Investigation of Life Satisfaction of University Students According to Sociotropic-Autonomic Personality Characteristics and Certain Variables

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Abstract

Sociotropic personality trait is a personality trait characterized by an emphasis on sincerity, sharing, empathy, understanding, acceptance, commitment, protection, guidance and helping in interpersonal interactions. Sociotropic personality traits are considered in three dimensions, which are concern about disapproval, concern over separation, and pleasing others. Autonomic personality trait is a personality trait characterized by the individual's happiness of directing her own activities, reaching her/his goals, controlling what is happening around her/his and being successful. Autonomous personality characteristics involve three dimensions, which are individual achievement, freedom from control, and preference for solitude. The study examines whether life satisfaction in university students is significantly predicted by gender; perceived socioeconomic level; concern about disapproval, concern over separation, and pleasing others as subfactors of sociotropy; and individual achievement, freedom from control, and preference for solitude as subfactors of autonomy. The study group consists of a total of 310 university students who are studying in two different public universities, were selected using the random sampling method, and voluntarily participated in the research. The "Satisfaction with Life Scale", the "Sociotropy-Autonomy Scale", and a "Personal Information Form" were employed to obtain the study data. Multilinear Regression Analysis was used for data analysis. The study found that life satisfaction levels of university students is significantly predicted by gender, perceived socioeconomic level; concern about disapproval, concern over separation, and pleasing others as subfactors of sociotropy. On the other hand, it was also found that individual achievement, freedom from control, and preference for solitude as subfactors of autonomy do not significantly predict life satisfaction levels of university students.

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Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Yaşam Doyumlarının Sosyotropik-Otonomik Kişilik Özelliklerine ve Bazı Değişkenlere Göre İncelenmesi

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Öz

Sosyotropik kişilik özelliği, kişilerarası etkileşimlerde samimiyet, paylaşım, empati, anlayış, kabul etme, bağlılık, koruma, rehberlik ve yardım etmeye önem verme ile karakterize bir kişilik özelliğidir. Sosyotropik kişilik özellikleri başkalarını memnun etme kaygısı, onaylanmama kaygısı ve ayrılık kaygısı boyutlarından oluşmaktadır. Otonomik kişilik özelliği ise bireyin kendi aktivitelerini yönlendirmekten, hedeflerine ulaşmaktan, çevrelerinde olup bitenleri kontrol etmekten ve başarılı olmaktan mutluluk duyması ile karakterize bir kişilik özelliğidir. Otonomik kişilik özellikleri kişisel başarı, özgürlük ve yalnızlıktan hoşlanma boyutlarından oluşmaktadır. Bu çalışmada üniversite öğrencilerinde cinsiyetin, algılanan sosyoekonomik düzeyin, sosyotropinin alt boyutları olan onaylanmama kaygısının, ayrılık kaygısının, başkalarını memnun etmenin; otonominin alt boyutları olan kişisel başarının, özgürlüğün ve yalnızlıktan hoşlanmanın yaşam doyumunu anlamlı bir biçimde yordayıp yordamadığı incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu iki farklı devlet üniversitesine devam eden ve gelişigüzel örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak seçilen ve araştırmaya gönüllü olarak katılan 310 üniversite öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada gerekli verileri elde etmek için “Yaşam Doyumu Ölçeği”, “Sosyotropi- Otonomi Ölçeği” ve “Kişisel Bilgi Formu” kullanılmıştır. Verilerin çözümlemesinde Çoklu Doğrusal Regresyon Analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda cinsiyetin, algılanan sosyoekonomik düzeyin, sosyotropinin alt boyutları olan onaylanmama kaygısının, ayrılık kaygısının, başkalarını memnun etmenin üniversite öğrencilerinin yaşam doyumunu düzeylerini anlamlı düzeyde yordadığı bulunmuştur. Otonominin alt boyutları olan kişisel başarının, özgürlüğün, yalnızlıktan hoşlanmanın üniversite öğrencilerinin yaşam doyumunu düzeylerini anlamlı düzeyde yordamadığı bulunmuştur.

