Health Habits and Well-Being: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Jordanian and Hungarian University Students

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Abstract

This study explores the interplay between health habits, holistic well-being, and life satisfaction among university students across cultural contexts. A total of 485 students participated in this cross-sectional study, including Hungarian students (Hu; n = 178), Jordanian students in Hungary (JoH; n = 112), and Jordanian students in Jordan (JoJ; n = 195). Data were collected using the Optimal Living Profile-Modified (OLP-M), assessing five well-being domains and health habits indicators derived from the physical well-being domain. ANOVA and post-hoc analyses revealed significant differences in life satisfaction scores across all groups (Hu: M = 3.0; JoH: M = 3.7; JoJ: M = 4.1, p < 0.05). Local Jordanian students consistently outperformed others across well-being domains and health habits (physical activity, sleep quality, and nutrition), while Hu students reported the highest scores in non-smoking and oral hygiene. Factor analysis identified two distinct aspects: Healthy Habits "HH" (e.g., physical activity, sleep quality) and Preventive Habits "PH" (e.g., avoiding harmful substances). HH was positively correlated with all OLP-M domains and life satisfaction (r = 0.44, p < 0.001), while PH showed weaker associations. Path analysis confirmed that HH influences life satisfaction both directly and indirectly through emotional and social well-being, suggesting that habits requiring conscious effort and engagement are more influential than PH. Regression models indicated physical activity and sleep quality as the strongest predictors of life satisfaction (β > 0.30, p < 0.001). The findings emphasize the importance of culturally grounded health promotion strategies in higher education and highlight how both cultural values and behavioral habits shape student well-being across contexts.

Keywords: health promotion, higher education, life satisfaction, OLP-M