

Quality of research life among postgraduate students

جودة الحياة البحثية لدى طلبة الدراسات العليا

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Abstract:

The student in higher education who bears responsibility for scientific research and seeks to obtain a higher diploma, such as a master's degree or PhD, may go through stages interspersed with many challenges and special circumstances, whether in his academic or personal life. On the one hand, scientific research is an essential part of his academic life and a key to expanding his scientific and professional horizons. On the other hand, he has a family life, aspirations and hopes that he seeks to achieve. Hence, it was necessary to study the quality of research life of a student in higher education because of its important role in achieving his research and personal goals and ensuring his survival and continuity in scientific research. Interest in this topic also contributes to the advancement and prosperity of higher education, especially in the era of globalization, competition, and the development of societies.

In this paper, we attempt to focus on defining the quality of research life and explain its concept by emphasizing on previous studies to explore the most important factors that affect the student's quality of life while conducting scientific research. This allows us to improve afterward the measurement of the quality of research life.

Keywords: quality of research life; academic life; personal life; research student in postgraduate studies.

ملخص

إن الطالب في التعليم العالي الذي يتحمل مسؤولية البحث العلمي ويسعى للحصول على الشهادات العليا مثل الماجستير أو الدكتوراه قد يمر بمراحل تتخللها العديد من التحديات والظروف الخاصة سواء في حياته الأكاديمية أو الشخصية. فمن ناحية يعتبر البحث العلمي جزءاً أساسياً من حياته الأكاديمية ومفتاحاً لتوسيع آفاقه العلمية والمهنية. ومن ناحية أخرى، لديه حياة عائلية وتطلعات وآمال يسعى إلى تحقيقها. من هنا كان لا بد من دراسة جودة الحياة البحثية للطلاب في التعليم العالي لما لها من دور مهم في تحقيق أهدافه البحثية والشخصية وضمان بقائه واستمراره في البحث العلمي. كما يساهم الاهتمام بهذا الموضوع في تقدم وازدهار التعليم العالي، خاصة في عصر العولمة والمنافسة وتطور المجتمعات.

نحاول في هذا البحث التركيز على تعريف جودة الحياة البحثية وشرح مفهومها من خلال التركيز على الدراسات السابقة لاستكشاف أهم العوامل التي تؤثر على جودة حياة الطالب أثناء إجراء البحث العلمي. هذا يسمح لنا بتحسين قياس جودة الحياة البحثية بعد ذلك.

كلمات مفتاحية: جودة الحياة البحثية؛ الحياة الأكاديمية؛ الحياة الشخصية؛ الطالب الباحث في الدراسات العليا.

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1- Introduction

Higher education covers a wide range institution, including the universities. The university is a subset of higher education, as are other groups such as colleges, technical institutes and higher schools. However, in some contexts, higher education and university are used interchangeably. The university is considered as a center for developing knowledge, transmitting culture, scientific and technological progress. From the British perspective, it is an institution that has the power to award its own degree and is prominent in the field of research in general (Alemu, 2018).

Higher education in general encourages scientific research and innovation, the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills in various fields, the provision of services, safety and facilities such as libraries, laboratories, student organizations, cultural and sports activities and other necessary resources in a better way for its students, in order to obtain a good academic environment. This may ensure the sustainability and continuity of their employees and professors in general and their students in particular. Hence, higher education institutions must treat their students as customers and take care of them carefully. In fact, attracting students is not an easy matter, but rather more difficult than gaining their loyalty (Pedro et al, 2014).

The academic environment is essential in the life of a student who is preparing a thesis or dissertation to obtain a higher degree. Providing the proper environment is a very important for student, because it affects his academic path. For example, the following infrastructure (eg. libraries, laboratories, sports facilities and services) have been found among others to achieve happiness and improve his quality of life. There is are many factors related to the academic environment that may contribute to the improvement of academic student life, such as academic social relations, research opportunities, education methods and programs, etc. This will be discussed later and this is what we will discuss later. In order for student to achieve success in his research and personal path, he must know how to balance his personal and academic life at the same time. This is not an easy matter, and this is why we find many students facing many personal problems (family, professional, economic, social...), and academic challenges (scientific research, relationships, facilities, means, services...). They do not have the ability to confront it, as it may have an impact on their health, social relationships, and economic situation, as well as on scientific research, which they may reject completely or temporarily (Vakkai et al, 2020). Thus, they find themselves that they have not achieved the goals set for them. This results in a low level of quality in their lives. From this standpoint, this study came to clarify the concept of quality of research life and contribute to achieving it, by exploring the most important factors that define this concept. Also, the study aims aimed to help student to identify the most important aspects that may help him feel comfortable and enjoyable, how to reduce stress, self-organize, and other aspects that achieve good quality in his life.

