

## The Effects of the Lebanese Economic Crisis on Secondary School Students' Education Structure, Habits, Happiness, and Labor

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of the Lebanese economic crisis on the secondary students in Lebanon including the education structure, students' eating habits, mean of transportation, happiness, labor status, and the reasons that make students work and study at the same time. This study was done in December, 2021.

In this study, the researcher adopted the descriptive approach. The participated students were chosen randomly. The only condition for the students to participate in the study is to be in the secondary level. The design of this study is mixed and it is based on answering questions electronically in a survey. 578 students responded to 28 out of 30 questions by likert scale or yes and no (quantitative design), whereas the rest two questions are open ended questions (qualitative design).

Descriptive statistics (SPSS) were used to analyze the quantitative data where as content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. The results of this study revealed that the secondary students in Lebanon are strongly affected by the economic crisis at the level of the education structure, daily habits, happiness, and labor status. The students' mental and physical health are also affected. Their social life is never like what was before the crisis. The family wealth status contributes to the degree to which the crisis is affecting the students' lives. Public school students are even more affected than private school students. Although, the negative effects of the crisis are tremendous, however some students can still view some positive effects of the crisis

like being more responsible, becoming wise spender, feel with others, and appreciate the graces that they have.

The study recommends an urgent plan for the secondary education in Lebanon, as the youth age shapes the future of the countries.

**Key terms:** Crisis, Education, Happiness, Daily habits, Labor

## **The Effects of the Lebanese Economic Crisis on Secondary School Students' Education, Habits, Happiness, and Labor**

### **Introduction**

Secondary education has internationally become a central policy concern of developing countries. The demand for secondary education is on the increase, and the need for improving the quality and relevance of secondary schooling has been made loud and clear (Holsinger, 2000; Sahlberg, 2007). Three factors contribute to shifting secondary education to the policy spotlight. First, an increasing number of students seek opportunities to continue formal learning in secondary schools. Parents throughout the world are also looking for better education for their children than they had themselves. Second, the secondary school age cohort of young people is larger than ever before. These young people are clearly going to be the key in shaping our future. Third, modern economies and dynamic labor markets need people with more sophisticated knowledge, skills and competences that cannot be developed only in primary school or in low-quality secondary schools (World Bank, 2005).

Good secondary education is increasingly recognized as a critical element in achieving the goals of human development, political stability, and economic competitiveness (King, McGrath, & Rose, 2007; Lewin, 2008; UNESCO, 2008; World Bank, 2007). As an intermediary step between primary and tertiary education, secondary education serves as a preparatory phase for youth before they enter the workplace, helping to equip a largely adolescent population with the skills, aptitudes, and social values for a productive and healthy adult life (cited in Jacob, & Lehner, 2011).

In Lebanon - in the recent years - the case is not anymore as in the other developing countries. Lebanon is in the midst of a rapidly escalating, unprecedented humanitarian crisis that



is plunging the country deep into poverty and threatens population's well-being, economic development, social welfare and national and regional stability. The dire situation is due to the compounding effects of the August 2020 Beirut blast, massive economic collapse and the COVID-19 pandemic, in a setting of longstanding entrenched political corruption and a dysfunctional, mismanaged crisis response by the state. The economic crisis in Lebanon has adversely affected enterprises before the onset of the COVID-19 crisis (Halwani, Mokdad, & Habib, 2021; UN ESCWA, 2020). All the sectors including education are affected by the economic crisis.

Between June 2019 and June 2021, the inflation rate in Lebanon amounted to 281 percent. As a result, the poverty line increased, which led to a rise in income poverty from 25 percent of the population in 2019, to 55 percent in 2020, and almost 74 percent in 2021 (UN ESCWA, 2021; UN news, 2021)

According to the new policy brief "Multidimensional Poverty in Lebanon: Painful Reality and Uncertain Prospects", 82% of the population lives in multidimensional poverty, which takes into account factors other than income, such as access to health, education and public utilities (UN News, 2021).

As a result of these changes at the Lebanese level, this research aims to highlight the effects of the Lebanese economic crisis on the basic needs of secondary students including education structure, basic daily life needs (transportation and food habits), and happiness. This research also investigates the effect of the crisis on the students' labor status and the reasons that make students work and study at the same time.

### **Needs and Rights of Secondary School Students**

In 1989, the United Nations agreed the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This human rights treaty sets out what governments must do to ensure children and young people everywhere have a good life. These rights include:

- Children and young people have the right to a standard of living that helps them develop fully
- Every young person has the right to be protected from harmful work and economic exploitation. Governments must do everything to protect this right.

- Every child and young person have the right to meet people and to gather in public
- Every child and young person have the right to free primary education.

Governments must encourage secondary education, making it available and accessible to every child and young person.

Access to higher education must be based on the ability to benefit from it.

Governments must make sure children and young people get information about education. Governments must encourage regular school attendance.

Governments must make sure that school discipline protects the dignity of children and young people, and is in line with their rights in this Convention - so no hitting or humiliation.

Governments agree that the aim of education is to help the fullest possible growth of the child or young person's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities

The kind of education you get should not be dependent on how much money you or your family has. The purpose of education is to help you reach your fullest potential as a human being. (Willow, 2006)

Quality learning requires a safe, friendly environment, qualified and motivated teachers, and instruction in languages students can understand. It also requires that learning outcomes be monitored and feedback into instruction (UNICEF).

For the full and harmonious development of child's personality, the child should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding (UNICEF, 1989).

Happiness can be defined as satisfaction with life in general (Arampatzi, 2013) or the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his/her own life-as-a-whole favorably (Veenhoven, 2008) Individual happiness is affected by relative income and political environment within a country. These range from the degree of democracy (Dorn et al., 2005) to the degree of trust between the citizens (Helliwell, 2003) and government quality (Ott, 2010) (cited in Arampatzi, 2013).

The gap between the levels of learning that education systems are providing and what children, communities and economies need is growing. The breadth and depth of this learning

crisis constitute the greatest global challenge to preparing children and adolescents for life, work and active citizenship (UNICEF).

### **Economic Crisis and Its Effects**

The term economic crisis can be defined as a situation where there is a recession or slowdown in economic activities due to financial/bank crisis, inflation, currency crashes, or sovereign debt. (Kumuyi, 2010; Parežanin, 2021). The economic crisis affects the countries at all the levels.

The economic and environmental contexts that adolescents live in can largely influence their social context, including their quality of life, physical and mental health, and levels of inequality (UNDP, 2021).

During an economic crisis, the slowdown of the economy is associated with reductions in hourly wage rates, numbers of hours worked, and the amount of public and private funds available for schools. Such conditions affect children's educational outcomes such as school enrollment, attainment, attendance, and performance (Shafiq, 2010).

According to existing economic studies, a child is exposed to one or more of the following negative effects during an economic crisis: The reduction in adult income makes it harder for the parents to bear the direct costs of education. Consequently, the child is either withdrawn from school or inadequately prepared for it. This also forces parents to become more reliant on child labor. This can harm the educational outcomes because the child is physically and emotionally draining and leaves fewer hours for studying. The crisis may also force the parents to work longer hours, which in turn reduces the time that parents take care of the academic development of their child (Shafiq, 2010).

