



ISSN Print: 2664-8717
ISSN Online: 2664-8725
Impact Factor: RJIF 8.00
IJRE 2024; 6(2): 166-171
www.englishjournal.net
Received: 20-05-2024
Accepted: 03-07-2024

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College life is a time to chill or time to toil? A study on university foreign languages students

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2024.v6.i2c.224>

Abstract

College students believe that after arduous years of high school education, when a significant number of students commit suicide and several suffer from severe mental illnesses as a result of the intense pressures of school, college life is a time to relax rather than work. Students ranging in year from first to fourth from various universities participated in the study. An online survey served as the methodology. The findings indicated that, in comparison to male students, female students make up the majority of university students who study foreign languages. The result revealed that students' attitudes about college life were generally balanced. While the first year was thought to be the most comfortable, the majority of students thought that the fourth year was the most challenging.

Keywords: Foreign language, chill, toil, Chinese, English, university students

Introduction

Many college students believe that college life is not a place to stress yourself out with books but rather a place to relax by learning new things and experiencing new things while still treating schoolwork with equal importance, owing to the struggles many of them had during their high school years. It is well recognized that high school coursework and exams rank among the most challenging experiences for students worldwide. In China, high school students typically begin lessons at 7 a.m. and end at 9 p.m., though they occasionally stay late to prepare for final exams. Suicidal thoughts, mental health issues, and school dropouts are commonplace during the high school years. Due to the extreme pressure that high school pupils are under, parents and guardians of these youngsters also encounter comparable difficulties in raising their charges. Additionally, studies reveal that some parents who may be considering divorce decide to wait until their kids have graduated from high school out of concern that their loss of parental supervision and care may force them to make terrible decisions. Many students think that once they start their university studies, it's time to relax and not worry about books as much. But things aren't the same as in grade groupings. Due to their lack of campus life experience, first-year students have a different perspective on university life. Since they are no longer confused about how university studies are contacted, sophomore students think differently than first-year students. Students set aside extra time for everything in their second year. Compared to fourth year students, who now fear the unknown, third year students are more at ease.

Background

University time Demographics

The Year of over-excitement and Confusion

According to Shole A. (2017) ^[10], college is a time and place where students acquire knowledge that helps them accomplish their life goals through interactions with other students from various countries and regions who have diverse lifestyles and perspectives on life. Many high school graduates are eager to start college and expect that everything will work out when they do. However, many students believe that their first year of college is the most challenging. Students that have been overly excited and confused have typified the first year. The majority of students attempt to discover who they are for the entire semester. Everything has changed from high school life and is new.

While it's against the rules in high school, college students bring their phones to class. Many first-year students became rebellious due to their excessive excitement over using their phones freely in class. Many first-year college students find it difficult to find the right course and facility quickly. It gets even more difficult because of the various criteria for each class subject and the method that they are studied. Liberated from the rules set by their parents, many students find it difficult to identify their typical lifestyle, behavior, and socialism. This is corroborated by Campsen NA and Bulbaltz WC (2017) ^[2], who claim that because college students have greater freedom to enjoy and amuse themselves, they sleep more on weekends and very less during the week.

The Year of Adjustment

The transitions to college life are influenced by a multitude of factors. According to Cho B and Lee J's (2019) ^[3] research findings, social support and stress—both academic and interpersonal—were the primary influencing factors that led to college life adjustment. Additionally, social assistance from friends and family was not unusual. According to Bilal Adel AI *et al.* (2012), adjustment in college is one of the key predictors of success in college, whether it be in the academic, physical, moral, or health domains. Many students lose themselves due to loneliness over their lengthy university careers. One of the contributing factors to students' stress in university life, according to Hicks T and Miller E (2006) ^[7], is the lack of high school friends and parents nearby throughout the transition from high school to university. The study on stress and depression among Republic of Korean College students conducted by Hee-Sook Sim and Weon-Hee Moon (2015) ^[6], however, comes in second place to the students' self-efficacy. Based on self-efficacy, these researchers also found that students' adjustment lives to college were quite good. The second year of university life can be characterized as a year of changes for the students, depending on how much time they want to spend working or relaxing. This varies significantly depending on the location. Taiwanese, Chinese, and Indonesian college students all prioritize various aspects of adjustment, as will be shown in the following chapter. The hardest thing for second-year college students is figuring out how to change their behavior, make new friends, manage their money, and balance their schedules. Some students may view it as a sign of hard work, while others will view it as a way to relax. Traveling, going on dates, viewing movies, and staying up late on the phone. Speak on the phone or engage in gaming.

