

SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTION OF THE QUALITY OF LIFE BY STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AT A VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study aimed at analysing the perceived importance and satisfaction with the particular domains of life among students and teachers at a secondary vocational school and comparing their respective views on the quality of life in the school setting. The research is based on a multidimensional concept of quality of life, which includes the domains of health, basic needs, close relationships, leisure time, and abstract values. The SQUALA subjective quality of life questionnaire (Dragomirecká et al., 2006) was used to collect data, which allows for the evaluation of not just satisfaction with, but also the importance of particular domains of life. The research sample consisted of 77 students and 39 teachers. The data were processed using descriptive and non-parametric statistical analysis.

The results demonstrated that students attribute the highest importance to health and basic needs, with which they also report the highest level of satisfaction. Teachers, on the other hand, rated abstract values, close relationships, and leisure time as more important, but their satisfaction in these domains was lower, especially in the domain of leisure time. A comparison of the two groups suggests that health, interpersonal relationships, and a balance between work and personal responsibilities are key determinants of the quality of life in the school setting.

The findings confirm the usefulness of the SQUALA questionnaire outside the clinical context and point to the need to developing a school setting that supports mental health, mental hygiene, and positive relationships. The study also offers a starting point for the creation of school well-being strategies and for further research into the quality of life of students and teachers at secondary schools.

Keywords

quality of life, SQUALA, students, teachers, school setting, satisfaction, well-being

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INTRODUCTION

Psychology, healthcare system, economics, environmental studies, urban planning, architecture, and many other fields try to frame the quality of life. These fields have at the centre of their research the human being, for whom they want to create the best possible environment for life – to satisfy his/her needs both physiologically and in terms of self-development. And they often want them to live in an even better environment than the person him/herself wants. The concept of the quality of life can thus be grasped in several ways. Our objective will be to provide an insight into the quality of life from the psychosocial perspective, focusing on the quality of life in the environment of a secondary general education school in the Slovak Republic.

Theoretical definition

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the term of the quality of life as "...the subjective perception of one's own life situation in relation to the culture and value system in which one lives, also in relation to one's goals, expectations, and concerns," (WHO, 2013, p. 11). More recent research has expanded the conceptualisation of well-being and quality of life by emphasising the dynamic balance between an individual's resources and the challenges they face, and the role of institutional and contextual factors in educational settings, particularly in shaping students' subjective experience of quality of life (Dodge et al., 2012; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2017). Many authors use this, or a very similar definition. Džuka states that "a person's subjective assessment of the Quality of life is based on his/her judgment and evaluates the conditions of his/her own life," (Babjáková & Kačmárová, 2020, p. 39). Others define the quality of life as "...a subjective phenomenon, which we will call experienced quality of life," (Kallová, 2020, p. 213), "...the degree to which a person, in his/her own opinion, is able to function not only physically, but also emotionally, mentally, and socially," (Národní zdravotnický informační portál [NZIP], n.d.).

As stated by Džuka (2004), nowadays we distinguish four streams concerning the quality of life and subjective well-being:

- Research into the quality of life is conducted in parallel and independently of research into subjective well-being, (e.g., Schumacher, Klaiberg, and Brähler).
- The quality of life is considered a multidimensional construct that integrates subjective well-being (e.g., The WHOQOL-Group).
- The quality of life is identified with subjective well-being, or both terms are used alternatively (e.g., Cummins, Eckersley, Pallant, Van Vugt, and Misajon).
- Subjective well-being is considered an indicator of the quality of life (e.g. Diener and Suh).

The term of the quality of life was first coined in the 1920s (Payne et al., 2005, p. 205). The American economist and sociologist Galbraith is considered the author who first used the term of the quality of life in 1958. The issue of the quality of life started to be

discussed especially in the economic context when it was found that the satisfaction and well-being of a society are not only influenced by the amount of goods consumed, but by the subjective perception of these conditions, with personal evaluation and emotional perception being of crucial importance (Tokárová et al., 2003, p. 14).

Several scientific disciplines, ranging from theology, psychology, economics, etc., have attempted to understand the nature and definition of the quality of life. Matis (2002, p. 11) defines the quality of life as "that aspect of life which is related to the quality, the standard of satisfaction of people's material and spiritual needs". These are thus the aspects that are related to people's comfort and satisfaction in everyday life.

