulation of people's desires, so levels of SWB vary across cultures (Diener, 2000). Previous studies showed that on average, individuals from collectivist cultures report being less satisfied compared to those from individualistic cultures (Diener, Diener, & Diener, 1995; Diener, Oishi, Lucas, 2003). However, suicide and divorce rates remain much higher in individualistic nations (Diener, Oishi, Lucas, 2003). Moreover, individuals in collectivist cultures are offered high levels of social support (Diener, 2000). Political instability and social disruption may influence people's evaluation of their lives leading to a lower level of satisfaction and lower level of SWB. (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003).

The Case of Lebanon

Few studies have discussed dimensions of well-being as related to Lebanese Youth (Kazarian, 2005). As mentioned earlier, different contextual and internal perspectives could influence levels of SWB. Generally, Lebanese are highly focused on family and family relationships but this focus has declined gradually (Faour, 1998). In other words, researchers believe that Lebanese are collectivist in nature but that the youth is moving towards individualism (Ayyash-Abdo, 2001, Faour, 1998; Khalaf, 2002). Youth are still very connected to their nuclear families but less so to their extended families (Barakat, 1977; Faour, 1998). However, gender differentiation is still present where boys are usually given more privileges and are expected to assume more crucial social roles in the household and in the society at large.

As mentioned previously, studies have been inconclusive regarding the effect of income on SWB (Diener et al., 2003). Previous studies have reported no correlation (Myers, 2000), a weak correlation (Inglehart, 1990) or a moderate correlation (Diener et al., 1995) between income and SWB. Lebanon is still considered a developing country were the minimum wage (333$) remains very low as compared to wealthier countries (Lebanese Ministry of Finance, 2011).

The purpose of this present study was to examine the effect of PSS on SWB among Lebanese college students. More specifically, the main objectives included determining 1) the whether there is a relationship between life satisfaction and the different levels of PSS as reported by Lebanese youth, 2) whether Lebanese college students are satisfied with their lives or not; 2) whether Lebanese college students perceive receiving social support from family, friends and significant others; 3) and finally 4) the importance of gender and income in predicting SWB

Methods

Participants

The data was collected in the summer semester of the 2009-2010 academic year. Participants were 168 undergraduate Lebanese college students (89 women, 79 men), with an age range of 17 to 24 (Mean= 20 years and 5 months) (Table 1) enrolled in three institutions in Lebanon following the American educational system. All surveys were administered to introduction to psychology classes. This course is a service course offered to all students from all majors at these institutions where the language of instruction is English. Students voluntarily completed the surveys inside the classrooms and signed informed consent forms.

Table 1. *Demographic characteristics of study sample of Lebanese college students (n=168), based on self-reported data*

Variable	*f*	Response Rate (%)*
Gender	168	-
Female	89	53
Male	79	47
Total responses	168	100
No response	0	0
Income Level	168	-
Low (0-$15,000)	47	28
Middle ($15,000-$35,000)	41	24
Upper ($35,000-above)	67	40
Total Responses	155	92
No response	13	8

*Percentage of responses were calculated out of the number of responses in each particular category, not out of the total number of participants in the study (N = 168)

Instruments

Subjective well being: Life satisfaction was assessed using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). SWLS has been found to demonstrate adequate internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha's ranging from 0.79 to 0.89) and stability across time (Pearson r's of 0.84 for 1 month and 0.54 for 4 years; Pavot & Diener, 1993) and occasions (Eid & Diener, 2004). This scale measures the cognitive dimension of well-being. Respondents rated their global life satisfaction on a Likert-scale measure that included five items. Each item has a score ranging from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree), yielding a possible total possible score range from five to 35 with a possible standard deviation as large as 5 (Pavot & Diener, 2008). The neutral point on the scale is the score of 20, where the respondent would have reported an equal satisfaction and dissatisfaction with live as a whole. A score below 20 (between five and 19) indicate dissatisfaction with life, and a score above 20 (between 21 and 35) indicate that the respondent is satisfied.

