The university students’ life satisfactions: Psychological help-seeking attitude and hopelessness

Zeynep Karataş, The Faculty of Education, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Burdur, Turkey.
Firdevs Savi Çakar*, The Faculty of Education, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Burdur, Turkey.

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Abstract

This research aims to reveal to what extent university students’ attitudes towards their psychological help seeking and hopelessness predict their life satisfaction. Participants of the study consist of 359 university students, including 178 female and 181 male. In the research, Life Satisfaction Scale, Psychological Help-Seeking Attitude Scale, Beck Hopelessness Scale and Personal Information Form were used as data collection tools. For the analyses of the research, Regression Analyses were made, and it was determined that university students’ attitudes of seeking for psychological help and their hopelessness levels significantly predicted their life satisfactions. Considering these findings, the analyses of the factors that affect university students’ life satisfactions may be instructive in determining the targets for the studies of psychological counselling.

Keywords: life satisfaction, professional help-seeking attitude, hopelessness, university students.

*ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Firdevs Savi Çakar, The Faculty of Education, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Burdur, Turkey, E-mail address: firdevssavi@hotmail.com
1. Introduction

The university period is a major life transition of emerging adulthood (Ames Pratt, Pancer, Wintre, Polivy, Birnie-Lefcovitch & Adams, 2011) and, students try adult roles, prepare for working life and idealize the values about their lives more (Çivitçi, 2012). These years are one of the periods in which life satisfaction reflecting individual’s perceptions and assessments related to his/her life is important. Because, university students need to cope with complex new roles and the urge to succeed in both academic and soft skills. However, on the other hand, to what extent, these students are happy and satisfied with their life, particularly in handling with new challenges and demands from the university and society (Malika, Nordinb, Zakariac & Sirund, 2013). In this way, life satisfaction can influence changes in behavior (Lewis, Huebner, Malone & Valois, 2011) and, having high life satisfaction life may reflect of having positive mental health and wellness (Malika et al., 2013).

Life satisfaction is defined as subjective well-being is perceived through filters of personality and of cognitive and emotional judgment, (Pavot & Diener, 1993; Deniz, 2006; McDowell, 2010), as individual’s positively assessing his/her life in accordance with the criteria he/she determines (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985; McDowell, 2010). Life satisfaction includes being satisfied with the present life, the will to change the life, being satisfied with the past, being satisfied with the future and the views of one’s relations regarding his/her life (Diener & Lucas, 1999). Fields of satisfaction, on the other hand, can be profession, family, free time, health, money, self and person’s immediate surroundings (Diener & Lucas, 1999). Life satisfaction is influenced by personality variables and proximal environmental factors (Sousa & Lyubomirsky, 2001). For example, violence, exploitation, and discrimination (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013), external factors such as income level and employment status with poor living conditions such as social services, health care, and level of income correlating with a low level of life satisfaction (Møller, 2005, 2007). Also, students’ quality of life may influence their offerings in areas such as organized student clubs, sports and recreation facilities, and food courts (Sirgy, Lee, Grzeskowiak, Webb & El Hasan, 2010).

In the researches carried out, it was observed that the university students whose life satisfaction is high take more responsibility concerning their different roles, have much more satisfaction in their romantic relations, school and family, experience less stress (Bailey & Miller, 1998) and less emotional loneliness (Çeçen, 2007), possess high self-esteem (Yetim, 2003) and have lower levels of state and constant anxiety, depression and hopelessness (Gündoğar, Sallan Gül, Uskun, Demirci & Keçeci, 2007). In addition, it was established that the state of well-being of the university students who receive sufficient support from their families and friends and who possess positive thoughts about their future is higher (Doğan, 2006). Accordingly, the problems university students experience are significant in terms of life satisfaction, and their possessing positive attitude as to receiving psychological help seems important in order to cope with the psychological problems these troubles created and to receive help.

