

Satisfaction of Needs and Determining of Life Goals: A Model of Subjective Well-Being for Adolescents in High School

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to develop and test a subjective well-being model for adolescents in high school. A total of 326 adolescents in high school (176 female and 150 male) participated in this study. The data was collected by using the general needs satisfaction questionnaire, which is for the adolescents' subjective well-being, and determining life goals questionnaire. The structural equation modeling method was used for analysis of the data. The results of the analysis showed that in the original model, the individual variables and the total effect of variables were directly and indirectly related to subjective well being of adolescents in high school. The direct and indirect effects of the independent variables to subjective well-being were found significant. The findings suggest that to enhance the subjective well-being of high school students, a combination of satisfaction of needs and determining of life goals are essential.

Kev Words

Subjective Well-Being, Satisfaction of Needs, Determining Life Goals, Adolescents.

Subjective well-being is considered to comprise three important dimensions: positive affection, negative affection and life satisfaction (Andrews & Whitney 1976; Diener, 1984). Positive affection includes positive feelings while negative affection includes negative feelings. The life satisfaction dimension is a cognitive component of subjective well-being (Myers & Diener, 1995).

When literature is examined, the subjective wellbeing of children and adolescents were investi-

a PhD. Ali Eryılmaz is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Educational Sciences, Guidance and Psychological Counseling. His research interests include subjective well-being, positive psychotherapy, life goals, class engagement and motivation, initiating romantic intimacy. Correspondence: Assist. Prof. Ali ER-YILMAZ, Osmangazi University, Faculty of Education, Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, Eskisehir/Turkey. E-mail: erali76@hotmail.com WEB: egitimpsikologu.com. Phone: +90 222 339 3750/1644 Fax: +90 222 229 3124. gated based on three important domains such as demographic factors (Huebner, Suldo, Smith, & McKnight, 2004; Karatzias, Chouliara, Power, & Swanson, 2006; McCullough, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2002; Šarakauskienė & Bagdonas, 2010); psychological factors (Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Joronen & Kurki, 2005; Mcknight, Huebner, & Suldo, 2002; Rask, Kurki, & Paavilainen, 2003; Shek & Lee, 2007), and also academic factors (Ash & Huebner, 2001; Baker, 1998; Cheng & Furnham, 2002; Huebner, 1991; Huebner & Alderman, 1993; Huebner & Gilman, 2003; Suldo & Huebner, 2004). According to results of researches, when adolescents have higher level of subjective well-being, they become healthier (Huebner et al., 2004; Steinberg, 2004, 2005). To investigate of adolescents' subjective well-being with different variables is important for positive development of adolescents (Gilman & Huebner, 2006).

Self determination theory points out that individuals want to satisfy three innate psychological needs such as competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 1998; Deci, 2008; Deci & Ryan, 1991; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to studies on subjective well-being, satisfaction of psychological needs is important variable which affects subjective well-being of individuals (Baard, 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000). If individuals satisfy their psychological needs, they feel better. On the other hand, if psychological needs are not satisfied, individuals develop more pathologies (Baard et al., 1998; Cole, Maxwell, & Martin, 1997; Crocker & Hakim-Larson, 1997; Deci et al., 2001; Ilardi, Leone, Kasser, & Ryan, 1993; Kasser & Ryan, 1999; Noom, Dekovic, & Meeus, 1999; Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan & Grolnick, 1986; Sheldon & Bettencourt, 2002; Sheldon, Ryan, & Reis, 1996; Véronneau, Koestner, & Abela, 2005; Wiest, Wong, & Kreil, 1998).

Literature indicates that one of the most important factors to regulate and adapt individuals to their lives is goals (Diener & Seligman, 2002, 2004; Emmons, 1999; Kasser, 2002; Sheldon & Bettencourt, 2002; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998; Sheldon, Ryan et al., 1996; Synder & Lopez, 2007). People behave to achieve various goals (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Emmons, 1999; Emmons, Colby, & Kaiser, 1998; King, Richard, & Stemmerich, 1998; Lock & Latham, 1990; Yetim, 2001). According to positive psychotherapy, individuals set goals four important domains such as body, achievement, relationships-contact, and also fantasy-future (Eryılmaz, 2010; Peseschkian, 1996, 2002; Peseschkian & Walker, 1987).