The study of the impacts of the economic crisis on secondary students in Nigeria showed that it has negative impact on the standards of education because the majority of secondary schools are public schools which depend completely on the small government budgetary allocation which has led to irregularity and half payment of salaries of teachers. This crisis has also negative impact on teaching effectiveness because the majority of the teachers seek alternative measures in order to survive the economic hardship. As a result, this affected negatively the students' academic achievement and caused some students to drop out of school (Sahlberg, 2007). The economic crisis



led to enlarged class sizes, reduction of some school-support services, and merging and closing of schools to gain efficiency (Rinne, Kivirauma, & Simola, 2002). In fact, all the aspects of education delivery are affected by the economic crisis (Bamigboye, Ede, & Adeyemi, 2016).

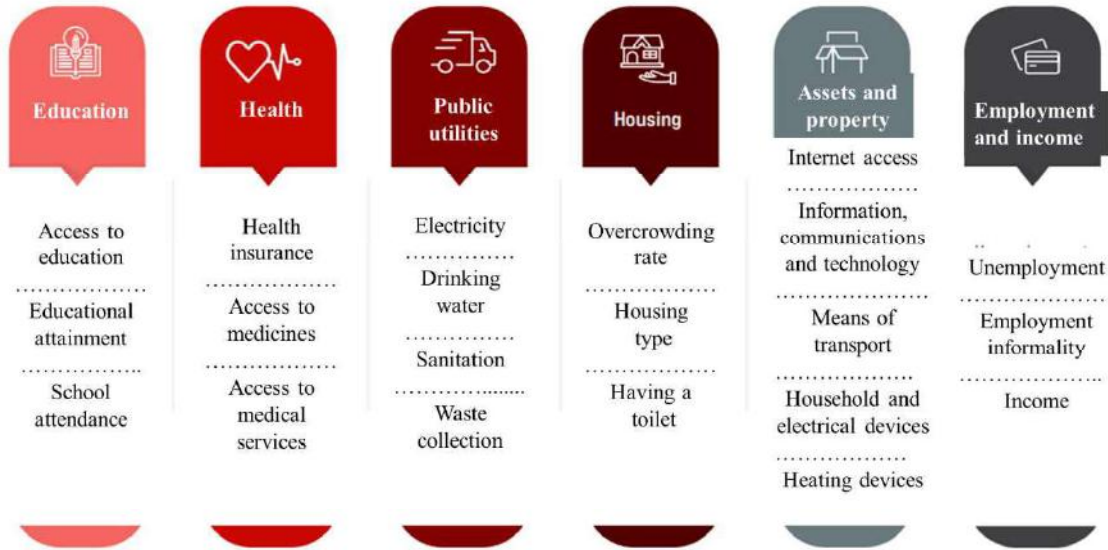
Crises are expected to deepen poverty (Baldacci, De Mello, & Inchauste, 2002) which can have lifelong implications in childhood and adolescence. The students' life satisfaction and living standards had fallen, and changes in their lifestyles occurred as a result of economic crisis (Arampatzi, 2013; Chalari, 2020; Kokkevi, Stavrou, Kanavou, & Fotiou, 2014). Older students reported effects of the crisis more than younger ones (Kokkevi, Stavrou, Kanavou, & Fotiou, 2014). Happiness can be affected by the crisis especially if the crisis sharpen inequality in a society (Arampatzi, 2013). The happiness scores had decreased in the countries that were hit by financial crisis. For example, in Greece, the happiness score decreased from 2.7 (in 2007) to 1.99 (in 2012) (Arampatzi, 2013).

The economic crisis can have some positive impacts like making students more serious and more mature, and recognizing themselves and their lives and learning how to live with less (Chalari, 2020). The support by the parents to their children during crisis can be also considered as a positive effect of the crisis. Some parents may encourage their child to substitute educational activities for work because of the low child wage rates and because less-educated workers suffer more than educated workers in the crisis (Shafiq, 2010).

### ***The Economic Crisis in Lebanon and Its Effects on Education***

- Multidimensional Poverty Index in Lebanon



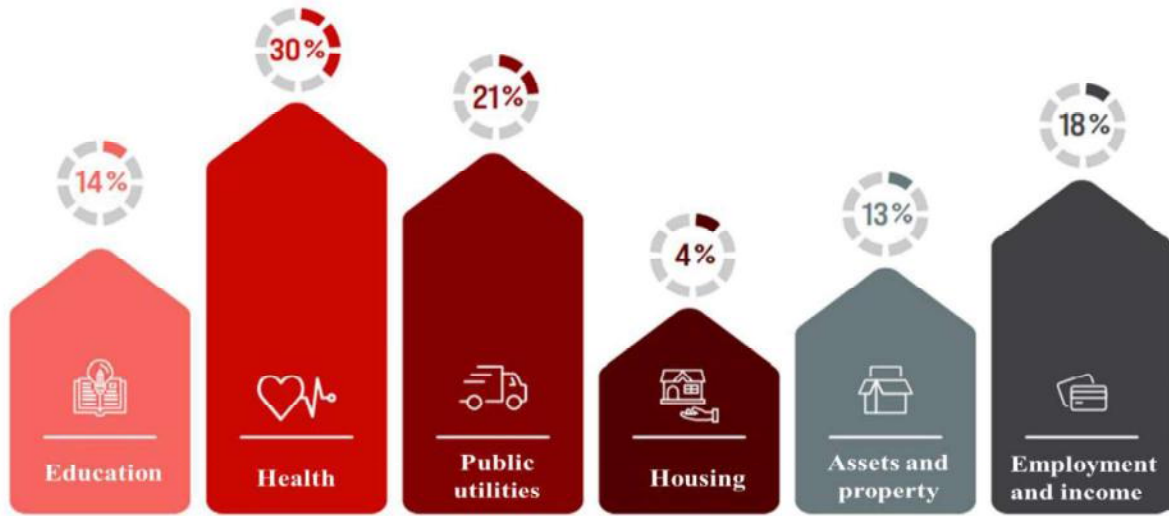


Note: The weights are equal between and within dimensions.

Figure 1. Multidimensional Poverty Index: Dimensions and Indicators (UN ESCWA, 2021).

The Multidimensional Poverty Index consists of six dimensions and twenty indicators (Figure 1). A household is classified as living in multidimensional poverty if it is deprived of one or more dimensions, and in extreme multidimensional poverty if it is deprived of two or more dimensions. Each dimension has several indicators. (UN ESCWA, 2021).

In Lebanon, education- which is considered as important factor in the multidimensional poverty index- contributes to 14 percent of the multidimensional poverty (Figure 2). Currently, the multidimensional poverty rate is 63 percent among university students, and 87 percent among students with the lowest levels of educational attainment. Given that the unprecedented economic and social crisis in Lebanon has affected all segments of society, the gap in multidimensional poverty rates between groups with the highest and lowest levels of educational attainment has narrowed (UN ESCWA, 2021).



Source: ESCWA calculation.

Figure 2. Contribution of the six dimensions to the total value of the Multidimensional Poverty in Lebanon, 2021 (UN ESCWA, 2021).