Seeking for help is individuals’ demanding help and support from the individuals, who are professional (formal resource) of not professional (informal resource), regarding the issue of help about the situation in which they are and in order to overcome the problems they cannot cope with (Husain, 1994). Whether an individual will exhibit the attitude of seeking for help may be related to his/her attitude towards seeking for help. According to Atkinson and Gim (1989), attitude of seeking for help is a three-dimensional process including person, problem and the source where help will be received. The factors governing the attitudes towards seeking for psychological help may be quite different. Some people turn towards seeking for a professional help due to the reasons such as their personal fears, weaknesses and failures, while some others may be volunteer in opening themselves easily to a psychological counselor concerning their basic problems (Özbay, 1996).

Help-seeking attitudes are formed of individuals’ emotional, cognitive and behavioral tendencies aiming at receiving help from a professional. Help-seeking attitude can be classified as positive and negative. Some factors cause individuals to hesitate to receive help and be anxious or exhibit negative attitudes about this psychological help even though they need it.

(Komiya, Good & Sherrod, 2000). However, help-seeking attitude, as having an adaptive function in the process of life (Lee, 1999) and as a coping with method (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993; Rickwood, Deane, Wilson & Ciarrochi, 2005), is an important factor affecting the individual’s mental health and subjective well-being (Rickwood, Deane, Wilson & Ciarrochi, 2005). Nevertheless, it is stressed that psychological help-seeking attitude is affected because of the problems' intensity and of their type, and therefore they should be dealt with in a multidimensional way (Özbay, 1996). Accordingly, possessing the positive psychological help-seeking attitude, being volunteer to seek for help and using the source of helps effectively will make contribution the life satisfactions of university students.

Hopelessness can generally be regarded as a risk factor in terms of subjective well-being and life satisfaction due to affecting individual’s mental health in a negative way (Hojat, Gonnella & Erdmann, 2003; Dilbaz & Seber, 1993). Hopelessness is individual’s negatively evaluating his/her self, his/her environment, life and future (Beck, 2005). This process causes individual to consider his/her life as full of the events that are preventive and challenging, to feel himself/herself unsuccessful and worthless, to see outer world as enemy and to look to future hopelessly (DeRubeis, Tang & Beck, 2001). When considering the literature regarding the university students’ hopelessness levels, it was determined that the students are hopeless for their own future (Yazıcı, 2003); many young people are hopeless and pessimistic in view of the problems experienced in our country (Özmen, Erbay, Çetinkaya, Taşkıncı & Özmen, 2003).

As previous studies addressing the university students’ life satisfactions focus on students’ subjective well-being and health and optimism (Bowman, 2010) and, social skills were positively correlated with life satisfaction (Özben, 2013) and, the students’ level of life satisfaction may be significantly predicted by their anxiety, depression (Bulut Serin, Serin & Özbaş, 2010; Güneya, Kalafat & Boysan, 2010). In addition, life satisfaction is a moderator variable for mental health studies and, associated with hope and perceived of the distress (Güneya, Kalafat & Boysan, 2010) and hopelessness (Gençay, 2009; Güneya, Kalafat & Boysan, 2010). The level of hopelessness and life satisfaction of teacher candidates is no significant difference for male and female students, whereas, there is a significant difference in hopelessness levels. Besides, there is a negative correlation in the medium level between their hopelessness levels and life satisfaction levels (Gencay & Gencay, 2011). However, there is no relationship between life satisfaction and academic performance among students (Malika et al., 2013). There is an associate between self-esteem and life satisfaction. Moreover, gender also moderated the link between self-esteem and life satisfaction (Huo & Kong, 2014).

Accordingly, the studies as to determining the factors affecting life satisfaction as the component of subjective well-being, as to developing university students’ psychological help seeking attitude and decreasing hopelessness seem extremely significant in terms of their life satisfaction. In this research, life satisfactions of university students are analyzed in terms of psychological help-seeking attitude and hopelessness. It is expected that the findings obtained should be compared with the results of previous studies and they should contribute to the researches to be conducted in this field.

2. Method

This study was carried out based on relational model. In this model, present situation is described in terms of the relationships among the variables. Purpose of this study is to reveal whether university students’ psychological help-seeking attitude and hopelessness levels significantly predict their life satisfactions. In accordance with this aim, dependent variable of the research is life satisfaction and independent variables, on the other hand, are psychological help-seeking attitude and hopelessness levels.
2.1. Study Group

Theoretical population of this research is the university students studying at Celal Bayar University in 2012-2013 academic year in spring term. However, group of the research was 359 university students, including 181 male (48,5%) and 178 female (48,5%), who were studying at different departments of Celal Bayar University in 2012-2013 academic year in spring term and who were selected through random sampling and designated based on the principle of voluntariness.