When individuals set goals and actualize them, their subjective well-being levels get a better position. If individuals do not have goals, they develop more diseases (Debats, 1998; Emmons, 1986, 1999; Hooker & Siegler, 1993; King et al., 1998; Palys & Little, 1983; Omodei & Wearing, 1990; Wheeler, Munz, & Jain, 1990).

In the literature, goals and need satisfaction are discussed in the context of the theory of telic. According to telic theory, there are two important factors including the need satisfaction and goals in order to increase subjective well-being of individuals (Emmons, 1986). Goals and satisfaction of needs are interrelated (Cantor, 1990; Diener, 1984; Emmons, 1986; Ivancevich & Matteson, 1999; Palys & Little, 1983; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Satisfaction of needs have function to regulate individuals, and also to adapt individuals to their lives (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998). It is needed a mediator factor for adaptive function of needs. In this context, a me-

diator factor could be determining of life goals.

The self-determination theory investigates subjective well being of individuals with respect to goals and satisfaction of needs (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998). According to this model, people must determine intrinsically their goals. Then, they should attach themselves for their goals, and also spent effort to actualize their goals. When people actualize their goals, they also should satisfy their needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus, their level of subjective well-being gets a better position (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998, 1999). The most important basic true is that needs are inherent and universal. In addition to this, with the relationships between satisfaction of needs and determining of life goals, it is supposed that determining of life goals has a significant mediator effect on the relation between subjective well-being and satisfaction of needs in this study.

Adolescence is the most important developmental stage of life. In this stage, adolescents experience so many changes (Allen, Hauser, Bell, & O'Connor, 1994; Collins & Laursen, 2004; Erikson, 1968; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Piaget & Inhelder, 1973; Steinberg, 2004). These changes have positive and negative results on adolescents' mental health (Collins, Hennighausen, Schmit, & Sroufe, 1997; Hecht, Inderbitzen, & Bukowski, 1998; La Greca & Lopez, 1998; Mcknight et al., 2002; Wires, Barocas, & Hollenbeck, 1994). If adolescents get higher level of subjective well-being then, their motivation to learn increase. On the other hand, if they have low level of subjective well-being, they experience school burnout, find school activities meaningless, and also perceive themselves as insufficient students (Huebner, 2004; Kiuru, Aunola, Nurmi, Leskinen, & Salmela-Aro, 2008; Salmela-Aro, Kiuru, Pietikäinen, & Jokela, 2008). Thus, investigating subjective well-being is important for positive development (Diener, 1984; Diener & Seligman, 2002, 2004; Mcknight et al., 2002) and positive academic results (Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002).

Studies conducted in Turkey or elsewhere; do not seem to focus on subjective well-being, need satisfaction and determining of life goals for adolescents in high school. Understanding the relations between these variables will provide insight into the direction and the power of these variables. The aim of this study is to test a model that examines the relation between subjective well-being of adolescents attending high school, satisfaction of their needs and the determining of life goals. Three important hypotheses were established:

- (a) The determining of life goals has a positive effect on subjective well-being of adolescents in high school,
- (b) Satisfaction of needs has a positive effect on subjective well-being of adolescents in high school and.
- (c) Determining of life goals has a significant mediator effect on the relation between subjective well-being and satisfaction of needs.

Method

Design

This study explains, by employing structural equation modeling, the theoretical model which asserts that determining of life goals and satisfaction of needs affect the subjective well-being of adolescents attending high school. In the pattern of this work, in order to analyze the extent to which determining of life goals and satisfaction of needs by interacting with each other, affects the adolescents' subjective well-being; a stuructural model has been used (Bentler & Bonnet, 1980; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993; Kenny & McCoach, 2003).

In several researches in literature a close connection has been detected between life goals, need satisfaction (Cantor, 1990; Diener, 1984; Palys & Little, 1983; Ryan & Deci, 2000); and subjective well-being (Baard et al., 1998; Hooker & Siegler, 1993; Ilardi et al., 1993; Kasser & Ryan, 1999; King et al., 1998; Reis et al., 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sheldon, Ryan et al., 1996; Sheldon & Bettencourt, 2002; Wheeler et al., 1990). In this study which is patterned based on the idea that the relationship which is obtained from research results, adolescents' subjective well-being is taken as dependent variable whereas satisfaction of needs and determining of life goals are accepted as independent variables.

