



## The Subjective Wellbeing of Emirati Youth: Does Work Really Matter?

Poplavskaya, A., & Karabchuk, T.

**Citation:** Poplavskaya, A., & Karabchuk, T. (2018). The subjective wellbeing of Emirati youth: Does work really matter? *Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4(1), 126-141.

**Abstract:** One's employment status is differently associated with subjective wellbeing and this is also the case for young adults. On one hand, young people involved in the labour market do not feel isolated and lonely. They report being engaged in meaningful activity, live more active social lives and make a contribution to the economic life of the nation. On the other hand, having a job increases their levels of stress and anxiety, especially when combined with family, education and work responsibilities. Given the differential impact of work, our study explores the relationship between the subjective wellbeing of Emirati youth and their labour market status. We use the "Monitoring of Emirati Youth 2017" data for analysis. The results of this pilot study show that being employed is positively associated with feelings of happiness and life enjoyment for young Emiratis. Combining both work and studies generates more negative feelings such as loneliness and sadness as well as less life enjoyment, but helps deter depressive symptoms. Finally, being unemployed is associated with feelings of loneliness and depression; yet, unemployed Emirati youth nevertheless seem to enjoy their lives more than those combining work and studies.

**ملخص البحث :** تعد الحالة الوظيفية للفرد مرتبطة على عدة أوجه بالرفاهية الذاتية، كذلك هو حال الشباب أيضاً. فمن ناحية، لا يشعر الشباب المنخرطون في سوق العمل بالعزلة والوحدة. وأفادوا بأنهم يشاركون في نشاط ذي معنى، ويعيشون حياة اجتماعية أكثر نشاطاً ويساهمون في الحياة الاقتصادية للأمة. من ناحية أخرى، فإن الحصول على وظيفة يزيد من مستويات التوتر والقلق، وخاصة عندما يقترن بمسؤوليات الأسرة والتعليم والعمل. نظراً للتأثير التفاضلي للعمل، تستكشف دراستنا العلاقة بين الرفاهية الذاتية للشباب الإماراتي ووضعهم في سوق العمل. نحن نستخدم بيانات مشروع "رصد الشباب الإماراتي 2017" للتحليل التجريبي. تظهر نتائج هذه الدراسة التجريبية أن التوظيف مرتبط بشكل إيجابي مع الشعور بالسعادة والاستمتاع بالحياة لدى الشباب الإماراتي. كما يبدو أن الجمع بين العمل والدراسة يجعل الشباب يبلغون أكثر مشاعر سلبية مثل الشعور بالوحدة والحزن وكذلك الاستمتاع بحياتهم أقل. على الرغم من أن الحصول على وظيفة أثناء الدراسة يساعد على ردع أعراض الاكتئاب بين الشباب الإماراتي. وأخيراً، عدم التوظيف مرتبط بمشاعر الوحدة والاكتئاب؛ ومع ذلك، يبدو أن الشباب الإماراتي الغير موظف عن العمل يستمتع بحياتهم أكثر من أولئك الذين يجمعون بين العمل والدراسة.

**Keywords:** Emirati youth; subjective wellbeing; happiness; depression; sadness; loneliness; employment status

**About the Authors:** Anita Poplavskaya is a PhD student at the Faculty of Social Sciences and analyst in the Centre for Institutional Research, National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow, Russia. Dr. Tatiana Karabchuk is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology, at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), Al Ain, UAE.



**Address all correspondence to:** Anita Poplavskaya, Email: [anitamoiseeva.a@gmail.com](mailto:anitamoiseeva.a@gmail.com)

**Acknowledgement/Funding:** The authors appreciate the comments received from participants of the International Conference on Survey Research on Youth (UAE University, Dec 5-6, 2018). This paper was made possible through the UAEU's Center-Based Research Grant No. 31R100-Research Center-CPPL-1-2016: Monitoring of Emirati Youth: Socio-economic characteristics, values and wellbeing.