INTRODUCTION

Psychology often focuses on issues such as self-discovery of one's strengths, developing positive emotions, carrying them over to life to become happy individuals. As a parallel development, studies on concepts such as life satisfaction, well-being, psychological well-being, and subjective well-being have gained prominence (Seligman, 2002). Subjective well-being refers to self-assessment of one's life to arrive at a judgment about it (Myers and Diener, 1995). Such personal judgment of life involves three dimensions, which are defined as positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction. The dimensions of positive and negative affect represent the affective aspect of subjective well-being, while life satisfaction makes up its cognitive aspect. Having more positive emotional experience and less negative emotional experience means that the individual is generally satisfied with his/her life (Diener, 2000). First defined in 1961 by Neugarten, the concept of life satisfaction involves a comparison of the criteria ascribed by someone on themselves and the life conditions to come up with a self-appraisal of one's own life (Pavot and Diener, 1993; Deniz, 2006; Veenhoven, 1996). The amount of life satisfaction is determined by the concordance or discrepancy between one's desires and his/her actual conditions. The higher the concordance, the higher the life satisfaction. Life satisfaction refers to the overall happiness and well-being in life in general, rather than being satisfied only with a particular aspect of life or during a certain timespan (Diener, Oishi and Lucas, 2003). It encompasses satisfaction with one's present life conditions, with one's past and future, the desire to change one's life, as well as what one thinks about his/her own life. Domains relating to free time, money, health, business, family, and self are regarded as life satisfaction domains (Diener and Lucas, 1999).

Individuals who are pursuing their university studies are confronted with developmental tasks such as preparing for a specific career, building close relationships, and getting involved with social groups. University students need to have well-being to successfully complete such developmental tasks. Life satisfaction is a significant concept that provides insight into the psychological health and happiness levels of university students. As a matter of fact, a great majority of university students are known to value life satisfaction and happiness more than they value money (Diener, 2000). Studies have shown that students with high levels of life satisfaction have a greater need for achievement (Çivitçi, 2012); assume greater responsibility for different roles; and have more satisfaction in the domains of romantic involvement, school, and family and experience less stress (Bailey and Miller, 1998). Other research on university students found significantly positive correlations between life satisfaction and high socioeconomic level (Chow, 2005), self-esteem (Chow, 2005; Çeçen, 2008; Yetkin, 2017); being satisfied with their department of study (Serin, Serin and Özbaş, 2010), self-kindness (Tel and Sarı, 2016), having positive expectations from the future (Tuzgöl-Dost, 2007), and high academic achievement (Chow, 2005; Tuzgöl-Dost, 2007). On the other hand, some researchers have found negatively significant correlations between life satisfaction and burnout, anxiety (Eken and Ebadi, 2019) and depression, despair, and state and trait anxiety (Gündoğar, Gül, Uskun, Demirci and Keçeci, 2007).

Two other concepts that have been shown to be associated with depression are sociotropic and autonomic personality characteristics, concepts which Beck (1983) frequently mentioned in his cognitive theory and defined as the characteristics that have dominance upon individual psychological functionality (cited by Mazure, Raghavan, Maciejewski, Jacobs and Bruce, 2001). Sociotropy is characterized by a profound need for approval and reassurance in interpersonal relations and attaching importance to sincerity, sharing, empathy, understanding, acceptance, commitment, protection, guidance, and help in interpersonal interactions (Mazure et al., 2001; Sato and McCann, 2000). Individuals demonstrating a high level of sociotropic characteristics usually experience anxiety over being rejected by others and often display behaviors aiming to please others to strengthen and secure their interpersonal bonds. Sociotropic individuals intensely expect attention and approval from others (Fairbrother and Moretti, 1998). For such individuals, life satisfaction often relies on their relations with others. In other words, their positive self-image depends on whether they are approved, loved, and cared about by people who are important for them (Gorski and Young, 2002). Sociotropic personality traits are considered in three dimensions, which are concern about disapproval, concern over separation, and pleasing others. Individuals demonstrating a high level of sociotropic traits usually experience concern about rejection and disapproval by others and often display behaviors aimed to please others so that they can reinforce and secure their interpersonal bonds (Fairbrother & Moretti, 1998).

