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THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF HEALTH COLLEGES STUDENTS STUDYING ATKING FAISAL UNIVERSITY IN AL-AHSA, EASTERN PROVINCE, SAUDI ARABIA

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#### ABSTRACT

Introduction: Poor Quality of Life (QOL) among medical and health students is related to an unhealthy lifestyle, psychological distress, and even academic failure that could affect their care for patients in the future. Material and Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted among King Faisal University.

**Material and Methods:** This cross-sectional study was conducted among King Faisal University (KFU) students, particularly health college students, to evaluate their QOL using the Arabic version of the WHOQOL-BREF instrument for data collection.

**Results:** A total of 346 students were included with a mean age of  $(21.4 \pm 1.88)$  years. The majority (71.1%) was highly satisfied with their chosen specialties, and more than half of them (61.6%) had high job expectations. Females had a low psychological health score (53.02 ± 18.98) than the males (57.83 ± 19.95). Students with low specialty satisfaction levels had low physical activity score (56.53 ± 20.85), psychological health score (40.09 ± 19.56), social relationships score (43.39 ± 23.08), environment score (45.47 ± 18.65), and the overall QOL (41.81 ± 23.92).

**Conclusion:** We reported a high level of specialty satisfaction and job expectation among KFU students in Saudi Arabia. Female participants were found to have significantly lower psychological health scores. Students with low GPAs (1-1.9) reported the lowest physical activity and overall QOL scores. Healthy students had better psychological health, environment, and overall QOL score than non-healthy ones. Low satisfaction among students was associated with poor psychological health, social relationships, environment, and overall QOL.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

University is a period of transformation, with young people developing new skills, experiences, social networks, and knowledge. Life can become stressful for many students attending the university as lifestyle, community, and interpersonal adjustments are negotiated.<sup>[1,2]</sup> The shift from adolescence to early adulthood comes with important challenges, such as the opportunity to manage their own lives and take on more independent duties.<sup>[3]</sup>

Quality of life (QOL)is a popular concept for a sense of wellbeing in general, including characteristics of happiness and satisfaction with the whole of life. Health, however, is an important field regarding the overall QOL, but there are many other fields, such as work, housing, schools, and the neighborhood. Aspects of culture, morals, and spirituality contribute to the complexity of assessing the QOL.<sup>[4]</sup> Healthrelated QOL (HRQOL) is a multidimensional concept that comprises physical, mental, emotional, and social activities. The impact of health status on QOL goes beyond direct indicators of people's health and life expectancy and causes of death.  $^{[5]}$ 

More university students worldwide are currently diagnosed with mental health problems, and many reviewers attribute this to academic, economic, and social stressors.<sup>[6,7]</sup> Depressive symptoms among university students are related to independent decision-making, including being on their own and managing their daily lives, and financial difficulties.<sup>[8]</sup> Academic performance also contributes to depression and mental health problems as many university students have more academic needs than high schools.<sup>[9]</sup> As a measurable outcome, HRQOL quickly gains acceptability. It is a broad multidimensional notion, often including self-identified functional skills, psychological conditions, social function, and the perception of one's health.<sup>[10]</sup>

Social support has been demonstrated to improve mental health and functions as an anti-stress buffer.<sup>[11]</sup> Social support comes from a network of family, friends, and community

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members. A lack of social support impacts the QOL of students and is a factor of psychological issues, including depressive signs among university students.<sup>[12]</sup> Research reveals that social support and psychological problems, including depression and stress, have a significant negative association.<sup>[13]</sup>A longitudinal study on medical students in the USA denoted that 10 percent of the students thought of suicide during their education. The students' QOL is one of the predicting indicators in these cases. Assessing the QOL of college students can inform us of their perspectives on health, current health conditions, and relevant factors.<sup>[14]</sup>

A commonly used instrument measuring QOL is the abbreviated version of the World Health Organization QOL questionnaire (WHOQO-LBREF), which employs the domains of physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment. In June 2011, a study was conducted at China Medical University using the WHOQOL-BREF instrument. The study suggested that the WHOQOL-BREF was reliable and valid in assessing the QOL of Chinese medical students .<sup>[2,3]</sup> Many other similar studies provided support for using the WHOQOL-BREF for college students in Thailand <sup>[4]</sup>, New Zealand <sup>[5]</sup>, Iran<sup>[6]</sup>, India<sup>[7]</sup>, Pakistan<sup>[8]</sup>, and Brazil<sup>[9]</sup>.