The concept of the quality of life cannot be expressed in a single specific instruction as no definition is universally accepted. At the basic level, the quality of life is understood as the result of the interaction of many factors that often influence individual as well as social development in an undetected way (Hnilicová, 2005, p. 207).

The most widely accepted definition of the quality of life is one by the WHO, where the quality of life is understood through an individual's understanding of his/her position in the world context of the culture and value systems in which he/she lives, in relation to his/her goals, expectations, lifestyles, and interests. The current conception is based more on the influence of an individual's health status and conditions (Payne et al., 2005, p. 208). Kováč (2007, p. 102) describes in his publication that "the quality of life is how a person sees his/her position within the context of his/her culture and in relation to his/her goals, expectations, lifestyle, and interests".

According to Uher (2014, p. 8), "Quality of life is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that implies biological, psychological, economic, aesthetic, social, ethical, philosophical, and other dimensions. Health is the determinant of the quality of life".

The quality of life of children was described by Mareš (2006, p. 25) as follows: "It is an individual's perception of his/her position in life, in the context of his/her culture and the value system in which the individual lives, it expresses the individual's relationship to his/her own goals, expected values, and interests. It encompasses in a complex way the individual's somatic health, psychological state of being, level of independence from the environment, social relationships, the individual's beliefs, faith – all of the above in relation to the main characteristics of the environment. the quality of life expresses a subjective appraisal that takes place within specific cultural, social, and environmental contexts. The quality of life is not identical to the term of 'health status', 'life satisfaction', 'psychological state' or 'well-being'. It is thus a multidimensional concept".

According to Drobná (2002, p. 580), "the quality of life can be considered as the level of being that arises from the combination of measurable and abstract values of life (the level of tangible and intangible values), and human development can be seen as a space for expanding the chances and possibilities of a person to attain these values".

The quality of life encompasses the total objective and subjective aspects of an individual's actions and feelings in everyday life, within a real social environment governed by specific rules of interaction, and involving realistic questions of meaning and purpose in life (Strieženec, 1999).

Quality of life in the school setting represents a specific aspect of the broader concept of subjectively experienced well-being, which is determined by personal, social, and

institutional factors. For students, quality of life is linked to feelings of safety, the school culture, the quality of interpersonal relationships, academic stress, and opportunities for self-achievement.

Extensive research indicates that a positive school climate – characterised by supportive teacher-student relationships, peer support, feelings of safety and connectedness – is significantly associated with enhanced student well-being, including emotional health, life satisfaction and overall academic engagement (Kutsyruba et al., 2015; Lombardi et al., 2019). As Mareš (2006) states, the quality of life of children and adolescents includes not only their somatic and mental health, but also their level of independence, social relationships, and value-anchoring in the school context. Similarly, Babjáková and Kačmárová (2020) point out that the quality of life of students is closely linked to their sociometric status and socio-economic background, while a supportive school setting can significantly mitigate these disparities.

In the school setting, quality of life is also impacted by the teacher-student relationship, which, according to Džuka (2004), contributes to the emotional well-being and sense of meaningfulness of everyday learning. A favourable school culture, fair assessment, student participation, and clear communication from teachers are among the basic prerequisites for a positive school experience (Mareš, 2006; Babjáková & Kačmárová, 2020). Negative factors such as excessive classroom demands, a conflict-ridden setting, or a lack of support can lead to a reduced quality of life and symptoms of school stress or psychosocial overload.

Teachers represent the second group of actors for whom the examination of quality of life is of particular importance. Their profession has long been characterised by a high level of mental stress, emotional engagement, and the risk of burnout syndrome (Hnilicová, 2005). The quality of life of teachers is shaped by a combination of work and personal factors – such as job satisfaction, relationships with colleagues, support from the school management, and work-life balance (Payne et al., 2005; Uher, 2014). Recent international systematic reviews highlight that teacher well-being is a central factor influencing not only teachers’ professional functioning – including work satisfaction, stress and burnout – but also broader educational outcomes, such as teacher retention and the quality of instructional support provided to students; moreover, research shows that high well-being among teachers is associated with lower attrition and improved psychosocial school climate overall (Aziku & Zhang, 2024; Dreer, 2023). OECD’s TALIS (2020) research confirms that teachers’ subjective satisfaction with the school setting is significantly associated with their work motivation, sense of autonomy, and support from the school management.

