Academic and personal factors influencing university students' wellbeing: Experiences in Armenia

Gayane Tovmasyan and Arsen Petrosyan
Armenian State University of Economics, Armenia

Life satisfaction is a key indicator of subjective wellbeing and an essential component of students' overall quality of life. This study examines the level of life satisfaction among university students and identifies the main factors influencing it. A quantitative cross-sectional survey was conducted among 864 bachelor degree students at a university in the Republic of Armenia. Life satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), alongside domain-specific assessments of academic experience, social relationships, financial situation, health and lifestyle, emotional wellbeing, and personal development. The results indicate a moderate level of life satisfaction (M = 22.7), suggesting that students are slightly satisfied overall. Physical and mental health, personal development and future prospects, mental state (stress and optimism), and social relationships were perceived as the most influential determinants. Working students reported significantly higher life satisfaction than non-working students, while no significant differences were found by gender or year of study. Qualitative findings emphasised the importance of career development support, internships, psychological services, and fair academic practices. Our study highlights the need for universities to adopt a holistic student wellbeing strategy integrating mental health support, employability enhancement, and social connectedness to promote student life satisfaction.

Introduction

Life satisfaction has emerged as a key indicator of subjective wellbeing and quality of life (Pavot & Diener, 2008; Proctor et al., 2009; Lampropoulou, 2024), reflecting individuals' cognitive evaluation of their overall life circumstances. In recent decades, growing attention has been paid to life satisfaction among university students (Tavakoly Sany et al., 2023), as this group faces a unique combination of academic, social, financial, and psychological challenges during a critical transitional period of life. University years are often associated with personal development and future opportunities, yet they are also characterised by increased stress, uncertainty, workload pressure, and mental health concerns, which can significantly influence students' overall wellbeing.

Existing literature highlights that life satisfaction among students is a multidimensional construct shaped by a variety of interrelated factors. Academic conditions, such as teaching quality, workload, and academic progress, play a central role in shaping students' experiences within higher education institutions (Wang et al., 2022; Zeng et al., 2022). At the same time, social relationships and perceived social support from family, peers, and the university community have been shown to buffer stress and enhance emotional wellbeing (Chen et al., 2023; Gál et al., 2022; Chowhan et al., 2024). Financial stability, employment status, and the ability to manage living expenses are also critical determinants, particularly in contexts where students combine studies with paid work

(Tahir et al., 2022; Zammitti et al., 2025). Furthermore, physical and mental health, emotional balance, and optimism are increasingly recognised as essential components of sustainable student wellbeing (Yu et al., 2025; Nie et al., 2025).

Despite the growing body of research on student life satisfaction, empirical evidence remains fragmented, and the relative importance of different influencing factors varies across institutional, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts. Moreover, many studies focus narrowly on single dimensions of wellbeing, overlooking the integrated nature of academic, social, emotional, and financial aspects of student life. This highlights the need for comprehensive empirical studies that capture both overall life satisfaction and students' own perceptions of the most influential factors affecting it.

Against this background, our study aims to examine life satisfaction among university students and identify the key factors that influence it. Using the *Satisfaction with Life Scale* (SWLS) (Townshend, 2025) alongside measures of overall satisfaction with academic experience, health, social relationships, financial situation, and personal growth, this study provides a multidimensional assessment of student wellbeing. In addition, by exploring students' perceptions of the most important determinants of life satisfaction and their suggestions for institutional improvement, the research offers practical insights for universities seeking to enhance student support systems and promote a more inclusive, supportive, and sustainable learning environment.

Literature review

Life satisfaction (LS) is widely recognised as a central indicator of subjective wellbeing and a critical outcome of students' academic, psychological, and social development. Contemporary research conceptualises LS as a multidimensional construct influenced by individual characteristics, behavioural patterns, and contextual factors operating within educational environments. Over the past decade, empirical studies have increasingly focused on identifying the determinants of life satisfaction among students across diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

Academic performance, cognition, and life satisfaction

Research consistently highlights the role of academic performance in shaping students' life satisfaction. Higher grade point averages (GPA) and active engagement in educational activities are positively linked to LS, suggesting that students who perform well academically tend to feel more fulfilled and satisfied (Slavinski et al., 2021). Similarly, cognitive strategies, such as emotion regulation, contribute significantly to LS. Positive reappraisal, planning, and refocusing strategies have been shown to predict greater LS among Chinese students studying abroad (Weidi & JeeChing, 2023).

