

Investigating Teachers' Life Satisfaction

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Abstract The aim of this study is to determine the life satisfaction perceptions of teachers working at public primary schools according to some variables. In this study, descriptive survey model was used. A random sample of 200 teachers from 25 public primary schools in Diyarbakır/Turkey during 2013-2014 academic year were selected to represent the overall population. In this research, "The Satisfaction with Life Scale" developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) and translated into Turkish by Dağlı and Baysal (2016) was used. The results show that general means of the teachers' perception of life satisfaction is at the "moderate" level. The highest mean score of perception is "I am satisfied with my life" (M=2,95; Agree moderately) and the lowest one is "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing" (M=2,24; Slightly agree). The results also show that there exists a significant difference among teachers' perceptions according to their gender, marital status and monthly income.

Keywords Life Satisfaction, Well-Being, Happiness, Primary School Teachers

1. Introduction

Life satisfaction is among the primary elements that people need to possess so that they can be happy in their lives and their lives make sense. Life satisfaction is one of the subjects being in the center of attention of the humankind for centuries. "Life satisfaction consists of a cognitive component of subjective well-being and the cognitive judgments of the person related to his/her life [1]. In the positive psychological literature, the idiom of subjective well-being is generally expressed as happiness [2]. Subjective well-being is composed of three different components including positive emotions, negative emotions and life satisfaction. The positive and negative emotions constitute the affective/emotional dimension of subjective well-being. And *life satisfaction* constitutes the cognitive/judgmental dimension of subjective well-being

[3].

Life satisfaction refers to a cognitive/judgmental process and is defined as the general evaluation of life qualities according to the criteria that the individuals select on their own [4, 3, 5]. The judgmental process of satisfaction is based on how the individual compares the conditions, which he/she is in, with the appropriate standards. It is emphasized that the judgments of the individuals about the extent to which they are satisfied are based on a comparison of the current course with the standards that the individual has identified (not imposed outwardly) for his/her own [3].

Life satisfaction can be defined as the situation or result that is achieved by comparing the expectations of a person with those in his/her possession [6], as positive evaluation of the whole life by a person in a way that conforms to the criteria that the person himself/herself determines and an important element of comprehensive happiness [3], the sum of human beliefs and evaluations about life, or the general attitude of person about his/her life [7]. According to Shin and Johnson [4], in general, *life satisfaction* is evaluation of the quality of life by the individual according to criteria that he/she determines. Life satisfaction can be defined as the level of the positive development of all qualities of life as a whole [8].

Life satisfaction is not related a specific area and can be defined as a positive assessment of the whole life, and therefore the fact that the individual is satisfied with only his/her work does not mean that he/she is satisfied with his/her life. Work satisfaction may increase life satisfaction but it does not replace it. The object of life satisfaction is all of the areas of life [9]. The fact that positive evaluations of the individual about life are higher than negative evaluations indicates that the quality of life is high, too [10]. Appleton and Song [11] argue that life satisfaction comprises six different components. These components can be sorted as; (1) *income level of the person*, (2) *occupation and social status*, (3) *possessed possibilities and social mobility*, (4) *welfare conditions*, (5) *current government policy and* (6) *environment, family and social relations*. Diener [1] states that life satisfaction has a dynamic structure that may change according to the current living conditions and personal standards of the person.

Life satisfaction of individuals can be affected by many things. Some of these are happiness obtained from daily life, meaning attributed to the life, adaptation to achievement of objectives, positive individual identity, that the person feels physically good, economic, security and social relations (Schmitter, 2003; Cited in: Yılmaz and Aslan, 2013) [12].

Social relationships represent an important living space associated with life satisfaction. The reason is that the relatives, such as spouses, children or friends, provide social support, give financial support, share leisure time and accompany [13]. Being married or living together with a partner affects life satisfaction positively like having a social circle [14]. Relationships of people with their friends are as important as those relationships with the family members [15].