**Depression and negative emotions commonly appear** in early adulthood with what is known as the u-shaped life satisfaction dip (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008, 2017; Cheng, Powdthavee, & Oswald, 2017) with suggestions that this emerges in the face of unrealized life goals (Schwandt, 2016). Yet, when young adults are beginning their most productive life stages, factors like entrepreneurial activity, self-employment and working for others full or part-time lead to greater satisfaction, with unemployment normally doing the opposite (Hessels, Arampatzi, van der Zwan, & Burger, 2018; Larsson & Thulin, 2017; Nikolova & Graham, 2014). Attending and obtaining higher education is also associated with greater satisfaction and wellbeing (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004; Botha, 2014; Oreopoulos & Salvanes, 2011), as are close relationships and marriage in particular (Gustavson, Røysamb, von Soest, Helland, & Mathiesen, 2012; Naess, Blekesaune, & Jakobsson, 2015). Job stability is further associated with marital stability and family happiness, while unemployment and vulnerable employment lead to problems in relationships and decrease levels of subjective wellbeing (Kalil, Ziol-Guest, & Epstein, 2010).

While these factors hold true in many parts of the world, little is known about Arab youth in this regard. For example, studies in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Lebanon showed that marital status did not affect subjective wellbeing (Lambert, Karabchuk, & Joshanloo, forthcoming; Moghnie & Kazarian, 2012). Having a job also produced differential results, with Lambert et al. (forthcoming) showing that unemployment had little negative effect on male Emirati wellbeing, while being self-employed had a positive effect, but only for female Emiratis. While self-realization at work or fulfilment in any other valuable activity seems to be an important predictor of feeling happy, satisfied, involved and valued, it is unclear whether this is the case for everyone.

Consequently, the present study is focused on the relationship between the subjective wellbeing of youth in the UAE and their labour market status. To assess this relationship, we used the 'Monitoring of Emirati Youth (MEY)' data recently collected by the Social Research Unit within a research grant given by the Center for Public Policy Research and Leadership at United Arab Emirates University (UAEU). As the UAE is transitioning away from oil-dependence towards the creation of a knowledge economy, determining how youth are faring overall, and with respect to the labour market, is essential for the continued favorable political and socio-economic conditions conducive for human development. Although the rate of unemployment in the UAE is generally low (4%), the unemployment rate in youth is about 10% (Federal Competitiveness and Statistical Authority (FCSA), 2016). The process of entering the labour market after university can take up to one year according to MEY survey results and this period of time can spell unhappiness.



The literature shows that having a job adds to feelings of happiness and social belonging and helps young people deter feelings of depression and sadness. We hypothesize that the absence of a job is related to low subjective wellbeing and negative emotions among youth.

### Subjective Wellbeing

There are varied approaches to measuring happiness and wellbeing. Traditionally, psychologists focused on the absence of negative emotion as a proxy for wellbeing and aimed to understand why individuals suffered in life and by what means it could be alleviated (Bolier et al., 2013). In recent years, the field of positive psychology has prioritized a focus on the positive aspects of life as well (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), although this exclusive focus on the positive has been re-corrected through the introduction of Positive Psychology 2.0 (Wong, 2011). This development includes attention to both the positive and negative aspects of life experience, a more commonly accepted understanding of wellbeing in the literature (Diener, Oishi, & Tay, 2018), especially as positive and negative affect are independent from one another and the absence of one does not signal the presence of the other (Diener & Emmons, 1984). Positive emotions in themselves contribute to life satisfaction (Cohn, Fredrickson, Brown, Mikels, & Conway, 2009; Franke, Huebner, & Hills, 2017; Hagenauer, Gläser-Zikuda, & Moschner, 2018), while negative states like depression and anxiety undermine it (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2018).