On the other hand, people with autonomous personality traits are success-oriented and control means a lot to them. Individuals with a high level of autonomous personality traits like to direct their own activities, to achieve their goals, to control their surroundings, and to be successful (Beck, 1983; cited by Robins, Bagby, Rector, Lynch

and Kenn, 1997). When they are confronted with failure in terms of their personal standards, they are relentless in their self-criticism and may experience guilt, feelings of inferiority, and depression (Nietzel and Harris, 1990). Autonomous personality characteristics involve three dimensions, which are individual achievement, freedom from control, and preference for solitude. Beck (1983) noted that these personality characteristics termed as autonomy and sociotropy may create susceptibility to different types of depression (cited by Nelson, Hammen, Daley, Burge and Davila, 2001). It is argued that people with sociotropic and autonomous characteristics often develop symptoms of depression when they are confronted with situations that prevent the fulfillment of their needs or with sociotropic-autonomous life events (Zuroff and Mongrain, 1987). As a matter of fact, various studies report that sociotropy and autonomy are correlated with depression (Sato and McCann, 2000; Robins et al., 1997).

Becoming a university student creates various changes in a person's life. University students are expected to accommodate themselves to a new academic and social environment and often to a new city. How they feel in these new environments may vary depending on the personality characteristics of the young person in question. Social relationships formed in this period may become more important for sociotropic individuals with a high level of concern about disapproval, concern over separation, and desire to please others. In a different vein, the new university environment might create uncertainty in autonomous individuals who very much value individual achievement, freedom, and solitude. All these new experiences may interact with the sociotropic-autonomous personality traits of the young person in question and have an impact on his/her life satisfaction as a result. It is believed that examining certain variables with potential relations with life satisfaction such as gender, socioeconomic level, and sociotropic-autonomic personality characteristics is important to enhance life satisfaction in university students. Therefore, it is expected that the findings of the present study may guide the contents of possible actions to enhance life satisfaction. This study examines whether life satisfaction in university students is significantly predicted by gender; perceived socioeconomic level; concern about disapproval, concern over separation, and pleasing others as subfactors of sociotropy; and individual achievement, freedom from control, and preference for solitude as subfactors of autonomy.

Methodology

Research Model

This is a study based on the correlational survey model which examines the extent to which life satisfaction in university students is predicted by gender; perceived socioeconomic level; concern about disapproval, concern over separation, and pleasing others as subfactors of sociotropy; and individual achievement, freedom from control, and preference for solitude as subfactors of autonomy. In correlational survey models, the aim is to determine the presence and extent of any change and variation between two or more variables or the level of the variable under study (Gürbüz and Şahin, 2016).

Study Group

The study group consists of a total of 310 university students who are studying in two different public universities, were selected using the random sampling method, and voluntarily participated in the research. Of the study group, 57.7% (n=179) are female and 42.3% (n=131) are male. In terms of perceived socioeconomic level, 6.8% of the study group (n=21) are in low-level, 66.8% (n=207) are in medium-level, and 26.5% (n=82) are in the upper-level.

Data Collection

The data were obtained from voluntary participants studying in different faculties and programs in two different public universities. The researcher contacted the students during class hours by obtaining permission from the lecturer. The students were informed about the purpose of the study and volunteering students first read and signed the informed consent form and then completed the data collection instruments.

The Data Collection Instruments Used

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): The Satisfaction with Life Scale was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) to measure life satisfaction. The scale was adapted to Turkish by Köker (1991). It is a 7-point Likert-type scale with five items. The lowest possible score is 5 and the highest possible score is 35. A high score obtained from the scale indicates high satisfaction with life. The scale's reliability coefficient obtained by the test-retest method is .85. Bölükbaşı (2017) performed a confirmatory factor analysis for the scale and found that the concordance values are at an acceptable level ($\chi^2 = 10.054$, $sd = 5$, $\chi^2 / sd = 2.011$, $GFI = .99$, $AGFI = .98$, $RMSEA = .04$, $CFI = .99$, $SRMR = .02$, $TLI = .98$). The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated to be .88

for the present study.