The main factors affecting life satisfaction can be sorted in this way: Freedom, democracy, being open-minded, being active, political stability, the feeling of the control of one's own life in his/her own hand, being physically and spiritually sound, being married, having good relationships with family and friends, doing sports, living in a secure region, having wide social circle, positive individual identity (Khakoo, 2004; Dockery, 2004; Cited in: Özdevecioğlu and Aktaş, 2007) [16].

When the literature was examined, any researches searching the perceptions of life satisfaction of the teachers working in public primary schools were not encountered. With this research, it was tried to determine how the perceptions of the teachers in public primary schools about life satisfaction are. It is hoped that this research will shed light to the administrators and teachers taking place in the application and to the researchers who will conduct research on the subject.

1.1. The Aim of the Study

The purpose of this research is to determine how the perceptions of teachers in public primary schools about life satisfaction are according to some variables. In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions have been sought:

- 1.1.1. How is the Distribution of Primary School Teachers' Perceptions about Life Satisfaction?
- 1.1.2. Do the Perceptions of Teachers about Life Satisfaction Differ in Respect of;
 - 1.1.2.1. Gender,
 - 1.1.2.2. Marital Status,
 - 1.1.2.3. Total Monthly Income?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. The Model of the Study

This study is in survey model. In survey model the person

or the object of the study is tried to be determined in its own conditions as it is [17].

2.2. Participants

Study group of this study is composed of 200 primary school teachers (branch teachers excluded) who were chosen randomly among 25 public primary schools which are at the city center of Diyarbakır/Turkey in 2013-2014 academic year.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

"Life Satisfaction Scale" was used in this study. The information related to data collecting tool is described below:

Life Satisfaction Scale: Life Satisfaction Scale developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin [3] and adapted into Turkish from English by Dağlı and Baysal[18] was used as data collection tool in the research. Scoring of expressions of measure is as follows: "I do not agree at all (1), I agree very little (2), I agree at medium level (3), I agree substantially (4), and I fully agree (5)". While Dağlı and Baysal[18] adapted the "Life Satisfaction Scale" (LSS) into Turkish, they first referred to the Turkish validity and reliability studies and then the validity of the structure. Within the scope of the linguistic equivalence study, they established that there is a high level of positive and meaningful relationship between English and Turkish scales ($r = 0,923$; $p = .000$). As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, which was conducted after it was established that there is a high level of positive and meaningful relationship between English and Turkish scales ($r = 0,923$; $p = .000$) within the scope of linguistic equivalence, they determined the KMO value as 0.869; and the χ^2 value of the Barlett test as 528,329 ($p < .001$, $Sd = 10$). The total variance explained was detected as 68,389%. The researchers found in the final that the scale was the only factor and a 5-item scale, was in conformity with the original scale, the factor loadings related to the items varied between 0,728 and 0,893, and determined the value of χ^2/sd , which is one of cohesion indexes of the model, as 1,17, the value of NFI, one of the cohesion indexes as 0,99; the value of NNFI as 1,00; the value of CFI as 1,00; and the value of SRMR as 0,019. On the other hand, the value of RMSEA was determined to be 0,030, the value of GFI as 0,99, and the value of AGFI as 0,97. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was determined as 0,883 and test-retest correlation coefficient as $r=0,97$ ($p=.000$). The researchers stated that the values that emerged when the adaptive values were compared with the standard cohesion criterion to be examined as a result of the exploratory factor analysis indicated in the study of Schermelleh-Engel and Moosbrugger [19] were in the group of "the best adaptive values".

2.4. Data Analysis

The research data was analyzed by SPSS 19.0 programme.

In the research, the arithmetic mean, level and standard deviations were calculated to determine the perception levels of the teachers about life satisfaction. The "t" test and the one-way analysis of variance were used to test whether there was a significant difference between the perceptions of the groups. When the averages were interpreted, the options that are included in the life satisfaction scale were evaluated as follows: 1,00-1,79 "I do not agree at all", 1,80-2,59 "I agree very little", 2,60-3,39 "I agree at medium level", 3,40-4,19 "I agree substantially", and 4,20-5,00 "I fully agree". The level of significance was taken as 0,05. The arithmetic means of these scores were benefited in interpretation of the perceptions of the teachers.