Data of the research were collected based on the principle of voluntariness in the classrooms determined by chance with simple random sampling. Of this classrooms and of these students who accepted to fill in the questionnaire, 36 questionnaire forms were not included in the analysis because they were missing and erroneous. Duration of the application changed between 25-30 minutes. The data were collected between February and March in 2013.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

Life satisfaction Scale: Life Satisfaction Scale was developed by Diener, Emmons, Laresen and Griffin (1985) and was adapted into Turkish by Köker (1991). The scale is formed of five items regarding life satisfaction. Each item is answered in compliance with the 7-graded answering system (1=not suitable at all – 7= very suitable). The scale that aims to measure the general life satisfaction is suitable for all ages, from adolescents to adults. The translation of the scale into Turkish and its study of validity through the techniques of “face validity” was performed by Köker (1991). In consequence of the item analysis, the correlation between the scores obtained from each item of the scale and the total scores were found to be sufficient. Test-retest reliability coefficient of the scale was found as .85. Later, in the research conducted by Yetim (1993), Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found as .86 and its reliability coefficient determined via test-retest method was found as .73. Within the scope of this study, Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .78.

Professional Help-Seeking Attitudes Scale: Shortened form of the Professional Help-Seeking Attitudes Scale (PHSAS), developed by Fischer and Turner (1970), was adapted into Turkish by Türküm (2001, 2004). This scale, through which individuals’ attitudes concerning professional help-seeking was measured, is made up of 18 items in the form of 5 point likert scale. Factor analysis results of the scale showed that 18 items accounting for 52.6% of the total variance concentrated in the two factors. The first factor consists of 12 items including the positive views as to psychological-help seeking, and its internal consistency coefficient is .92. The second factor is, on the other hand, composed of 6 items involving the negative views as to psychological-help seeking, and its internal consistency coefficient is found as .77. Internal consistency about the fullest extent of the scale is .90. Test-retest reliability of the scale is .77. The scores obtained from the scale changes between 18-90, and the high scores derived from the scale point out the high positive attitude related to psychological-help seeking. Within the scope of this study, Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale is .84.

Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS): Items of the scale, which was developed by Beck and his friends and is formed of 20 items, is scored with 0-1 point. Options of the items are in the form of “yes”, “no”, and high scores derived from the scale assume that hopelessness in the individual is high (Savaşır & Şahin, 1997). Factors of the scale are feelings about the future, lost of motivation and expectations about future. Validity and reliability study of the scale was performed by Seber, Dilbaz, Kaptanoğlu and Tekin (1993), Durak and Palabıyıkölğlu (1994); and its internal consistency coefficient was found as .86, item-total correlations as .07 and .72, and test-retest reliability coefficient as .74.
2.3. Analysis of the Data

The practices were conducted at Celal Bayar University, in the Faculty of Education in 2013 academic year in the spring term. The required permissions were taken, the classes were visited at the most appropriate times, primarily aim of the research was explained to the students, and the principle of voluntariness was stressed. The whole students in the research group were volunteer in practicing the scales. The application lasted for about 15 minutes. In the analysis of the data obtained from this research, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used in order to determine whether there is a relationship between the university students’ life satisfaction, their psychological help-seeking attitude and their hopelessness, and Multiple regression Analysis was employed to determine whether life satisfaction scores predict the variables of psychological help-seeking attitude and hopelessness. Prior to the analyses, extreme values were checked, and 22 extreme values were excluded from the data set. In the normality analysis carried out later, the data were determined to be normal. In order to derive multiple regression hypothesis, primarily whether the relationship between the variables were linear was analysed with propagation diagram, and it was observed that the relationship was linear and it did not have the values digressing from the cluster. In addition, there does not to be any relationship between the error terms in the model to be able to derive regression hypothesis. Accordingly, when Durbin Watson value used in testing auto-correlation in the model is considered, it seen that the valued desired to be between 1.5 and 2.5 (Kalayci, 2006) was 1.75, standard errors of the b coefficients were very small and the regression hypothesis was derived. The data were analysed using SPSS 20.0 packaged software. Significance level of .05 was taken into consideration in the interpretation of the results.

