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THE DETERMINANTS OF LIFE SATISFACTION AMONG RURAL YOUTH IN MASHONALAND EAST PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

Life satisfaction within various contexts remains an important subject for both policymakers and researchers. This importance emanates from the view that life satisfaction is an enduring indicator of both social and economic stability in a country. The study examined the level of life satisfaction and the factors influencing such levels. The impetus for conducting the study was derived from the growing significance of the subject of life satisfaction as well as the existence of a research gap for similar studies in the Zimbabwean context. The data were gathered from 200 randomly selected youths living in rural parts of Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe. The analyses of demographics, social-economic characteristics and the level of life satisfaction were conducted using descriptive statistics. The factors affecting life satisfaction were estimated using an ordered logit regression model. The results showed that life satisfaction levels among the youth in the study were generally low and differed according to the demographic and social-economic characteristics of the respondents. In the regression analysis, the variables that predicted life satisfaction included the level of education, dependency ratio, government programmes, access to credit, type of livelihood strategy, food security status, utility, and intrinsic value. For improved life satisfaction, the study recommends that the government implements interventions that focus on addressing issues affecting accessibility and availability of food. Furthermore, the government should improve access to basic needs such as credit facilities, education and agricultural programmes.

Keywords: Agriculture, life satisfaction, rural, youth, unemployment

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Introduction

Although migration, off-farm labour and remittances are significant in sustaining rural life in Zimbabwe, agriculture remains the linchpin for many rural youths in the country (Chikanda and Tawodzera, 2017; Munyoka, 2020). The situation is the same across sub-Saharan Africa. The youth must select one or a combination of techniques, including on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm activities to build their livelihoods (Yakubu and Aidoo, 2015). According to the literature, young people make these decisions to accomplish particular goals or outcomes. For rural youth, the most likely outcome of any livelihood strategy includes improved food security, reduced vulnerability, increased opportunities and enhanced subjective well-being (SWB) (DFID, 2000). The notion of subjective well-being includes both a cognitive and affective assessment of life (Diener et al., 1985). Happiness serves as an explanation for the affective component, while life satisfaction serves as a metaphor for the cognitive component, which is the focus of this study (Duncan, 2010; Ott, 2013). The terms life satisfaction and happiness are generally used interchangeably in literature to evaluate SWB, but there is strong evidence that these terms are not synonymous. According to Diener et al. (2003), life satisfaction is concerned with people's opinions about their lives, which may include assessments of their jobs or interpersonal relationships, whereas happiness is more closely related to emotions, feelings, or moods.

Life satisfaction portrays an overall evaluation of feelings and attitudes about one's life, at a given period, ranging from negative to positive (Diener et al., 1985). It focuses on what benefits a person, improves his or her situation, furthers their interests, or is attractive to them. A person with a high level of life satisfaction is typically thought to be doing well, lucky, or in an admirable situation (Valois et al., 2002). Since a higher life satisfaction level is correlated with a higher standard of living and economic prosperity, life satisfaction is developing as a complement to the more conventional and material techniques of measuring poverty and deprivation. It serves as the foundation for the case for a more human-centred approach to development and encourages us to reconsider pro-poor policy indicators and measures (Diener et al., 1999). Empirical evidence reveals a strong correlation between life satisfaction, performance, health and social relationship (Meyer and Dunga, 2014; Yakubu and Aidoo, 2015; Herrera, et al., 2021). Ma et al. (2021) found low life

satisfaction to be associated with low agriculture productivity in rural China. Furthermore, Chima et al. (2020) found a strong correlation between low life satisfaction and health-related factors such as pain, obesity, anxiety and chronic illness. Also, low life satisfaction is noted to significantly influence violence, sexual risk behaviour and substance abuse (Valois et al., 2002). In the same study, the chances of becoming involved in civil conflict and political protests were found to be higher among dissatisfied communities or individuals.