Study Group

Researcher in using purposive sampling is able to choose a specific unit based on theoretical knowledge and specific goals of the study (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel 2008; Fraenkel & Wallen 1993; Sencer 1989). In this study, maximum variation was used among the purposive sampling methods. In order to determine the sample, inclusion and exclusion criteria were used. Inclusion criteria for the study were the following: participants should be between 14-16 years-old

and should be attending high schools. Exclusion criteria for the study were to have a chronic illness and have a psychiatric diagnosis. The study group initially consisted of 377 participants. Prior to data analyses, the participants' answers were reviewed. As a result of this review, 35 individuals who left most of the items of the scale blank (at least 5% of the items) or who were detected to mistakenly check the wrong answer in the answer sheet were excluded from the data set. 11 adolescents who have chronic illness and 5 adolescents who have psychiatric diagnosis were excluded from the data set. As a result, a total of 326 adolescents, 150 males and 176 females, participated in the study. Their ages varied between 14 and 17 years.

Data Gathering Instruments

Personal Information Form: In this study, a personal information form which included variables such as having chronic illness, having psychiatric diagnosis, age, gender, educational level and socioeconomic level was used to reveal the demographic features of the participants.

Basic Need Satisfaction in General Scale: This scale which was developed by Deci and Ryan (1991) and has 21 items concerning three needs: competence, autonomy and relatedness. It was adapted to Turkish by Cihangir-Çankaya and Bacanlı (2003). This 21-item questionnaire assesses the individuals' satisfaction of intrinsic needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness. There are six items for competence, eight items for relatedness, and seven items for autonomy, to which participants responded on 5-point scales. The internal consistency of the scale for competence is .80; for autonomy .82, and for relatedness .81.

Adolescents' Subjective Well Being Scale: This scale was developed by Eryılmaz (2009). The scale is composed of 15 items with a 4-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (almost never) to 4 (all the time). Exploratory factor analysis was performed to examine the factor structure of scale. It explained 61.64% of the variance in four dimensions: (i) satisfaction of family relationships, (ii) satisfaction of relationships with important others, (iii) positive affect, (iiii) life satisfaction. The total score is computed as the sum of the scores on each of the 15 items. In addition to the total score, the scores from the subscales were computed. The total score of the scale can range between 15 and 60 points. The scale can be administered individually or collectively. A higher total and subscale score indicates a higher level of subjective well-being. The internal consistency of the scale for total point is 0.87. The concurrent validity of the scale was computed with the satisfaction with life scale. The reliability and validity analyses showed that the scale was reliable and valid.

Life Goals Scale for Adolescents: This scale was developed by Eryılmaz (2010). The scale is composed of 9 items with a 4-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (almost never) to 4 (all the time). Exploratory factor analysis was performed to examine the factor structure of scale. It explained 65.32% of the variance in three dimensions: (i) determining of achievement (career) goals, (ii) determining of relationship goals, (iii) determining of body (senses) goals. The total score is computed as the sum of the scores on each of the 9 items. In addition to the total score, the scores from the subscales were computed. The total score of the scale can range between 9 and 36 points. The scale can be administered individually or collectively. A higher total and subscale score indicates a higher level of determining life goals. The internal consistency of the scale for total point is 0.75. The concurrent validity of the scale was computed with the satisfaction with life scale. The reliability and validity analyses showed that the scale was reliable and valid.

Process

The main objective of this study is, by analyzing the relationships between determining of life goals and satisfaction of needs and their connection to adolescents' subjective well-being, to test a developed independent theoretical model. In this study structural equation modeling is employed to determine the relationships with related variables. To test structural equation model, to investigate appropriate theoretical models and enable a unification of measurement errors in both observed and latent variables, path analysis was employed in place of multiple regression analysis.