3. Findings

Purpose of this study is to reveal whether the university students’ psychological help-seeking attitudes and hopelessness levels significantly predict their life satisfactions. In accordance with this generic objective, the findings related to descriptive statistics were firstly presented and then those regarding the regression analysis were provided, respectively.

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Scales used in the Research (n=415)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>The Lowest Score</th>
<th>The Highest Score</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Attitude for Seeking Psychological Help</td>
<td>16,00</td>
<td>87,00</td>
<td>47,06</td>
<td>8,81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Attitude for Seeking Psychological Help</td>
<td>6,00</td>
<td>30,00</td>
<td>13,55</td>
<td>5,10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Help-Seeking Attitude</td>
<td>25,00</td>
<td>87,00</td>
<td>60,51</td>
<td>8,15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings about Future</td>
<td>2,00</td>
<td>5,00</td>
<td>2,75</td>
<td>1,05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost of Motivation</td>
<td>1,00</td>
<td>8,00</td>
<td>2,63</td>
<td>1,70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>7,00</td>
<td>8,00</td>
<td>7,05</td>
<td>0,74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopelessness</td>
<td>5,00</td>
<td>19,00</td>
<td>12,45</td>
<td>2,57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Satisfaction</td>
<td>6,00</td>
<td>35,00</td>
<td>22,21</td>
<td>6,50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table-1, average and standard deviation values are seen regarding the scales.
3.2. Findings concerning the Correlations of the Variables

Table 2. Pearson Correlations of the Dependent and Independent Variables included in the Research (n=469) The Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Life Satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Attitude for Seeking Psychological Help</td>
<td>.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Attitude for Seeking Psychological Help</td>
<td>.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Help-Seeking Attitude</td>
<td>.128*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings about Future</td>
<td>-.397**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lost of Motivation</td>
<td>-.315**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations about Future</td>
<td>-.365**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopelessness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05; **p<.01

As seen in Table-2, it is observed that there is a positively significant relationship between the total scores of the university students’ psychological help-seeking attitude and the life satisfaction (r=.128, p<0.05), while there is a negatively significant relationship between hopelessness and life satisfaction (r=-.397, -.315, -.365, p<0.01).

3.3. Findings regarding the regression analysis

Table 3. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R2</th>
<th>F Variance</th>
<th>F Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.446</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>21.923**</td>
<td>21.923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.458</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>13.305**</td>
<td>1.652</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<.01

When the Table-3 is examined, it is seen that the model built in the study is meaningful (F=21.923, p<.01; F=13.305, p<.01). It is observed that the group variables predicting life satisfaction at most is the group variables of psychological help-seeking attitude with their 19.9 percentage of explanation and then the percentage of explaining the total variance of entered variables at the second step is, on the other hand, 011%. The entire variables’ total percentage of explaining life satisfaction is, on the other hand, 21%. In the research, when the meaningfulness which each variable entered at the first step provided for the model is analyzed, it is seen that the feelings about future (β=.303, t=3.173, p<.01) and variable of hope (β=.191, t=3.955, p<.01) made significant contribution to the model. Also, at the second step, it is observed that again the same variables (the emotional expectations about future β=.320, t=3.340, p<.01; hope β=.200, t=4.084, p<.01, respectively) made meaningful contribution to the model.

4. Discussion

In the research, we have examined whether there are significant relationships between the university students’ life satisfaction, their psychological help-seeking attitude and hopelessness and whether their life satisfactions are predicted by the variables of psychological help-seeking attitude and hopelessness.