How happy individuals report themselves to be can serve as a barometer of how they feel about their current conditions. Thus, determining how such states can be measured is vital. Previously, objective measures (e.g., unemployment rate, GDP, education levels) were most often used; however, a reliance on such narrow indicators is now discouraged (Adler & Seligman, 2016; Weijers & Jarden, 2013). Instead, perceptions and psychological states are prioritized, such as positive emotions (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2015). For example, subjective wellbeing is defined as the cognitive and affective evaluation of one's life by an individual (Diener, 1984; Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2003). This evaluation is self-reported and measured by standard questionnaires, which can include various concepts relating to happiness, life satisfaction, the subjective evaluation of different aspects of life itself (i.e., health, social life) as well as the presence of emotional states such as stress, depression, anxiety, restless sleep as well as mood and other behavioural manifestations (Chmiel et al., 2011; Kahneman, 1999; Park, 2004). It is accepted that subjective wellbeing is better measured with a broad range of components rather than a single item on a happiness or life satisfaction questionnaire (Chmiel et al., 2011; Moghnie & Kazarian, 2012; Park, 2004).

An example of this approach can be found in the measures used by the World Happiness Index developed by the Gallup organization and implemented in the Gallup World Poll since 2006. In it, the UAE scores relatively high: the indices were stable from 2006 until 2016 and reached 7 points out of 10 on scores of life satisfaction (Helliwell, Huang, & Wang, 2017, p. 14). For balance, the Negative Experience Index<sup>1</sup> is included. Also developed and implemented by Gallup since 2011, the UAE scored 25 out of 100, considered to be a positive middle level. The

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<sup>1</sup>The Negative Experience Index: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/155045/middle-east-leads-world-negative-emotions.aspx>



index measures the distribution of five negative emotions in countries around the world, including sadness, stress, anger, pain and worry. Both approaches to understanding the subjective wellbeing of Emirati youth are included in the current paper and include indicators of loneliness and sadness, alongside the experience of positive emotions.

### **Work, Youth and Subjective Wellbeing**

Work plays an important role in life. It serves not only as a source of financial income but provides for meaning in life, a way to become socially engaged, and the possibility of making a contribution to one's national economy and society. Work provides for daily structure, without which many individuals would be lost, bored, unfocused, and without purpose; work also provides individuals with a valuable place and role in society (Mogilner, 2010; Thin, 2012; Warr & Clapperton, 2010). Not surprisingly, being unemployed is strongly related to lower wellbeing and satisfaction (Calvo, Mair, & Sarkisian, 2015; Helliwell & Huang, 2014; Wulfgramm, 2014). In fact, a study of European nations showed that unemployment reduced life satisfaction by 0.33 on a scale of 1 to 4 (DiTella, MacCulloch, & Oswald, 2001). Yet, this drop in wellbeing appears to be more pronounced in older adults versus young (Pultz & Teasdale, 2017). Temporary work is hardly better as the lack of certainty given a weak or absent work contract can also lead to feelings of job insecurity (De Witte & Näswall, 2003; Scherer, 2009), as well as the strain of having to search for better opportunities while fulfilling a current job (Lewchuk, Clarke, & de Wolff, 2008).

Among the unemployed, greater initial wellbeing is correlated with higher re-employment one year later and lower chances of unemployment altogether (Krause, 2013; Luhmann, Lucas, Eid, & Diener, 2013). Greater initial wellbeing also translates into youth being more likely to attain a university degree, search for work and be clear about the type of work that would suit them best and get hired (Cote, Saks & Zikic, 2006; Haase, Poulin, & Heckhausen, 2012; Turban, Lee, da Motta Veiga, Haggard, & Wu, 2013). Young adults who experience a high degree of positive emotion show greater workplace competency and social engagement, as well as less depression, loneliness, and anxiety into their twenties (Kansky, Allen, & Diener, 2016; Richards & Huppert, 2011). Poor wellbeing during the period of young adulthood spells a number of risk factors such as violence, substance abuse, and risk-taking behavior (Proctor, Linley, & Maltby, 2009). Conversely, a lack of engagement in education, work or work-related training also leads to negative outcomes such as substance use, depression, poor social functioning, and greater risk of mental illness (O'Dea et al., 2014).