Empirical research in the school setting (Brodáni & Kováčová, 2019; Babjáková & Kačmárová, 2020) shows that health, social relationships, and the opportunity for self-achievement are among the most important dimensions of the quality of life for both students and teachers. These factors also contribute most to subjective satisfaction, confirming the need to perceive school as a place not only for education, but also for social and emotional development.

Methodology

The research issue is in the subjective perception of the quality of life in the selected secondary school, which is addressed by a standardised SQUALA questionnaire (Dragomirecká et al., 2006)², which was translated into Slovak for the purposes of this research while retaining its original structure, items, and rating scale. The translation was carried out with the aim of preserving the content and semantic equivalence of the items. The translation was carried out while preserving the semantic consistency of the items; semantic consistency and language accuracy were verified in consultation with experts in the fields of psychology and pedagogy.

The research provides answers to the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the importance of different domains of life for students measured by the SQUALA questionnaire?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in satisfaction with different domains of life among students as measured by the SQUALA questionnaire?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the importance of each life domain for educators measured by the SQUALA questionnaire with respect to life domains?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference in satisfaction with different domains of life among educators as measured by the SQUALA questionnaire?

The research population was selected on the basis of the available sample, and therefore the selected secondary school is the Secondary Grammar School at Trebišovská 12 in Košice with a 4-year course of study.

The subjective quality of life includes the respondent's opinion on the importance and satisfaction in 21 life domains surveyed.

The students include full-time students of the 4-year teaching line of study at the Secondary Grammar School at Trebišovská 12 in Košice.

Teachers include educational staff in the position of teacher at the Secondary Grammar School at Trebišovská 12 in Košice in the 4-year teaching line of study.

Data were collected between the 5th and the 13th March 2024 via a web-based form provided to the school administrators. This ensured distribution among the students and the teaching staff of the school. There are 123 students in 4 forms in the 4-year study programme attending the Secondary Grammar School. The school has 51 qualified teachers, 41 of whom are female (Gymnázium Trebišovská 12, Košice, 2023).

The SQUALA questionnaire is a standardised quality of life questionnaire and focuses on the subjective dimension of the quality of life. This means that the quality of life is understood and declared subjectively by the respondents for whom the questionnaire is administered (Křivohlavý, 2004).

The author of the SQUALA questionnaire is M. Zannotti from Nice, France. He understands the quality of life as an individual's perception of satisfaction or dissatisfaction throughout his/her life, with satisfaction with different aspects also having different importance. In its original form, the SQUALA questionnaire was compiled in 1992. The questionnaire

² The Slovak version of the SQUALA questionnaire (Džuka, 2004) was not freely available at the time of the research, so the Czech version (Dragomirecká et al., 2006) was used, adapted into Slovak.

can be grouped into batteries of the so-called self-assessment questionnaires, and was constructed according to clear, focused, and methodologically appropriate criteria. The SQUALA questionnaire in its original version focuses on 23 domains (Dragomirecká et al., 2006).

As Dragomirecká et al. (2006, p. 9) put it, "the Czech SQUALA questionnaire is much more widely used and better known than the French original".

The key concepts include satisfaction and importance. Satisfaction is rated on a five-point scale from 1 = very disappointed to 5 = completely satisfied. Importance is also rated on a five-point scale, with 0 = unimportant to 4 = essential.

It can be concluded that the SQUALA questionnaire is widely applicable. Its use can be found e.g. "in the medical, social, psychological, and pedagogical fields, especially for the purpose of diagnosis or improvement of care and services" (Mühlpachr, 2005, p. 63).

In the processing of the data collected, the so-called score is used. A raw score is assigned in order to obtain a subjective assessment (satisfaction) of the different life domains. The partial score is dependent on the given life domains (e.g. the health domain – The quality of life¹ is the product of the importance score D01 and the satisfaction score S01 – together it takes the summative values of 0–20. The partial score is displayed in the form of the quality of life profile; the total score is given by the sum of all the partial scores (Dragomirecká et al., 2006). If a participant in the investigation rates the domain of life as unimportant, it does not matter how he/she rates his/her satisfaction with that domain. That is, the partial score is 0. The maximum score, the score of 20, is present if the investigation participant is 'completely satisfied' with the domain he/she rated as 'essential'. The results can be processed in the form of a profile of partial scores, providing an overview of which domains of life are disrupted for a certain group of people, or to what extent (Dragomirecká et al., 2006).