First discovery of the research is that there is a significant relationship between the university students’ life satisfaction and psychological help-seeking attitude in a positive way. In other words, it can be said that as the psychological help-seeking attitude increases, life satisfaction also increases. This discovery is supported by the studies stressing the relationship of individuals’ subjective well-being and their mental health (Rickwood, Deane, Wilson & Ciarrochi, 2005; Lee, 1999; Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993). Accordingly, possessing positive psychological help-seeking attitude, being volunteer for help-seeking and effectively using the sources of help will

Contribute to the students’ life satisfactions. As the process of psychological help, the objectives determined in the psychological counseling mainly aim to enhance the counselee’s well-being (Christopher, 1999). From this point of view, analyzing the factors affecting the counselee’s life satisfaction and taking into account the relationship between the help-seeking and life satisfaction seem to be important.

Another discovery of the research is that there is a significant relationship between life satisfaction and hopelessness in a negative way. In consequence of some research results where this result is supported, the relationship between life satisfaction and hopelessness is emphasized (Hojat, Gonnella & Erdmann, 2003; Dilbaz & Seber, 1993; Şar, Işıklar & Aydoğan, 2012). Hopelessness is considered as an important predictor of life satisfaction (Şar, Işıklar, & Aydoğan, 2012). Hopelessness will decrease the university students’ life satisfaction in terms of its reflecting pessimism in looking for future (Kashani, Stoyls, Dandoy, Viadya & Reid, 1991; Lavender & Watkins, 2004) and also of reflecting negative point of view for future (Bayam, Okay, Dilbaz & Açıkgoz, 2002; Hadley & Mac Load, 2010).

Other findings derived from the research put forth that university students’ hopelessness levels and their psychological help-seeking attitudes significantly predict their life satisfactions. The relationship between hopelessness and life satisfaction can be regarded as being connected with the fact that life satisfaction covers the expectations related to future. When similar studies carried out by the university students are analyzed, it was determined that as the level of looking for future in an optimistic way increases, university students’ life satisfaction increases (Tuzgöl-Dost, 2007; Doğan, 2006). It was also established that state of university students’ well-being, who possess positive thoughts about their futures are high (Doğan, 2006). In literature, the fact that psychological help-seeking is a meaningful predictor of subjective well-being (Lee, 1999), its being a method of coping (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993; Rickwood, Deane, Wilson & Ciarrochi, 2005) and its being considered as a significant factor affecting individuals’ mental health and their subjective well-being (Rickwood, Deane, Wilson & Ciarrochi, 2005) can be viewed in a way that there is a meaningful relationship between these two variables.

5. Result and Suggestions

As a result, it was revealed in this research that university students’ psychological help-seeking attitudes and their hopelessness levels significantly predict their life satisfactions. When these findings are taken into considerations, analyzing the factors affecting the university students’ life satisfactions can be instructive in determining the targets for the studies of psychological counseling. In course of higher education, a large number of students leave their families and environments and have to adapt to a new environment and to cope with many problems in terms of social, academic and professional aspects. Accordingly, when we consider the fact that as the university students’ hopelessness levels increase, their life satisfactions will decrease and their need for psychological help will increase, the necessity of services for psychological counseling and guidance in higher education will be better understood.

According to International Association of Psychological Counseling Services (International Association of Counseling Services Report, 2005), it was stressed that psychological counseling and guidance services in the higher education have three main functions. These are; a) counseling for the students experiencing personal adaptation, professional, developmental and/or psychological problems, b) conducting preventive studies aiming at supporting the students’ learning skills, and c) supporting healthy development thanks to the activities outside the university and consultation services. It is necessary that requirements and characteristics of the students be primarily determined for these functions to be performed effectively. Therefore, while psychological counseling and guidance services are being planned for the university students, it seems significant to make use of the findings of the researches carried out in this field and to increase the students’ life satisfactions with more comprehensive programs.

Some limitations of this research affect the generalizability of its results. These limitations are (1) the data’s having been collected only from the university students and (2) the participants’ having been formed only of the volunteer ones.
Some suggestions can be made based on the results of this study:

1-Novel researches can be made with different sample groups concerning the university students’ needs for psychological help.

2-Comprehensive activities of psychological counseling and guidance can be made to reduce the hopelessness levels of university students.

3-The factors affecting the life satisfactions of university students can be investigated and a number of precautions can be taken to make it possible for them to look to future in a more optimistic way.

References