Life satisfaction within various contexts remains a persistent topic for policymakers and researchers. To this extent, there is a growing body of literature that examines the construct of life satisfaction (Becchetti and Conzo, 2013; Ngoo et al., 2015; Asfahani et al., 2019; Chima et al., 2020). However, there appears to be a paucity of such studies in developing countries such as Zimbabwe. Moreover, studies that direct research attention exclusively to youth in Africa is rare. These research gaps presented a fundamental impetus for this study. To fill the lacuna in research, this study examines the determinants of life satisfaction among youth in rural Zimbabwe. The study objectives were to (1) determine the level of life satisfaction among the youth; (2) and determine the factors affecting life satisfaction. The findings of this study may, theoretically, be used by other scholars as a benchmark for literature and research methods. In terms of policy, several government agencies, as well as non-governmental organisations may utilise the study as a guide for creating interventions targeted at raising the socioeconomic status of farmers and youths and ensuring socio-economic stability.

Conceptual background

From the view of economists and sociologists, several factors ranging from demographic, and socioeconomic to environmental influence life satisfaction. For instance, some studies found that aspects such as level of education, level of income, employment status, gender, poverty, age, marital status and social relationships influence an individual's evaluation of life satisfaction (Meyer and Dunga, 2014; Yakubu and Aidoo, 2015; Chima et al., 2020). Regarding education, there is no wide consensus on the effect on life satisfaction. Some studies have reported a positive association between education and life satisfaction or subjective well-being, while some studies have found life satisfaction to decrease as the level of

education increases. For instance, Meyer and Dunga (2014) and Ngoo et al. (2015) found that highly educated people are more likely to be unhappy compared to their less-educated counterparts. However, in other studies, life satisfaction was found to increase as the level of education increases (Sonmez and Altunsu, 2018; Chima et al., 2020). The effect of marital status is well documented in subjective well-being literature (Ebrahim et al., 2013; Ngoo et al., 2015; Yakubu and Aidoo, 2015; Asfahani et al., 2019; Chima et al., 2020). Chima et al. (2020) show that married people are happier compared to unmarried people (widowed, divorced and separated). Similarly, Ngoo et al. (2015) found marital status to be an important determinant of life satisfaction in South, Centre/West and Southeast Asia. In the study, married people had high levels of life satisfaction compared to their single counterparts.

Concerning household/ individual income, several studies have found a positive association between income and life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985; Meyer and Dunga, 2014; Ngoo et al., 2015). High income does not, however, enable higher levels of life happiness after a specific income threshold is reached (Chima et al., 2020). Hence, Frey and Stutzer (2002) found a negative correlation between income and life satisfaction. The importance of food insecurity on subjective well-being is reflected by Yakubu and Aidoo (2015) in Ghana. The study reveals that food insecurity and life satisfaction have a negative and statistically significant association. Similarly, Frongille et al. (2019) examining data from 138 countries found a significant and negative association between food insecurity and subjective well-being. Social class is another determinant of life satisfaction. Sonmez and Altinsu (2018) found a positive association between social status and life satisfaction. In the study, people in the upper class were happier and more satisfied with life when compared to lower-level classes. This led to the conclusion that life satisfaction increases as an individual move to higher social classes.

Regarding employment status, Meyer and Dunga (2014) found a negative association between unemployment and life satisfaction among South Africans. Thus, people experiencing unemployment have low life satisfaction. The study further revealed that individuals in informal employment are dissatisfied with life compared to those in formal employment. Several studies relay a concave association between age and life satisfaction (Meyer and Dunga, 2014; Ngoo et al., 2015; Sonmez and Altunsu, 2018; Chima et al., 2020). Thus,

younger (in their twenties) and older (above fifty years) people tend to be happier and more satisfied with life compared to people in their mid-years. There is no agreement in the literature on whether gender is an important variable in life satisfaction or happiness studies. This is exemplified by the contradictory results of some previous studies. For example, Mahadea and Rawat (2008) and Hinks and Gruen (2007) in South Africa found the impact of gender on life satisfaction or happiness to be insignificant. However, Meyer and Dunga (2014) revealed that men have higher life satisfaction than women. On the other hand, it emerged that women have higher life satisfaction than men (Ngoo et al., 2015). The factors that affect life satisfaction gathered during the literature review process are summarised in Table 1. The conclusions drawn from the analysis are broad generalisations and may be affected by both individual and environmental factors, yielding different results when analysed.