The affective dimension of well-being was measured using the Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The Positive Affect scale represents the extent of positive, enthusiasm, excitement, and determination. The Negative Affect scale reflects a general dimension of unpleasant engagement and subjective distress that subsumes a broad range of aversive affects including fear, nervousness, guilt, and shame. The PANAS scales show excellent psychometric properties; Watson et al. (1988) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the various time reference periods ranging from .86 to .90 for the Positive Affect scale and .84 to .87 for the Negative Affect scale. This scale has been translated into several languages including Estonian (Allik & Realo, 1997), German (Krohne, Egloff, Kohlmann, & Tausch, 1996) and Turkish (Gencoz, 2000). The PANAS consists of 20 items which describe different emotions. Participants used a five-point scale that ranged from one (not at all) to five (extremely) to indicate how frequently they felt each emotion. Ten of these items can be grouped into a PA scale, and the other 10 items into NA scale. The positive affect (PA) score was the average of the scores of the 10 items that described positive emotions: interested, excited, strong, enthusiastic, proud, alert, inspired, determined, attentive, and active. On the other hand, the NA score was obtained by calculating the average of the scores of the 10 items that described negative emotions: distressed, upset, guilty, scared, hostile, irritable, ashamed, nervous, jittery, and

afraid. The positive and negative affect scores can range from 10-50 with higher scores representing higher levels of positive affect and negative affect. The momentary and weekly standard deviation values are 7.9 and 7.2 and 5.4 and 6.2 for positive and negative affects respectively Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The affective balance score (ABS) was obtained by subtracting the negative affect from the positive affect score.

Perceived Social Support (PSS): The degree of PSS was measured using the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al. 1988). The MSPSS has been shown to be psychometrically sound with coefficient alphas for the subscales range from .85 to .91 and test-retest correlations ranging from .75 to .85 (Dahlem, Zimet, Walker, 1991; Zimet et al. 1988). This scale has been translated into several languages including Turkish (Eker & Arkar, 1995), Urdu (Rizwan & Aftab, 2009) and Chinese (Chou, 2000). The MSPSS consists of 12-items that measures social support from three domains: family, friends, and a significant others. Respondents used a seven-point Likert scale that ranged from one (very strongly disagree) to seven (very strongly agree). The total score ranged from 12 to 84 with a possible deviation as large as 12 (Dahlem, Zimet, Walker, 1991; Zimet et al., 1988). Higher scores suggest higher perceived social support.

Statistical Model and Data Analysis

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between SWB measured through the variables SWLS, PA, NA, overall perceived social support (MSPSS) and the different levels of social support (family, friends and significant others). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was employed as the variables in question are interval or ratio scaled variables.

To determine whether Lebanese college youth are satisfied with their life and perceived receiving PSS above a set neutral point one sample t-tests were employed. These tests were extended to the three levels of MSPSS-SWLA, PA and NA- and social support –family, friends and significant others. With a sample of 168 students normality can be assumed according to the central limit theory. A paired t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a difference between the positive and negative experiences in the lives of Lebanese students.

To investigate the potential effect of gender on the three measures of SWB, namely SWLS, PA, NA, the different measures of PSS, and overall perceived social support (MSPSS), independent t-tests were conducted. The independent t-test allows testing for differences between two independent groups (male, female). A one-way analysis of variance was performed to investigate the potential effects of socioeconomic status (high, medium and low) on each of the three measures of SWB and the measure of perceived social support MSPSS. These were followed by Tukey's post hoc tests to identify between which pair of socioeconomic levels the differences existed for each dependent variable.

Regression analyses was then conducted to determine the level to which total MSPSS was predictive of SWB as measured by SWLS, PA subscale, and NA subscale. The independent variables were entered simultaneously into the regression equation. These three regression analyses were followed by three similar regression analyses aimed at determining the level to which the components of social support, family, friends and significant others, were predictive of SWB as measured by SWLS, PA and NA.

Hierarchical linear regression was then implemented to determine the impact of the demographic variables, gender and socioeconomic status, and perceived social support on the dependent variable SWB as measured by SWLS, PA and NA. This method was chosen for its flexibility as it allows the researcher to determine the order of entry of the independent variables in the regression equation with each independent variable assessed at it point of entry for the additional explanatory power it

contributes to the equation. Gender and socioeconomic status were accorded priority of entry into the prediction equation followed by total MSPSS. This order will assess (1) the importance of gender and socioeconomic status in predicting SWLS, PA and NA and (2) the importance of the unique information in SWB measured by SWLS, PA and NA that is accounted for by total MSPSS. A separate intercept was estimated for SWLS, PA and NA.