It is reported that as at March 2021, 15 percent of 1,244 households surveyed by UNICEF had stopped their children's education. Access to education is further threatened by the imminent lifting of subsidies, with many children likely to either be transferred from private to public schools and others likely to forgo education completely as spending on food is prioritized over schooling. Still others are forced into child labor to support household incomes. To be noted, the increasing rates of child labor have been reported since October 2019 in Lebanon (Abouzeid, Halwani, Mokdad, & Habib, 2021).

### Research Questions

- 1- To what extent is the Lebanese economic crisis affecting the education structure of secondary school students in Lebanon?
- 2- How are the daily life habits for the secondary school students in Lebanon changing as a result of the economic crisis?
- 3- To what extent do the secondary school students feel happy during the economic crisis?
- 4- How is the economic crisis affecting secondary school students' labor?



- 5- Is there any significant difference of the effect of the crisis on the secondary school students based on gender, type of school, family wealth status, labor, and governate where they live?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impacts of the Lebanese economic crisis on the education structure of secondary school students, their daily life habits, happiness, and labor in Lebanon.

### **Research Methodology**

This research is based on survey. Survey research is defined as "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" (Check & Schutt, 2012). This type of research allows for a variety of methods to recruit participants, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation. Survey research can use quantitative research strategies (e.g., using questionnaires with numerically rated items), qualitative research strategies (e.g., using open-ended questions), or both strategies (i.e., mixed methods). As it is often used to describe and explore human behavior, surveys are therefore frequently used in social and psychological research (Singleton & Straits, 2009).

The research design is descriptive and the strategy that is adopted in this study is mixed: quantitative and qualitative. It is based on collecting data from the secondary school students using survey which contains 27 questions that the students respond to according to Likert scale and three open-ended questions. The quantitative data is analyzed by calculating percentages and using SPSS to check for significance difference between groups; whereas, the qualitative data which is obtained from the open-ended questions is analyzed by content analysis. In SPSS, independent t-test is used to compare the results between groups except for family wealth where ANOVA is used. Paired t-test is used to track the significance of the effect of the crisis on students' mean of transportation. In content analysis, the students' answers in the open-ended questions were collected, and then translated into English. These answers were classified based on their content, and then were coded and put under categories that reflect the sides of which the economic crisis is affecting students' life.

### **Population of the Study**



The population of the study includes students in secondary school level in Lebanon who volunteered to fill out the survey.

### **Sampling**

The researcher used random snowball sampling technique. The survey was distributed electronically on social media including WhatsApp and Facebook. Volunteered students filled the survey and send it to other students. A total of 578 students throughout Lebanon filled the survey.

### **Research Instrument**

The research instrument is a survey which consists of three sections that target to answer the research questions (Table 1).

The first section consists of 7 demographic questions (Note that writing the name in the survey was optional).

The second section include expressions/ questions are related to students':

- Education structure: Questions 1 to 10 (Adeyemi, Omoyiola, Oladejo, 2020) and question 19. Questions 1 to 10 deal with the effect of the Lebanese economic crisis on the education structure of secondary school students structure including the effect of the crisis on the:
  - Role of government in education,
  - Availability of teaching aids, students' preparation for exams and motivation to learn,
  - Standards and sustainability of education, satisfaction of school environment, level of teaching and learning of integrated sciences of educational section, teachers' motivation toward effective delivery of the curriculum,
  - Number of the students' that dropped out as a result of crisis.

Question 19 is developed by the researcher to investigate students' opinion about leaving the school and go for work.

- Daily life habits: Questions 11 and 12 glow the effect of crisis on students' transportation (developed by researcher); questions 13 and 14 investigate the effect of crisis on food habits (Basev, 2014).

- Happiness: Questions 15 to 18 (Robinson, 1999).

Table 1. Mapping the research questions with the research instrument			
Research question	Measured aspect	Questions in research instrument	Analysis method
1	Effect of crisis on the structure of education for secondary school students	Questions 1 to 10 and 19 Open -ended questions (20 and 21)	Quantitatively using SPSS Content analysis
2	Effect of crisis on daily life habits	Questions 11, 12, 13, and 14 Open -ended questions (20 and 21)	Quantitatively using SPSS Content analysis
3	Effect of crisis on students' happiness	Questions 15 to 18 Open -ended questions (20 and 21)	Quantitatively using SPSS Content analysis
4	Effect of crisis on student's labor	Questions 23 to 30 Open -ended questions (20 and 21)	Quantitatively using SPSS Content analysis
5	Check if there is any significant different between the participants based on gender, type of school, labor status, family wealth status, and governate where they live.	All the questions expect the open-ended questions	Quantitatively using SPSS

In this section, there are also two open ended questions (20 and 21) which aims to collect information about the positive and the negative effects of the crisis on students' life.

The students respond to these expressions/questions in this section using 5 Likert scales ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree except questions 11 & 12 where students choose their mean of transportation, question 13 which includes 6 Likert scale range (very large extent to not at all), and questions 14 to 17 where the 5 Likert scale ranges from "very happy" to "unhappy". This section ends by a question to check if the students learn and work at the same time.

The third section includes 8 questions related to type of job, relation between crisis and work, and reasons for work. The questions related to reasons of work are taken from a previous study (Robinson, 1999) where the remaining questions are developed by the researcher (type of work-part time or full time; what do you work?)

The questions and expressions in the survey were written in English and Arabic Languages.

*Note:* Sections 1 and 2 are directed to all the participating students. However, the third section is only dedicated to the students that work and study at the same time.

### Validity of the Instrument

Four expert researchers reviewed the questions in the survey, and 6 students volunteered to validate the instrument. The reliability of the questions in each section varied between good and high based on the values of Cronbach alpha (Table 2).

Domain	Cronbach alpha	Reliability	Questions
Education structure	0.735	Good	1 to 10 and 19
Happiness	0.814	High	15 to 18
Reason for going to work and study at the same time	0.638	Good	25 to 30

## Results and Discussions

### *Demographic Results*

The students that are participating in the study are distributed among the 8 governates of Lebanon, but mostly they live in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, and Nabatiyeh. Around 80% of the participated students learn in public schools, and about 63 % of the students are of ages between

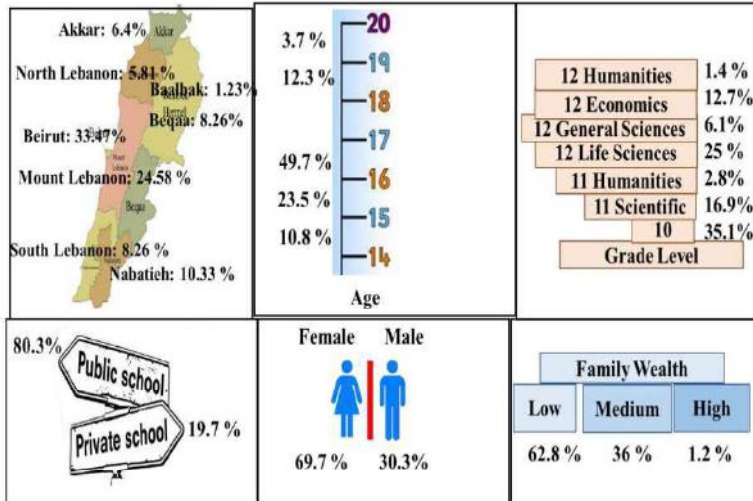


Figure 3 (a): Students' demographic in this study

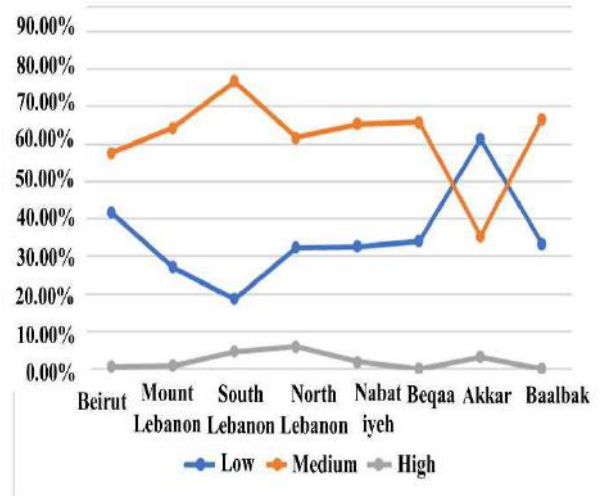


Figure 3 (b): Percentage of family wealth status of the students in each governate