3. Findings

In this section, there are findings about (I) how are the perceptions about life satisfaction of primary school teachers distributed? and (II) whether the perceptions of teachers about life satisfaction differ significantly in respect of; gender, marital status and total monthly income?

3.1. Distribution of the Perceptions of Teachers in Relation to Life Satisfaction

The mean and standard deviation results of the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction are presented in Table 1 below.

As seen in Table 1, the general average of the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction is 2.60 and is at the level of "I agree at medium level". The highest attitude of teachers concerned with life satisfaction is "I am satisfied

with my life ($M=2.95$; I agree at medium level)", and the lowest perception is "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing ($M=2,24$; I agree very little)".

3.2. The Evaluation of the Perceptions of the Teachers regarding life satisfaction in Respect to Some Variables

3.2.1. Perceptions of Teacher According to Gender

The t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction according to gender and the results are presented in Table 2.

As seen in Table 2, a significant difference was determined between the averages of the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction according to gender. When we look at the averages, it can be said that the perceptions of the female teachers ($M=2,74$) are slightly higher than those of the male teachers ($M=2,46$).

3.2.2. Perceptions of Teachers According to Marital Status

The t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction according to marital status and the results are presented in Table 3.

As seen in Table 3, it was concluded that there is a significant difference between the averages of the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction according to marital status, the average of the perceptions of married teachers ($M=2,67$) are slightly higher than the perceptions of single teachers ($M=2,32$).

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation results of perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction

Items	M	SD	Level
1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.	2,61	1,060	I Agree at Medium Level
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.	2,36	1,032	I agree very little
3. I am satisfied with my life.	2,95	1,083	I Agree at Medium Level
4. So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.	2,89	1,001	I Agree at Medium Level
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	2,24	1,191	I agree very little
Total	2,60	,884	I Agree at Medium Level

Table 2. T-test results of teachers' perceptions in relation to life satisfaction according to gender

Gender	N	M	SD	Df	t	S
Female	102	2,74	0,95	193,991	2,33	0,021*
Male	98	2,46	0,78			

* $p < 0,05$ Note. N: Number of people, M: Mean, SD: Standard Deviation, Df: Degree of freedom, S: Significance

Table 3. T-test results of teachers' perceptions in relation to life satisfaction according to marital status

Marital Status	N	M	SD	Df	t	S
Married	165	2,67	0,87	197	2,11	0,036*
Single	34	2,32	0,89			

* $p < 0,05$

Table 4. Results of analysis of variance (anova) of teacher’s perceptions in relation to life satisfaction according to monthly income

Income	N	M	SD	Source	SS	Df	MS	F	S	Significant Difference
2000-2999 TL	67	2,39	0,88	Between-groups	11,693	4	2,923	3,957	0,004*	Between 2000-2999 TL and 6000 TL and more
3000-3999 TL	33	2,53	0,77	Within-groups	144,055	195	0,739			
4000-4999 TL	38	2,55	0,75	Total	155,747	199				
5000-5999 TL	45	2,77	0,82							
6000 TL and more	17	3,25	1,18							
Total	200	2,60	0,88							

*p<0,05. Note. N: Number of people, M: Mean, SD: Standard Deviation, SS: Sum of Square, Df: Degree of freedom, MS: Mean of Squares, S: Significance.

3.2.3. Perceptions of Teachers According to Monthly Income

The mean and standard deviation results and the results of one-way analysis of variance whether the difference between the mean is significant or not are presented in Table 4 in relation to the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction according to the monthly income.