The Year of Chilling or Toiling

From perplexity and over enthusiasm to adaptation for many college students, the third year is a critical one for determining their long-term objectives. University third-year students feel they still have a lot of time to follow their aspirations for a post-graduate period, unlike the third year of high school, which is the final year for graduation. At this point in their third year of college, many students like to look back on their best university moments now that they have settled in, made lots of friends, and adapted to the campus environment. According to Paul D. *et al.* (2011), college students' excessive stress has a huge negative impact on their general health, leading to both mental and physical health issues. The third-year students at Chinese College are

so stressed out from their high school education that they would rather relax than work. One of the most demanding learning environments in the world is found in Chinese high schools. Due to the high level of competition in China due to its enormous population, parents will do whatever it takes to ensure their children pass the high school exams and live a successful life after graduation.

According to Paul D. *et al.* (2011) (Ibid), racial and gender inequalities account for the majority of the stress that college students accumulate. Because they are expected to shoulder more obligations in life, boys appear to put in more work than girls when attending college. Because of their strict expectations to provide their prospective wives a house, a car, and a bride price, the Chinese lads are under more stress in this situation. Numerous Chinese male college students have been forced by this legislation to put in extra effort when it comes to their academic work. Due to anxiety and worry of what lies ahead after graduation, nearly all students don't begin to experience final stress until their fourth year of study.

The Year of Fear of the Unknown

Every human being experiences stress, and the type and source of stress differs from person to person, according to Pfeiffer D (2001) ^[9]. The author goes on to say that behavioral, environmental, and social changes are only a few of the many factors that lead to stress in college students. According to Sirgy MJ *et al.* (2006) ^[12], the ten domains of life—personal financial situations, family financial situations, availability of free time, personal and family health, university career, university friendship, faculty, and friendship—all contribute to college students' overall life satisfaction. Students who are satisfied are more equipped to focus on their post-graduation plans and overcome their fear of the unknown. Many fourth-year college students typically suffer from a concern of not knowing what lies ahead in their lives beyond college. This is probably a regular occurrence, particularly among students whose selections favored more relaxing than striking a balance between relaxing and working. The rigorous coursework requirements, which include research projects, writing assignments, and language exams, cause anxiety in many students. They wonder if they will graduate in time to continue their education or find employment. Many university students push everything in their fourth year of study in order to graduate and concentrate on their uncertain futures. However, throughout the course of four years at university, this does not disappear without having an impact on students' physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Many college students commit suicide for a variety of reasons, including personal health issues. The same causes may cause other students to drop out of college. The findings of some of the college students who participated in this study's studies will highlight a variety of elements influencing college students during their time in college.

College Students' health life issues

Most of Chinese universities have very high enrollment rate of students due to the country's large population. From morning classes to evening classes the passageway is always full of students coming in and going out of classroom buildings. The dangers of contracting diseases are very high. This has been witnessed during the COVID 19 pandemic period where it was very difficult to control the spreading of

the virus in universities. The relationship between College stress and health worries is immensely inseparable. As Watson TD (2017) ^[14] noted the limited ability by College students in the US to get adequate food due to financial problems results in the insecurity of food in Colleges. Food insecurity in Universities drives the rate of stress in students in many Colleges. Before delving into some preventative measures such as Relax programs and balanced diet promotion as discussed by Tucker D (2010) ^[13] in relations to College students' health problems we will first discuss about types of health issues and their causes. The authors have discovered four types of health issues which involves the following issues.