15 and 17. Moreover, 69.7 % of the students in this study are females. The large majority of the participated students have low family wealth (62.8%) (Figure 3 a & b).

### *Effect of the Lebanese Economic Crisis on Secondary School Students' Education*

The structure of education of most of the participated students is affected by the economic crisis. The majority of the students agreed that the economic crisis affected the availability of instructional materials and teaching aids. The level of learning decreased, the standard of education fell down, and the sustainability of the educational sector is affected. Laboratories are not well equipped and teachers are not motivated in their tasks. The students can't prepare well for the exam and the overall environment is not motivating for learning. As a results of the crisis, students noticed that many students left the school, and about 21% of the students in this study think of leaving the school to go for work, and 66% refused this idea (Table 3). These results also can be noticed when the students were asked to mention how the crisis affected their life. Some mentioned that they are working hard to get high marks in order to have good life in the future (Figure 7)

while others think of leaving the school in order to get some money from a job so that they can buy their essential needs (Figure 8).

Table 3. Students' views toward the effects of the Lebanese economic crisis on education					
<i>SA: Strongly agree; A: Agree; N: Neutral; DA: Disagree; SDA: Strongly disagree</i>					
Expression	SA(5)	A(4)	N(3)	DA(2)	SDA(1)
1. The economic crisis has affected the provision of instructional materials due to lack of government participation	54.5%	37.7%	6.2%	1.3%	0.4%
2. Due to the economic crisis, useful teaching aids for the students are not available for teaching.	46.5%	42.2%	8.8%	2.4%	0%
3. The economic crisis has reduced the number of students who prepared very well for the examination.	44.8%	39.6%	11.2%	4.3%	0%
4. Due to the economic crisis the standard of education has fallen.	53.9%	34.9%	7.3%	3.2%	0.7%
5. The economic crisis has affected the level of teaching and learning of integrated science.	41.4%	46.3%	9.1%	2.8%	0.4%
6. The economic crisis has affected the sustainability of the education sector.	43.1%	34.1%	9%	9.1%	4.7%
7. As a result of the economic crisis, most students have dropped out from school.	33.4%	36.8%	19.6%	9.5%	0.7%
8. The economic crisis leads to poor motivation and unsatisfactory school environment.	35.3%	46.3%	11%	5.8%	1.7%
9. Purchase of laboratories equipment and other well standard laboratories apparatus for effective learning has been affected by the drop in a government allocation.	39%	44.8%	13.8%	2.1%	0.4%
10. Teachers are not motivated in their task of effective curriculum delivery as a result of economic crisis.	41.4%	31.9%	15.5%	8.8%	2.4%
Average	43.33%	39.46%	11.15%	4.93%	1.14%



19. I thought of stop going to school and get full time work because of the crisis.	7.5%	14.2%	12%	32.2%	34.1%
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In order to know if there is any difference between the students in terms of gender, family wealth, labor status, and governate where they live, the results are analyzed by SPSS using suitable tests.

The results show that the education structure of females is significantly more affected than males ( $p=0.025 < 0.05$ ) particularly concerning the provision of instructional materials due to lack of government participation ( $p = 0.038 < 0.05$ ).

The crisis is affecting significantly the education structure of the public secondary school students more than the private secondary school students ( $p = 0.001 < 0.05$ ) particularly concerning the availability of teaching aids ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), the level of teaching and learning of integrated science ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), and the motivation of the teachers in their task of effective curriculum delivery ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Moreover, the students in the public-schools are thinking significantly more than the private schools about leaving the school and going for work ( $p = 0.003 < 0.05$ ).

Labor status also affects students' vision for the effect of the crisis on the education structure at some levels. Labor students significantly foresee more than non-labor students that the crisis reduced the standards of education ( $p = 0.003 < 0.05$ ) and decreased the level of teaching and learning of integrated science ( $p = 0.015 < 0.05$ ). They also significantly think more than the non-labor students about leaving the school and going for work ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ).

The education structure for secondary school students is also affected by family wealth status. The results show that the students with low family wealth are significantly more affected than the students with medium family wealth except concerning the sustainability of learning, poor motivation school environment, purchasing of lab materials and motivation of teachers. No significant difference is found between students with low family wealth and high family wealth and between medium family wealth and high family wealth.

The Lebanese economic crisis is affecting the education structure of the students approximately equally throughout the 8 governates of Lebanon ( $p > 0.05$ ). There are some significant differences between some governates. The students in Beirut are significantly more affected than the students in North Lebanon ( $p = 0.024 < 0.05$ ). The secondary school students

in Akkar are educationally the most affected among the secondary students in Lebanon in this study. The effects of the economic crisis on the education structure of the students show significant difference between Akkar and Mount Lebanon ( $p = 0.05$ ) and Akkar and North Lebanon ( $p = 0.026$ ).

### *Effect of Lebanese Economic Crisis on Secondary Students' Daily Habits*

The main daily habits of the students at school are transportation and eating. The results of this study show significant effect of the crisis on their transportation ( $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ). The use of public transportation has decreased as a result of the crisis. However, the number of the students that go by walking to their schools has increased sharply (figure 4). The high cost of transportation