The Sociotropy-Autonomy Scale (SAS): This scale was developed by Beck et al. (1983) to assess the personality traits of dependence on others (Sociotropic) and independence from others (Autonomous). Şahin, Ulusoy and Şahin (1993) adapted the scale to Turkish. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale with 60 items. It assesses sociotropic and autonomous personality traits in two different subscales, each of which involves 30 items. The subscales are assessed separately and the scale does not yield a total score. The lowest score that can be obtained on each of the subscales is 0 and the highest possible score is 120. High scores obtained from the subscales indicate the strength of the factor in question. In the scale, sociotropic personality characteristics involve three distinct sub-dimensions, which are concern about disapproval, concern over separation, and pleasing others. Autonomous personality characteristics, on the other hand, consist of three sub-dimensions, which are individual achievement, freedom from control, and preference for solitude. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the Turkish version of the scale is .70 for the sociotropy subscale and .81 for the autonomy subscale (Şahin et al., 1993; Savaşır and Şahin 1997). As part of the present study, the scale's Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated to be .87 for the sociotropy subscale and .71 for the autonomy subscale.

Personal Information Form: The Personal Information Form developed by the researcher includes questions aiming to determine the gender and perceived socioeconomic level of the university students who participated in the study.

Data Analysis

SPSS 23 Statistical Software Pack was used to analyze the data. Multilinear Regression Analysis was performed to determine how well the independent variables of the study predict the life satisfaction of university students. The dependent variable in the study was "life satisfaction". The independent variables included "concern about disapproval", "concern over separation", and "pleasing others" as subfactors of sociotropy and "individual achievement", "freedom from control", and "preference for solitude" as subfactors of autonomy. In addition, gender and socioeconomic level were also identified as independent variables in the study. Multilinear Regression Analysis was performed to analyze the data. Significance level was taken as .05.

The categorical variables in the personal information form were recoded as dummy variables before they were included in the regression analysis.

The dummy codings for the categorical variables in this study were carried out as follows:

a. A dummy variable was created for the gender variable:

- The gender variable: Female student: 1; Male student: 0

b. Two dummy variables were created for the socioeconomic level (SEL) variable:

- SEL dummy 1 (upper): Upper SEL: 1; Medium SEL: 0 and Lower SEL: 0

- SEL dummy 2 (lower): Upper SEL: 0; Medium SEL: 0 and Lower SEL: 1

Prior to the actual analyses, the dataset was examined as to whether it fulfills the assumptions required to perform a multilinear regression analysis. The main assumptions in a regression analysis are normal distribution, the presence of covariance, and unrelated independent variables (Kalaycı, 2006; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2014). In this regard, it was first examined through kurtosis and skewness coefficients whether the scores obtained from the "Satisfaction with Life Scale" had a normal distribution. In addition, Durbin-Watson Test was also performed to check for autocorrelation which creates systematic errors. Pearson Moment-Product Correlation Coefficients, Tolerance Values, and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were also checked to test for collinearity between the independent variables.

Results-Findings

First, kurtosis and skewness coefficients of the scores obtained from the Satisfaction with Life Scale were examined to see if they have a normal distribution. For the Satisfaction with Life Scale, skewness coefficient is .66 and kurtosis coefficient is .28. The value range between +1.5 and -1.5 is acceptable for skewness and kurtosis values in a dataset (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2014). Thus, the skewness and kurtosis values obtained for the Satisfaction with Life Scale were confirmed to be within the acceptable range. Also, for life satisfaction scores, DW= 1.88. Durbin-Watson Test confirmed the lack of autocorrelation. A value Durbin-Watson Test value between 1.5 – 2.5 shows that there is no autocorrelation (Kalaycı, 2006). As a result of the analysis performed to check for multicollinearity between the independent variables, the Tolerance Values and VIF-Variance Inflation Values were examined. It is statistically significant to have tolerance values greater than .10 and VIF-Variance Inflation Values smaller than 10

(Çokluk, Şekercioğlu, and Büyüköztürk, 2016). For the study variables, the tolerance values range between .27 and .87, while the VIF values range between 1.15 and 3.78.