1. **Stress:** With the rise of competence in the job market in many countries China included, it has become very stressful for many College students to outperform each other in College activities. College life has become a place of stress for many students because of the pressure many students face in order to acquire the best grades. Wurdinger S and Rudolph J (2009) ^[15] asserts that College students apart from just studying books they also practice skills such as time management, problem solving and taking responsibilities. This is however a very stressful moment for many College students when they take their time to plan for their future.
2. **Confusion:** Fallahchai R (2011) ^[5] asserts that students who get into College without preparedness to College work usually fall behind in their skill or academic achievements. The confusion that grapples first year College students to cope up with College life results into many students to face many challenges in attaining the best grades. This confusion usually disappears in the second year.
3. **Dietary:** Silliman K *et al.* (2004) ^[11] attributed College students' health problems as caused by dietary deficiency due to many students missing breakfast and overeating of snacks. Silliman K *et al.* (2004) ^[11] (Ibid) also observed that more male students miss a balanced diet due to overtaking of alcohol. Some University students apartments are located far from classrooms while classes usually starts early in the morning thereby resulting to many students to miss breakfast.
4. **Sleeplessness:** There are many activities that keeps many College students away from campus life which usually results in some students to suffer from some health issues such as sleeplessness disease. Cox BE *et al.* (2016) ^[4] asserts that life events outside College life affects students' performance in College and their health status. Some of the life events outside College included clubbing, family financial issues and other personal indulgences. Having such things in College students' life brings a lot of sleeplessness habits. With the advent of cell phones many College students do not sleep watching social media and playing phone or computer games.

Methodology

The researchers carried this survey using a quantitative methodology whereby questionnaires were send to University students from various countries among them Chinese students, Zimbabwean students, Indonesian students and others.

Research Questions

Among the 10 questions submitted to the students who participated the following are the few example questions.

- College life is time to chill?
- College life is time to toil?
- Which University year is more difficult?
- How often do you visit the library a week?

Results and Discussions

Results

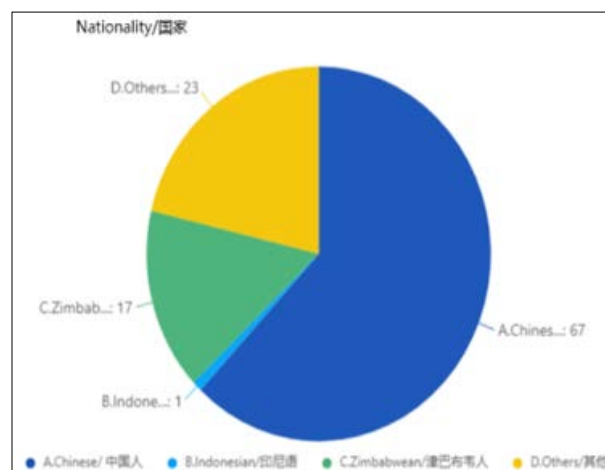


Chart 1: Participants' Nationality

The research questionnaire was distributed to Chinese University students and foreign students studying in China. 108 students responded in the survey. 67 Chinese students, 17 Zimbabwean students, 1 Indonesian students and 23 students from different nationalities.