Table 1: Summary of some of the determinants of subjective well-being

Variable name	Generalised correlation with life satisfaction
Unemployment	Unemployed people have a lower life satisfaction than employed people
Level of education	Lower levels of education lead to lower levels of life satisfaction
Marital status	Married people have a higher life satisfaction than unmarried people
Gender	Men have higher levels of life satisfaction the women do
Age	People in their early life (in the 20s) and later life (above 50) are happier than people in their mid-years
Social class	People in the upper class were happier and more satisfied when compared to lower-level classes
Food insecurity	Food insecure people have a lower life satisfaction than food-secure people or households.
Income	Higher income has a positive effect on life satisfaction or happiness.

Research methods

Data

The respondents for the study were randomly drawn from three purposively chosen districts in Mashonaland East province, Zimbabwe: Seke, Goromonzi and Hwedza. Mashonaland East Province is in the northeast of the country and neighbours Midland's province in the South, Mashonaland West in the North-West, and Manicaland in the East. The province lies in Natural Regions 3 and 4 and covers an area of 32 230 km² (FEWSNET, 2017). The province has a significant number of youths (people between the ages 15-35 years) and rural communities engaging in smallholder farming. The characteristics of Mashonaland East Province are typical of other provinces in Zimbabwe e.g., poor resource management, food insecurity, poverty and high incidences of HIV/AIDS, etc (ZIMVAC, 2020). The principal economic base of the province is agriculture where the majority of the rural people derive their livelihood (FEWSNET, 2017). Key agricultural activities include crop cultivation, horticulture, floriculture, animal husbandry, and dairy farming. As the main source of livelihood, the performance of agriculture is a key determinant of rural livelihood resilience, life satisfaction and food security in the province.

The study adopted a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches and data in the study. Combining these approaches compensated for the limitations of each approach while leveraging the strengths of both approaches (Creswell, 2013). The study utilised the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling approach to come up with a representative sample size of 200 youths. Another factor considered while determining sample size was the data's suitability for the suggested empirical analysis methodologies. For the ordered logit regression model, the study followed the suggested ratio of observations to variables (at least 10:1) (Costello and Osborne 2005). Thus, the sample of 200 youths was enough for the proposed empirical methods of data analysis. In line with the constitution of Zimbabwe and the African Youth Charter, youths in the study were defined as individuals between the age range of 15-35 years (NYP, 2000). Given the evidence of different types of rural youths in Zimbabwe (FEWSNET, 2017), the sample was stratified to include agriculture participants (engaging in any of the activities along the agricultural value chain such as ploughing, planting, weeding, harvesting, marketing, and transporting) and non-

participants. Using a list of youths obtained from the Ministry of lands, agriculture, water, climate, and rural resettlement, random sampling was used to determine a sample of 125 agriculture participants. For the non-participants, the study targeted youths (75) within a radius of 10 km from the location of agriculture participants. This was done because no prior information on the actual populations of these groups was available.