Also, Pearson Moment-Product Correlation Coefficients were computed to test multicollinearity between the independent variables. The correlation mean and standard deviation values for the study variables are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Pearson Moment-Product Correlation Coefficients, Mean and Standard Deviation Values for the Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Life Satisfaction	1									
2. Concern over Disapproval	.20**	1								
3. Concern about Separation	-.05	.67**	1							
4. Pleasing Others	.02	.61**	.51**	1						
5. Individual Achievement	-.07	-.28**	-.21**	-.32**	1					
6. Freedom from Control	.05	.20**	.04	.09	.40**	1				
7. Preference for Solitude	.06	-.14*	-.37**	-.12*	.43**	.41**	1			
8. Gender Female (Dummy-1)	-.16**	.08	.25**	.11	.04	-.10	.01	1		
9. SEL-Upper (Dummy-1)	-.31**	-.14**	-.07	-.11	.06	.07	.12*	.01	1	
10. SEL-Lower (Dummy-2)	.28*	-.01	-.07	-.04	.11	.05	.04	-.03	-.16	1
Mean	16.27	19.76	31.95	13.21	33.43	31.13	14.97			
Standard Deviation	5.91	6.67	5.13	3.75	5.90	5.13	4.25			

*p<.05, **p<.001

As shown in Table 1, the Pearson Moment-Product Correlation Coefficient for the variables ranges between .01 and .67. A correlation value of .90 and above between the variables indicates the presence of the multicollinearity problem (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2015). No multicollinearity was detected between the variables in this study.

Multilinear regression analysis was performed to identify the variables that predict life satisfaction in the study. The analysis results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Results of the Multilinear Regression Analysis to Predict Life Satisfaction

Variables	B	Standard Error B	B	t	P	Double Correlation	Partial Correlation
Constant	19.46	2.70		7.21	.00		
Concern about disapproval	.32	.07	.37	4.61	.00	.26	.23
Concern over separation	-.12	.06	-.17	-2.15	.03	-.12	-.11
Pleasing others	-.22	.10	-.14	-2.17	.03	-.12	-.11
Individual achievement	-.09	.07	-.09	-1.41	.16	-.08	-.07
Freedom from control	-.01	.07	-.01	-.19	.08	-.01	-.01
Preference for solitude	.14	.09	.10	1.61	.11	.09	.08
Gender	-1.49	.64	-.12	-2.33	.02	-.13	-.12
Female (Dummy-1)							
Perceived SEL	-3.41	.69	-.26	-4.92	.00	-.27	-.25
Upper (Dummy-1)							
Perceived SEL	5.21	1.2	.22	4.35	.00	.24	.22
Lower (Dummy-2)							
R= 0.25		R ² = 0.23					
F(9, 300) = 11.28		p= .00**					

*p<.05, **p<.01

Table 2 shows that concern about disapproval as a subfactor of sociotropy is a positively significant predictor of life satisfaction in university students ($t= 4.61$, $p<.05$). Concern over separation as a subfactor of sociotropy is a negatively significant predictor of life satisfaction ($t= -2.15$, $p<.05$). Pleasing others as a subfactor of sociotropy is also a negatively significant predictor of life satisfaction ($t= -2.17$, $p<.05$).

Table 2 also shows that individual achievement as a subfactor of autonomy is not a significant predictor of life satisfaction in university students ($t= -1.41$, $p<.05$). Freedom from control as a subfactor of autonomy is not a significant predictor of life satisfaction in university students ($t= -.19$, $p<.05$). Similarly, preference for solitude as a subfactor of autonomy is not a significant predictor of life satisfaction in university students ($t= 1.61$, $p<.05$).

As seen in Table 2, gender is a significant predictor of life satisfaction in university students ($t= -2.33$, $p<.05$). Life satisfaction among male students was found to be significantly higher than life satisfaction among female students.

As seen in Table 2, perceived upper socioeconomic level is a significant predictor of life satisfaction in university students ($t= -2.33$, $p<.05$). The students in perceived upper socioeconomic level were found to have lower life satisfaction levels when compared to the students in perceived medium and lower socioeconomic levels whose life satisfaction level was taken as the criterion variable.