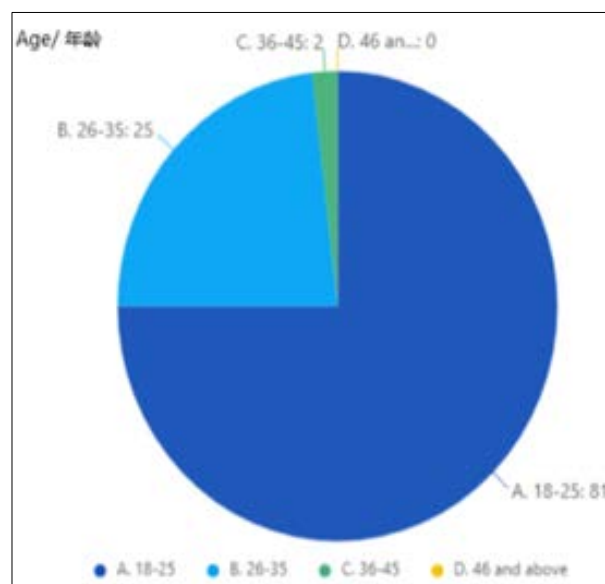
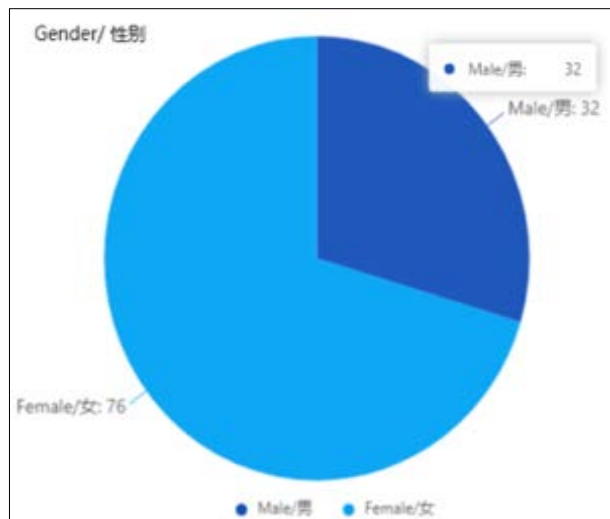
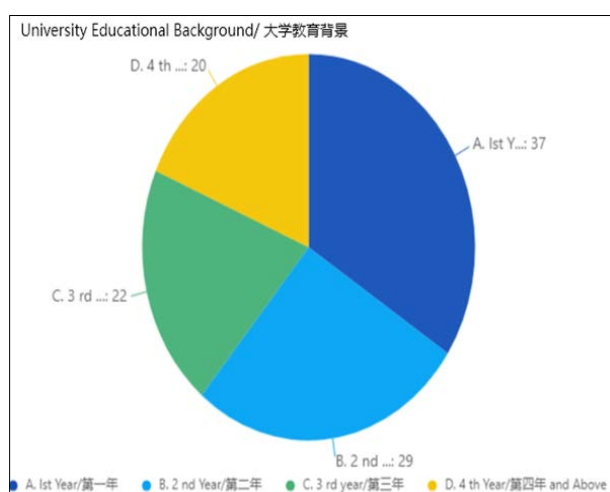


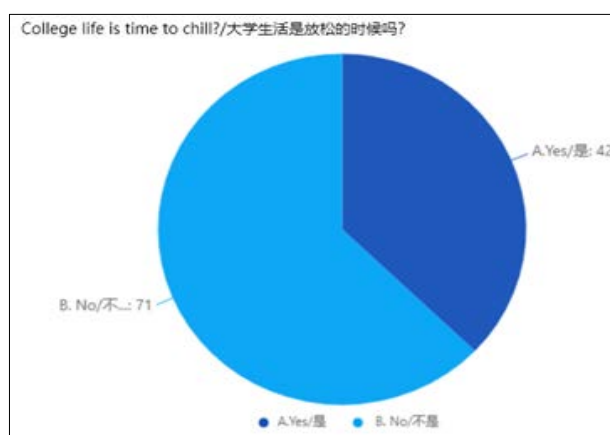
Chart 2: Participants' Age

The majority of students were of 18-25 years of age where 81 students participated while 25 students aged 26-35 and 2 students aged 36-45 participated.

This survey showed that female university students dominated in university enrollment than male students. 76 female students constituting 70.3% and 32 male students constituting to 29.6% participated.