HRQOL study among university students is highly important since HRQOL affects students' performance and yields good health for good quality students. This study aims to assess the QOL of undergraduate students studying in the health colleges of King Faisal University (KFU) and investigate students' perceptions of their QOL. The colleges involved in the study are College of Medicine, College of Dentistry, College of Applied Medical Sciences, and College of Clinical Pharmacy.

#### **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

This was a cross-sectional questionnaire-based study. The study was conducted at the health colleges of KFU in Al-Ahsa, Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia, in 2020. All health and medical students who study in KFU were the study population. A convenient sampling method was used. The Arabic version of the WHOOOL-BREF instrument was used to assess the QOL of students.<sup>[23]</sup> In addition to the WHOQOL-BREF instrument, there was a sociodemographic questionnaire to obtain information on age, gender, nationality, college, grade, grade point average(GPA), housing mate, social status, children, sleeping hours, study hours, and having diseases. The two questionnaires were administered simultaneously in one form of an electronic copy to all of the students studying in the health colleges of KFU in Al-Ahsa. All health medical students of both genders who study in KFU in Al-Ahsa, Eastern Province. Saudi Arabia, was the inclusion criteria. Postgraduate students in KFH health colleges and students who studied in the non-health colleges were excluded from this study. The data were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 21, and all variables were coded before entry and were checked before analysis. All continuous data were presented in the form of mean and standard deviation. Categorical data were presented in the form of frequency distributions and percentages. The relationships between QOL and the possible related factors were tested by T-test for continuous variables and chi-square for categorical variables. A P-value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant. All the participants were informed about the content and the objective of the questionnaire. The

questionnaire was presented as an anonymous survey, and the results remained confidential. The questionnaire didnot comprise any identifying information regarding the individual subjects. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants had the option of declining to answer specific questions. The necessary permission and approval were taken from the ethical research committee and the higher authority, and all data were used only for research purposes.

### RESULTS

A total of 346 students participated in this study. All of them were Saudi with a mean age of  $(21.4 \pm 1.88)$  years. More than half of them (53.8%) were females. Less than half (41.6%) studied clinical pharmacy, 27.5% applied medical science, 20.8% medicine, and 10.1% dentistry. More than half (59.8%) of the participants were admitted at the preclinical years, 26.9% were at the clinical years, and 13.3% were at the orientation year. Regarding their GPA, 33.5% scored 4.5-5, 30.4% scored 4-4.4%, and only 0.9% scored 1-1.9. The majority (88.2%) lived with their families, 89% were single, and 95.4% had no children. Most participants (82.4%) were not affected by any diseases. Their mean sleeping hours were  $6.57\pm1.59$ , and the mean studying hours were  $4.22\pm2.49$ . The details of the demographic profile is shown in table 1.

 
 Table 1 Sociodemographic characteristics of the included participants(N=346)

Parameter	Frequency	Percent
Age, y (Mean ± SD)	21.4±1	.88
Sex		
•Male	160	46.2%
•Female	186	53.8%
Nationality		
•Saudi	346	100%
College		
•Medicine	72	20.8%
•Dentistry	35	10.1%
<ul> <li>Applied Medical Sciences</li> </ul>	95	27.5%
Clinical Pharmacy	144	41.6%
Grade		
<ul> <li>Orientation Year</li> </ul>	46	13.3%
<ul> <li>Pre-clinical Years</li> </ul>	207	59.8%
<ul> <li>Clinical Years</li> </ul>	93	26.9%
GPA		
•4.5-5.0	116	33.5%
•4.0-4.4	105	30.4%
•3.0-3.9	99	28.6%
•2.0-2.9	23	6.7%
•1.0-1.9	3	0.9%
Housing Mate		
•Family	305	88.2%
•Friends	14	4.1%
•Alone	27	7.8%
Social status		
•Single	308	89%
•Married	31	9%
•Divorced	5	1.5%
•Widowed	2	0.6%
No. of offspring		
•0	330	95.4%
•1	12	3.5%
•2	4	1.2%
Disease status		
•Yes	61	17.6%
•No	285	82.4%
Sleeping hours (Mean ± SD)	6.57±1.59	
Studying hours (Mean ± SD)	4.22±2.49	

Response on Students satisfaction and expectations:

The majority (71.1%) of the participants were highly satisfied with their specialty and field of study while only 8.4% had a low level of satisfaction. More than half of them (61.6%) had high expectations on finding a job related to their study field, and only 13% had low expectations about the future. The details of the responses on students' satisfaction and expectations questionnaires are shown in table 2.