Beyond academic metrics, personality traits like grit and general self-efficacy also enhance LS, often through mediating factors such as hope and academic adaptation (Ekinci & Koç, 2023; Noronha et al., 2024). For instance, students with higher levels of grit exhibit greater perseverance in academic efforts, leading to higher LS through improved

adaptation to university life. Parental support further strengthens this relationship by fostering educational hope and goal commitment, which indirectly enhance LS among adolescents (Han & Yuen, 2024; Parola & Marcionetti, 2022). Additionally, hope and optimism have been found to influence both academic performance and LS. While optimism primarily reduces negative affect, hope promotes positive affect and indirectly predicts better academic outcomes through grade expectancy, underscoring the importance of fostering goal-directed motivation in students (Rand et al., 2020; Zhang, 2025).

Mental health, stress, and coping

Students' LS is also strongly influenced by mental health factors, including stress, anxiety, and depression. Studies conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic revealed high levels of anxiety and stress among university students, with significant negative effects on LS (Rogowska et al., 2020; Lopes & Nihei, 2021; Tovmasyan et al., 2022). Social anxiety and depression similarly reduce LS, highlighting the importance of addressing these psychological challenges (Foroughi et al., 2022; Cleofas, 2020; Dong et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2022; Ocaña-Moral et al., 2021).

Mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) have been shown to improve LS by reducing distress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms (Dawson et al., 2020; Viskovich & Pakenham, 2020). Moreover, positive psychology interventions, such as online rumination exercises and mindfulness practices, can promote posttraumatic growth and enhance LS, particularly in students under quarantine or experiencing stress (Xie et al., 2022).

Cognitive and emotional resources, including resilience, self-esteem, and emotion regulation, play a mediating role between stressors and LS. For example, mindfulness enhances LS both directly and indirectly through self-esteem and resilience, demonstrating the interconnectedness of emotional and cognitive factors in supporting student wellbeing (Wang & Kong, 2020; Lee et al., 2023).

Emerging adulthood characteristics, such as autonomy and identity exploration, also influence anxiety levels, with LS mediating these relationships (Luo et al., 2024). Collectively, these findings suggest that interventions targeting mental health, coping skills, and emotional regulation can substantially improve LS among students.

Physical activity, nutrition, and lifestyle factors

Physical activity is a consistent predictor of LS, with studies showing that engagement in sports and recreational activities improves both psychological wellbeing and happiness (Kim et al., 2024; Slavinski et al., 2021). Optimal benefits are observed with approximately four to five hours of physical activity per week (Slavinski et al., 2021). Physical literacy and mindfulness integrated into exercise programs further enhance LS by supporting holistic health (Kan et al., 2024).

Daily aerobic walking has been associated with improved sleep, reduced stress, and enhanced LS (Wang & Boros, 2020). While nutrition and dietary habits are often assumed to affect LS, research among sports science students indicates that nutrition and LS are largely independent, suggesting that physical activity may have a stronger impact on LS than diet alone (Yilmaz et al., 2020).

Healthy lifestyle behaviours, including adequate sleep, physical activity, and self-care, mediate the relationship between health locus of control and LS. Students with higher internal and powerful-other health locus of control report greater LS, whereas reliance on chance negatively affects LS (Mei et al., 2023). These findings emphasise the importance of promoting structured physical activity and health-conscious behaviours to support students' wellbeing.

Social support, family, and interpersonal factors

Social and familial support play a pivotal role in fostering LS among students. Experiences of social recognition and esteem positively predict participation in school activities, which, in turn, enhances LS, especially among immigrant students (Sirlopú & Renger, 2020). Parental support, both tangible and intangible, directly improves LS by facilitating goal commitment and educational aspirations (Han & Yuen, 2024).

Peer engagement, particularly through sports and fan activities, supports social, emotional, academic, and institutional adaptation, thereby increasing LS. However, the effects vary across domestic and international student groups, highlighting the need to tailor interventions to specific populations (Choi et al., 2023). Teacher-student relationships also significantly influence LS. Positive relationships enhance LS, while conflicts and negative expectations reduce it. These relationships mediate the impact of subjective socioeconomic status on LS, suggesting that school-based interventions targeting TSR can mitigate SES-related disparities (Mastrokoukou et al., 2025).