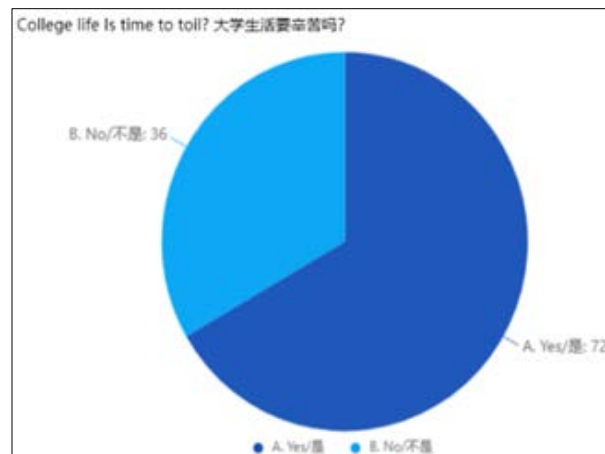
**Chart 3: Participants' Gender****Chart 4: Participants' Educational Qualifications**

The students who participated in the survey were comprised of 37 students in first year, 29 students in second year, 22 students in third year and 20 students in fourth year.

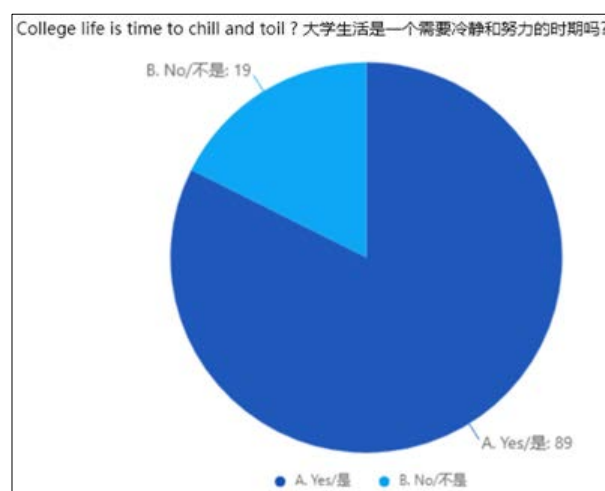
**Chart 5: Question 1**

When the students were asked if University life was time to chill their answers were 42 of them said "Yes" 38.8% and 71 students 65.7% said "No".

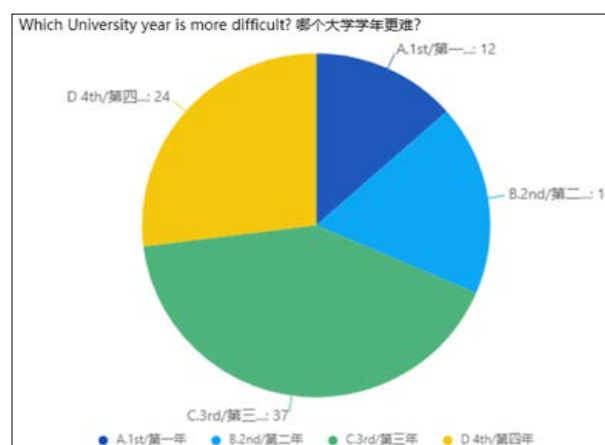
On the question if University life was time to toil 72 students constituting to 66.6% said "Yes" while 36 students constituting 33.3% of the participants said "No"

**Chart 6: Question Number 2**

On the question if University life was time to toil 72 students constituting to 66.6% said "Yes" while 36 students constituting 33.3% of the participants said "No"

**Chart 7: Question Number 3**

The question asked them if University life was time to chill and toil 89 students 82.4% said "Yes" and 19 students 17.5% said "No"

**Chart 8: Question Number 4**

Regarding the question on which University year was more difficult 37 students 34.2% said "3rd Year" was more difficult while 24 students 22.2% said "4th Year" was more difficult. 16 students 14.8% said "2nd Year" was more

difficult while 12 students 11.1% said “1st Year” was more difficult.