Labour market involvement is crucial for the positive future development of youth as they become familiar with a sense of engagement in meaningful activity during their educational years. Having a job can help reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness (Hipskind & Poremski, 2005). Studies highlight that being engaged in meaningful activity contributes to the happiness of individuals (Bundick, 2011; Froh et al., 2010; Konow & Earley, 2008), while involvement in extracurricular activity like community service and volunteering also boost happiness (Binder & Freytag, 2013; Bundick, 2011). When individuals perceive there are plenty of opportunities to volunteer and work, they even rate their cities as happier places (Leyden, Goldberg, & Michelbach,



2011). Yet, combining the responsibilities of family, education and work can lead to role conflict and negative psychological feelings such as stress, anxiety, restless sleep and sadness (Perna, 2010; Robotham, 2008). As youth transition between school, work and the start of relationships and parenting, it is important to monitor their levels of happiness and negative emotions so that appropriate services and/or programs may be aimed at helping them. As no studies have been conducted in the UAE on the work status of Emirati youth and their levels of wellbeing, this segment of society remains poorly understood.

### **The UAE Labour Market: Trends and Challenges for Youth**

Since the 1980's, the UAE has become an important provider of oil and gas production to nearby and remote countries, and the revenue from these sales have fostered rapid developments in its economy, infrastructure and social life (Gonzalez, Karoly, Constant, Goldman, & Salem, 2008). Thanks to high oil revenues, the UAE has taken a historically unprecedented leap from becoming a substance traditional society into a highly modernized one over the last 20 years (Samier, 2015). Like other nations, the political stability and economic prosperity of the UAE contribute to higher levels of wellbeing in society (Hsieh, 2015). Further, good living conditions, safety and security, a generous healthcare and social welfare system, as well as modern leisure facilities, and infrastructure maintain this level of satisfaction.

The UAE's national GDP has increased dramatically in the last few decades. The same can be said of the nation's population, which has tripled in size due to a large influx of expatriate labor, totaling more than 85% of the country, as well as a recent population boom among national youth (FCSA, 2016; Gonzalez et al., 2008). At the same time, only 8 to 10% of the workforce is comprised of national citizens. Such changes create economic advantages and challenges as the migrant flow constrains the job search for young nationals. The low labor market engagement of the national population has led to a heavy reliance on a foreign labor force and produced a weaker national human resource pool (Gonzalez et al., 2008).

Despite a high level of educational enrolment<sup>2</sup> in the country, the job search after graduation remains a challenge for youth (World Economic Forum, 2014). The strong preference of Emiratis to work exclusively in the public sector prevents them from being fully engaged in the private sector. Public entities are saturated and not every citizen can be absorbed. In contrast, employment in the private sector is very competitive as it is open to the world and young Emiratis with lower levels of experience but higher salary expectations lose out to cheaper expatriate workers with better skills (Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2012; Burden- Leahy, 2009; Gonzalez et al., 2008; Samier, 2015). As the UAE is rated as the best country to live in by young Arabs in the region, the competition is only expected to rise<sup>3</sup>. In this context, it is important to understand how Emirati youth feel about their work experience and whether it adds to their subjective wellbeing.