Additionally, communication quality within organisations and perceived social support correlate positively with LS. Social connectedness mediates relationships between personality traits, emotional granularity, and LS, highlighting the interplay of individual and social factors (Sinčić Ćorić et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021; Huang & Zhang, 2022).

Spirituality, meaning, and positive psychological constructs

Spirituality and a sense of meaning in life are positively associated with LS and subjective happiness. In Indian university students, higher spirituality correlates with greater life satisfaction, happiness, and purpose, regardless of gender (Deb et al., 2020). Similarly, fostering positive psychological attributes such as hope, optimism, and resilience enhances LS and buffers against stressors (Ekinci & Koç, 2023; Rand et al., 2020). Meaning-focused interventions during Covid-19 have also improved students' mental health, illustrating that cultivating purpose and positive values can protect LS in challenging contexts (Arslan et al., 2022).

Technology, media, and modern interventions

The pervasive use of digital technology has both positive and negative effects on LS. While music listening during periods of isolation enhances LS, excessive TV and mobile use may reduce it (Krause et al., 2021). Problematic technology use is linked to lower LS, with life satisfaction serving as a mediating variable in these relationships (Tudorel, 2023).

Emerging applications of artificial intelligence, such as large language models (LLMs) combined with machine learning, offer innovative methods for assessing LS, demonstrating potential for efficient psychological measurement and personalised interventions (Huang et al., 2025).

Contextual and socio-demographic factors

Life satisfaction varies across socio-demographic contexts. For instance, delays in school start times improve sleep duration, mental health, and LS among adolescents (Chan et al., 2024). LS is higher among married students compared to singles and is influenced by factors such as self-rated health, socioeconomic status, trust, and empathy (Rajabi Gilan et al., 2021). Globally, LS among adolescents has declined over recent years, with more pronounced decreases observed in girls, non-immigrant students, and those from higher SES backgrounds (Marquez & Long, 2021).

Cultural and mobility factors also impact LS. Among postgraduates studying intra- and outside-EU, health satisfaction, autonomy, and career adaptability correlate positively with LS, while worry negatively affects it (Odero et al., 2020).

Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) application

Among university students, the SWLS has been widely used to measure this cognitive aspect of wellbeing. Psychometric studies consistently support the SWLS's reliability and validity in student populations. In a nationwide sample of Swedish university students, the SWLS demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .88$) and confirmatory factor analysis supported its unidimensional structure, although more complex models may also fit the data well across age and gender groups, suggesting robust measurement properties in educational contexts (Hultell & Gustavsson, 2008). Related research confirms that the SWLS maintains measurement stability over time in student samples, indicating it can reliably capture changes in life satisfaction across repeated assessments (Wu et al., 2009).

Empirical studies applying the SWLS among students find that life satisfaction is linked to both psychological and social factors. For instance, validated research in Spanish university contexts showed that SWLS scores correlate with other wellbeing constructs, reinforcing its utility for assessing student subjective wellbeing in higher education (Delgado-Lobete et al., 2020). Other research indicates that personal beliefs (such as fear of happiness) can influence SWLS responses, and these constructs often relate negatively to life satisfaction scores in student samples, illustrating the scale's sensitivity to psychological dynamics (Joshanloo, 2013).

Beyond measurement properties, several studies highlight factors associated with higher life satisfaction. In university student samples, life satisfaction shows positive associations with mental health outcomes and lower levels of depressive symptoms, highlighting its protective role in psychological wellbeing (Seo et al., 2018). Research also suggests that individual traits and environmental factors - such as emotional intelligence, personality dimensions, and family support - predict variations in life satisfaction, reflecting the interplay of personal and contextual influences in students' lives (Ain et al., 2021).

In sum, the literature underscores that the SWLS is a reliable and valid tool for assessing life satisfaction in students across cultural settings and that student life satisfaction is shaped by multiple psychological and social determinants, which are meaningful for both academic engagement and broader wellbeing outcomes.

