

Investigating Adolescents' Subjective Well-Being with Respect to Using Subjective Well-Being Increasing Strategies and Determining Life Goals

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ABSTRACT

Investigating adolescents' subjective well-being with respect to using subjective well-being increasing strategies and determining life goals

Purpose: This study examines the association between determining life goals with respect to positive psychotherapy and subjective well-being increasing strategies among Turkish adolescents. In addition to this aim, the relationship between two variables and subjective well-being is also investigated.

Method: This study was carried out following the scanning model. The participants of the study included a total of 290 adolescents (139 male and 151 female). The ages of them ranged between 14 and 17. The data of the study were obtained through the use of the following scales: Subjective Well-Being Increasing Strategies Scale for Adolescents and Determination of Life Goals with Respect to Positive Psychotherapy Scale Likert Form, and also Satisfaction with Life Scale.

Results: The data were analyzed through using simple regression analysis method. The findings obtained indicated that subjective well being increasing strategies, determining life goals had moderate positive relationship, and also two variables were related with adolescents' subjective well-being.

Discussion and Conclusions: The findings of the study suggest that there is a statistically significant relationship between using subjective well-being increasing strategies and determining life goals. These two variables are also related with adolescents' subjective well being. Results of this study may be used for improving subjective well being programs.

Key words: Adolescent, subjective well being increasing strategies, life goals

ÖZET

Ergen öznel iyi oluşunun, öznel iyi oluşu artırma stratejilerini kullanma ile yaşam amaçlarını belirleme açısından incelenmesi

Amaç: Bu çalışmada, ergenlerin öznel iyi oluşu artırma stratejilerini kullanmaları ile yaşam amaçlarını belirlemeleri arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Ayrıca strateji kullanmanın ve amaç belirlemenin ergenlerde öznel iyi oluşla ilişkisinin incelenmesi de hedeflenmiştir.

Yöntem: Çalışmaya, Ankara Keçiören ilçesinde lise eğitimi gören, 14-17 yaşları arasındaki, 151 kız (%52.1) ve 139'u (%47.9) erkek olmak üzere toplam 290 ergen katılmıştır. Çalışmada; Ergenler için Öznel İyi Oluşu Artırma Stratejileri Ölçeği, Pozitif Psikoterapi Bağlamında Ergenler için Yaşam Amaçları Belirleme Ölçeği Likert Formu ve Yaşam Doyumu Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular: Analiz sonuçları, yaşam amaçları belirlemenin öznel iyi oluşu artırma stratejilerini kullanma ile anlamlı düzeyde ve pozitif yönde ilişkili olduğunu göstermiştir. Anılan iki değişkenin ergenlerde öznel iyi oluşu açıkladığı da bulunmuştur.

Tartışma ve sonuç: Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, öznel iyi oluşu artırma stratejilerini kullanma ile yaşam amaçları belirleme arasında istatistik açıdan anlamlı ve önemli bir ilişkinin olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca, bu iki değişkenin öznel iyi oluşla da ilişkileri önemli ve anlamlıdır. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, öznel iyi oluşu artırma programlarında kullanılabilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Ergen, öznel iyi oluşu artırma stratejileri, yaşam amaçları

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INTRODUCTION

Equivalent of the term happiness in psychology is subjective well-being. Subjective well-being is evaluation of individual's his/her own life and reporting judgment about his/her affection. Subjective well-being have three important elements: a) positive affection (contains emotions such as trust, interest, hope, excitement, pride, joy), b) negative affection (contains emotions such as anger, hatred, self-blame and sadness) and c) satisfaction with life (1-2). Satisfaction with life is considered as cognitive component of subjective well-being. Satisfaction with life contains evaluation of individual's satisfaction of various domains of life (3). If person experiences positive emotions frequently and highly satisfied of his/her life, then he/she has a high level of subjective well-being.

In current literature, there are data generally about subjective well-being of adults. However, number of studies done about well-being of children and adolescents are also increasing. In these studies, demographic factors and intrapersonal characteristics were evaluated. For example, it was concluded that adolescents who had high level of self-control and self-esteem also had higher levels of subjective well-being (4). It was found that demographic factors had a low impact on subjective well-being of adolescents (5).