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<sup>2</sup> Gross enrollment ratio in tertiary education jumped from 15.55% in 2008 to 36.85% in 2016 (with even higher numbers for females: from 27.7% in 2008 to 53.2% in 2016) (UNESCO, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> The National. (2013, April 10). UAE best place to live or emulate, says Arab youth survey. URL: <https://www.thenational.ae/uae/uae-best-place-to-live-or-emulate-says-arab-youth-survey-1.599182>



## Method

The basis for our empirical analysis was the first wave of the longitudinal annual youth survey data collected within the ‘Monitoring of Emirati youth (MEY)’ project directed by the Center for Public Policy and Leadership at the UAE University in 2017. The goal of this pilot MEY survey was to test the instruments and begin to identify social issues that are problematic for Emirati youth. The sample size allowed us to identify and describe the relationship between employment status and positive and negative aspects of subjective wellbeing like happiness and enjoyment, as well as negative emotions, like sadness and loneliness.

## Participants

The age of our respondents ranged from 18 to 29 years of age and the final sample included 656 respondents (Mean age = 23.15, SD = 2.83), with 32% of respondents being male and 68% female. Half of all respondents lived in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. A total of 20% of the sample reported having a paid job and 9% reported being unemployed and looking for work. Among employed Emirati youth, 67% were working in the government sector. Only half of employed youth had a permanent work contract, 30% had fix-term contracts, and 4% were self-employed. Regarding socio-economic characteristics, 16% of respondents evaluated their family income as low, 67% as normal and 17% as high. In terms of educational qualifications, 38% had already obtained a Bachelor’s, Master’s or Doctoral degree, while 56% were still in school. Only 22% reported being married and 13% had children. A majority (77%) lived with their parents.

## Measures

### *Employment status*

We analyzed the following five employment status groups: non-working students, employed students, employed non-students, unemployed youth and non-active (not working, not studying, and not searching for work). Non-working students comprised 56% of the sample, 9% were young employed Emiratis who had finished their education, 11% were employed students, 9% were unemployed youth and the remainder, 15%, were classified as non-active. We used chi-square tests and correlation analysis to test for links between employment status and subjective wellbeing indicators.

### *Subjective Well-being*

We measured subjective wellbeing by including two lists of negative and positive emotional and behavioral items (see Table 1 and Table 2 for the questions used).



Table 1

*List of positive and negative SWB items*

Positive emotional items	Negative emotional items
1. Feeling happy	1. Feeling unhappy
2. Enjoying life	2. Not enjoying life
3. No sadness	3. Feeling sad
4. No depression	4. Feeling depressed
5. No loneliness	5. Feeling lonely
6. No restless sleep	6. Having restless sleep
7. No feelings that everything is an effort	7. Feeling that everything is an effort

Table 2

*Selected questions from the MEY survey*

Questions	Response Options
Q1.4. Taking all things together, would you say you are...	Very happy Rather happy Not very happy Not happy at all
Q3.4 Please tell me how much of the time during the past week, You felt sad? You felt depressed? You felt that everything you did was an effort? Your sleep was restless? You enjoyed life?	None or almost none of the time Some of the time Most of the time All or almost all of the time
Q1.6 How often do you feel lonely?	Very often Often From time to time Almost never Never at all



## Results

The majority of young people in the present study report high levels of happiness: 94% say they are very or rather happy (Table 3). At the same time, the analysis of other subjective wellbeing components shows less positive results. One third of Emirati youth state feeling lonely (Table 4). Restless sleep, sadness and depression bother 35%, 21% and 16% of Emirati youth accordingly (Table 5). Almost 27% of Emirati youth feel they put much effort into their life and 16% of young men and women never or almost never feel they enjoy their life.

Table 3

*Happiness of Emirati youth, % (frequency table of the question: Taking all things together, would you say you are...)*

Category	%
Very happy	60
Rather happy	33
Not very happy	5
Not at all happy	1

Table 4

*Loneliness of Emirati youth, % (frequency table of the question: How often do you feel lonely?)*

Category	%
Very often	14
Often	18
From time to time	36
Almost never	19
Never at all	12

Table 5

*Depression, sadness, restless sleep and life enjoyment of Emirati youth, % (frequency table of the question items: Please tell me how much of the time during the past week you...)*

	Felt depressed	Felt sad	Felt like everything you do is an effort	Had a restless sleep	Enjoyed life
None/almost none of the time	33	29	19	22	16