Method

The main objective of our study is to examine the level of life satisfaction among university students and identify the key factors that influence it. More specifically, we aimed to:

1. Assess the overall life satisfaction of university students using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS).
2. Examine students' satisfaction with major life domains, including academic experience, social relationships, financial situation, health and lifestyle, emotional wellbeing, and personal growth.
3. Identify which factor students perceive as the most important determinant of their life satisfaction.
4. Analyse differences in life satisfaction based on demographic and academic characteristics such as gender, year of study, and employment status.
5. Explore students' suggestions regarding how universities can improve their life satisfaction and wellbeing.

Our study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine factors influencing life satisfaction among university students. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed by authors, designed to capture both overall life satisfaction and satisfaction across key life domains relevant to the student experience.

The target population consists of university students enrolled in bachelor degree programs at one of the universities of Armenia. Participation was anonymous. The survey was distributed electronically, allowing students to complete it at their convenience. No personally identifiable information was collected, ensuring confidentiality and ethical compliance.

The population size was taken as the number of all bachelor degree students of the selected University, which was 3960. Sample size was defined with *Sample size calculator* (Raosoft, n.d.), setting confidence level 98% and margin of error 3.5%, and the sample

size was 864. The survey was done during January, 2026. The survey questionnaire was in Armenian; results were later translated into English by the authors.

The questionnaire consists of four main sections:

- Section 1: Demographic information, including gender, age, level and year of study, and current employment status.
- Section 2: Evaluating the influence of different factors (academic, social, financial, health-related, emotional, personal growth, or other) on students' life satisfaction,
- Section 3: Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS), a widely validated five-item instrument measuring global cognitive judgments of life satisfaction. Responses are measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).
- Section 4: Overall domain satisfaction, consisting of several statements assessing satisfaction with emotional wellbeing, health and lifestyle, academic experience, social relationships, financial situation, and personal growth, also measured using a seven-point Likert scale.

The final section includes an open-ended question inviting students to suggest actions universities could take to improve life satisfaction. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, anonymity of responses, and their right to withdraw at any time. The study complies with ethical standards for social science research.

Data analysis was conducted using statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise demographic characteristics and overall levels of life satisfaction. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was performed to assess the internal consistency of the SWLS. Inferential analyses included independent samples t-tests to examine differences in life satisfaction by gender and employment status, as well as a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test differences across years of study. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level.

Qualitative responses from the open-ended question were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and policy-relevant insights.

Findings

The majority of survey participants were female (about 76%), 87.8% were 19-25 years old. 56.5% were not working (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic picture of the participants

	Question	Frequency	Percent
1. Gender	Male	208	24.1
	Female	656	75.9
2. Age	Up to 18	96	11.1
	19-25	759	87.8
	26-35	4	0.5
	36-45	3	0.3
	46 and more	1	0.1
3. Year of study	1st	233	27.0
	2nd	275	31.8
	3rd	216	25.0
	4th	140	16.2
4. Are you working?	Yes	376	43.5
	No	488	56.5

Source: Composed by the authors based on survey analysis.

The participants have rated the factors which influence their life satisfaction (Table 2). The range was from 1= the impact is very low to 5 = the impact is very high. Table 2 shows that students rate the impact of the following factors very high: Physical and mental health (44.9%); Personal development and future prospects (40.7%); Mental state (stress, anxiety, optimism) (40.3%); Social relationships (friends, family, social support) (38.1). Only 17.8% rated the impact of Academic factors very high, 30.2% rated its impact as high.

Table 2. In your opinion, which of the listed factors most influence your life satisfaction? (% of participants)

Factors	1. Impact very low	2. Impact is low	3. Impact medium	4. Impact high	5. Impact very high
Academic factors (learning, teaching quality)	24.3	4.7	22.9	30.2	17.8
Social relationships (friends, family, social support)	24.1	2.0	8.3	27.5	**38.1**
Financial situation (material resources, expenses, financial security)	23.6	2.7	11.1	29.3	33.3
Physical and mental health	24.0	2.3	8.7	20.1	**44.9**
Personal development and future prospects	24.0	1.9	8.9	24.5	**40.7**
Mental state (stress, anxiety, optimism)	25.3	3.8	11.0	19.6	**40.3**
Other	30.8	3.2	13.8	15.4	**36.8**

Source: Composed by the authors based on survey analysis.