The data were collected during the months of July and August 2020 using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered through face-to-face interviews by experienced enumerators who spoke the local Shona language. A questionnaire pre-testing was done with ten youths and the identified errors including question-wording were remedied. The questionnaire included information on basic characteristics such as gender, age, marital status, level of education and type of livelihood strategy. The questionnaire also included measures of natural capital (e.g., land ownership, distance to the land), physical capital (e.g., access to the internet, infrastructure condition), financial capital (e.g., access to loan, household income) social capital (e.g., source of information, social groups), and physiological capital (e.g., expectancy, utility, and cost value). The study protocol was approved by the Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Permission to conduct the study was also provided by the traditional authority (village heads) of the areas. The purpose and aim of the study were explained to the participants and were informed that should they wish to withdraw at any point during the interview they could do so. Anonymity and confidentiality were also discussed. The participants were assured that their names will not be used and the information they provide will not be shared with other community members and will be stored in secure storage at the university. All participants provided written consent to be interviewed in the research.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The satisfaction with life scale (SWLS), developed by Diener et al. (1985) was used to measure life satisfaction among youths in rural parts of Mashonaland East. Consistent with previous studies, the SWLS has been used to measure life satisfaction and proved to be reliable with a high internal consistency (Ngoo et al., 2015; Chima et al., 2020). In line with Diener et al. (1985), the study measured the

life satisfaction of the respondents using a scale of 0-7, with zero representing those who are dissatisfied (low subjective well-being) and seven representing those who are very satisfied (high subjective well-being) with the ends in their livelihood. The seven-point scale was further categorized into low subjective well-being, which is unhappy with the ends of one's livelihood (0-3), and high subjective well-being, which is very happy with the ends of one's life (5-7). A score of 4 represents the neutral point of scale or medium satisfaction (the point at which a respondent is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied).

Empirical approach

The data for life satisfaction in the study was in ordinal form. Thus, an appropriate method for the analysis was a ordered logit regression model (Ebrahim et al., 2013; Ngoo et al., 2015; Chima et al., 2020). The maximum likelihood estimation based on ordered logit regression gauges the optimum set of coefficients for predicting values of the logit-transformed probability of the dependent variable being in one category rather than another. Ordered logit specification can be represented in the form of a latent regression model as follows (Yakubu and Aidoo, 2015):

$$y^* = \sum_{i=1}^m \beta_i X_i + \varepsilon$$

y^* is an unobserved latent variable, X_i is independent variables and ε is an error term. The observed ordinal variable (y) has values between one and k , as follows:

$y_l = j \Leftrightarrow \alpha_{j-y} < y_i^* \leq \alpha_k$ for completeness, $\alpha_0 = -\infty$ and $\alpha_k = +\infty$ where α s are the unknown threshold parameters separating the adjacent ordinal categories (j) The probability of y observing a value of j is:

$$P_{ij} = \Pr(y = j) = \Pr(\alpha_{j-1} < y^* \leq \alpha_j) = \Pr(\alpha_{j-1} < \sum_{i=1}^m \beta_i X_i + \varepsilon \leq \alpha_j)$$

The error term, ε , is assumed to be logistically distributed. The dependent variable, y , which represents life satisfaction in this study has the values $k = 1$ to 3.

Table 2: Definition of variables in the ordered logistic model

Variable	Description
Dependent variable	
Level of satisfaction	Satisfaction with life (1 if between 0 and 3, 2 if 4, and 3 if between 5 and 7).
Independent variables	
Marital status	Whether the respondent is married or not (1 if yes and 0 if otherwise)
Gender	Sex of the respondent (1 if male and 0 if otherwise)
Age	Age of the respondents in years
Level of education	Number of years of formal education
A beneficiary of a government programme	Respondents benefit from any government programme (1 if yes and 0 if otherwise)
Dependency ratio	Number of individuals that depend on the respondent for their well-being
Household income	The total monthly amount of income earned or received by the household unit (US\$)
Land ownership	Ownership of any form of land (1 if yes and 0 if otherwise)
Access to credit	Access to formal or informal credit (1 if yes and 0 if otherwise)
Food insecurity	Household food insecurity status
Livelihood strategy	
Agriculture	Engage in agriculture as the main livelihood strategy (1 if yes and 0 if otherwise)
Migration	Engage in migration (internal or international) as the main livelihood strategy (1 if yes and 0 if otherwise)
Remittance dependency	Engage in remittance dependency as the main livelihood strategy (1 if yes and 0 if otherwise)
Cross border trading	Engage in cross-border trading as the main livelihood strategy (1 if yes and 0 if otherwise)
Behavioural constructs	
Intrinsic value	The interest one gains from engaging in agriculture
Utility value	The usefulness of agriculture to an individual's future
Cost	What an individual must give up to engage in agriculture
Attainment value	Personal significance ascribed to succeeding in agriculture
Expectancy	Individual's beliefs regarding their ability to succeed in agriculture