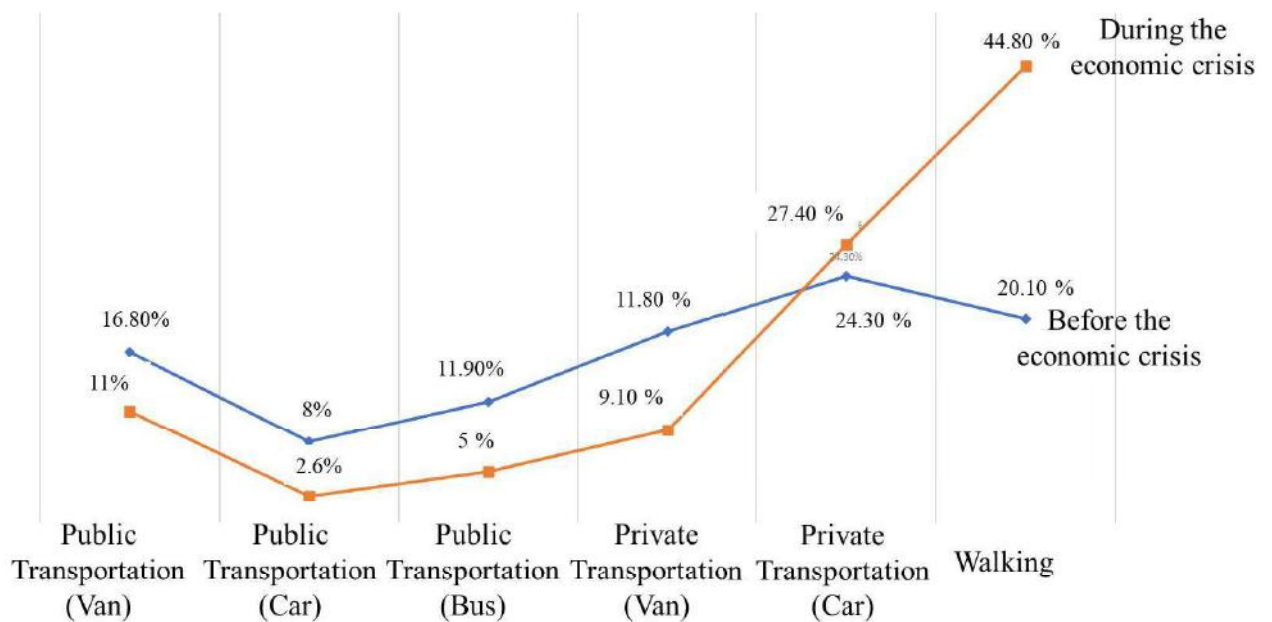


Figure 4. Variation of students' transportation mean between before and during the economic crisis made some students change their schools so that they can reach their schools by walking (figure 8).

The crisis has also affected students' eating habits (Figure 5 a). Most of the students cannot buy all the food they eat and like. Eating out became so difficult for the students to achieve (Figure 5 b). This is also reflected by students' answers about the negative effect of the crisis on their lives. Students mentioned that they cannot buy some kinds of food including meat and they do not buy food that may affect their health because they don't have the money to go to the doctor or to get

medicine. Students also suffer from their inability of going out with their parents and friends because of the high cost of food and transportation (Figure 8).

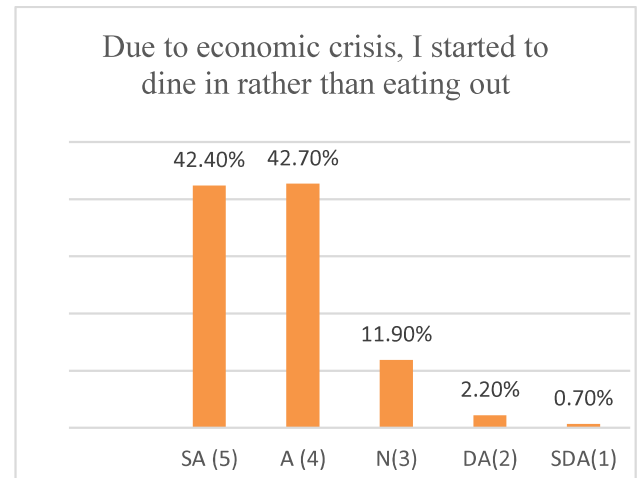
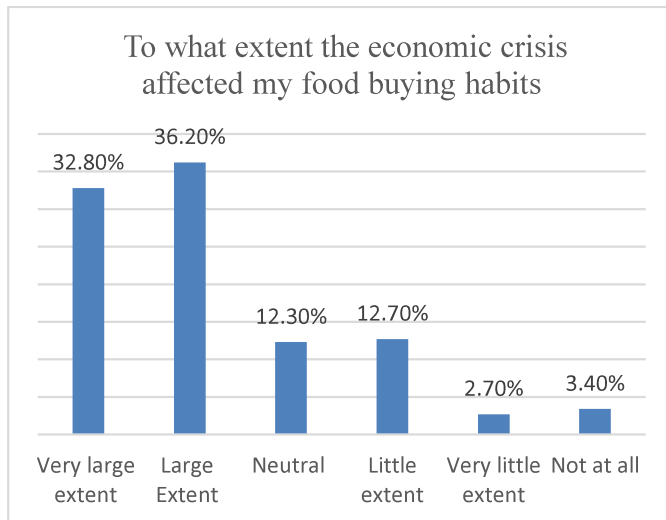


Figure 5 a. Effects of crisis on students' food buying habits Figure 5 b. Effects of crisis on students' eating out

Students' (males and females) eating habits and eating out are equally affected by the crisis among the 8 governates of Lebanon ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, the students in Akkar are the most affected ones. The results show significant difference in the result of eating habits between Akkar and Nabatiyeh ( $p = 0.041 < 0.05$ ) and between Beirut and Nabatiyeh ( $p = 0.031 < 0.05$ ) where Beirut is more affected than Nabatiyeh. In terms of eating out, the results show significant difference between Akkar and Nabatiyeh ( $p=0.038 < 0.05$ ), South Lebanon ( $p = 0.041 < 0.05$ ), and North Lebanon ( $p= 0.023 < 0.05$ ).

Eating habits and eating out are also affected by family wealth status. Students with low family wealth are significantly more affected than students with medium and high family wealth ( $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ ). This can be also reflected from the significant difference between Akkar and other governates as Akkar is known for its reputation as being one of the most governates that lack basic needs.

The eating habits of the public-school students are significantly more affected than private school students ( $p = 0.004 < 0.05$ ). Moreover, the labor students are significantly affected more by

the crisis in terms of eating habits ( $p=0.03 < 0.05$ ) and eating out ( $0.004 < 0.05$ ) than the non-labor students.

### *Secondary School students' happiness in the economic crisis*

Feeling happy and satisfied has great importance on students' lives. The percentage of the secondary school students that have very happy feelings toward is the lowest in all the categories, while the percentage of unhappy students is the highest in all the categories except the feelings toward the whole life where 26.7 % of the students feel happy and 25.7 % feel unhappy (Figure 6). This is reflected in students' positive view of the crisis on their lives. Some students learned to appreciate what they have, feel with the poor people, deal with stressful situations, and thank God for everything they have (Figure 7).

The SPSS results show that males are significantly happier than females in terms of their feelings toward the job they do, weekly budget, social life, and whole life (all p values are less than 0.05). Private school students are significantly happier than public-school students in terms of the job they do ( $p = 0.048 < 0.05$ ), weekly budget ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), and social life ( $p= 0.034 < 0.05$ ) but not in terms of whole life ( $p=0.106 > 0.05$ ).