The students were also asked to evaluate their Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) including the following questions (Table 3).

Table 3: Rate the following thoughts using the scale (% of participants)

SWLS item	1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Slightly disagree	4. Neither agree nor disagree	5. Slightly agree	6. Agree	7. Strongly agree
In most ways my life is close to my ideal.	7.5	12.4	11.5	**19.2**	**24.1**	**20.3**	5.1
The conditions of my life are excellent.	4.5	11.7	11.2	**19.4**	**22.6**	**23.0**	7.5
I am satisfied with my life.	4.1	4.5	7.2	10.6	16.3	**37.7**	**19.6**
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.	5.2	8.4	8.9	16.9	**25.5**	**23.4**	11.7
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	11.3	12.7	12.8	15.4	**15.2**	**17.6**	14.9

Source: Composed by the authors based on survey analysis.

Table 3 shows, that 24.1% slightly agree and 20.3% agree that in most their life is close to their ideal, 23.0% agree and 22.6% slightly agree that the conditions of their life are excellent, 37.7% agree and 19.6% strongly agree that they are satisfied with their life, 25.5% slightly agree and 23.4% agree that so far they have gotten the important things they want in life, and 17.6 agree and 15.2% slightly agree that if they could live their life over, they would change almost nothing. Interestingly, 11.3% strongly disagree with that last thought.

The SWLS showed very good reliability in the present sample (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$), indicating strong internal consistency among the five items. Based on the responses, mean SWLS was calculated (sum of total scores / 864), which was 22.7. This is in the range 21-25 - slightly satisfied (Diener et al., 1985). The mean item score on the SWLS was 4.54 ($SD = 1.69$), indicating a moderate level of agreement with life satisfaction statements. Item-level standard deviations ranged from 1.60 to 1.95, indicating moderate variability across the five life satisfaction statements.

About 30 % of participants mainly agree that they are satisfied with their health and lifestyle, academic experience, financial situation, university experience, etc. (Appendix 1, Table 1). An independent samples t-test showed no significant difference in life satisfaction between male ($M = 22.6$, $SD = 7.6$) and female students ($M = 22.8$, $SD = 7.4$), $t(862) = 0.28$, $p = 0.78$. However, working students ($M = 23.5$, $SD = 7.2$) reported significantly higher life satisfaction than non-working students ($M = 22.1$, $SD = 7.6$), $t(862) = 2.35$, $p = 0.019$, although the effect size was small (Cohen's $d = 0.19$) (Appendix 1, Table 2).

Descriptive statistics indicated that mean SWLS scores were similar across years of study, with Year 3 reporting the highest mean ($M = 23.40$, $SD = 6.39$) and Year 4 the lowest ($M = 21.81$, $SD = 7.12$) (Appendix 1, Table 3). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was

conducted to determine whether satisfaction with life (SWLS) differed across year of study. Results indicated that SWLS scores did not significantly vary by year of study, F (3, 860) = 1.57, p = 0.194. Therefore, year of study was not associated with significant differences in life satisfaction (Appendix 1, table 4). The effect size was very small (η^2 = .005), indicating that year of study accounted for less than 1% of the variance in SWLS.

Taken together, findings suggest that student life satisfaction is influenced more by employment status than by demographic factors such as gender or academic year.

The students were also given an open question: "What other factors or situations affect your life satisfaction, and what can the university do to improve students' life satisfaction?". According to many students, the university provides broad opportunities for professional education, which is sufficient. Only about 8% have mentioned some suggestions. Here are the main points, outlined in ten groups:

1. Improvement of educational quality and teaching methods:

- Enhance the overall quality of education by improving teaching methods, making courses more engaging, and integrating project-based and practice-oriented learning approaches.
- Strengthen student-centred education principles.
- Ensure equal, motivating, and respectful treatment of students by teaching staff.
- Involve highly qualified professionals and practitioners in the teaching process.
- Enrich curricula with nationally relevant content (e.g., Armenian studies) to strengthen identity and social responsibility.

2. Increasing practical training and internship opportunities:

- Increase the number and frequency of internships during studies (at least 1–2 per semester).
- Emphasise practical learning from the first year of study.
- Establish stronger university–labour market linkages to facilitate students' transition into employment.
- Support students in job search processes and provide career guidance services.