Findings

The data were statistically processed using the SPSS 22 software. For statistical analysis, due to the research questions and the nature of the data, Cronbach's alpha reliability test, Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, Wilcoxon signed-rank test, Shapiro-Wilk normality test, Chi-square test of data distribution, and Mann-Whitney U-test for 2 independent samples were used for statistical analysis. We applied each of these tests to the research questions in accordance with the nature of the specific data appearing in the hypothesis or the research question.

The sample consisted of 116 respondents of whom 77 were students, representing 66.4%, and 39 were teachers, representing 33.6% of the total sample.

The largest group (37.9%) in terms of size of residence was made up of respondents living in a city of between 10,001 and 50,000 inhabitants.

The smallest group (8.6%) was made up of respondents who live in a city of between 5,001 and 100,000 inhabitants. The largest group in the sample in terms of material security were respondents who perceived their material security as average, and they made up

52.6% of the sample. Conversely, the least numerous group consisted of the respondents who perceived their material security as significantly below average, and they made up 0.9% of the sample.

Description of the sample

Girls were the largest group in the sample in terms of gender (58.4%). In contrast, the smallest group consisted of the respondents who did not want to indicate their gender (1.3%). In terms of the age of the students, the sample reached an average age of 16.57 years.

The largest group in the sample (82.1%) in terms of gender of educators consisted of females. The smallest group consisted of the respondents who did not want to state their gender, and they constituted 5.1% of the sample of educators. In terms of the age of educators, the sample averaged 45.59 years.

In the case of teachers, up to 92.3% reported a second-level university degree. The smallest group (2.6%) was those with a first degree.

In terms of marital status, 69.2% of the teachers were married. Divorced respondents represented the smallest group (7.7%).

Testing of research questions and hypotheses

The partial importance score was determined based on the responses of respondents who were given the following choices in the importance domain: unimportant (0 points), not very important (1 point), moderately important (2 points), very important (3 points), and essential (4 points). Thus, the partial importance scores could take values from 0 to 4, taking into account the distribution of the items listed above into dimensions.

Partial satisfaction scores were determined based on the responses of respondents who had the following choices in the satisfaction domain: very disappointed (1 point), dissatisfied (2 points), somewhat satisfied (3 points), very satisfied (4 points), completely satisfied (5 points). Partial satisfaction scores could take values from 1 to 5, taking into account the distribution of the items listed above into dimensions.

The partial item scores were calculated as the product of item importance and item satisfaction; the dimension score is the sum of the adjacent partial item scores. We computed the average score to achieve score parity between the dimensions, since the dimensions are made up of different numbers of items.

Research question 1

Research question No. 1 focused on identifying differences in the perceived importance of individual domains of life among students. The findings are based on an analysis of the

average scores in the SQUALA questionnaire, where 0 represents the lowest and 4 the highest perceived importance.

The results showed that students attach the highest importance to the domain of health, which scored the highest average value (M = 3.42). This suggests that health is perceived as a key determinant of the quality of life in adolescence, with students recognizing its importance for personal well-being and everyday functioning.

The domain of abstract values ranked second (M = 3.30), which can be interpreted as a relatively strong orientation of students towards values such as morality, justice, future goals, and the meaning of life. A similarly high score was reported in the domain of basic needs (M = 3.31), indicating that material security, safety, and stability remain important factors in the subjective assessment of life.

The domain of close relationships (M = 3.06) scored slightly lower, which may indicate that although interpersonal relationships remain an important part of students’ lives, they are perceived as slightly less intense than health or value and existential aspects.

The lowest average score was reported in the domain of leisure time (M = 2.92). However, this result still points to the relatively high importance of this domain, as even the lowest score is above 2.5, i.e., above the midpoint of the scale. Leisure time is therefore perceived by students as an important but not a priority element of the quality of life compared to health or value-existential domains.

Overall, it can be said that students attach a high level of importance to all the domains of life surveyed, with health and values occupying a dominant position, while leisure time is the least important, but still relevant, domain.