Results

In this particular model of study, CFI was determined as 0.96, IFI was determined as 0.96, NFI was determined as 0.94, NNFI was determined as 0.95, RFI was determined as 0.92, and also GFI was determined as 0.95. AGFI goodness-of-fit value was determined 0.91. This indicates that goodness-of-fit values theoretical model is appropriate for obtained data. On the other hand RMSEA value was

detected as 0.071. This indicates that only a few variances and covariances were not explained by structured theoretical model. In this study χ^2/df ratio was found to be 2.25. The fact that this ratio is smaller than 4 means a good fit between observed and multiplied covariance matrixes (Kline, 2005).

Standardized and unstandardized path coefficients have been used to explain the effect of the independent variables of this research on subjective well-being. Kline (1998; 2005) defines standardized path coefficients effect size as low if it is below .10, average if it is below .30 and, high if it is above .50. Accordingly, the strongest predictor in the model is satisfaction of needs. One unit increase in satisfaction of needs increases subjective well-being by 0.62. The second predictor in the model is determining of life goals. One unit increase in determining of life goals increases subjective well-being by 0.38 points. In addition these findings, the mediator effect of determining of life goals is also meaningful.

Discussion

Literature shows that the levels of subjective wellbeing of individuals have also been raised in line with the satisfaction of needs (Baard et al., 1998; Ilardi et al., 1993; Kasser & Ryan, 1999; Reis et al., 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sheldon & Bettencourt, 2002; Sheldon, Ryan et al., 1996). Similarly, studies in the literature show that the levels of subjective well-being of individuals have also been raised in line with the determining life goals (Emmons, 1986, 1999; Hooker & Siegler, 1993; King et al., 1998; Omodei & Wearing, 1990; Palys & Little, 1983; Wheeler et al., 1990). Most studies mentioned have been conducted on young adults and adults (Baard et al., 1998; Ilardi et al., 1993; Kasser & Ryan 1999; Reis et al., 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Sheldon & Bettencourt, 2002; Sheldon, Ryan et al., 1996). This study concludes that the satisfaction of adolescents' needs and determining of life goals is in parallel with the increase in their subjective wellbeing. These results are an important contribution to the literature as the relations between these two variables have been studied with adolescents attending high school.

The results of this study can be evaluated with respect to activity theory of subjective well-being. According to this theory, it is not only important determining life goals but also actualize them (Carver & Scheier, 1996; Deiner, 1984; Ryan & Deci, 2000). So, in future some studies will be carried out with this perspective. According to literature, when peo-

ple determine and actualize goals, they get some gains such as self-efficacy. These kinds of gains effect subjective well-being of individuals (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995; Skinner, 1995, 1996). Thus, some model studies will be carried out with possible gains.

The literature shows that while there are studies that analyze the direct relations between subjective well-being and the mentioned variables, none have analyzed the indirect relations. For instance, activities which are goal oriented account 40 % for subjective well-being (Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006). On the other hand, theoretical explanations of the relations between these variables are mentioned in the literature. According to Telic Theory, subjective well-being, goals and needs are related to each other (Lykken & Tellegen, 1996). Some goals arise as a result of the individuals' desire to fulfill their needs (Diener 1984; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The model which is developed in this study confirms theoretical explanations in literature.

In addition, an alternative model with respect to self-concordance model was also developed (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001; Sheldon & Kasser, 1998) in this study, but the effect of the alternative model was found low. This result supported explanation of self-determination theory (needs are universal and innate) and goal theory (goals are cognitive based and not innate) (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Lock & Latham, 1990; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

A greater contribution to subjective well-being of adolescents attending high school can be achieved when satisfaction of needs is put into practice parallel with efforts to determining life goals. In this process, adolescents must determine their life goals by autonomic way (Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005; Sheldon & Elliot, 1998, 1999; Skorikov, 2006). In literature, there are positive intervention studies (Ash & Huebner, 2001). The result of this study can be used possible intervention programs.

The most significant limitation of this study is that all participants were adolescents attending high school. The model developed here should also be tested on adolescents who are not in high school or engaged in further education, have chronic illness and psychiatric diagnosis.

In conclusion, according to the model in this study, adolescents attending high school can unite satisfaction of needs with determining of life goals. In this way, subjective well-being achieves a positive level through both needs and determining of life goals.

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