Results and discussion

Differences in life satisfaction

Table 3 reveals the distribution of life satisfaction among the 200 respondents. The results reveal that 68.5 percent of respondents expressed low life satisfaction (between 0 and 3), while 17 percent expressed middle satisfaction (4), and only 14.5 percent stated high levels of life satisfaction (between 5 and 7). Thus, the results show, first, that the level of life satisfaction in rural Zimbabwe is low. This is not surprising given the economic decline taking place in the country for the past 20 years. Poverty and unemployment are both endemic in the country, driven by the shrinking economy and hyperinflation. Poverty rates in 2020 were nearly 50 percent while the unemployment rate was estimated to be around 90 percent during the same time (Kiiza, 2021; World Bank 2021). The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated the situation disrupting livelihoods, expanding the number of extremely poor citizens by 1.3 million and increasing extreme poverty to 38 percent in 2020 (World Bank, 2021). The low life satisfaction among the youth perhaps explains the social and economic instability facing the country. Many people especially the youth, have turned to substance abuse and prostitution, and unemployment, inflation and poverty have remained relatively high (Munyoka, 2020). The future of the country is uncertain, hence different schools of thought describe the situation as a ticking time bomb. This calls for urgent attention by the government and development practitioners if we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 3 of good health and well-being.

Table 3: Life satisfaction levels

Life satisfaction Score	Frequency	Percent
0-3	137	68.5
4	34	17.0
5-7	29	14.5

n=200

Second, the results show that the distribution in life satisfaction differed according to the demographic and social-economic characteristics of the respondents. Concerning gender, Table 4 shows that female youth (2.95) were happier with their lives

compared to their male counterparts (2.71). However, there was no significant difference. The results concur with the literature which shows that gender differentials in life satisfaction are generally insignificant (Hinks and Gruen, 2007; Mahadea and Rawat, 2008). In line with Chima et al. (2020), married respondents were happier than their unmarried counterparts with an average life satisfaction score of 2.92. It is worth pointing out that respondents who were never married were happier (2.83) than those who were divorced (2.78) and widowed (2.60). The grief of losing a partner has an impact on the lives of widowed people, and a failed marriage that results in a divorce has an adverse effect on life satisfaction. With more people deciding not to get married and universal marriage being abolished, it will be interesting to see how the shift will impact life satisfaction in coming generations.

The results showed a significant difference in the level of education, alluding to the fact that there were differences in the mean happiness level within the four education categories. Of significance, respondents with tertiary education (3.32) were found to be happier than those with secondary (2.78) or primary (1.82) education. The results concur with Meyer and Dunga (2014) who found educated individuals to be highly satisfied, possibly because higher formal education is associated with better labour market outcomes, better health, higher living status, and high self-esteem. Regarding employment status, there were also significant differences. Employed respondents had the highest mean level of happiness (3.23) compared to unemployed respondents (2.78). The results confirm previous research which found that unemployed individuals are more likely to have low life satisfaction levels compared to those who are formally employed (Chima et al., 2020). This may be because of the personal and social cost associated with unemployment which includes poverty, food insecurity, debt, homelessness, and family tension. The results show that respondents between the age range of 29-35 years (2.98) were happier than respondents between the ages of 15-28 years. The differences in the satisfaction score were little, hence there was no statistical significance.