Table 1 Mean values of the average score of the perceived importance of life domains of the students (SQUALA)

Domain	Average value (points)
Abstract Values	3.30
Health	3.42
Close Relationships	3.06
Leisure Time	2.92
Basic Needs	3.31

Source: Our own elaboration

Research Question 2

Research question No. 2 focused on the level of subjective satisfaction of students with particular domains of life. Respondents rated their level of satisfaction on a Likert scale from 1 (minimum satisfaction) to 5 (maximum satisfaction). Since the data did not show a normal distribution, non-parametric tests were used for statistical analysis, which increases the robustness of the interpretation of the results.

The results show that the highest average level of satisfaction was reported in the domain of basic needs ($M = 4.02$). This result indicates that students largely feel materially and existentially secure, which may include a sense of safety, a stable family background, or the satisfaction of physiological needs.

Satisfaction with health ranked second ($M = 3.82$), which is consistent with the results of the first research question, where this domain was also rated as the most important domain. We can assume that the positive perception of health is conditioned by the fact that most respondents belong to an age group with a low incidence of chronic diseases. The domain of abstract values ($M = 3.75$), which includes, for example, ethical beliefs, spiritual values, or personal meaning in life, also scored relatively high in terms of satisfaction. This suggests that most students have a relatively stable value system and do not feel significant tension or frustration in this domain.

Satisfaction in the domain of leisure time ($M = 3.66$) is slightly lower than in the previous domains, but still exceeds the midpoint of the scale. Students therefore report relatively good opportunities for spending their leisure time, but this domain is not experienced as a source of maximum satisfaction.

The lowest score was reported in the domain of close relationships ($M = 3.58$). Although this value still indicates relative satisfaction, it also suggests a certain level of tension or ambivalence in interpersonal relationships (family, friends, classmates). In the context of adolescent development, this slightly lower value may be natural given the process of socialisation, identity formation, and increased sensitivity to social interactions.

Overall, it can be said that students show high to moderately high satisfaction in all the domains of life surveyed, with the most positive ratings given to the satisfaction of basic needs and health status. The domain of close relationships, although rated lowest, remains above the average value of the scale, which indicates an overall positive experience of the quality of life.

Table 2 Mean values of the average score of the perceived satisfaction of the domains of life of the students (SQUALA)

Domain	Average value (points)
Abstract Values	3.75
Health	3.82
Close Relationships	3.58
Leisure Time	3.66
Basic Needs	4.02

Source: Our own elaboration

Research question 3

Research question No. 3 focused on identifying which domains of life teachers consider most important. Perceived importance was rated on a scale from 0 (least important) to 4 (most important).

The highest average score was reported in the domain of health ($M = 3.56$), indicating that teachers consider physical and mental fitness to be a key prerequisite for personal well-being and professional performance. The high rating of this domain can also be interpreted in relation to the demanding nature of the teaching profession, which requires mental stability, stress resistance, and good health.

The domain of abstract values ($M = 3.21$), which includes life beliefs, moral values, spirituality, and the meaning of life, ranked second. Teachers thus reflect on the importance of value rootedness and personal integrity, which may be related to their professional role in forming the personalities of their students.

The domain of close relationships ($M = 3.14$) also achieved a relatively high importance, confirming that interpersonal bonds, family and partner relationships, play a significant role in teachers' lives.

The use of leisure time was rated relatively lower ($M = 3.00$), although it still remains above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that relaxation and personal interests are considered important, but not a priority.

The lowest rating was scored in the domain of basic needs ($M = 2.72$). This value may indicate that teachers perceive material security or economic stability as satisfactorily covered, and hence it does not feature prominently in their current value hierarchy. Alternatively, it may also be an indicator that teachers prioritise the psychological, ethical, and relational aspects of life over the material ones.

Overall, the results show that teachers attach the highest importance to health and the value domains of life, while material aspects and physiological needs take a back seat.

Table 3 Mean values of the average score of the perceived importance of life domains of educators (SQUALA)

Domain	Average value (points)
Abstract Values	3.21
Health	3.56
Close Relationships	3.14
Leisure Time	3.00
Basic Needs	2.72

Source: Our own elaboration

Research question 4

Research question No. 4 examined teachers' subjective level of satisfaction with particular domains of life. The evaluation was conducted on a scale from 1 (minimum satisfaction) to 5 (maximum satisfaction).

Teachers expressed the highest average satisfaction in the domain of close relationships ($M = 3.81$). This result suggests that family and social ties are an important source of support, stability, and personal satisfaction.