Results

PSS, Income, Gender and SWB

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between SWLS, PA, NA and MSPSS and its components. Results are summarized in Table 2. As several correlations were computed a corrected significance level using the Bonferroni approach was adopted. SWLS was positively correlated with the MSPSS total score (r = 0.352, 166, $p <$ 0.000) and its three subscales: the family subscale (r = 0.360, n = 167, p = 0.000), the friends subscale (r = 0.242, n = 167, p = 0.002), and significant other subscale (r = 0.268, n = 167, p = 0.001). The PA subscale correlated positively with MSPSS total score (r = 0.248, n = 165, p = 0.001) and the significant other subscale of MSPSS (r = 0.278, n = 165, p = 0.000). The MSPSS total score is correlated positively with its three subscales: the family subscale (r = 0.782, n = 167, p = 0.000), the friends subscale (r = 0.784, n = 167, p = 0.000), and significant other subscale (r = 0.860, n = 167, p = 0.000).

Table 2. *Pearson correlations for measures of subjective well-being*

Measures	**SWLS**	**PA**	**NA**	**FAM**	**FRE**	**SO**	**MSPSS Total**
SWLS	-	0.219	-0.158	0.360*	0.242*	0.268*	0.352*
PA	-	-	-0.019	0.116	0.216	0.278*	0.248*
NA	-	-	-	-0.093	-0.059	-0.081	-0.091
FAM	-	-	-	-	0.359*	0.565*	0.782*
FRE	-	-	-	-	-	0.530*	0.784*
SO	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.860*
MSPSS Total	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985); PANAS = Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Tellegen, & Clark, 1988); PA = Positive affect subscale of PANAS; NA = Negative affect subscale of PANAS; MSPSS = Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet GD, Powell SS, Farley GK, Werkman S, Berkoff KA. Psychometric characteristics of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. J Pers Assess 1990;55:610-7.); SES = Socioeconomic status.*p<0.0023

We calculated the SWB levels of the sampled Lebanese university students. Table 3 summarizes the descriptive statistics of the three measures used. The sample's mean score on the SWLS (M = 23.10, SD = 5.47) is above the neutral point (20). College students reported being more satisfied with their lives than college students in general (M = 23.10, SD = 5.47) and 20, t(165) = 7.30, $p <$ .001 (Pavot and Diener 1993).

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the affective dimension of well-being in Lebanese youths' lives. There was a significant difference between positive experiences PA (M =

35.83, *SD* = 7.70) and negative experiences NA (*M* = 24.28, *SD* = 8.59); *t*(163) = 12.70, *p* < 0.001, *d* = 1.54). Generally students experienced relatively more positive than negative affect in their lives.

Finally, the t test revealed a statistically significant difference between the mean score of MSPSS for college youth in Lebanon than college students in general (*M* = 66.65, *SD* = 12.70), *t*(166) = 25.1 and 42, *p* < .001 (Pavot & Diener 1993).Thus, college youth in Lebanon seem to perceive high level of PSS. This finding extended to each of the subscales of MSPSS, namely families, friends and significant others. A one-sample t-test revealed significant differences in PSS above the neutral point 14 (Pavot & Diener 1993) for family (*M* = 22.57, *SD* = 5.0, *t* (166) = 22.14, *p* < 0.001, friends (*M* = 21.31, *SD* = 5.14), *t*(166) = 18.38, *p* < 0.001 and significant others (*M* = 22.85, *SD* = 5.32), *t* (166) = 21.50, *p* < 0.001.