Increasing factors of subjective well-being of people were defined as subjective well-being increasing strategies in the literature. First studies on strategies towards increasing subjective well-being were conducted by Fordyce (6,7). According to Fordyce, positive-optimistic thinking, working on new activities and having an active life, engagement in social activities, developing extrovert personal characteristics and decreasing negative thoughts are among subjective well-being increasing strategies effective in individual subjective well-being. Another scientist worked on increasing subjective well-being was Buss (8). Buss is an evolutionary psychologist and according to him, filling spaces occurred between modern and primitive living conditions, developing close relations with relatives and friends, creating deep friendships, reducing subjective stress, managing competitive structures to

collaboration and providing satisfaction of demands are among subjective well-being increasing strategies. Tkach and Lyubomirsky (9) also examined strategies which young adults used to increase their subjective well-beings. According to Tkach and Lyubomirsky, having social relations, and active and passive occupations, determining goals and implementing them, directly behaving towards subjective well-being, religious activities and providing cognitive control are strategies which adults use to increase their subjective well-beings. When these studies are examined, it can be seen that subjective well-being strategies were generally been evaluated in studies done in adults. In this context, studies done about subjective well-being increasing strategies in adolescents are relatively recent ones.

Subjective well-being of adolescents were evaluated by comparing normal and problematic adolescents, evaluating relationship between optimism and self-esteem and evaluating relationship between coping and personal characteristics (10-13). Studies are also being conducted about subjective well-being increasing strategies of adolescents. In this context, Eryılmaz and Yorulmaz (14) concluded in their studies that adolescents used respect and love, being in good relations with other people, seeking for pleasure, having romantic relationships, having positive academic experience, preserving happiness and controlling negative emotions in order to increase their level of subjective well-being. Eryılmaz (15) developed scale for increasing strategies of subjective well-being for adolescents. Sections of this scale consisted of giving positive responses to environment, receiving positive responses from environment, implementing religious requirements, satisfying demands and mental control.

Several factors affect subjective well-being. Goals are among these factors. Goals are private demands which individuals are aware of. These private demands consisted of personal projects which will be implemented in daily life, conscious targets and challenges. Individuals struggle for goals which are important and meaningful for them. Goals increase the subjective well-being levels of individuals by focusing them on the future and adding meaning to their lives (16). It was mentioned in the literature that people who determined a goal and

strived to realize these goals are subjectively better than the ones who did not (17).

Klinger (18) stated that when people were asked "What makes you get satisfied from life?", they generally talked about their goals for life, wishes towards future and dreams about the future. Due to importance of determining a goal, determining goals and realizing them in order to maintain a psychologically positive life is highlighted in most of the therapeutic approaches. These goals are important in positive psychotherapy as well (19). Except therapeutic process, extending studies based on positive psychotherapy are being conducted as preventive studies (20).

In conclusion, when literature is reviewed, it can be seen that there are few studies which evaluated the relationship between goal setting and subjective well-being for adolescents. To see the relationship between goal setting and using strategies to increase subjective well-being in adolescents may contribute to the literature.

Previous studies showed that by globalization, not only people living in capitalist countries but people living all over the world will seek ways of subjective well-being (21). Subjective well-being is very important for adolescents to maintain a healthy development. Because, adolescence is a period which intensive physical and emotional changes occur. Adolescents are prone to positive and negative stressors which impair their adaptation to their environment during this period. These changes affect adolescents either positively or negatively. For example, adolescents show negative behaviors such as substance dependence, maladjustment to school and other behavioral disturbances. These negative events impair their future roles and responsibilities (22). Therefore it is important to determine and implement the factors which are adaptive and increasing subjective well-being during adolescence.

In this study, we aimed to investigate the relationship between strategies to increase subjective well-being and determining life goals of adolescents. It was also aimed to investigate the relationship between using strategy and determining goals and subjective well-being of adolescents.

METHOD

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between strategies to increase subjective well-being and determining life goals of adolescents. The study has two sub-goals:

a) To investigate the relationship between strategies to increase subjective well-being and determining life goals of adolescents.

b) To investigate the relationship between using strategy and determining goals and subjective well-being of adolescents.