Table 4: Respondent's demographics and average happiness

	Variable	Percentage	Average happiness
Age	15-20	14	2.75
	21-28	44.5	2.75
	29-35	41.5	2.98
Gender	Male	45.5	2.71
	Female	54.5	2.95
Level of education	None	3	1.21
	Primary	4.5	1.82
	Secondary	73	2.78*
	Tertiary	19.5	3.38
Marital status	Married	45.5	2.92
	Single	46.0	2.83
	Divorced	6.0	2.78
	Widowed	2.5	2.60
Employment status	Unemployed	85	2.78*
	Employed	15	3.23
Land ownership	Own land	63	3.11*
	Does not own	37	2.69
Food security status	Food secure	19.5	3.62*
	Food insecure	80.5	2.66
Household income (US\$)	0-50	50.5	2.43
	51-150	26.5	2.87
	151-300	19.5	2.77
	301+	3.5	2.89

n=200

In terms of food security, food-secure respondents (3.62) were happier than food-insecure respondents (2.66). The differences were significant and concur with Asfahani et al. (2019) who found young people living in food-insecure households to exhibit low life satisfaction. This is because of the impacts of food insecurity which include depression, hunger, stress, and malnutrition. Table 4 shows that respondents earning US\$301 and more monthly were happier (with an average score of 2.89) compared to those earning below US\$300 per month, possibly because higher income decreases social risks and affords a certain standard of living. Finally, the results show that youth owning land regardless of size are happier (with an average score of 3.11) than those respondents who do not

own any form of land. Land especially among the poor in developing is an important asset for sustainable livelihoods and food security. Akinyemi and Mushunje (2019) linked land ownership with increased production, income, food security and social stability which all positively influence life satisfaction.

Life satisfaction and type of livelihood strategy

Table 5 presents the life satisfaction score of the respondents, adjusted according to the type of livelihood strategy; agriculture, cross-border trading, self-employment, migration and remittance dependency. The results show that of the five livelihood strategies only one (agriculture) had a statistically significant difference. The study reveals that individuals engaging in agriculture (the main livelihood strategy in rural Zimbabwe) show levels of life satisfaction (4.43) that are statistically significant and greater than those not engaging in the strategy (2.55). This may be because of the contribution of agriculture to household food security demands. Thamaga-Chitja and Morojele (2014) and Pienaar and Traub (2015) show that smallholder farming contributes to food security and poverty alleviation by improving farm incomes, providing nutritious food and creating employment opportunities, which all have a positive influence on life satisfaction. For instance, Ngoo et al. (2015) found a positive association between income and life satisfaction.

Concerning the migration strategy, the results show that respondents engaging in the strategy were less happy (2.82) compared to those not engaging in the strategy (4.10). This was not expected of migrants as they are more likely to be economically stable compared to non-migrants (Abdelwahed et al., 2015). A plausible explanation could be the challenges facing migrants in destination areas. This includes but not limited to cultural differences, language barriers, lack of employment and harassment due to lack of immigration documents (Fawole and Ozkan, 2014). For instance, in South Africa, there has been a frequent eruption of violent attacks against foreign nationals under the regalia “Put South Africans first”. This has seen many foreign nationals in the country losing their jobs and closing their businesses. However, there was no significant difference between the migration strategy and life satisfaction.

Table 5: Subjective well-being versus the type of livelihood strategy

Livelihood strategy	Variable	Percentage	Average satisfaction
Agriculture	Yes	34.0	4.43*
	No	66.0	2.55
Self-employment	Yes	38.5	2.92
	No	61.5	2.80
Migration	Yes	10	4.10
	No	90	2.82
Remittance dependency	Yes	40.5	2.81
	No	59.5	2.87
Cross-border trading	Yes	27.5	2.82
	No	72.5	2.86

n= 200

Owing to the current economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe, cross-border trading has spiralled to become a livelihood strategy for millions of people in the country. Despite being a common livelihood, the results show that respondents not engaging in the livelihood strategy were happier (2.86) than those engaging in the strategy (2.82). Similarly, respondents not engaging in the remittance dependency livelihood strategy were found to be happier (2.87) compared to those engaging in the strategy (2.81). The picture given shows that people engage in this livelihood's strategies for survival, whether they are happy or not, they have no choice but to engage. Regarding the self-employment livelihood strategy, the results show that respondents engaging in the strategy were happier (2.92) than those not engaging in the strategy (2.80).