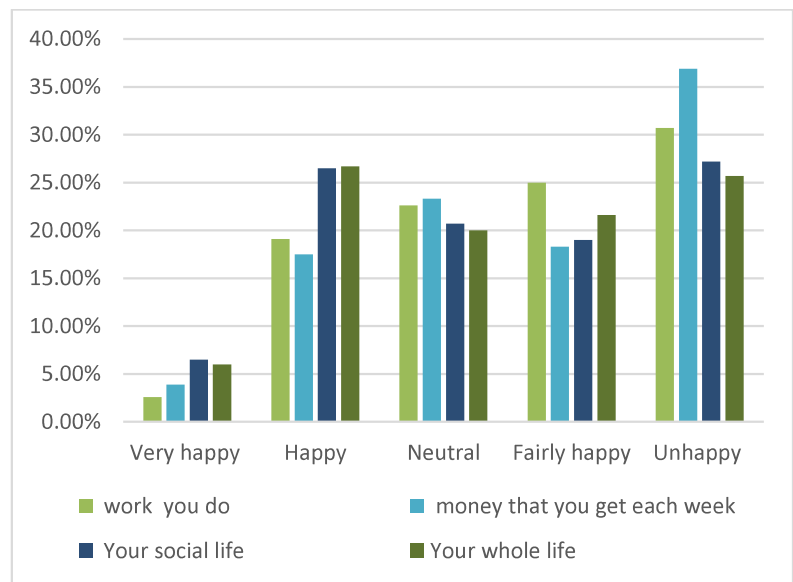


Figure 6. Students' feeling toward the work they do, weekly budget, social life and whole life

Family wealth also affects students' happiness. Students with low family wealth are significantly less happy than students with medium family wealth in terms of the job they do ( $p=0.00 < 0.05$ ), their weekly budget, ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), social life ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), and whole life ( $p=0.00 < 0.05$ ). They are also significantly less happy than the students with high family wealth in terms of the weekly budget ( $p= 0.001 < 0.05$ ).

The happiness of the students toward their weekly budget is significantly affected by the labor status. Labor students are less happy toward their weekly budget than the non-labor students ( $p = 0.037 < 0.05$ ).

Among the governates, the students are approximately equal in terms of happiness ( $p > 0.05$ ). Significant differences are noticed between some governates. The students in Beirut significantly feel less happy about their social life than those in Mount Lebanon ( $p = 0.027 < 0.05$ ). The happiness feeling of the secondary students toward their weekly budget in Beirut is significantly lower than that of the students in Nabatiyeh ( $p = 0.028 < 0.05$ ). Akkar students are the least students that feel happy for their weekly budget among the 8 governates. Significant differences are found between Akkar and Mount Lebanon ( $p = 0.015 < 0.05$ ), South Lebanon ( $p = 0.017 < 0.05$ ), North Lebanon ( $p = 0.012 < 0.05$ ), and Nabatiyeh ( $p = 0.004 < 0.05$ ).

### *Effects of Lebanese Economic Crisis on Secondary School Students' Life from their Point of View.*

Economic crisis majorly has negative impacts on human's life. However, it may have some positive effects. The students were asked to write a positive and a negative effect of the crisis on their lives. Many of them wrote more than one effect.

spend and save money wisely	feel the pain of poor people	Insist to get high scores in education in order to immigrate and help parents and get good work	become more sociable and learn about other communities using social media	Sample of students' answers "...made me closer to people with low incomes..." "...we were living in a big blessing..." "... gives me hope to see that others are still clinging into something" "My health improved by partially stopping eating food outside the house ... depend on what we plant to eat" "... all economic classes, rich or poor, became at the same level..." "...how to manage the money I get from my parents in a wiser way..." "... feel others more..think how to take steps in helping them..." "Motivated me to study to secure a promising future .." "Learn to choose my priorities"
	appreciate the prosperity that they were living in	Prepare better for the exams during the strike in the schools	Be responsible, patient, and contentment	
think of solutions to reduce the severity of the problem	thank God and be grateful for everything	Dedicated to reach their ambition	More time to practice hobbies	
identify the priorities	Work to help their parents in family expenses	Study harder to get a decent life that is away from humiliation	Have the power to talk about their situations	
avoid extravagance	Appreciate having a family and good health	Replan their future	People are no more arrogant	
Stay healthy to avoid diseases		Depend on themselves in their study and their personal expenses	Stronger family and relatives relationships	
			Getting fresh dollars from relatives outside the country or from online work.	
			Less pollution due to less cars	
			Deal with stressful situations	

Figure 7. Students' positive views for the Lebanese economic crisis



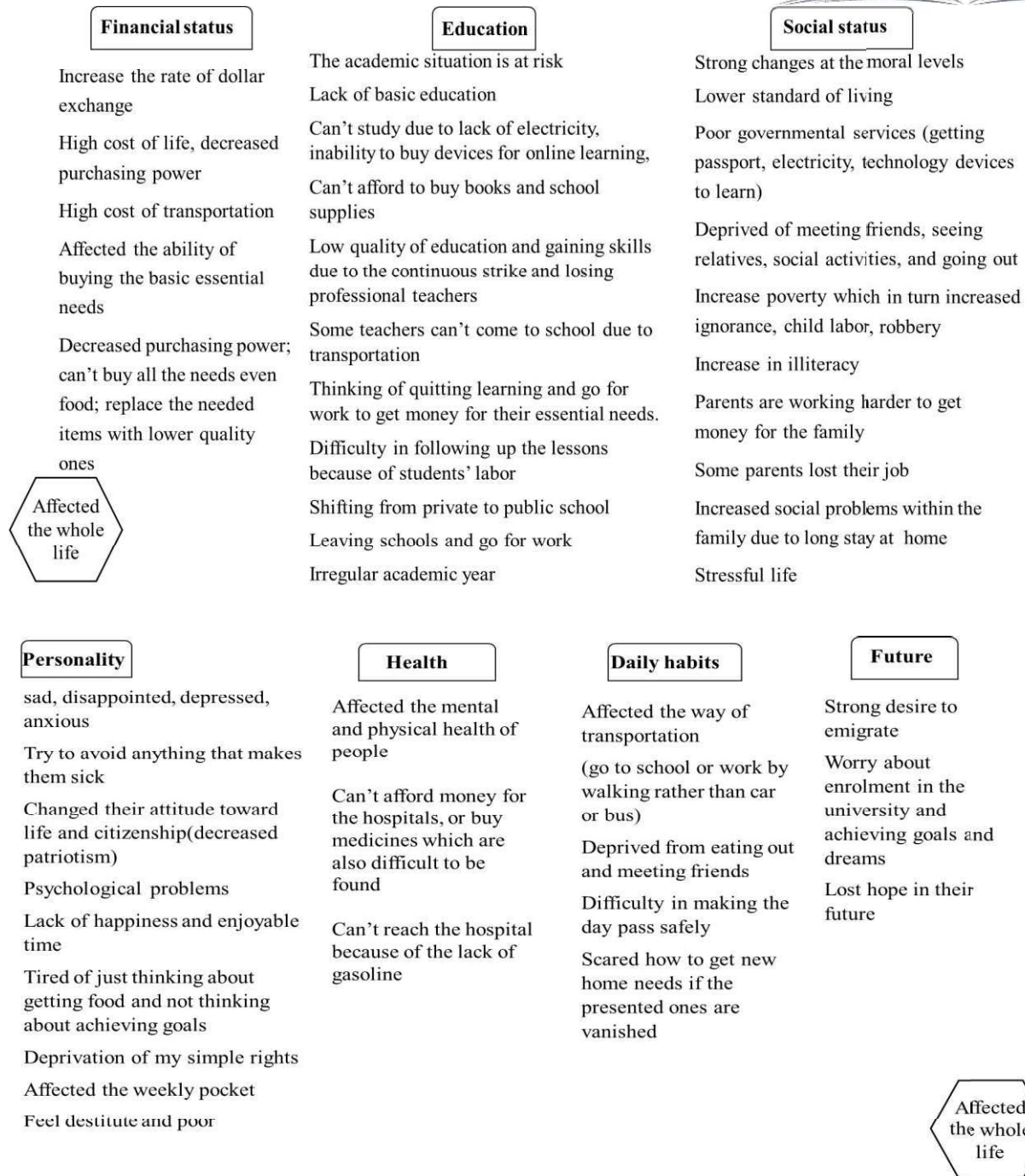


Figure 8. Negative effects of the crisis from students' point of view

At the level of the positive effect of the crisis, about half of the participating students mentioned that there is no positive effect of the crisis on their life. Some even wondered how a crisis can have positive effects. The others mentioned that the crisis affected them positively in identifying their needs, learning how to manage spending money, and feel with the poor people.