This is followed by the domain of basic needs ($M = 3.73$), which indicates a relatively high level of satisfaction with material security, living conditions, and a sense of security.

The domain of health ($M = 3.71$) was also rated positively, which may reflect relatively good health and the ability of teachers to adapt to stressful situations.

The domain of abstract values ($M = 3.66$) shows stable satisfaction, which may be related to internal value beliefs and a sense of meaningfulness in the profession.

The lowest, but still above-average level of satisfaction was reported in the domain of leisure time ($M = 3.53$). This result may indicate that although teachers value their leisure time, its use may be limited by workloads, administrative burdens, or various professional responsibilities.

Overall, it can be said that teachers report relatively high satisfaction in all the domains of life, with close relationships, basic needs, and health dominating. The results also suggest that teachers are able to maintain a balance between personal and professional demands, although the domain of leisure time may offer some room for improvement.

Table 4 Mean score of perceived life domain of satisfaction of educators (SQUALA)

Domain	Average value (points)
Abstract Values	3.66
Health	3.71
Close Relationships	3.81
Leisure Time	3.53
Basic Needs	3.73

Source: Our own elaboration

Discussion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that students consider health to be the most important domain of life, rating it higher than relationships, abstract values (security, justice, freedom, beauty, art, and truth), or leisure time. They also prioritise basic needs (housing, money, food) over close relationships and leisure time. At the same time, it

has been shown that in the domains that students consider most important – health and basic needs – they also score the highest levels of satisfaction. This correlation between importance and satisfaction can be considered a positive indicator of the overall well-being of students.

The present findings are consistent with recent international evidence indicating that teachers' well-being is closely associated with professional functioning, retention, and the psychosocial climate of schools. Systematic reviews further suggest that supportive organisational conditions and positive interpersonal relationships represent key protective factors for sustaining teacher well-being over time (Hascher & Waber, 2021; Dreer, 2023). In the group of teachers, it turned out that they consider basic needs to be less important, while they attach greater importance to abstract values, close relationships, and leisure time. Abstract values were rated as more important than leisure time, but satisfaction in these domains did not reach as high a level as among students. Teachers were least satisfied with their leisure time, which may be related to their workload, lack of recovery time, and need for mental hygiene. From the perspective of the work setting, it is therefore appropriate to analyse the obstacles to satisfaction in this domain and to distinguish which factors can be affected by the school as an employer (e.g., distribution of workload, support for relaxation activities) and which are within the competence of the teachers themselves (e.g., organisation of their leisure time, personal self-reflection).

The finding that health is the most important area of the quality of life is consistent with the results of other authors. Broďáni and Kováčová (2019) state that in the population of secondary school students, the dimension of physical well-being was of the highest subjective importance. In his framework model of the quality of life of children and adolescents, Mareš (2006) considers health to be a key component of psychosocial well-being and emphasises its connection with social relationships and the overall experience of school life. These findings confirm that health and a sense of physical and mental comfort are central factors in the quality of life in the school setting.

Our results on satisfaction with particular domains of life also support Džuka's (2004) concept, according to which subjective well-being is the result of a balance between internal goals and external conditions. Hnilicová (2005) also emphasises that satisfaction with health and material security forms the core of the subjective perception of the quality of life. In the group of teachers, the results are consistent with the findings of Babjáková and Kačmárová (2020), according to which higher teacher satisfaction is related to social support, recognition, and work-life balance. In our research, teachers scored highest in the domain of close relationships, confirming the importance of interpersonal bonds as a source of emotional stability. Conversely, lower satisfaction in the domain of leisure time may indicate a need to strengthen regeneration, mental hygiene, and stress reduction, as confirmed by Hnilicová (2005).

From a practical point of view, these results point to several possibilities for intervention in the school setting. In the case of teachers, we recommend identifying barriers to satisfaction in the area of leisure time and differentiating those that can be influenced by the school (e.g., organisation of work hours, support for recreational activities, teamwork) from those related to teachers' personal strategies. For students, satisfaction in the areas of close relationships and abstract values can be promoted through activities that develop

socialisation, empathy, and value orientation – for example, morning community meetings with the form teacher, group projects, encouraging teamwork, or expanding the scope of the school support team.