Determinants of life satisfaction

The ordered logit regression model was estimated to examine the factors influencing life satisfaction among youth in rural parts of Mashonaland East Province, Zimbabwe. The results are presented in Table 6. The estimated model fits the data reasonably well as the likelihood ratio X^2 is statistically significant at the 1 percent level and the model correctly predicts 81 percent of the sample observations. The sign of the coefficient in the model shows the independent variable's direction of influence on the dependent variable. It follows that a positive value implies an increase in the likelihood that an

individual would be satisfied with life, while a negative coefficient implies a likelihood that the respondent would be not satisfied with life. Out of the 19 variables, eight had a statistically significant influence on life satisfaction and most of the variables.

Food insecurity measured using the household food insecurity access score had a negative and statistically significant relationship with life satisfaction. The results show that for a one-unit increase in food insecurity score, the odds of high life satisfaction versus medium to low life satisfaction are -.940 times lower, given the other variables are held constant. In other words, food insecurity increases the probability of individuals having low life satisfaction. The results agree with Yakubu and Aidoo (2015) who found a negative association between food insecurity and life satisfaction. A plausible explanation is that food insecurity predisposes an individual to a myriad of challenges including, poor health, stress, depression, hunger, and poor diets, which all lower their subjective well-being. For instance, Frongille et al. (2019) found that depression levels are higher in households that are food insecure. Similarly, Yakubu and Aidoo (2015), found that food insecurity is significantly and positively related to poor mental health. In another study, households associated with lower levels of food security reported higher levels of depression (Fang et al., 2021).

There is a very large body of literature on the relationship between education and life satisfaction (Meyer and Dunga, 2014; Ngoo et al., 2015; Yakubu and Aidoo, 2015; Sönmez and Altinsu, 2018; Chima et al., 2020). A common finding is that individuals with more years of formal education are more likely to be satisfied with their life compared to individuals with low levels of education. In line with the literature, Table 6 shows a positive and significant association between education and life satisfaction. This implied that with a unit increase in the level of education by a year, the odds of having high life satisfaction compared to having medium to low life satisfaction increases by a factor of 2.843, holding other variables constant. In other words, youths with higher levels of education demonstrated a higher satisfaction with life than those with lower levels of education or without education. A plausible explanation is that higher formal education is associated with better labour market outcomes, better health, and higher social status (Meyer and Dunga, 2014). Furthermore, higher levels of education are related to lower negative feelings or effects such as disenchantment, disillusion and frustration

associated with life in general. Chima et al. (2020) opine that education enables an individual to make progress towards their goals to adapt to changes in life.

Table 6: Factors affecting life satisfaction among rural youth

Variables	B	Std. Error	P-value	Odds ratio
Socio-economic characteristics				
Age	0.313	0.239	0.191	1.368
Gender	0.411	0.292	0.159	1.508
Level of education	1.045	1.3381	0.002**	2.843
Marital status	0.135	0.238	0.570	1.145
Level of income	-0.093	0.154	0.548	0.912
Own piece of land	-0.468	0.385	0.224	0.626
Food insecurity	-0.062	0.023	0.007**	0.940
Number of dependents	-0.285	0.0821	0.001***	0.752
Access to credit	0.979	0.557	0.079**	2.662
Beneficiary of gvt programme	0.371	0.139	0.008**	1.449
Livelihood strategy				
Agriculture	1.494	0.322	0.000***	4.454
Migration	-0.173	0.451	0.701	0.841
Remittance dependent	-0.048	0.296	0.870	0.953
Cross-border trading	-0.229	0.317	0.469	0.795
Behavioural factors				
Intrinsic value	0.630	0.192	0.001***	1.878
Utility value	-0.283	0.153	0.064**	0.754
Attainment value	-0.487	0.436	0.264	0.614
Cost	-0.165	0.153	0.280	0.848
Expectancy	-0.152	0.137	0.268	0.859
Constant cut 1	1.241	1.897		
Constant cut 2	4.156	1.939		
Constant cut 3	5.130	1.949		
Model specification Number of obs: 200 LR chi2 (12): 96.512 Pearson: 0.409 Deviance: 0.951 Overall % correctly classified: 81%				

p-value = *, ** and *** significant at 10%, 5% and 1%, respectively.
Source: Survey data (2020).