2- Quality of research life

To know the quality of research life among graduate students, we must first know what quality of life is in general. Quality of life research began by focusing on the concept of mental health, and the terms varied and differed in their concept, which led to the formation of large and contradictory groups of research in this field. From this standpoint, a variety of concepts for mental health were proposed, represented by four approaches (Cooke, P. J,2016: 731) are as follows:

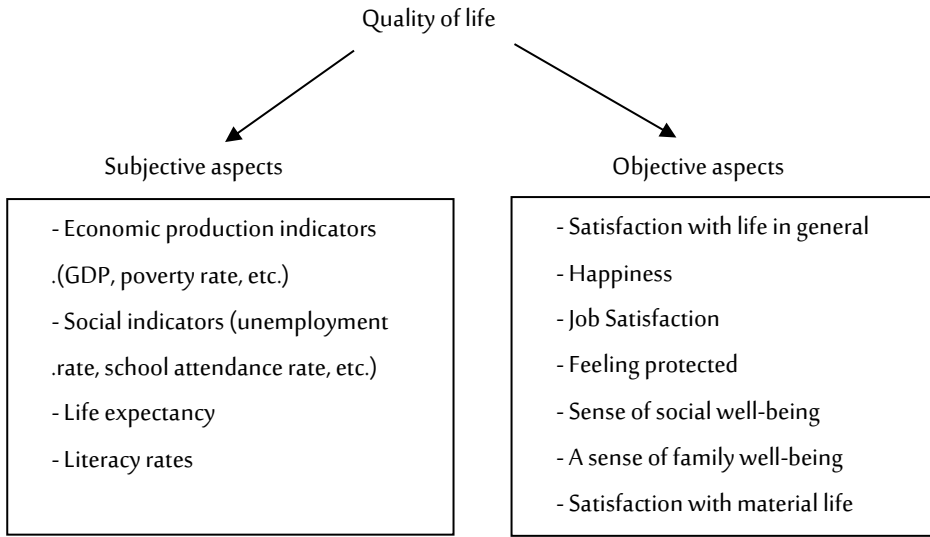
- *The first approach:* The hedonic tradition, which focuses on such concepts as happiness, positive affect, low negative affect, and life satisfaction.
- *The second approach:* is the eudaimonic tradition, which highlights positive psychological performance and human development. This approach focuses on optimal performance in the sense of developing human competencies (Dodge, R et al ,2012 : 223).
- *The third approach:* Quality of life. This approach has been influenced by a variety of disciplines, especially medicine, sociology, and psychology. For example, measuring the quality of life for patients suffering from cancer has become very advanced.
- *The fourth approach:* Wellness.

To get out of this tangle of concepts, many researchers in this field adopted the phrase “level of well-being” to express and clarify the concept of quality of life (Elyse W. Kerce, 1992: 2). Therefore, recent research in the field of quality of life has focused on two basic approaches to measurement.

1. **Objective well-being:** It uses social and economic indicators that are measurable to reflect the extent to which human needs are met.
2. **Subjective well-being:** It sees quality of life as levels of subjective happiness, pleasure, achievement, and so on, and it has been called by several names, including subjective well-being, which is considered one of the most common labels in the concepts of quality of life, or what is called cognitive well-being, as it focuses on self-evaluations and considers aspects personality as the basic component of the comprehensive concept, and that each individual has internal standards and evaluations of life that are private and not fully accountable to any external standard (James E. Birren, 1991: 7). The United Kingdom’s Office of National Statistics also called it “personal well-being” because it is based on personal experience and perceptions (Atkinson, 2017: 7, Uysal & al,2012 :150).

The following figure shows the components of the subjective and objective aspects of the concept of quality of life.

Fig.1. Objective and subjective measures of quality of life.



Despite the overlap between the concept of quality of life and related concepts, the psychological literature is replete with a number of definitions, some of which we mention as follows:

The World Health Organization (WHOQOL, 1995: 95) defines Quality of Life as “an individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns.” Some researchers believe that this broad concept includes, in a complex way, a person’s physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs, and their relationship to the salient features of the environment in which he lives (Hagerty et al, 2001).