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics of study participants' scores on measures of subjective well-being*

Measures	***M***	***SD***	**MDN**	**Range**
SWLS	23.10	5.47	24.00	8-34 (26)
PANAS				
PA	3.58	0.76	3.6	1.10-5.40 (4.3)
NA	2.43	0.86	0.24	0.10-0.91 (0.81)
MSPSS	66.65	12.70	69.00	21.00-84.00(63)
Family	22.57	5.00	22.00	4.00-28.00(24)
Friends	21.31	5.14	24.00	4.00-28.00(24)
Significant others	22.85	5.32	22.00	4.00-28.00(24)

Note. SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985); PANAS = Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (Watson, Tellegen, & Clark, 1988); PA = Positive Affect, NA=Negative Affect

To investigate the potential effect of gender on the three measures of SWB, namely SWLS, PA, NA and the measures of PSS, and total MSPSS, independent t-tests were conducted. A one-way analysis of variance followed by Tukey post-hoc tests was performed to investigate the potential effects of socioeconomic status on each of the four measures.

Gender

Independent t-tests were used to explore the relationship between gender and the different measures of SWB (SWLS, PA, NA) and social support (MSPSS). Results indicated significant gender differences on NA. Female participants' (*M* = 25.53, *SD* = 10.10) mean scores were higher than their male counterparts (*M* = 22.83, *SD* = 6.23), *t* (162) = 2.029 *p* < 0.05, *d* = 0.92 on the NA subscale of the PANAS. Female participants experienced more NA than male participants. However, no significant gender difference was found at the PA subscale.

Data from SWLS showed that female (*M* = 22.84, *SD* = 5.065) and male (*M* = 23.38, *SD* = 5.907) Lebanese students are equally satisfied with their lives; however, no significant difference was found between female and male participants' perceived level of social support (MSPSS).

Income

ANOVA and, when appropriate, Tukey post-hoc tests were used to determine the effect of the three different income level groups (as indicated by their reported monthly family incomes) on MSPSS, SWLS, and PANAS. Results indicated that participants belonging to different income level groups differed significantly in their levels of life satisfaction (as measured by SWLS) and their level of PA (as measured by the PA subscale of PANAS) (F (2,151) = 3.184, $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.040$; F (2,149) = 3.661 , $p < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.047$, respectively). Tukey post-hoc tests revealed that participants in the medium income level group had, on average, significantly lower scores on SWLS (M = 21.27, SD = 5.040) than did participants in the high income level group (M = 23.97, SD = 6.155), $p < 0.05$. Furthermore, the low income level group had a significantly lower mean score on the PA subscale (M = 33.51, SD = 7.581) of PANAS than did the high income level group (M = 37.08, SD = 6.7570), $p < 0.05$.

For PSS, Tukey post-hoc tests indicated that participants in the high income level group (M = 71.49, SD = 10.205) had, on average, significantly higher scores on the total MSPSS measure with family, friends and significant others subscales than those in the medium income level group (M = 61.95, SD = 14.805), $p < 0.01$and that the high income level group had, on average, significantly higher scores on the total MSPSS scale than the low income level group (M = 63.85, SD = 12.182), $p < 0.001$.

In light of these findings, three regression analyses were conducted, using the enter method (all independent variables were entered simultaneously), to identify the extent and degree to which the total MSPSS was predictive of SWB levels as measured by SWLS, PA subscale, and NA subscale. Results are displayed in Table 4. Perceived social support (or total MSPSS) was a significant predictor of SWLS, $p < 0.001$, accounting for more than a tenth of the variance in the SWLS (12.4%); followed by PA, $p < 0.01$, accounting for about six percent of the variance PA (6.2%). Furthermore, three additional regressions were conducted to identify the extent and degree to which the three subscales of perceived social support (family, friends, and significant other) were predictive of the measures of SWB (Table 5). All independent variables were entered simultaneously into the regression analysis. The three subscales of MSPSS are a significant predictor of SWLW, $p < 0.001$ and PA, $p < 0.01$ accounting for approximately 15% and 9% of the variance in SWLS and PA respectively. Of the three subscales, the family subscale FAM, t (161) = 3.36, $p < 0.01$ is a significant predictor of SWLW while the significant others subscale SO, t (160) = 2.60, $p < 0.05$ is a significant predictor of PA. The strong association of FAM and SO is evident through the value of relative standardized beta coefficient (β) which is .296 and .261 for SWLS and PA respectively. Total MSPSS and its three subscales are not a significant predictor of NA.