As seen in Table 4, a significant difference was detected between the averages of the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction according to the monthly income. According to the results of the Scheffé test that was conducted to determine the source of the intergroup significant difference, a significant difference was established between the perceptions of teachers with monthly income of 2000-2999 TL (Turkish Liras) and those with 6000 TL and over. When the arithmetic averages are considered, it is seen that the average of the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction with monthly income of 2000-2999 TL (M=2,39) are lower than the average of the perceptions of those (M=3.25) of monthly income of 6000 TL and more. That is, it was determined that the teachers with low incomes (2000-2999 TL) have less *life satisfaction* than those with high incomes (6000 TL or more).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusions

The purpose of this research is to determine how the perceptions of teachers in public primary schools about life satisfaction are according to some variables. In line with this purpose, answers to the following questions have been sought: (I) How is the distribution of primary school teachers’ perceptions about life satisfaction? (II) Do the perceptions of teachers about life satisfaction differ in respect of; gender, marital status and total monthly income? In the study, the results obtained in line with the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction were researched within the related literature and discussed within their own context.

The general mean of the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction is M=2.60 and it is at the level of “I agree at the medium level”. It was pointed out that high life satisfaction for adults is related to the person’s own

internal world, work, physical and psychological health and positive outcomes in education status (Marques et al., 2007; Cited in: Bekmezci and Mert, 2013) [20]. They are also concerned with their own internal world, work, physical and psychological health and positive outcomes in education. Khakoo (2004) and Dockery (2004) sort the main factors affecting life satisfaction as follows: Freedom, democracy, being open-minded, being active, political stability, feeling that the control of one’s own life in his/her own hand, being physically and spiritually sound, being married, having good relationships with family and friends, doing sports, living in a secure region, having wide social circle, positive individual identity (Cited in: Özdevecioğlu and Aktaş, 2007) [16]. Teachers enjoy the life satisfaction that they maintain *at the medium level*. The highest attitude of teachers concerned with life satisfaction is “*I am satisfied with my life (M=2,95; I agree at medium level)*”, and the lowest attitude is “*If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing (M=2,24; I agree very little)*”. As it is seen, the teachers say that they are not very satisfied with their current lives, and they agree very little with the expression that if I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing, that is, they can change many things in their lives. In both of the empirical and correlated studies, it was found that the greater the difference between the desires and the present situation of people the lower their life satisfaction is (Michalos, 1985; 2004; Crawford Solberg et al., 2002; Cited in: Lavalley, Hatch, Michalos and McKinely, 2007: 206) [21].

Life satisfaction is a multidimensional concept that is complementary to the health and functional status of the individual in general, and it is closely related to the physical, psychological, social, economic, and spiritual aspects of the person [22]. When the foreign literature related to the research is considered, there is a consensus that the demographic data reveal only a very small variance in life satisfaction and that demographic data are not very influential variables in life satisfaction. The main characteristics determined to increase life satisfaction are income level especially in developing or underdeveloped countries [23], being married in terms of marital status [24], being social and being proud of themselves [25]. It was determined that age has very little effect on life satisfaction and sex has no effect on life satisfaction (Argyle, 1999;

Michalos et al., 2001; Cummins et al., 2005; Cited in: Lavallee, Hatch, Michalos and McKinley, 2007: 215) [21;1].

On the other hand, in this research, a significant difference was established between the averages of teachers' perceptions of life satisfaction according to gender. When we look at the means, life satisfaction levels of female teachers (2,74) are slightly higher than life satisfaction levels of male teachers (2,46). This finding is similar to the research findings achieved by Bayram, Aytaç, Sam and Aytaç[26], Reçepoğlu[27], Şahin, Zade and Direk[28], Tuzgöl-Dost [29] and Selim[30].

It was concluded that there is a significant difference between the averages of the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction according to marital status, the average of the perceptions of married teachers ($M=2,67$) are slightly higher than the perceptions of single teachers ($M=2,32$). It can be said that there is a meaningful difference between the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction and the married teachers have a higher level of life satisfaction than those of the bachelor teachers. The results of the survey with 35 million people by the US National Public Opinion Survey shows that 40% of married people are happy, while only 24% of those who are unmarried, divorced, separated or widowed are happy. It is stated that married people are happier without any regard to income, age and gender difference, and there is no consensus that there is a direct relationship between marriage and life satisfaction [24]. Ability of perceiving the shared values shared in the family life and the attitudes based on these values increase life satisfaction [31]. In their studies, Wan, Jaccard, and Ramey [32] stated that the marriage institution is within a strongly correlation with social support that is an important concept in life satisfaction. In a study conducted by Cockrum and White [33], the average life satisfaction of never unmarried women ($M=3.80$) is lower than that of never unmarried men ($M=4.00$). Emotional loneliness is thought to be the most important determinant of this situation. The positive effect of marriage on subjective well-being manifests itself as a consistently repetitive finding in the results of the research, and when compared to unmarried people, it was determined that married people have a higher level of mental well-being [34], higher life satisfaction [30], and the lowest level of mental distress [35]. Diener and Seligman [36] argue that the fact that almost all of the very happy people are not alone but have strong, romantic and social relationships can be acceptable as the reason for the relationship of marriage with happiness.