**Table 2** Students' satisfaction with their specialties and expectation about getting a job in their field of study in the future

Parameter	Frequency	Percent	
Specialty satisfaction			
<ul> <li>High Satisfaction</li> </ul>	246	71.1%	
<ul> <li>Average Satisfaction</li> </ul>	71	20.5%	
<ul> <li>Low Satisfaction</li> </ul>	29	8.4%	
Expecting job			
High Expectation	213	61.6%	
•Average Expectation	88	25.4%	
•Low Expectation	45	13%	

Association between sociodemographic characteristics and the elements of QOL.

Female had a significantly low psychological health score  $(53.02 \pm 18.98)$ . Students who studied applied medical sciences had a high physical health score (67.07  $\pm$  18.77), and orientation year student had the lowest physical health score  $(62.5 \pm 22.51)$ . Regarding their GPA, students who scored (1-1.9) had the lowest physical health score (41.67  $\pm$  21.82) and the lowest overall QOL score (16.67  $\pm$  19.09). The nondiseased participants had higher physical activity score (66.85  $\pm$  17.39), psychological health score (56.45  $\pm$  18.83), environment (65.84  $\pm$  19.5), an overall score (64.17  $\pm$  22.58) than the diseased ones. Students with low specialty satisfaction levels had significantly recorded the lowest physical activity score (56.53  $\pm$  20.85), psychological health score (40.09  $\pm$ 19.56), social relationships score  $(43.39 \pm 23.08)$ , environment score (45.47  $\pm$  18.65), and the overall QOL (41.81  $\pm$  23.92). The details of the association between socio-demographic characteristics and the elements of QOL of the student is shown in table 3.

#### DISCUSSION

The present study was undertaken to evaluate the QOL of health college students in Al Ahsa district of Saudi Arabia. Various studies which included university students have found a close association between high-stress levels and consequent deterioration of QOL. The common contributing factor was detected to be insomnia or poor sleep quality<sup>[24]</sup>, low values of mental components assessed by different instruments<sup>[25,26]</sup>, high depression levels and coping strategies of ineffective coping.<sup>[27]</sup>

The presents study demonstrated a high level of specialty satisfaction (71.1%) and job expectations (61.6%) among university students. This could be attributable to the stable extrinsic environment in Saudi Arabia, both politically and economically, and a well-balanced integrated society that is supporting students' psychological well-being. [<sup>28]</sup>

Female participants were found to have longer studying hours than the males, and significantly, the females had lower psychological health scores. Similarly, in other studies, males had better psychological health than females .<sup>[15,28,29]</sup> Furthermore, one Brazilian study established that female students had lower scores in most majors.<sup>[30]</sup>In a study conducted among university students to investigate factors associated with HRQOL, several factors were associated with worse QOL, such as female sex and more frequent use of health-care services .<sup>[31]</sup>

Significantly, the highest physical health scores were recorded by students who study applied medical science and student who do not complain of any disease. On the other hand, the lowest physical scores were in the orientation year students, those who scored a 1-1.9 GPA and those with low satisfaction level. A study conducted in the Asser region, Saudi Arabia has reported a significant difference between the education type and HRQOL domains. Medical applied health sciences students had lower scores than other specialties in physical activities, physical health, emotional well-being, and general health.<sup>[32]</sup>

Table 3 The associations between the participants' sociodemographic characteristics and the QOL elements

