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## ***Students' Subjective Constructions and Their Satisfaction with Academic Life***

### **Extended summary**

The research aimed to determine the relationship between students' subjective constructions and academic life satisfaction. Three instruments were used to examine the objective and the tasks: a questionnaire on socio-demographic characteristics created for the purpose of the research, an optimism/pessimism scale (Chang, 1996), translated for the research by Penezić (2002), and the Academic Life Satisfaction Scale (ALSS), an original scale created by Nogueira, Antunes, and Sequeira (2019). The study involved 237 undergraduate and master's students at the University of Novi Sad. The research was conducted online using the Google Forms platform from June to August 2023. The data were processed using the IBM SPSS statistical program for Windows (version 26). Descriptive statistical indicators, independent samples t-test, and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to explore statistically significant differences between categorical variables (participants' socio-demographic characteristics) and scores on optimism/pessimism and academic life satisfaction scales. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to determine statistically significant associations between optimism/pessimism and academic life satisfaction.

Given the relevance of these constructs, many authors have explored the relationship between optimism, pessimism, and academic life satisfaction (Wengelert and Rosen, 2000; Pavićević and Stojiljković, 2017; Pavićević and Stoševski, 2019; Gavín Chocano, García Martínez and Molero, 2023).

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The results of the research confirmed the connection between students' attitudes toward optimism, pessimism, and their satisfaction with academic life. Statements with the highest scores indicated that students are optimistic about their effort and commitment, believing that they can achieve expected outcomes. In comparison with a previous study (Pavićević and Stoševski, 2019), no statistically significant differences were found concerning the gender of participants, which may be explained by a significantly smaller number of male participants. Financial situation emerged as a significant factor influencing optimism and pessimism, indicating that financial stress can have a negative impact on students' future perspectives. Significant results were obtained regarding relationships with fellow students, choice of study program, and extracurricular activities. Participants were most satisfied with relationships with fellow students and the choice of the study program, while extracurricular activities offered at the faculty were the least satisfactory. This could affect the overall subjective experience of their capabilities since students' extracurricular involvement contributes to their self-efficacy, self-esteem, and emotional well-being (Coates, 2005). Another important factor in academic life satisfaction is students' financial situation. Additionally, significant differences were found concerning academic success. Students satisfied with academic life, those who have adapted most to the academic environment, also achieve the highest academic success.

It is important to note significant associations between optimism, pessimism, and academic life satisfaction. A significant positive association between optimism and satisfaction, and a significant negative association between pessimism and satisfaction, emphasize the impact of students' subjective constructions regarding the future and the environment on overall satisfaction with academic experience. Pedagogical implications suggest that students should be provided with greater support in creating a positive environment, as strengthening a positive environment at the faculty can increase student satisfaction. In addition to greater support, it is necessary to improve the selection of extracurricular activities for students. Certainly, working on the development of emotional skills and resilience can help students cope with stress and unpleasant experiences.

**Keywords:** subjective constructions, optimism, pessimism, satisfaction with academic life, students

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