When the relationship between the teachers' perceptions in relation to life satisfaction and their monthly incomes were examined in the research, it was determined that there was significant difference between the perceptions of the groups with income of only 2000-2999 TL and 6000 TL and more. When the arithmetic averages are considered, it is seen that the average of the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction with monthly income of 2000-2999 TL ($M=2,39$) are lower than the average of the perceptions of those

($M= 3,25$) of monthly income of 6000 TL and more. That is, it was determined that the teachers with low incomes (2000-2999 TL) have less life satisfaction than those with high incomes (6000 TL or more). Diener and Biswas-Diener[23] argue that the effect of the individual income growth on life satisfaction is higher in low-income group, the effect of income on life satisfaction is strong only if it helps to meet the basic needs, and the effect of income on life satisfaction is reduced when people are rich. In a study conducted by Özgür, Babacan-Gümüş and Durdu[37] it was determined that among the students who live both at home and in dormitories, the students with good economic status had higher life satisfaction. Moreover, in a research conducted by Matheny, Curlette, Aysan, Herrington et al. [38], it was found that economic freedom has a positively relation to life satisfaction. On the other hand, in a research conducted by Yılmaz and Altınok[39] on school administrators, life satisfaction levels of the school administrators with income level between 1000-2000 TL were significantly lower than the school administrators with income level between 2000-3000 TL. Economic power is an important means to meet the needs of people. Economic strength remains a valid criterion for success and dignity. Herzberg also includes economic factors that the individual regards as one of the hygienic factors in their motivation, and states that they cannot be successful unless these needs are satisfied [40]. According to Maslow, people have to make money in order to meet their physiological and security needs. Economic power is an important factor in meeting people's expectations [41]. Based on these findings, it can be said that the effect of income on subjective well-being is very strong in respect of meeting the basic physiological needs.

4.2. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following suggestions can be made:

1. In-service training courses organized for teachers should include the subjects related to life satisfaction.
2. The factors that affect teachers' future expectations in the negative direction should be investigated in depth and measures should be taken to make them look more optimistically to the future.
3. School administrators should evaluate teachers not only as organizational citizens but also as a whole with school and non-school life. Schools should also be sensitive to the non-school life and needs of their employees.
4. Positive communication should be adopted and fostered to increase life satisfaction in schools. Designing the organizational communication structure in order to meet the needs of the teachers should be the basic approach. Thus, negative situations such as alienation and conflict will be replaced with consciousness, happiness and satisfaction.
5. Providing the teachers with detailed information both about the school and their jobs and performances increases the job satisfaction as well as life satisfaction.

6. School administrators should strive to create a democratic and supportive working environment in their schools. Thus, the negative situations of teachers such as exhaustion, conflict, stress and depression should be reduced and establishing a positive climate should be preferred.

7. Legal arrangement should be made in order to employ specialist psychologists who provide teachers with counseling service in the school environment for the purpose of increasing the life satisfaction of teachers.

8. Teacher wages and salaries should be improved and managers should positively discriminate against teachers with low income in the appointments related to paid work.

In this research, the perceptions of teachers in relation to life satisfaction were measured. In this subject, researches based on the perceptions of the non-educator employees can be conducted. Similar researches can be conducted quantitatively and qualitatively in public and private secondary schools. Moreover, the relationship between life satisfaction and organizational citizenship, engagement with work, exhaustion can be examined.

Note

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