Some of the time	51	50	54	43	36
Most of the time	11	14	20	27	27
All/almost all of the time	4	7	7	8	21

Tables 6 and 7 reflect the distributions of the seven negative and positive items by employment status. The chi-square tests show that negative and positive indicators are differently spread among respondents from the five socio-economic groups depicted from their status on the labor market. Results of the negative components of subjective wellbeing show that none of the employed non-student Emirati youth reported feeling unhappy. In fact, the percentage of participants who reported feeling unhappy was relatively small, with the highest percentage of unhappiness found among employed students (8.2%). Employed students also reported the highest percentage of those feeling sad (29.1%) Additionally, chi-square results showed a significant difference in loneliness of employed students compared to the others. The trend in the data showed that a higher percentage of the non-active group did not enjoy life compared to the other groups (28.6%); at the same time, the non-active group had the smallest percentage of participants who reported feeling depressed (6.7%) and restless (20%). Unemployed youth represented the greatest percentage of those feeling depressed (21.4%) and lonely (50%). Employed non-students had the highest percentage of those feeling that everything is an effort (36.8%) and restless (37.8%), followed by employed students (36.1%), who also represented the smallest percentage of those feeling that everything they do is an effort (16.4%).

Table 6

*Employment status of Emirati Youth and Negative Components of the SWB, %*

	Feel unhappy	Do not enjoy life	Feel lonely	Feel depressed	Feel like everything you do is an effort	Feel restless	Feel sad
Student	7.5	16.3	29.5	15.5	26.6	35.4	20
Employed student	8.2	20.3	45.9*	16.4	16.4*	36.1	29.1*
Employed non- student	0*	8.1	47.2	17.6	36.8*	37.8	16.7
Unemployed	6.3	23.1	50	21.4	33.3	21.4	28.6
Non-active	6.7	28.6	33.3	6.7	26.7	20	26.7

Note. \* =  $p < .05$  for Chi-square test

Table 7 includes the distributions for the positive components of subjective wellbeing. Consistent with the results described above, 100% of employed non-student Emirati youth reported feeling happy, with the smallest percentage of this being reported by employed students



(91.8%). Thus, a large percentage of all groups reported feeling happy. The other positive subjective wellbeing components, however, showed much smaller percentages. For example, only 32.2% of employed students reported that they enjoyed life. The highest percentage of this variable was reported by unemployed youth (53.8%). Even though over 50% of unemployed youth reported enjoying life, they represented the smallest percentage of those who do not feel lonely. It is possible that the lack of employment limited their access to socialization opportunities. The highest percentage of those not feeling lonely were the non-active group (50%), who also represented the highest percentage of those who do not feel depressed (66.7%), followed by employed students (49.2%). Here, employed non-students represented the smallest percentage of those who reported not feeling depressed. They also represented the smallest percentage of those who do not feel that everything is an effort. In this category, again, the non-active participants represented the highest percentage. Despite this finding, the trends in the data show that the non-active participants were the smallest percentage of those who do not feel restless while the unemployed youth represented the largest percentage of those who did not feel restless. Finally, the highest percentage of those not feeling sad were the employed non-students (38.9%) and the smallest percentage of those not feeling sad were the students (27.9%).

Table 7

*Employment status of the Emirati Youth and Positive Components of the SWB, %*

	Feel happy	Enjoy life	Do not feel lonely	Do not feel depressed	Do not feel like everything you do is an effort	Do not feel restless	Do not feel sad
Student	92.5	48.5	33.8	32.4	18.7	21.2	27.9
Employed student	91.8	32.2*	27.9	49.2*	24.6	27.9	34.5
Employed non- student	100*	43.2	27.8	26.5*	10.5*	21.6	38.9
Unemployed	93.8	53.8	21.4	28.6	25.0	28.6	28.6
Non-active	93.3	42.9	50	66.7*	26.7	20.0	33.3

*Note.* \* =  $p < .05$  for Chi-square test

To gain additional information on the wellbeing of employed students, we conducted correlational analyses on positive and negative items. The results showed that combining work and studies is significantly associated with less enjoyment and more loneliness in the lives of young Emiratis. On the other hand, working while studying may help to deter depressive symptoms and is associated with fewer feelings that everything they do is an effort.