Data were collected after individual implementation in the study. When data were being collected, ethical rules were complied and voluntary participation was the basis of recruitment. Brief information was given before data collection about the aim of the study. After this, scales were given to the participants volunteered to participate. Additional explanations were also provided when needed. Identity details were not required from participants. Implementations of the scales were between 60-70 minutes. Data were collected between December 2009 and March 2010.

Study Group

This study was done in 2009-2010 study term in 290 adolescent high school students which were going to normal and Anadolu high schools and composed of 151 girls (52.1%) and 139 boys (47.9%) between 14 and 17 years of age in Keçiören county of Ankara. Out of adolescents participated in the study, 156 (53.8%) were at ninth grade, 132 were at tenth grade (45.5%) and 2 (0.6%) were at eleventh grade. Parents of 19 participants (5.9%) were divorced, 262 (90.3%) were living together and mother and/or father of 9 participants (3.1%) died.

Assessment Tools Used in the Study

In this study, Subjective Well-being Increasing Strategies Scale for Adolescents, Satisfaction with Life Scale and Likert form of Life Goals Scale for Adolescents in Positive Psychotherapy were used. Psychometric properties of the scales were mentioned below.

Subjective Well-being Increasing Strategies Scale for Adolescents: Subjective Well-being Increasing Strategies Scale for Adolescents was developed by Eryılmaz (15). Reported variance of the scale was 59%. Scale has 5 dimensions. Cronbach-alpha reliabilities of the whole scale and sub-dimensions were found 0.91 for dimension of Receiving Positive Reactions from Environment, 0.92 for Implementing Religious Beliefs, 0.90 for Giving Positive Reactions to Environment, 0.68 for Satisfying Demands, 0.71 for Preserving Subjective Well-being and 0.89 for the whole scale. In order to test the adjustment validity of the scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale was used. After the analyses, it was concluded that the scale had adequate validity and reliability values. Getting higher scores from the scale mean using strategies at a high level.

Satisfaction with Life Scale: This scale was developed by Diener (2) and adapted to Turkish by Köker (11). Scale consists of a total 5 items and is of Likert type and scored between 1 and 7. Values of ticked choices are added and total score is obtained. Test-retest method for the stability of the responses given to each item of the scale and item analysis study was performed by Köker to understand how well the scale performed. Test-retest reliability coefficient of the scale which was performed twice with three weeks interval was found 0.85. In item analysis study, correlation coefficient between item scores of the scale and test scores was calculated by Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Multiplication of Moments. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found 0.76; Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of this study group was found 0.84.

Likert form of Life Goals Scale for Adolescents in Positive Psychotherapy: This scale was developed by Eryılmaz (20). The scale assesses whether adolescents determine life goals in three domains or not. Reported variance of the scale which has three dimensions (career goals, relationship goals and body-sensation goals) was 65.32%. Cronbach-alpha values of the sub-dimension of career goals was 0.85, Cronbach-alpha values of the relationship goals was 0.73 and Cronbach-alpha values of the body-sensation goals was 0.68'dir. Getting a higher score from the scale means determining goals in all three domains.

Assessment of Subjective Well-being: Subjective well-being was assessed by positive and negative emotions and satisfaction with life scales in the literature. Two methods were followed in the previous studies: In the first method, scales mentioned were implemented one by one (3). In the second method, all these scales were implemented together and total subjective well-being score was obtained. In this study, first method was implemented. In other words, subjective well-being was assessed by satisfaction with life scale.

Statistical Analysis

This study was conducted on the basis of descriptive survey model. SPSS 15.0 software package was used for data analysis. Relationships between variables were analyzed by simple regression analysis in the study. In this context, consistent with the first –sub-goal of the study, using subjective well-being increasing strategies was selected as predicted variable, determining life goals was selected as predictive variable. Similarly, for the second goal of the study, subjective well-being (satisfaction with life) was selected as predicted variable, determining life goals and using subjective well-being increasing strategies was selected as predictive variables. Descriptive statistical analyses such as mean and standard deviation related with dependent and independent variables were also done. Statistical significance level was determined as $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

In this study, relationships between variables were examined by simple regression analysis method. Results were evaluated in two sub-topics: descriptive statistics and regression analyses.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

| | Statistical Values | |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| | Mean | Standart Deviation |
| Subjective Well-being | 24.33 | 5.96 |
| Using Subjective Well-being Increasing Strategies | 44.82 | 6.17 |
| Determining Career Goals | 8.98 | 1.98 |
| Determining Relationship Goals | 7.72 | 2.36 |

A. Descriptive Statistics

In this study, variables evaluated were subjective well-being, subjective well-being increasing strategies and determining career, relationship and body-sensation goals. Descriptive statistics about variables can be found in Table 1.