It has been shown by some researchers, Cummins, Schalock et al, Verdugo et al., that to understand the term quality of life, it must be evaluated from the perspective of the individual, and to evaluate his perceptions of personal satisfaction or happiness (Verdugo et al, 2005: 708). In other words, it is the general satisfaction that the student realizes during the period of scientific research with his personal and academic life, and this satisfaction is measured by what the student expects, needs, and wants, with a focus on his experiences in the educational institution (Al-Hadi Ibrahim Abdel-Hay. A and Abdul Jalil Ibrahim. R, 2022).

It has also been pointed out that quality relates to the degree of need for satisfaction and experiences that create positive feelings throughout the student’s period of scientific research (El abidine. H et al, 2016), and a useful measurement of student quality should be related to the vision and values of the higher education institution and the experiences of students, with the interests of the institution and students converging (Pedro et al, 2014). The quality of academic life was defined as “the student’s feeling of satisfaction, happiness, and the ability to satisfy his needs through the richness of the

environment and the services provided to him in the educational, health, social, and psychological fields, along with his good management of time and benefiting from it" (Al-Hadi Ibrahim Abdel-Hay. A and Abdul Jalil Ibrahim. R, 2022).

Based on the above, the concept of the quality of research life among postgraduate students can be defined as the extent of satisfaction, comfort and balance that they feel during the period of their study and research at the university or educational institution.

3- Quality of research life factors

Based on previous studies, the quality of research life can be understood as the conditions, environment, and resources that contribute to researchers' productivity, satisfaction, and well-being in their academic or personal endeavors. Below are some factors that can contribute to improving the quality of research life and making it of high-quality merit.

Scientific and technological progress: Scientific and technological progress in societies plays a vital role in improving the quality of life, but consideration must be given to how to direct this progress and distribute its benefits fairly to ensure everyone benefits and achieve sustainable development. It is not sufficient alone to improve the student well-being, family, and society, but must focus on many complex combinations of these developments as well as values, perceptions and environmental conditions (Verdugo et al, 2005: 708).

- 1) *Academic environment*: The academic environment greatly influences a student's experience and sense of satisfaction. His decision to pursue further education and scientific research is influenced by a variety of factors specific to his academic environment, which include a wide range of schools and programs, the highest quality of education, scholarship opportunities, security, welcoming institutional attitudes towards students, culturally advanced supports, advanced support services, and opportunities to acquire new information and skills (Vakkai et al, 2020), providing a good academic environment in order to improve students' performance, their motivation to achieve their subjective and objective goals and then raise their level of quality. In addition to that, pushing the educational institution to excellence by preserving talented and distinguished students and occupying them in advanced, high-level positions, which plays a major and positive role in Society (Al-Hadi Ibrahim Abdel-Hay. A and Abdul Jalil Ibrahim. R, 2022: 196).
- 2) *Mental and physical health*: Postgraduate research students face great pressures during their studies, exams, scientific research burdens, and other pressures outside the academic environment. They may feel increasingly anxious and stressed in the face of these pressures. This affects their psychology in particular and their lives in general. Successful students are those who are able to control and regulate their emotions during their daily lives in order to obtain continued good mental health. Mental health is necessary to achieve happiness for the student, the family,

and society as a whole (Shohri.T and Al-Hashemi. A, 2018). Some standards that help achieve mental health among students were mentioned, as follows:

- a) **Emotional balance:** It is controlling and expressing emotions and not holding them back or being ashamed of them, while keeping the emotional response constant.
- b) **Appreciation of life:** It is the student's feeling of happiness about his life in general through optimism, and that it has value and has something worth striving for.
- c) **Acceptance of self and surroundings:** The student must accept himself as he is, develop his available abilities, and know how to exploit them optimally. He must also accept others and adapt to them within the limits of his capabilities and energy.
- d) **Cooperation:** Contributing to improving the surrounding environment, service, and giving enhance students' mental health. (Shohri.T and Al-Hashemi. A, 2018, pp. 182-183)

Physical health is also considered a very important element in the quality of life of student and is represented by the individual's satisfaction with his health condition, living with pain, sleeping enough to get some rest, feeling appetite for eating healthy and balanced food, sexual ability, and the ability to exercise (RaghdAA Ali Naissa, 2012, p. 149).