	Parameter	Physical Health	<b>Psychological Health</b>	Social relationships	Environment	Overall QOL
	Female	$64.0 \pm 19.12$	53.02 ± 18.98 <sup>a</sup>	$60.57 \pm 25.56$	$63.44 \pm 21.24$	$59.21 \pm 23.4$
Sex	Male	$66.14 \pm 18.2$	$57.83 \pm 19.95$	$55.54 \pm 24.54$	$66.24 \pm 19.08$	$64.08 \pm 23.04$
	Applied Medical Sciences	$67.07 \pm 18.77$ bc	$55.88 \pm 19.96$	$59.91 \pm 26.5$	$65.13 \pm 20.73$	$63.68 \pm 22.78$
	Clinical Pharmacy	$60.66 \pm 19.57$	$53.1 \pm 20.27$	$55.84 \pm 25.89$	$63.17 \pm 20.26$	$58.59 \pm 23.95$
College	Dentistry	$67.55 \pm 19.43$	$60.36 \pm 17.8$	$58.33 \pm 22.42$	$66.88 \pm 21.06$	$65.0 \pm 22.24$
	Medicine	$69.79 \pm 14.21$	$56.77 \pm 18.15$	$61.11 \pm 22.9$	$66.54 \pm 19.35$	$63.02 \pm 23.21$
	Orientation Year	62.5 ± 22.51 b	$56.79 \pm 19.65$	$58.88 \pm 29.94$	$68.34 \pm 22.51$	$64.67 \pm 27.3$
Dhaaa	Preclinical Years	$63.65 \pm 18.68$	$53.95 \pm 20.1$	$57.49 \pm 24.9$	$63.59 \pm 19.95$	$59.66 \pm 23.05$
Phase	Clinical Years	$69.32 \pm 15.81$	$57.8 \pm 18.2$	$59.86 \pm 23.18$	$65.69 \pm 19.7$	$64.25 \pm 21.7$
	1.0-1.9	$41.67 \pm 21.82$ bc	$27.78 \pm 25.12$	$22.22 \pm 20.97$	$32.29 \pm 17.21$	$16.67 \pm 19.09$ bc
	2.0-2.9	$58.7 \pm 18.3$	$51.81 \pm 19.37$	$59.06 \pm 24.61$	$65.62 \pm 20.03$	$58.15 \pm 20.16$
	3.0-3.9	$66.05 \pm 16.86$	$55.47 \pm 18.35$	$59.09 \pm 24.11$	$65.44 \pm 17.37$	$61.24 \pm 20.71$
GPA	4.0-4.4	$62.41 \pm 19.53$	$54.8 \pm 19.5$	$58.33 \pm 27.0$	$63.45 \pm 22.11$	$60.24 \pm 23.11$
	4.5-5.0	$68.35 \pm 18.55$	$57.18 \pm 20.23$	$58.41 \pm 24.11$	$66.11 \pm 20.45$	$64.87 \pm 25.21$
	Yes	$56.44 \pm 21.9$	$50.27 \pm 22.19$	$58.61 \pm 29.22$	$59.84 \pm 22.98$	$49.39 \pm 23.21$
Diseased	No	$66.85 \pm 17.39$ ac	$56.45 \pm 18.83$ a	$58.25 \pm 24.22$	65.84 ± 19.5 a	$64.17 \pm 22.58$ ac
	Low Satisfaction	$56.53 \pm 20.85$ bc	$40.09 \pm 19.56$ bc	$43.39 \pm 23.08$ bc	$45.47 \pm 18.65$ bc	$41.81 \pm 23.92$ bc
	Average Satisfaction	$61.72 \pm 19.94$	$51.47 \pm 20.62$	$55.16 \pm 25.45$	$63.95 \pm 18.9$	$61.44 \pm 25.6$
Satisfaction	High Satisfaction	$66.97 \pm 17.64$	$58.28 \pm 18.26$	$60.98 \pm 24.64$	$67.3 \pm 19.62$	$63.92 \pm 21.53$

a T-test, p<0.05

b One-way Anova, p<0.05

c p<0.01

Students with low GPA scores (1-1.9) had a poor overall QOL. This contradicts another Saudi study<sup>[29]</sup>, yet Shareef *et al.* has reported that medical students with better academic performance had higher scores in all QOL domains.<sup>[33]</sup>Comparably, a study in the United States revealed that students with better GPAs are physically healthier than those with fewer academic achievements.<sup>[34]</sup> There is a need to build an effective and adequate student support system, especially for better-performing students who suffer from significant stress during their studies.

Healthy students had better psychological health, environment, and overall QOL score than students who suffered from diseases. Moreover, this study associated low satisfaction levels with poor psychological health, social relationships, environment, and overall QOL. In line with our findings, a Turkish study has reported a positive association between satisfaction and QOL.<sup>[55]</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This study reported a high level of specialty satisfaction and job expectations among KFU students in Saudi Arabia. Female participants were found to have longer studying hours than the males and significantly lower psychological health scores. Students with low GPAs (1-1.9) reported the lowest physical activity and overall QOL scores. The highest physical health scores were recorded by students who study applied medical science, who do not complain of any disease. Healthy students had better psychological health, environment, and overall QOL score than non-healthy ones.Low satisfaction among students about their chosen specialties was associated with poor psychological health, social relationships, environment, and overall QOL. It is recommended to adapt changes to the education system to enhance the activity of students and their life satisfaction and QOL. Factors affecting students' academic achievement should be investigated, and studies should be conducted at universities to increase the level of success of students.

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