B. Regression Analysis

In this study, relationship between using of subjective well-being, strategies by adolescents and determining life goals and relationship between using strategies and determining goals and subjective well-being of adolescents were evaluated by simple regression analysis. Results of regression analysis can be found below.

Findings From Relationship Between Using of Subjective Well-being Strategies by Adolescents and Determining Life Goals: Relationship between using subjective well-being increasing strategies and determining life goals were evaluated by simple regression analysis method.

Findings from simple regression analysis can be seen in Table 2. When findings are examined, it can easily be seen that variables significantly explain subjective well-being strategies ($R=0.43$, $R^2=0.18$, $F=15.32$, $p<0.001$).

When relationships of variables were evaluated one by one, it was concluded that determining a career goal was significantly correlated with using of subjective well-being increasing strategies of adolescents ($\beta=0.42$; $p<0.001$). According to these findings, 18% correlation was found between using of subjective well-being increasing strategies further and determining life goals.

Findings from Relationships Between Using Strategies and Determining Goals With Subjective Well-being of Adolescents: In the study, relationship between using of subjective well-being increasing strategies of adolescents and determining life goals with subjective well-being of them was evaluated with simple regression method.

Findings from simple regression analysis can be seen in Table 3. When findings are analyzed, it can be seen that variables explained the subjective well-being significantly ($R=0.41$, $R^2=0.17$, $F=10.09$, $p<0.001$). When relationship between variables and subjective well-being were evaluated one-by-one, using subjective well-being increasing strategies ($\beta=0.29$; $p<0.001$) and determining career goals ($\beta=0.16$; $p=0.02$) were significantly correlated with subjective well-being of adolescents in regression equation. There was a 17% correlation between further increasing subjective well-being and using subjective well-being strategies and determining career goals.

Table 2: Predictors of using subjective well-being increasing strategies of adolescents by simple regression analysis

| | Statistical Values | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|---------|---------|
| | B | Standard Error | Beta | t-value | p-value |
| Determining Career Goals | 1.38 | 0.21 | 0.42 | 6.49 | <0.001 |
| Determining Relationship Goals | -0.04 | 0.17 | -0.01 | -0.23 | 0.81 |
| Determining Body-Sensation Goal | 0.06 | 0.14 | 0.03 | 0.45 | 0.64 |

Table 3: Predictors of subjective well-being in adolescents by simple regression method

| | Statistical Values | | | | |
|---|--------------------|----------------|-------|-------|--------|
| | B | Standart Error | Beta | t | p |
| Using Subjective Well-being Increasing Strategies | 0.26 | 0.06 | 0.29 | 4.10 | <0.001 |
| Determining Career Goals | 0.49 | 0.21 | 0.16 | 2.25 | 0.02 |
| Determining Relationship Goals | -0.14 | 0.16 | -0.05 | -0.87 | 0.38 |
| Determining Body-Sensation Goal | 0.14 | 0.13 | 0.07 | 1.06 | 0.28 |

DISCUSSION

In this study, relationship between using of subjective well-being increasing strategies of adolescents and life goals were investigated. Relationships between these variables and subjective well-being were also evaluated. According to the results of analysis, there was a significant and positive correlation between using of subjective well-being increasing strategies of adolescents and determining career goals. Moreover, a significant and positive correlation between determining life goals and using strategies and subjective well-being was found. Findings of the study were evaluated and discussed under two topics in this section in context of literature.

Relationships between Using of Subjective Well-being Strategies and Determining Life Goals: In this study, significant correlation was found only between determining life goals and using of subjective well-being increasing strategies. In the literature, there are studies investigated relationship between subjective well-being levels of individuals and determining life goals (16-18). In these studies, positive correlation was found between subjective well-being and determining life goals. However, no study was found in the literature evaluating the relationship between subjective well-being strategies and determining life goals. This study can be considered as a contribution to the literature by bringing up findings which were not previously evaluated in the literature.