- 3) *Social life:* Social relationships and integration into the social and academic community have a strong impact on the level of well-being and sense of happiness of the student. He needs to interact with the faculty and classmates, as well as the family and people around him in general. Social relationships that are dominated by love, familiarity, appreciation and respect, and a sense of belonging and conformity with social standards within his community, increase his ability to resist frustration and reduce his psychological suffering, and also make him responsible, thus achieving psychological and mental health. Social support also plays an important role in satisfying his needs for psychological and social security in the environment in which he lives. It may take several forms, including: emotional support, performance support, informational support, and friend support. Its sources vary depending on the environment in which the student is located. He or she may receive academic support and guidance from classmates and experienced professors. He may also receive social support from friends, family, neighbors, and all the social network surrounding him. Which helps him set his goals and achieve his ambitions. That positively affects the quality of his academic and personal life (Samaha, 2020: pp. 525-526).
- 4) *Economic situation:* The economic situation of the student and his family may affect his ability to bear the costs of scientific research and living. The presence of financial support, whether personal or family, is considered an achievement of material well-being, which in turn affects the quality of his life. Material well-being plays an important role in meeting material needs, enjoying a high standard of living such as housing, food, water, education, continuing training, and

covering medical costs, as well as enjoying social, recreational and entertaining activities, opportunities for work, and stable job status (Reinders et al, 2014: 292).

- 5) *Balance and adaptation*: Self-regulation is the ability to manage time and achieve a balance between scientific research and personal and social activities. It plays an important role in the student's quality of life. He must acquire the skill of self-organization that helps him organize time and resources (libraries, professors, websites) effectively to successfully achieve academic goals, whether they are short-term, such as obtaining a certain degree, or long-term, such as obtaining a master's degree or doctorate. This also includes allocating time appropriately and using a schedule for each academic task, such as studying, preparing research, writing reports and doing internships. It has also been confirmed that students who have a high level of academic self-regulation have the ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and they also have the ability to set their goals and monitor their behaviors (Al-Abidin, H. S and Al-Sharqawi, F.M, 2016: 156). Hamad (Hamad Al-Ghafri, 2009) also pointed out that allocating time for activities and using them regularly has a clear impact on his research path, whether it is made available to him by the university or outside it. It is an essential part of his life experience and contributes to developing his skills and development, self-fulfillment and gaining him desirable directions such as Respecting others, it also enhances the motivation for scientific research. In addition, it gives him the opportunity to contact the local environment in a healthy way, form mature personal relationships and develop friendships. It can be said that student activities have an important role in supporting the normal life of university students and increasing their research production. Among the activities that the student can practice are as follows:

- a) Sports activities: exercising in sports facilities and participating in promotional programs for sports activities and physical fitness.
- b) Cultural activities: such as organizing seminars, study days, and national and international conferences.
- c) Social activities: organizing parties, participating in volunteer work...etc
- d) Artistic activities: Joining workshops for drawing, sculpture, ceramics, and artistic handicrafts, and participating in theatrical performances, acting competitions, and other artistic works.

Vakkai (Vakkai et al, 2020) also pointed out that the acculturation process in some countries that suffer from racism and cultural tension, such as America, may affect the student's scholarship opportunities when he immigrates to another country to study. Acculturation has been defined as the process through which a new student acquires new information about the values of a culture and adapts their behaviors to the other culture. This adaptation to the new host culture

varies according to the student's personality, cultural adaptation, history, family, skills, and knowledge.

- 6) *Religiosity*: The relationship of religiosity to quality of life is a topic that raises a lot of disparity in views and opinions between people and societies. Religiosity can significantly affect the quality of life depending on how it is interpreted and practiced by individuals and societies. Religiosity is considered one of the main factors that has been positively linked to subjective well-being, or what is called quality of life. Religiosity contributes to self-understanding and acceptance, and achieving a healthy personality. It may also protect the student from falling into behavioral and intellectual disturbances and deviations due to its reflection on the individual's behavior. It also helps them achieve happiness, tranquility, and psychological and social harmony, in addition to developing the principles of moderation and moderation, such as not drifting into excess or deficiency, in order to achieve balance in their lives and raise their quality of life in general (Basiouni, S and Al-Kashki, M, 2021).

4- Conclusion

Finally, it can be said that high-quality research life is characterized by a supportive and stimulating environment that enables researchers to achieve their goals, meet ambitions, and nurture intellectual curiosity. It also enhances cooperation and social relationships, enhances well-being and a sense of happiness, and supports ethical standards, which ultimately enables researchers to make meaningful contributions in their academic fields and in society as a whole.

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