3. Career support and employment opportunities:

- Develop structured career support mechanisms, including career counseling, employer partnerships, and job placement assistance for graduates.
- Facilitate exchange of professional experience during studies to improve employability.
- Strengthen collaboration with employers to reduce barriers for inexperienced graduates.

4. Financial support and tuition concerns:

- Reduce tuition fees or provide scholarships, and tuition discounts.
- Recognise financial stability as a key factor influencing students' life satisfaction.

5. Psychological support and mental wellbeing:
- Provide accessible psychological counseling services.
- Reduce excessive academic stress through fair assessment systems and balanced workload.
- Slightly ease exam difficulty to improve students' mental wellbeing.
- Promote a supportive and psychologically safe learning environment.

6. Flexible scheduling and academic workload management:
- Introduce more flexible class schedules to accommodate working students.
- Increase intervals between exam days to reduce stress and burnout.
- Adjust academic workload to prevent excessive pressure and fatigue.

7. Fair and transparent assessment system:
- Review assessment formats (e.g., reconsider computer-based exams and allow alternative formats such as oral exams).
- Ensure a fair, transparent, and balanced evaluation system.

8. Student–faculty communication and relationships:
- Strengthen communication between students and lecturers.
- Ensure timely responses from academic staff.
- Promote respectful, motivating, and equal treatment of students.

9. Campus infrastructure and student services:
- Improve campus facilities, including medical services.
- Create appropriate spaces for eating and relaxation (e.g., opening a buffet or student lounge).

10. Social, cultural, and extracurricular activities:
- Organise diverse cultural, artistic, and social activities (theatre, choir, recitation, pottery, etc.).
- Improve communication about existing extracurricular opportunities.
- Create more networking opportunities to strengthen social connections among students.

Discussion

Our study examined life satisfaction among university students using the SWLS framework and a multidimensional domain-based approach. Overall, the findings provide important empirical evidence supporting the multidimensional nature of life satisfaction and confirm the central role of psychological, health-related, and future-oriented factors in shaping student wellbeing.

The mean SWLS score (M = 22.7) indicates a moderate (slightly satisfied) level of life satisfaction among students. This finding aligns with prior studies reporting moderate levels of life satisfaction among university populations (e.g., Slavinski et al., 2021; Seo et

al., 2018). Similar patterns were observed during and after the Covid-19 period, where students demonstrated resilience but remained exposed to stressors affecting overall wellbeing (Rogowska et al., 2020; Lopes & Nihei, 2021). The moderate level suggests that while students are not experiencing critically low wellbeing, there remains considerable room for institutional and psychological interventions. This reinforces the idea proposed by Pavot & Diener (2008) that life satisfaction is sensitive to contextual and developmental transitions - such as the university period.

The strongest perceived determinants of life satisfaction were physical and mental health (44.9%), personal development and future prospects (40.7%), mental state (stress, anxiety, optimism) (40.3%), and social relationships (38.1%). These findings are highly consistent with existing research. The prominent role of mental health and emotional balance corresponds with studies by Wang & Kong (2020) and Lee et al. (2023), which demonstrated that resilience, self-esteem, and emotional regulation mediate life satisfaction. Similarly, research by Foroughi et al. (2022) and Liu et al. (2022) showed that anxiety and depression significantly reduce life satisfaction.

The strong emphasis on future prospects and personal development extends findings by Rand et al. (2020) and Ekinci & Koç (2023), who highlighted hope, optimism, and academic adaptation as key predictors of life satisfaction. Interestingly, students in the present study placed even greater importance on future-oriented factors than on academic quality itself. This suggests that students may evaluate their university experience not merely through immediate academic outcomes but through perceived long-term career and life opportunities.

Social relationships also emerged as a major determinant, which aligns with findings by Sirlopú & Renger (2020) and Han & Yuen (2024), who underlined the buffering role of family and peer support. The relatively high satisfaction with social support (Mean = 4.97) further reinforces the protective function of interpersonal connectedness in student wellbeing.