They spent also their time in learning new things and practicing their hobbies. They felt equality with other people as many became poor (Figure 7).

At the negative side of the crisis, many students mentioned that their whole life is affected by the crisis. Students' reflections could be classified into 7 categories as shown in figure 8. At the educational level, the students are worried about their academic year where they don't feel stability in their education due to the lack of basic needs like books, electricity, school supplies, etc.... Some students recommended to have an emergency plan for the public schools. The students' personality is strongly affected by the crisis. They are no more able to get all the essential needs. They are feeling down, lost hope and deprived of their rights. Socially, their life is not like before. They can't participate in social activities, and more problems arise at home due to the long time they stay at home and the presence of different views within the family about expenses. The students' health is affected at all levels (mental, psychological, and physical). They do not have enough money to be treated if they get sick. They are worried even about their future and thinking of quitting learning and going for work or continuing studying and then emigrating to have a better life for their sake and their parents' sake (figure 7 and figure 8).

### *Effects of Lebanese economic crisis on students' labor*

About 21.45 % of the students who participated in this study work and study at the same time, and about 71 % of the labor students started their job during the crisis. Most of the labor students work part-time job (Figure 9). The labor students work in various domains like private teacher, in a café, in accessories store, with their parents, carpenter, photographer, car mechanic assistant, handmade accessories, car tire repair, furniture workshop, sell items online,

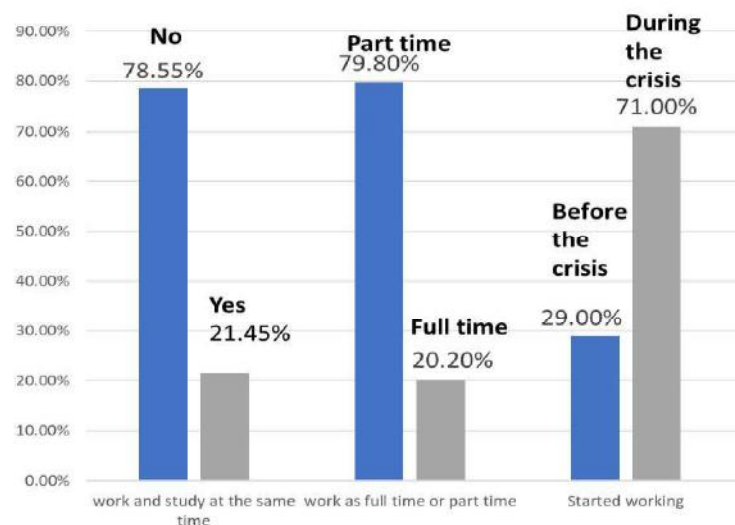


Figure 9. Percentage of students that work, with the duration and timing of work

electronics shop, supermarket, beauty salon, chocolate factory, baby sitter, bakery, clothes shop, construction, building guard, marketing, delivery, restaurant, accounting, and agriculture.

The major reason that make the students work is to support themselves, followed by supporting their families, and then the facilities that this job provides in getting a job when they finish studying. About half of students need this job to stay as a student. Also about half of the students like the sense of independence that the job provides (Table 4).

Expression	SA(5)	A(4)	N(3)	DA(2)	SDA(1)
26. I like the sense of independence the job provided	13.6%	33.6%	24%	17.6%	11.2%
27. This job will help me to get job when I finish studying	15%	27%	17%	23%	18%
28. I need the money from this job to support myself	40%	44%	9%	6%	1%
29. The money I earn enables me to remain a student	16%	33%	22%	24%	5%
30. I work to support my family	32%	32%	17%	14%	5%

48.7% of the labor students belong to families with low family wealth, 50.4% belongs to medium family wealth, and 0.85% to high family wealth. The results show the significant effect of family wealth on the reason of students' labor. The students of low wealth families work to support themselves ( $p=0.035<0.05$ ) and their families ( $p = 0.037 <0.05$ ) and to remain as a student ( $p = 0.02 < 0.05$ ) significantly more than the students with medium family wealth.

## Discussion of the findings

### - Interpretation of the findings of the 1<sup>st</sup> research question:

#### Effect of the Lebanese economic crisis on the education structure of secondary students

The results of the survey (questions 1 to 10, 19, 20, and 21) show that the structure education of the secondary school students is strongly affected at most of the levels including the availability of instructional materials, laboratory instruments, and school supplies, and at the level of learning and teaching integrated sciences. The standards and sustainability of the education sector are also affected based on students' opinions. The students mostly agree that the

teachers became less motivated in their tasks as a result of the economic crisis and as students they can't prepare well for their exams due to this crisis. The students of this study also foresee that the crisis resulted in dropping out many students from their schools.

These results agree with what UN-News (2021) reported that most the people in Lebanon live in multidimensional poverty, where education is one the sectors that are strongly affected.

The results of this study also match with the results of other studies that were done about the effect of the crisis on students' education. Students' performance was found to be affected by the crisis according to Sahlberg (2007) and Shafiq (2010), who also found that children are dropped out from their schools to go for work. The study that was done by Sahlberg (2007) also revealed that the effective role of the teachers had decreased as a result of the crisis. The crisis had negatively affected the standards of education (Rinne, Kivirauma, & Simola ,2002) including enlarged class sizes, reduction of some school-support services, and merging and closing of schools to gain efficiency. All the aspects of education delivery are affected by the economic crisis according to Bamigboye, Ede, and Adeyemi (2016).

The students of this study strongly believe that their learning will be the only way for them to have better future. That's why they mostly don't agree with the idea of leaving the school and go for work. (Table 3, figure 7). These results agree with the previous findings that the secondary education serves as a preparatory phase for youth for having a productive and healthy adult life (cited in Jacob, & Lehner, 2011).

- ***Interpretation of the findings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> research question:***

**Effect of the Lebanese economic crisis on secondary students' daily habits**

The results of this study (questions 11 to 14 & 20 &21) show that the daily habits of the secondary school students are significantly affected by the crisis. Students depend now mostly on walking more than any other way of transportation in order to reach their schools and work due to high cost of public transportation. They now deprived of their social activities and outings due to the high cost of such activities which include the cost of transportation and food. The eating habits of large majority of the students have been affected to large or very large extent due to the crisis. Moreover, most of the students nowadays dine in rather than eat out. Some students are worried about getting food from the market if the food at home was vanished (figures, 4, 5a, 5b, & 8).

