

The Effect of “Going Out” on the Life Satisfaction of JMU Students  
Logan Spitzley  
Virginia Wright  
James Madison University

### Abstract

We were interested in finding whether hours spent going out and socializing could predict a person's life happiness. We had 362 students from James Madison University participate in an online survey that consisted of questions that measured how many hours a week students spend “going out” as well as questions that measure overall life satisfaction. We hypothesized that the more time people spend “going out”, the more likely it would lead to alcohol consumption and less time to spend on academic work and other extracurricular activities. Therefore, they would be less satisfied with their life. After running our regression analysis, we found that hours spent going out was not a significant predictor of life satisfaction. One possible reason for our findings may be the participants' misinterpretation of our question on going out. We suggest that future studies have participants from a multitude of majors and incorporate multiple questions to measure how much a person spends partying or going out that are not likely to be misinterpreted.

*Keywords: life satisfaction, partying, going out, happiness, college students,*

### The Effect of “Going Out” on the Life Satisfaction of JMU Students

There is a lot of literature on the potential physical and emotional health risks that can come about as a result of excessive alcohol consumption and partying. In a study that collected data from students at 25 different universities in over 24 countries, researchers found that there was a positive association between heavy drinking and low life satisfaction when they ran a regression analysis (Peltzer & Pengpid, 2016). On the other hand, research has also been done that shows how important feeling connected is to an individual’s well being. One study that researched the impact of social connectedness and life satisfaction on undergraduate students found that social connectedness was significantly correlated with life satisfaction for university students (Blau et al, 2016). Going out and social events such as frat parties may be a way for students to find a sense of belonging but, they may possibly lead to heavy alcohol consumption. This information raises the question as to whether partying and going out increases or decreases life satisfaction.

In this study, we investigated the impact of going out on students’ life satisfaction. An exploratory study that surveyed 2715 university students from 14 different nation measured life satisfaction by The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) which consists of 5 questions that were each rated from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Joshani et al, 2016). We used a scale with similar questions to measure life satisfaction in our participants. We hypothesized that hours spent going out would be a significant predictor of the participants’ overall life satisfaction. Specifically, as hours spent going out increases, life satisfaction decreases. As college students spend more time going out to social events they may be more likely to engage in destructive

behavior and abuse alcohol. This could possibly lead to lower academic performance, which might result in lower levels of life satisfaction.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Participants in this study were students studying psychology at James Madison University. Three hundred and sixty-two students participated in the study. Out of all of those who participated, 23.9% of the participants were male, 74.9% of the participants were female, and 0.3% percent identified as transgender.

Most of the participants identified themselves as White. Specifically, 86.5 % identified as White or Caucasian, 3.7 % of participants identified themselves as African American, 3.4% of participants identified themselves as Hispanic, and 3.1% of participants identified themselves as Asian. In addition, approximately 0.3% identified as Pacific Islander while 3.1% identified themselves as another race.

Our sample consisted of undergraduate students across all academic years at James Madison University. Five point four percent were freshmen students, 65.4 % were sophomores, 27.6% were juniors, and 1.1% of participants were seniors.

Participants in this study were compensated with class credit in a psychology research methods class for taking the survey.

### **Materials**

For the purpose of this study, researchers had students take an electronic survey from Qualtrics. The survey consisted of questions that were meant to measure the students activities

outside of academics, such as partying. One question asked specifically, “How many hours per week do you spend going out”? The survey also consisted of questions that were designed to measure students’ overall life satisfaction. The participants responded to the questions in a Likert scale format from 1-5. A score of 1 equated to a strongly disagree and a score of 5 equated to a strongly agree. Researchers used SPSS to compute a total life satisfaction score from the participants’ responses to the five life satisfaction questions. Two example questions from the life satisfaction scale are: “How much do you agree with the following statements: The conditions of my life are excellent” and “In most ways my life is close to my ideal”. The range of possible total on the life satisfaction scale varied from 5-25. A low score on the life satisfaction scale would be associated with a participant who likely had low life satisfaction. A high score on the life satisfaction scale would be associated with a participant who likely had a high life satisfaction. We calculated a measure of internal consistency for the life satisfaction scale using SPSS and found a Cronbach’s Alpha of  $\alpha = .844$  between the 5 questions of the life satisfaction scale. A Cronbach’s alpha of .844 suggests that the internal consistency between the questions used in the life satisfaction scale is at an acceptable level and the questions in this scale are likely good measures of a single variable.

### **Procedure**

On the day students participated in the study they entered into a JMU computer lab. The participants sat down at a desktop computer and opened a Qualtrics link to the online survey. The survey consisted of 183 total survey items as well as a variety of scales on life satisfaction and amount of time spent “going out”. Furthermore, the survey consisted of demographic

questions such as gender, race, and year in school of the participants. Students had as much time as needed to complete the survey.

## Results

Researchers used the data collected from the Qualtrics survey to run a simple linear regression in order to investigate the relationship between hours spent going out per week and an individual's score on a life satisfaction scale. The  $r = .005$  and  $R^2 = .000025$ , which means that our analysis found that virtually none of the variation in life satisfaction scores could be accounted for by hours spent going out per week. The p-value was  $p = .922$  which was well above .05. This means that it was extremely likely that any correlations between the two variables was due to chance and was not statistically significant. Also, hours spent going out per week was not shown to be a predictor of life satisfaction. The regression equation for our analysis was  $y_{\text{total life satisfaction}} = 23.437 + .006x_{\text{hrs going out}}$ . Through analyzing the slope it can be seen that as hours going out increases by one total life satisfaction score increases by .006.

## Discussion

Our results did not support our hypothesis that hours spent going out negatively correlates with life satisfaction. This contradicted some of the research that was found. In one study, researchers interviewed 236 college students about the effect that their sleeping and drinking habits have on their GPA. The researchers found a connection between alcohol use, daytime sleepiness, and grades received (Singleton & Wolfson, 2009). As a result of this research and others like it, we predicted that going out would have a negative impact on the overall happiness and life satisfaction of the participants. One possible reason why our results

did not support our hypothesis is that participants may have interpreted the question of hours spent going out in different ways. The question was intended to measure the hours students spend attending gatherings such as frat parties or other activities where students may be likely to abuse alcohol. But, the question was vague and could have been left up to interpretation. Additionally, we only had one question to measure how much participants party or go out. It may have been better to have several questions and compose a scale in order to more accurately measure the behavior we were intending to study.

### **Limitations**

There were a few limitations that we had throughout the study. The majority of the students surveyed were female and white. Since we did not have a diverse group of participants, this restricted our data and results. In addition, we only surveyed students who attend James Madison University, who are psychology majors, and who are enrolled in the Psychological Research Design and Data Analysis course, which could have also skewed our data.

### **Further Research**

For future replications of this study, we would suggest including a more diverse group of participants. It also might be useful to survey people who are older than the typical college student to see if there is any change in the answers given. In our study we only had one question regarding how many hours people spend going out. This may have limited our responses and altered the linear regression. Any further research done should include more questions that have

to do with socializing and going out. It might also be helpful to add questions about consuming alcohol during social events to see if drinking has any effect on life satisfaction as well.



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