Table 8

*Correlation coefficients*

	Correlation coefficient	Significance
Employed student * enjoying life	-0.137 <sup>**</sup>	0.007
Employed student * not being depressed	0.156 <sup>**</sup>	0.002
Employed student * feeling lonely	0.143 <sup>**</sup>	0.005
Employed student * everything is an effort	-0.112 <sup>*</sup>	0.029

*Note: Only significant coefficients are provided in the table*

### Discussion

In the current study we assumed that having a job would contribute to feelings of happiness and the life enjoyment of young Emiratis. We also wanted to see if the double burden of studies and work was negatively associated with wellbeing. Although we used a nonprobability convenience sample and our findings cannot be generalized, they are still relevant and serve as grounds for further methodological solutions in the measurement of subjective wellbeing. By analyzing items representing positive and negative components of subjective wellbeing, we were able to investigate reports of wellbeing from both sides. In short, we discovered that having a job can contribute to positive aspects of wellbeing such as feeling happy and not feeling sad, while unemployment can be a factor in loneliness and depression. Our findings are in line with the literature (Calvo et al., 2015; Helliwell & Huang, 2014; Wulfgramm, 2014, Robotham, 2008). At the same time, being employed may also create situations where young people feel restless and that everything is an effort. Similarly, combining work with university studies may have both positive and negative implications for Emirati youth. Although it is associated with less life enjoyment and more loneliness, being an employed student may also decrease depressive symptoms. As employed students juggle several tasks, it is possible that they gain time management skills that help them feel more capable in multiple areas of their lives, thus lessening feelings of everything being an effort.

One of the most interesting findings of the present study is that unemployed youth enjoy their lives more than any of the other groups. Similar findings were suggested by a recent UAE study which showed that Emiratis may be less worried about their future as the government provides a generous welfare safety net to alleviate the usual concerns associated with unemployment (Lambert et al., forthcoming). Another interesting aspect is that non-active youth (those who are not employed, studying, or looking for work) are the least depressed and among those who are the least lonely. This raises the idea that the non-active may be socializing and involved in activities that are not related to work or study. They may, for example, be more active with family and friends and thus may have fewer reasons to feel lonely. More research is needed to determine the ways in which employment and university studies combine with other aspects of life to provide a fuller picture of subjective wellbeing among youth in the UAE.



## Conclusion

The results of this pilot project serve as a starting point in the discussion on the relationship between Emirati youth work status and subjective wellbeing. Our findings can be used towards future research applying more advanced statistical methods and relying on a more representative sample across the nation. Additionally, qualitative and mixed methods enquiries would help to better explain how youth perceive the positive and negative components of subjective wellbeing as well as the activities in which they engage outside of studying and/or paid employment. Future studies should also focus on the quality of reported jobs, as many jobs, particularly for youth are frequently characterized as “bad jobs”; that is, lacking in security, interest, and meaning (Clark, 2015). It is important to monitor the subjective wellbeing of Emirati youth for policy-making and focus on both positive and negative states to obtain a full structural understanding of the employment and educational experiences in Emirati youth.

Finally, our findings suggest that interventions to facilitate optimal working environments could be developed to support working students; conversely, more supports and flexibility in educational institutions may also help working students to a greater degree. It is also worthwhile to monitor youth wellbeing over time and repeatedly to determine the effects of such programming or policy modifications as subjective wellbeing is responsive to changes in social and economic conditions, as well as developmental transitions (Chen & Page, 2016).

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