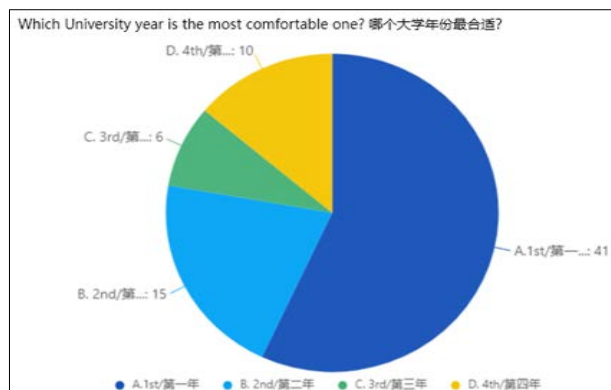


Chart 9: Question Number 5

The students were asked on which University year was more comfortable and 41 students 37.9% said “1st Year” while 15 students 13.8% said “2nd Year”. 10 students 9.2% said “4th Year” and 6 students 5.5% said “3rd Year” was more comfortable.

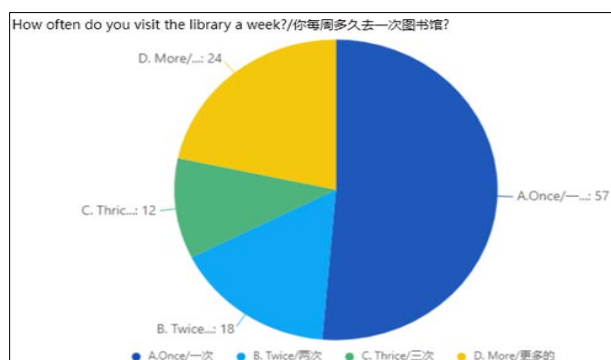


Chart 10: Question Number 6

When asked how often they go to the library per week 57 students 52.7% said “once per week” while 24 students 22.2% said “more than three times a week”. 18 students 16.6% said “Twice a week” while 12 students 11.1% said “Three times a week”

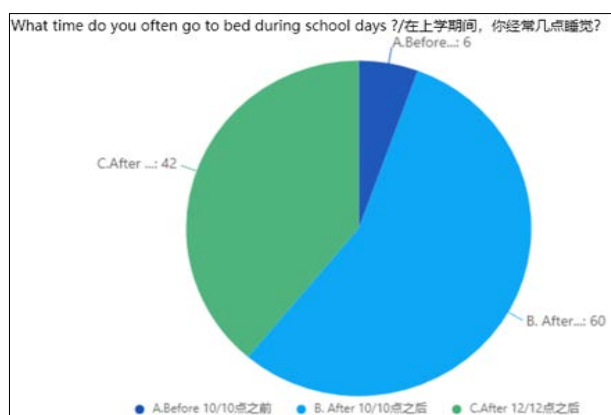


Chart 11: Question Number 7

The students were asked what time they often go to bed 60 students 55.5% said “After 10 PM” while 42 students 38.8% often go to bed “After 12 Midnight” and only 6 students 5.5% said they often go to bed “before 10 PM”.

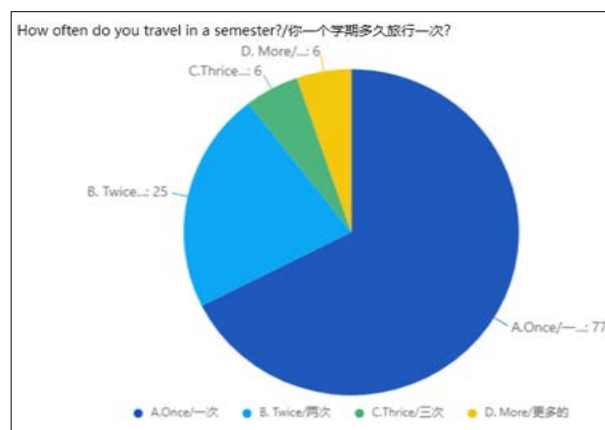


Chart 12: Question Number 8

When the students were asked about how often they travel in a semester, 77 students 71.2% said “Once” while 25 students 23.1% said “Twice”. 6 students 5.5% said “Thrice” and 6 students 5.5% said “More than Thrice”