Table 4. *Regression coefficients for predictor of subjective well-being*

DV	IV	B	95% CI for B LB	UB	SE	β	Durbin Watson
SWLS							
	MSPSS	0.151***	.089	.213	0.031	0.352	2.088
PA							
	MSPSS	0.151**	.059	.242	0.046	0.248	1.768
NA							

	MSPSS	-0.062	-.167	.043	0.053	-0.091	2.112

Table 5. *Regression coefficients for the subscales of the predictor of subjective well-being*

DV	IV	B	95% CI for B		SE	β	Durbin Watson
			Lower Limit	Upper Limit			
SWLS	FRE	0.117	-.063	.296	0.091	0.111	2.059
	FAM	0.324**	.133	.514	0.096	0.296	
	SO	0.045	-.151	.241	0.099	0.044	
PA	FRE	0.151	0112	.414	0.133	0.101	1.735
	FAM	-0.102	.381	.177	0.141	-0.066	
	SO	0.379*	.090	.667	0.146	0.261	
NA	FRE	-0.028	-.335	.279	0.156	-0.017	2.115
	FAM	-0.118	-.444	.208	0.165	-0.068	
	SO	-0.055	-.392	.282	0.171	-0.034	

Finally, to identify the extent and degree to which the sources of social support and demographic variables, predicted subjected well-being we conducted three hierarchal regression analysis using perceived social support (MSPSS), income level, and gender as potential predictors of SWLS, PA and NA (Table 6). Priority of entry was accorded to the demographic independent variables of gender and SES as they were considered less related to the dependent variables. MSPSS was the independent variable entered at the second level of the regression analysis. Dummy coding was used for each of the demographic independent variables with male considered to be the referent gender and high income the referent income level. The results indicated that the three independent variables, MSPSS, income level and gender, are significant predictors of SWLS, $p < 0$ .001 and PA, $p < 0.01$ accounting for 12.6% and 11.7% of the variance in SWLS and PA respectively. Of the three independent variables, only MSPSS, is a significant predictor of both SWLW, t (148) = 3.75, $p < 0.001$ and PA, t (146) = 3.31, $p < 0.01$. The strong association of MSPSS is evident through the value of relative standardized beta coefficient β which is .31 and .28 for SWLS and PA respectively. The sources of PSS and the demographic variables of income and gender were not found to be significant predictors of NA. However a significant negative association of gender is evident through the value of relative standardized beta coefficient β which is -0.17. No such significant gender differences were found at the PA subscale or for SWLS. Significant income level differences were recorded for NA only with high income student groups experiencing less NA than medium income groups. It is important to note that all intercepts are positive with initial NA higher than PA which is in turn higher than SWLS. Results indicated that if gender, income level and total MSPSS are ignored then Lebanese college

youth tend to experience significant levels of SWLS followed by increased levels of PA and even higher levels of NA.

Table 6. *Regression coefficients for predictors of subjective well-being*

	SWLS			**PA**			**NA**		
	B	**SE**	**β**	**B**	**SE**	**β**	**B**	**SE**	**β**
Intercept	14.16***	2.67		24.65***	3.89		33.44***	4.59	
Level 1									
Gender	0.81	0.87	0.7	0.61	1.24	0.04	-2.10*	1.46	-0.17
Low Income	0.011	1.06	0.00	-2.22	1.52	-0.13	0.12	1.80	0.01
Medium Income	-1.42	1.08	-1.17	1.82	1.56	0.11	-3.69*	1.84	-0.19
Level 2									
MSPSS Total	0.13***	0.04	0.31	0.17**	0.51	0.28	-0.10	0.06	-0.14

Referent Income Level is high; Referent gender is male *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001

Discussion

The aim of this present study was to examine the relationship between different components of social support and subjective well-being (SWB). Findings revealed that Lebanese college youths are generally satisfied with their lives and tend to experience more PA than NA. These results are consistent with previous research using the same instrument to measure affective and cognitive well-being (Diener, Suh, et al., 1995; Lucas et al., 1996).