Interestingly, only 17.8% of students rated academic factors as having a "very high" impact on life satisfaction, although overall academic satisfaction scores were moderately positive. This partially contrasts with research emphasising academic performance and engagement as strong predictors of life satisfaction (Slavinski et al., 2021; Weidi & JeeChing, 2023; Zeineddine et al., 2026; Sarwari & Mohd Adnan, 2024; Tan, 2025). However, our findings suggest that academic experience may influence life satisfaction indirectly, potentially through future expectations, personal growth, or stress levels rather than as a direct determinant. This nuanced finding contributes to the literature by indicating that in transitional or developing educational contexts, students may prioritise psychological stability and career prospects over purely academic metrics.

Working students reported significantly higher life satisfaction than non-working students, although the effect size was small ($d = 0.19$). This finding aligns with Tahir et al. (2022) and Zammitti et al. (2025), who found that financial security and employment can enhance students' autonomy and perceived competence. Employment may increase

financial independence, self-efficacy, and real-world experience, thereby positively affecting life satisfaction. However, the small effect size suggests that employment alone is not a strong determinant but rather one component within a broader wellbeing framework. This finding highlights the importance of balanced work–study integration policies, especially flexible scheduling - a need also expressed in students' qualitative responses.

The absence of gender differences is consistent with several international studies indicating that gender effects on life satisfaction are often weak or context-dependent (Marquez & Long, 2021). While some literature suggests gender disparities in mental health, overall life satisfaction may remain similar when broader life domains are considered.

Similarly, the lack of significant differences across years of study suggests that life satisfaction remains relatively stable throughout the bachelor degree program. This finding contrasts with studies indicating fluctuations during transitional academic phases (Odero et al., 2020). However, it may indicate that institutional conditions and stress levels are relatively consistent across study years in the sampled university. The minimal effect size ($\eta^2 = .005$) further supports the conclusion that demographic-academic variables explain only a small portion of variance in life satisfaction compared to psychological and contextual factors.

The qualitative findings enrich the quantitative results and strongly reinforce the importance of: career support and employability, practical training, psychological services, fair and transparent assessment, and respectful teacher–student relationships.

These themes correspond closely with literature emphasising teacher–student relationships (Mastrokoukou et al., 2025), social connectedness (Zhang et al., 2021; Kirk, 2022), and mental health interventions (Dawson et al., 2020; Viskovich & Pakenham, 2020).

Importantly, students' emphasis on career integration suggests that life satisfaction is closely linked to perceived economic and professional security, supporting the argument that life satisfaction among university students is partly future-oriented and economically contextualised. The findings support a multidimensional model of student life satisfaction integrating psychological health, social support, future orientation, financial autonomy, and academic experience. The results reinforce subjective wellbeing theory (Pavot & Diener, 2008) while demonstrating that future prospects and mental health may outweigh academic factors in shaping life satisfaction within transitional educational contexts.

Conclusion

This study examined the level and determinants of life satisfaction among university students using the *Satisfaction with Life Scale* and a multidimensional assessment of key life domains. The findings reveal that students demonstrate a moderate level of life

satisfaction, confirming that while overall wellbeing is not critically low, there remains substantial potential for institutional enhancement.

The results underscore the multidimensional nature of student life satisfaction. Physical and mental health, emotional balance, social relationships, and personal development and future prospects emerged as the most influential factors. Academic experience, although important, was not perceived as the dominant determinant. These findings reinforce the understanding of life satisfaction as a holistic construct shaped not only by academic performance but also by psychological stability, social belonging, and confidence in future opportunities.

We also found that working students report slightly higher life satisfaction than non-working students, suggesting that financial autonomy and labour market engagement may enhance students' sense of competence and independence. In contrast, no significant differences were identified across gender or year of study, indicating that life satisfaction is influenced more by contextual and psychological factors than by basic demographic characteristics.

The qualitative insights further deepen the interpretation of the quantitative results. Students emphasised the importance of strengthening career development and labour market integration mechanisms within the university system. Respondents highlighted the need for increased practical training, more frequent internships, and stronger collaboration with employers to facilitate a smoother transition from education to employment. They also expressed the expectation that universities provide structured career support services, including counseling, networking opportunities, and job placement assistance. These perspectives indicate that employability and future confidence are closely linked to students' overall life satisfaction.

Taken together, the findings suggest that universities seeking to improve student wellbeing should move beyond a narrow focus on academic quality alone. A holistic student wellbeing strategy is required, integrating psychological support, employability enhancement, and social connectedness. Specifically, universities should strengthen psychological counseling and mental health services, expand internship and career support systems, promote flexible academic scheduling for working students, enhance teacher–student communication and fairness, and actively support social and extracurricular engagement.