As expected, access to credit had a positive and statistically significant relationship with life satisfaction. This implies that the odds of being highly satisfied with life versus medium to low satisfaction are 2.662 times greater among youth with access to credit. The finding is in line with Becchetti and Conzo (2013). Credit either from formal or informal sources results in asset possession and improved purchasing power leading to enhanced life satisfaction. The coefficient 'number of dependants' had a negative and statistically significant effect on subjective well-being. Thus, with a unit increase in the number of dependants by one unit, the odds of having high life satisfaction the medium to low life satisfaction will be -0.752 times lower holding other variables in the model constant. Adesina and Favour (2016) are of the view that high dependency ratios entail higher food security needs to overcome and more mouths to feed hence affecting negatively subjective well-being.

Table 6 shows that the coefficient 'beneficiary of a government programme' had a positive and statistically significant effect on life satisfaction. Thus, for beneficiaries, the odds of high subjective well-being versus the combined medium and low subjective well-being are 1.449 greater than for non-beneficiaries, given the other variables are held constant. Participating in programmes offered by the government ensures sustainable food security, income, and employment (Meyer and Dunga, 2014). In the area, most of the youths were part of the Pfumvunza programme which is a sustainable way of crop production intensification, whereby farmers concentrate resources on a smaller piece of land, resulting in higher productivity from lower investment, hence higher profit margin and life satisfaction.

Out of the five livelihood strategies, only the agriculture strategy had a statistically significant effect on youth's subjective well-being. The results show that for agriculture participants, the odds of having high subjective well-being are 4.454 times greater relative to them having a medium to low subjective well-being, given the other variable are held constant. The results concur with Yakubu and Aidoo (2015) in Ghana who also found individuals engaging in agriculture to have high life satisfaction. This is expected because of the contribution of agriculture to the rural economy and food security (Afande et al., 2015; Chitja and Mabaya, 2015). In Africa, agriculture is the main source of food, employment and income for most of the rural population.

In line with the expectancy-value theory, utility and intrinsic value had a positive and significant association with life satisfaction. Thus, with a unit increase in utility and intrinsic value by one unit, the odds of having high life satisfaction versus medium to low subjective well-being are 0.754 and 1.878 times greater, respectively, with other factors being held constant. In other words, an individual who values agriculture is more likely to be satisfied with life compared to their counterparts who do not value agriculture. This is because individuals who value agriculture are more likely to be productive, earn high incomes and have better access to food, all of which affect life satisfaction positively (Yunusa and Giroh, 2017). This finding is in line with the expectancy-value theory which posits that an individual who values an activity is more likely to perform well in it (Wigfield, 1994; Eccles and Wigfield, 2002).

Conclusion

This study is arguably the first to examine the factors influencing life satisfaction among youths in rural Zimbabwe. The satisfaction with life scale was utilised to explore the levels of life satisfaction, and an ordered logit regression analysis determined the variables that influence life satisfaction. The results confirm that rural youth have relatively low levels of life satisfaction and the distribution of life satisfaction differs according to the demographics and social-economic characteristics of an individual. The results show that satisfied individuals had to be educated, food secure, have access to credit, benefit from a government programme, engage in the agriculture livelihood strategy and value agriculture. Through engaging and understanding the factors affecting life satisfaction in rural Zimbabwe, the study recommends that the government implements interventions that focus on addressing issues affecting accessibility and availability of food. Furthermore, the study suggests government interventions to provide basic needs such as credit facilities, schools and also more agriculture programmes.

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