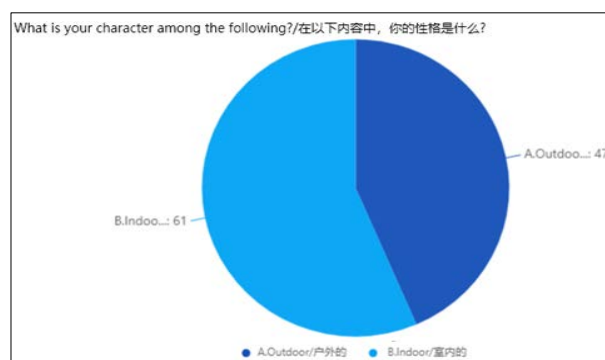


Chart 13: Question Number 9

The students were asked if they were indoor or outdoor. 61 students 56.4 said they were “indoors” while 47 students 43.5% were “outdoors”

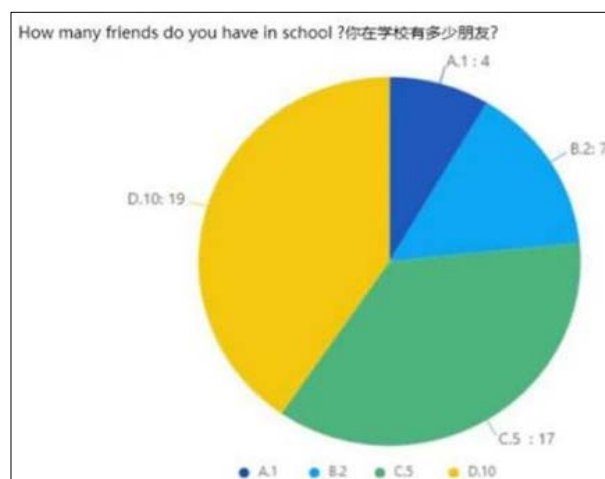


Chart 14: Question Number 10

Students were asked about how many friends they have in school and 19 students 17.5% said they had 10 friends while 17 students 15.7% said they had 5 friends. 7 students 6.4% said they had 2 friends and 4 students 3.7% said they only had 1 friend. This question was answered by only 47 students 43.5% and 46.5% did not answer the question.

Discussion

The survey was carried out on 108 students studying foreign languages among them were 67 Chinese nationals, 17 Zimbabwean nationals, 1 Indonesian national and 23 from different nationalities. From these participants female students were more than male students learning foreign languages. This shows that more female students study foreign languages than male students. The researchers found out that many students assume that the fourth year is the most difficult year in university while the first year has been assumed as the most comfortable year. In answering the main research question whether university life is time to chill or time to toil 66.6% of the students think it is time to toil however when asked if university life is both time to toil and chill 82.4% said "Yes". This research therefore showed mixed feelings about the research question which revealed that some students prefer hard work while others prefer to relax during university time.

Conclusion

University life is viewed differently by students learning foreign languages. Learning languages and especially foreign languages is mostly preferred by female students compared to male students. Regardless that the first year has been suggested as the most confusing year for university students the results also showed that it is also the most comfortable year of students' university life. The students also believe that university life is time to chill and toil. The researchers believe that most students take more pressure in the fourth year due to fear of the unknown.

Acknowledgement

The researchers acknowledges the participants from the participants who contributed immensely with their ideas and opinions regarding the survey. Great appreciations to my co-authors who have assisted in the rest of the research.

Declaration of Conflict of Interests

The researchers declare no conflict of interest.

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Recommendations

1. Establish a yearly psychological student examination
2. Establishment of a Counselling and training department for the first and fourth year students
3. Organize students educational trips

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