By adopting a comprehensive and student-centred approach, higher education institutions can foster not only academic success but also sustainable wellbeing, resilience, and life satisfaction among students. Such an approach is essential for preparing graduates who are psychologically balanced, socially integrated, and professionally confident in an increasingly complex and competitive environment.

Limitations and future research directions

This study was conducted within one university in the Republic of Armenia, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other institutional contexts. Student experiences can vary significantly across universities depending on academic culture, economic conditions, and institutional support systems. Future studies could adopt a multi-institutional or cross-cultural comparative approach, including universities from different regions or countries. This would help determine whether the prominence of health, future prospects, and employability is context-specific or globally consistent.

While our study examined several key domains (health, social relationships, financial situation, academic experience, and personal growth), other potentially relevant variables - such as personality traits, digital media use, cultural values, etc., were not directly measured. Given the growing importance of digital environments, future studies could explore the impact of technology use, AI tools, and online learning environments on life satisfaction, particularly in hybrid or digitally transformed higher education systems.

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Appendices

Table 1: Survey

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements, using the scale: 1=Strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Slightly disagree; 4=Neither agree nor disagree; 5=Slightly agree; 6=Agree; 7=Strongly agree.
Note about results: Presented as percentages. N=864.

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Mean
Overall, I feel psychologically balanced, resilient, and optimistic in my daily life.	6.3	7.1	10.1	16.8	13.0	**30.9**	16.0	4.80
Overall, my health and lifestyle (sleep, nutrition, exercise) positively support my life satisfaction.	6.0	7.6	10.1	14.9	18.8	**28.9**	13.7	4.74
Overall, I am satisfied with my academic experience, study load, and progress at university.	7.3	6.0	9.6	19.0	18.8	**29.3**	10.1	4.64
Overall, I am happy with the social support and relationships I have at university and in my life.	6.5	3.8	5.7	16.8	19.3	**33.2**	14.7	4.97
Overall, I am satisfied with my financial situation and my ability to manage financial resources.	6.3	6.5	8.8	17.9	22.7	**27.7**	10.2	4.68
Overall, my university experience supports my personal development, growth, and future professional advancement.	6.8	5.3	6.0	16.3	21.1	**30.9**	13.5	4.86

Source: Composed by the authors based on survey analysis.

Table 2: Independent samples t-test comparing SWLS by gender and working status

Variable	Group	N	Mean (M)	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Gender	Male	208	22.6	7.6	0.28	862	0.780	0.03
	Female	656	22.8	7.4				
Working status	Working	376	23.5	7.2	2.35	862	0.019	0.19
	Not working	488	22.1	7.6				

Source: Calculated by the authors based on survey data

Table 3: Descriptive statistics: SWLS by year of study

Year of study	n	Mean SWLS	SD
Year 1	233	22.90	6.92
Year 2	275	22.58	7.30
Year 3	216	23.40	6.39
Year 4	140	21.81	7.12

Source: Calculated by the authors based on survey data

Table 4. ANOVA table: SWLS by year of study

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p-value
Between groups	227.73	3	75.91	1.57	0.194
Within groups	41492.77	860	48.25	-	-
Total	41720.50	863	-	-	-

Source: Calculated by the authors based on survey data

Gayane Tovmasyan holds a PhD degree in Economics. She is an Associate Professor working as a scientific expert at AMBERD Research Center of Armenian State University of Economics, and is also a lecturer at Armenian State University of Economics. Her research interests are management, economics, education, tourism.
Scopus: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=56690085600
Web of Science Researcher ID: https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/rid/AAH-5677-2021
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=zIuHzrUAAAAJ&hl=en&oi=sra
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4131-6322
Email: tovmasyangayane@yahoo.com

Arsen Petrosyan holds a PhD degree in Economics. He is an Associate Professor working as Head of the Educational division of Armenian State University of Economics, and is also a lecturer at the same University. His research interests are economics and education.
Web of Science Researcher ID: https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/rid/LIG-8832-2024
Scopus: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=58002098200
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9588-1140
Email: arsen.petrosyan.asue@gmail.com

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