This research also expands our knowledge on the quality of life in the school setting and confirms the usefulness of the SQUALA questionnaire in the domain of education. The comparison of students and teachers provides important insights into differences in understanding the importance of and satisfaction with various aspects of life and may serve as a starting point for targeted interventions aimed at promoting well-being at schools. The theoretical contribution lies in expanding knowledge of how quality of life manifests itself in everyday school reality and how it can be influenced by psychosocial factors and the school culture.

This research has had several limitations that need to be taken into account when interpreting the results. These mainly concern the use of a translated Czech version of the SQUALA questionnaire (Dragomirecká et al., 2006), which has not been officially standardised for the Slovak population. Although the tool was adapted to the Slovak language while maintaining the original structure and semantic consistency of the items, it is not a formally validated version. For this reason, the results should be viewed with some caution, as differences in language or cultural interpretation may affect the accuracy of the measurements and their direct comparability with other studies.

The availability of information on the internal processes of the school under study was another limiting factor. The data were drawn only from publicly available sources, which did not allow for a deeper understanding of the school setting and interpersonal relationships through qualitative methods such as interviews or observation. In the future, it would therefore be appropriate to expand the research to include objectively assessed indicators (e.g., MANSA or LSS tools), satisfaction questionnaires, and school culture measurements. Investigating the academic and social integration of students, indicators of health, well-being, and school success in the context of well-being may also be of interest.

Overall, it can be said that the quality of life in the school setting is the result of a combination of individual and organisational factors. Health, interpersonal relationships, and work-life balance represent the key pillars of subjective well-being. Schools should therefore be understood not only as places of learning, but also as settings that promote overall life satisfaction, health, and personal development for all their members.

CONCLUSION

The presented study offers several theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions. From a theoretical point of view, it expands the knowledge base on the quality of life in the school setting, which in Slovakia has so far been studied mainly in the field of social work and health sciences, but rarely in the context of secondary education. The results empirically confirm that even in healthy populations – of students and teachers – the SQUALA questionnaire can be used to obtain a relevant and reliable depiction of the subjective quality of life.

From a methodological point of view, the research verified the usability of the SQUALA questionnaire in school settings and pointed to the need for its further adaptation for the teaching population. The interpretation of the particular scales provides a useful profile of satisfaction and perceived importance of the domains of life which can be beneficial for school psychologists, educational counsellors, and school management in planning their preventive and support programmes.

From a practical point of view, the study identified the domains in which the well-being of students and teachers can be specifically supported. For students, this mainly involves the development of interpersonal relationships, the promotion of a healthful lifestyle, and the creation of opportunities for meaningful leisure time. For teachers, measures aimed at reducing the workload, systematically supporting their mental health, and encouraging more teamwork seem to be key. These findings may serve as a basis for creating school programmes focused on well-being, stress prevention, and fostering a positive school culture.

The quality of life of students and teachers at secondary school is the result of several factors, including the physical and social environment, emotional and physical well-being, and opportunities for personal and professional development. Specific aspects include the quality of educational opportunities, student involvement in school life, teacher support, available resources, school facilities, and the level of diversity and inclusion. Quality of life is therefore dynamic and can vary significantly from school to school, as well as between students and their teachers. The role of schools and educators is to create a setting that consistently supports the sound development, satisfaction, and well-being of all the stakeholders.

Measuring the quality of life at secondary schools is a complex task, as it involves a wide range of aspects, from education and social relationships to emotional well-being and physical health. Choosing a suitable tool to capture such a multidimensional phenomenon is challenging, and our research took into account the options available to the research team. Nevertheless, it can be said that the SQUALA questionnaire has proven to be an effective means of assessing subjective well-being in the school environment.

We consider the main contribution of the study to be the finding of relatively high overall satisfaction among students in the domains they themselves consider most important, primarily health and basic needs. Among teachers, a difference was confirmed between the perceived importance and satisfaction of leisure time, which is important to them but is associated with a lower level of satisfaction. Although these findings cannot be considered alarming, they provide an important basis for future research and proposals for interventions aimed at promoting work-life balance. However, they must be viewed in the context of the limitations of the research, which result from the methodology employed and the availability of data, which also opens up opportunities for further, methodologically expanded research.

The results of this research thus provide a starting point for building further frameworks for assessing and improving the quality of life in the school setting, as well as for developing a school culture focused on the well-being of students and teachers.

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