These results are also verified by the studies done by Arampatzi (2013), Chalari (2020), and Kokkevi, Stavrou, Kanavou, and Fotiou (2014). The researchers concluded that the economic crisis resulted in decrease of the students' living standards and in changes in their lifestyles.

- ***Interpretation of the findings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> research question:***

**Effect of the Lebanese economic crisis on secondary students' happiness**

About 50 to 55% of the students fall under the category of being fairly happy or unhappy, whereas about 20% of the students have neutral feelings toward the work they do, money they get each week, their social life, and their whole life, a total of 20 to 30% of the students are under the category of happy and very happy (figure 6).

It can be seen that the students' happiness is the lowest at the level of the money they get weekly and the work they do. However, students are learning how to deal with the changes, feel with others, and appreciate what they had and what they have (figure 8).

Previous study has shown that the crisis can affect happiness especially if it sharpened inequality in a society as the crisis decreased the happiness scores in Greece (Arampatzi, 2013).

- ***Interpretation of the findings of the 4<sup>th</sup> research question:***

**Effect of the Lebanese economic crisis on secondary students' labor**

The results of this study show that large majority of the labor students started working as a result of the economic crisis. Most of the labor students have part-time jobs. The large majority of the labor students work to support their families, and most of the them also works for supporting themselves.

These results agree with the previous findings of a study that was done on October 2019. This study reported an increase in child labor rates in Lebanon (Abouzeid, Halwani, Mokdad, & Habib, 2021).

Other findings show that more parents are forced to rely on child labor due to the economic crisis (Shafiq, 2010).

- ***Interpretation of the findings of the 5<sup>th</sup> research question:***



Is there any significant difference of the effect of the crisis on the secondary school students based on gender, type of school, family wealth status, labor, and governate where they live?

#### *Effect of gender*

In this study 69.7% of the participated students are females. Based on this study, females are significantly more affected than males at the level of the education structure and they are significantly feeling less happy than males.

Males and females are equally affected by the crisis in terms of their daily habits.

#### *Effect of school type*

Public students are significantly more affected by the economic crisis than private students at the level of education structure, thinking of leaving the school and going for work, and eating habits. The private school students are significantly happier than public-school students in terms of the job they do, weekly budget, and social life.

#### *Parental wealth status*

The large majority of the students who participated in this study belong to families with low wealth status. The results of this study don't show clear significant difference between students of different family wealth status at the level of the education structure. However, low family wealth students are significantly more affected at the level of their eating habits and eating out, and are significantly less happy than students with medium and high family wealth status.

#### *Effect of labor status*

Labor students significantly think more than the non-labor students about leaving the school and going for work. They feel significantly less happy toward their weekly budget and their eating habits and eating out are significantly more affected than the non-labor students.

#### *Effect of governate where students live*

The results of this study show that the students in all the governates are approximately equally affected by the crisis. However, the students in Akkar are significantly more affected than the students in other governates at the level of education structure, eating habits, and eating

out. Moreover, the students in Akkar are feeling less happy than the students on other governates.

### **Implications and recommendations**

This research provides a general view for how the Lebanese economic crisis is affecting a crucial category of the society which is the secondary school students. These students play an important role in shaping the future of the country. The number of researches that deal with all the aspects that are mentioned in this research is limited according to the knowledge of the researcher. That's why this research can be used to make more detailed researches that may deal with each aspect in the research alone. Detailed researches may help in raising up specific solutions that may help in minimizing the effects of the crisis on the students.

### **Conclusion**

Secondary education is a critical element in building and shaping the future of a country. The students at this level either will be well educated and continue their study after this stage to either stay in the country or leave the country to search for better life conditions or they may fall under the effect of the crisis and stop their education to get a work to support themselves.

The Lebanese secondary school students are strongly affected by the economic crisis at all levels. At the level of the education structure, they are under the pressure of fluctuating academic year and absence of essential school materials and accesses. They can barely prepare for the exam due to the absence of the learning basic needs like electricity, books, school supplies, etc... The students may not have the ability to buy food or reach their schools without getting tired from walking. However, they still want to continue their learning in order to have better life. At the financial level, students are worried about getting their essential needs; whereas, socially they lack most of the social activities, and they are suffering from the increase of poverty rate and social problems. The majority of the labor students have started working as a result of the crisis due to several reasons, mainly to support themselves and their families. These results agree with finding that was done by Sahlberg (2007) and Shafiq (2010) and coincides with the results of the study that was done in 2020 which shows that the adolescents living in Lebanon face significant challenges, such as a lack of access to quality education and protective



environments, high rates of child labour and an inability to meet their basic needs (Plan International Lebanon, 2021)

Personally, students are depressed from the whole situation. Their whole life style has been affected. The students barely feel happiness, but they appreciate what they had and still have and try to manage their life with the current situations as much as they can. Similar results were found in the studies done by Arampatzi (2013), Chalari (2020), and (Government of Lebanon and UN, 2019). The latest found in a study that over 50% of Lebanese adolescents suffer from anxiety and 12% suffer from depression.

Students are not equally affected by the crisis based on the status of their family wealth. Students with low family wealth are more affected by the crisis at all levels. Among the governates, Akkar is almost affected more than the other governates at all levels.

The secondary school students in this study found some positive effects of the crisis on their lives. They became more responsible and learned how to manage their expenses, and they are feeling grateful for what they have and can feel with other poor people. They are insisting of getting high scores in their education in order to have better future. These findings were similarly investigated by Chalari (2020).

In short, education in Lebanon is at risk. Students are deprived to a great extent from their human rights which are developed by United Nations in 1989 (Willow, 2006). Even prior to the Beirut blast, which left at least 183 schools damaged and is estimated to have affected access to learning and education support for more than 85,000 children and youth, there were reports that 1,600 schools would close due to the economic crisis, and many children had been withdrawn from schools due to economic hardship. It is estimated that at least one in four children in Beirut are now at risk of dropping out of school (cited in Abouzeid, Halwani, Mokdad, & Habib, 2021).

Countries that are in crisis have fragmented educational systems and structures (Jacob, & Lehner, 2011). Thus, education must be protected. The students in this study mentioned that the public schools need emergency plan to restore the level of education.

There are strong reasons for protecting educational outcomes during crisis periods (Jolly and Cornia, 1984; Reimers, 1994). Educated individuals become workers who are better at coping



with crises and protecting their families from poverty. Furthermore, there are ethical and social justifications for protecting educational outcomes for the general populace (Lange and Topel, 2006). The protection may involve school fee reduction and cash transfers to poorer households, media campaign directed at households and the broader society, and block grants which involve government and non-governmental organizations providing monetary assistance to schools (Shafiq, 2010).

Reconstructing and reforming the educational sector in countries that have crisis need specific approach which is different from developing countries. This approach has to respond to the urgency of rebuilding, the needs of different social groups, the dire lack of resources (i.e. teachers, buildings, curriculum materials), and the social and political conflicts and complexities that persist (Jacob, & Lehner, 2011).

The Lebanese people, and in particular the children of Lebanon, can be rescued only through rigorous political reform that demands merit-based and transparent governance and a political agenda that strengthens institutions and infrastructures, allows a life of dignity and protects the rights and well-being of all (Abouzeid, Halwani, Mokdad, & Habib, 2021).

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