In this study, significant correlation was found only between determining career goals and using of subjective well-being increasing strategies. This finding might be due to giving higher importance to career goals by adolescents. In the literature, there are data which showed that when individuals believe that their goals are very important and they can realize their goals, they will be able to have higher levels of subjective well-being (23). This finding of this study is consistent with the literature. More detailed information and findings can be obtained by both qualitative and quantitative studies in the future.

Relationship between Using Strategies and Determining Goals and Subjective Well-being of Adolescents: According to study results, positive and

significant correlation between using of subjective well-being increasing strategies of adolescents and determining life goals and subjective well-beings. Correlation of using strategies and subjective well-being is consistent with the literature. Because, according to previous studies, using strategies contributes to subjective well-beings of individuals subjective well-beings (9). This study contributed to the literature due to bringing up the importance of using strategies to increase subjective well-beings of adolescents.

When results of this study are evaluated, determining life goals of adolescents were correlated with their subjective well-beings. This finding is consistent with the literature. There are studies which showed positive contribution of determining goals to subjective well-being of individuals (16-18). Different aspects of the goals are correlated with subjective well-being at different levels. If individuals believe that their goals are important and they can realize these goals then they have higher level of subjective well-being. Moreover, not every goal increases individual's subjective well-being. Goals considered as important by individual increases subjective well-being of the individual (9). From adolescents' point of view, these findings showed that determining career goals provided better subjective well-being in adolescents. Adolescents might have considered determining career goals more important than other goals at this point. Determining other aspects of their lives related with determining career goals and realize them might have been underlying this consideration. Because, they are expected to gain sexual, social and professional identities by the end of adolescence (24). At this point, goals about clarifying professional identity were more prior than goals at other aspects for adolescents.

Correlation of subjective well-being of adolescents with career goals can be evaluated from point of view of predictors of subjective well-being. According to literature, there are three important factors which are effective on subjective well-being of individuals (21). The most effective of these factors is genetic susceptibility. Determining effect of genetic susceptibility on subjective well-being was 50% (25). Second factor is goal-oriented or purposeful behaviors or actions of the individual.

Purposeful activities contain daily activities which individuals think of or act. Purposeful activities explain subjective well-being of individuals by 40% (21). Demographic characteristics are the third determining factor. Demographic characteristics contain age, gender, ethnic origin, occupation and marital status. Demographic characteristics affect subjective well-being by 10%. At this point, although purposeful activities affect subjective well-being of individuals by 40%, this impact seemed to be lower in this study. The reason might be due to not determining goals consciously by adolescents. Because, according to Target Theory (Telic Theory) of subjective well-being, there are two main factors (targets and needs) which affect subjective well-being (16). According to the theory, determining goals is not enough itself in subjective well-being of individuals. Determining goals may increase subjective well-being of individuals but behaviors expressed to reach these goals and consequences of them bring people to a better position from a subjective point of view. Differences between two percents may be due to not being implemented of goals to life.

CONCLUSION






According to the results of this study, determining career goals of adolescents is important for both using subjective well-being increasing strategies and increasing levels of subjective well-being.

Some suggestions can be made based on the findings of this study. First of all, in order to increase happiness of adolescents, subjective well-being increasing strategies and career goals can be used as clinical tools. Because, using strategies contribute to subjective well-being strategies of individuals according to studies done (9). At this point, professionals who help clinically such as psychiatrists and clinical psychologists may benefit from the findings of this study. For example, programs to increase subjective well-being of adolescents can be prepared. In these programs, career goal factor can also be considered. Both using strategies and determining of career goals of adolescents can be helpful.

In this study, subjective well-being of adolescents was evaluated in context of determining life goals and using subjective well-being increasing strategies. Demographic variables were not included in the analyses. This might be considered as a limitation of this study. Second, subjective well-being of adolescents was measured by satisfaction with life scale. Subjective well-being can also be measured by different scales. At this point, using a single scale to measure the dependent variable can also be considered as a second limitation. In conclusion, it is important for subjective well-being of adolescents to determine their career goals and using subjective well-being increasing strategies. Studies can be done with different groups and different variables in the future.

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