Recently, numerous researchers have suggested that culture could impact the relation between agreeable and disagreeable emotions (Bagozzi, Wong, & Yi, 999; Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). In addition, Triandis (1995) differentiated between collectivist and individualistic culture depending on the type of goals that individuals pursue. Previous studies suggested that attainment of personal goals could positively influence the individual's sense of well-being and life satisfaction (see Cantor &Blanton, 1996; Emmons, 1996, for review). According to Triandis (1995), individualist cultures usually pursue personal goals including personal wants and needs, while collectivist cultures generally pursue group desires and goals. Markus and Kitayama (1991) also highlighted the difference in goals between individual and collectivist culture and suggested that "the goals of others may become so focal in consciousness that the goals of others may be experienced as personal goals" (Markus and Kitayama, 1991, p. 229). Furthermore, individuals from western (more individualistic) countries generally show higher levels of affective well-being and life satisfaction as compared to individuals in collectivist countries (Diener, Suh, Oishi, & Trendis, 1998; Pavot & Diener, 1993). Consistent with previous studies, Lebanese students reported higher level of well-being compared to their Korean and Chinese counterparts (Cha, 2003). These findings could be explained by the shift of Lebanese youths from collectivism towards individualism (Faour, 1998). Lebanese college students are exhibiting features of individualism such as pursuing individual goals and making personal decisions about life in general such as marriage and career (Ayyash-Abdo, 2001).

As for the relation between SWB and PSS, this study found that Lebanese youth perceived great level of PSS from their families, friends and significant other. PSS was found to be positively correlated to students' well-being and a significant predictor of students' life satisfaction and pleasant experiences. Particularly, the family was found to be a significant predictor of subjective well-being and the significant other a significant predictor of PA. Lebanon is generally considered a collectivist culture where individuals are encouraged to maintain intimate relationships, and to focus on the group's harmony and interdependence. In collectivist societies, according to Hofstede, (1991), "people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestionable loyalty" (p.51)). Although Lebanese college students are moving towards individualism, they are still preserving collectivist features of intimate and durable relationships (as compared to students from individualistic cultures). Norms and social expectations in the Lebanese culture still center support on the social network. Therefore, individuals tend to seek social support from this social network. Parallely, family, friends and significant others are likely to provide social support, guidance, and reassurance of worth. The present findings revealed that perceived social support particularly contributes to students' life satisfaction and pleasant experiences most probably attributed to the nature of relationships in the Lebanese collectivist society.

As for the effect of gender on SWB, female and male Lebanese students' experienced no differences of pleasant affect and were equally satisfied (or dissatisfied) with their lives. In addition, both genders perceived similar levels of family, friends, and significant other support. However, female students experienced higher levels of NA as compared to their male counterparts. In addition, there was a negative correlation between gender and NA. Previous research has been inconsistent regarding the relationship of gender and PA among males (Diener & Suh, 2000). However, most studies have consistently shown that females tend to exhibit higher levels of NA as compared to males (Haring, Stock, & Okun, 1984). In Lebanon, higher levels of NA among females could be explained by the prevalence of gender inequalities and a patriarchal society. These findings are important and require further analysis since they do not support previous studies on Lebanese youth (Ayyash-Abdo & Alaumuddin, 2007).

There is no consensus on the effect of income levels on SWB. In this study, a positive correlation was found between income and PA among Lebanese youth. Students from high income levels were generally more satisfied with their lives and perceived greater PSS than those from medium and low income. Income level is believed to be an important measure of SWB in poorer countries but not in wealthier ones (Diener & Oishi, 2000). In other words, increased income in wealthy nations does not contribute to increase in SWB. Lebanon has suffered economically in the past years because of political and economical turmoil. As mentioned earlier, the minimum wage remains way below average as compared to more developed countries which could explain the positive relationship found between income and SWB.

The present study focused on Lebanese college students' perceptions of social support from three different sources (family, friends, and significant other), and their effect on their subjective well-being. Two other demographic variables including gender and income were explored. Lebanese youth perceived high levels of PSS which was found to be a significant predictor of subjective well-being. Gender and income were also found to influence subjective well-being. These findings reconfirm the crucial role of PSS as a predictor of subjective well-being among youth in general and specifically among Lebanese youth. Further research is needed to further explore gender and income effects, cultural constructs and the role of families, friends and significant other and their impact on youths' well-being. Such findings could provide important information related to promoting and optimizing the role of families, friends and significant others as social support agents among youth.

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