It is seen in Table 2 that perceived lower socioeconomic level is a significant predictor of life satisfaction in university students. Life satisfaction levels of the students in perceived lower

socioeconomic level were found to be higher when compared to the students in perceived medium and upper socioeconomic levels whose life satisfaction level was taken as the criterion variable.

Table 2 clearly shows that the variables of gender, perceived socioeconomic level, concern about disapproval, concern over separation, and pleasing others as subfactors of sociotropy, and individual achievement, freedom from control, and preference for solitude as subfactors of autonomy altogether significantly predict life satisfaction levels among university students ($R=0.25$, $R^2=0.23$, $p<.01$) and these variables as a whole account for 23% of the total variance in life satisfaction.

Discussion

As a study result, gender was found to be a significant predictor of life satisfaction in university students ($t= -2.33$, $p<.05$). Life satisfaction among male students was found to be significantly higher than life satisfaction among female students. This study result is compatible with the results of other studies which report that men's life satisfaction scores are significantly higher than women's life satisfaction scores (Erdoğan, 2018; Goldbeck, Schmitz, Besier, Herschbach and Henrich, 2007; Mosknes and Espnes, 2014). On the other hand, there are other studies in the literature which report the finding that women have higher life satisfaction levels than men (Çam and Artar, 2014; Çelen-Demirtaş, 2010; Tuzgöl-Dost, 2007) or that gender does not have an impact in predicting life satisfaction (Myers and Diener, 1995) and there is no difference between women and men in terms of life satisfaction levels (Kermen, Tosun and Doğan, 2020).

University years is a period when people are expected to adapt to an unfamiliar environment as quickly as possible by using their own potentials and maintain this adjustment process (Karahan, Sardoğan, Özkamalı and Dicle, 2005), when they receive training to practice a profession. Özdemir (1985) noted that female students have more problems than males both in terms of the types and number of problems. In particular, female students are reported to experience more emotional stress than male students by participating in university life and engaging with the social and academic university circles (Sax, Bryant and Gilmartin, 2004). The cultural aspect of Turkish society involves certain practices that favor men over women. Indeed, it has been shown that roles representing bold, independent and strong personalities are more common among men in Turkish culture (Özkan and Lajunen, 2005). In university life, female students mainly have difficulty with separating from their families and developing autonomy (Josselson, 1987). The study result that gender significantly predicts life satisfaction and female students have significantly lower levels of life satisfaction when compared to male students could be attributed to the fact that such difficulties experienced by female students during their university years may have created a disadvantage for females in terms of life satisfaction levels.

It was found in the study that perceived upper socioeconomic level is a significant predictor of life satisfaction in university students. The students in perceived upper socioeconomic level were found to have lower life satisfaction levels when compared to the students in perceived medium and lower socioeconomic levels whose life satisfaction level was taken as the criterion variable. It was also found that perceived lower socioeconomic level is a significant predictor of life satisfaction in university students. Life satisfaction levels of the students in perceived lower socioeconomic level were found to be higher when compared to the students in perceived medium and upper socioeconomic levels whose life satisfaction level was taken as the criterion variable.

This study result does not seem to compatible with other research findings in the literature. Research has reported a positive correlation between life satisfaction and socioeconomic level in university students (Chow, 2005; Gündoğar et al., 2007; Tuzgöl-Dost, 2007; Yıkılmaz and Güdül, 2015). On the other hand, Myers and Diener (1995) reported that socioeconomic level does not have an effect in predicting life satisfaction. Boyce, Brown, and Moore (2010) noted that income is an important

instrument for fulfilling people's needs. And people whose needs are fulfilled are expected to have high life satisfaction.

The study's result that students in perceived lower socioeconomic level have greater life satisfaction can be explained by the theory of expectations, which sheds light into the relations between income and happiness. The theory of expectations argues that people are happy when their income-oriented expectations are met (Clark, Frijters and Shields, 2008). Income-oriented expectation signifies the gap between what one has now and what s/he had in the past or expects to have in the future. In this sense, one can argue that people who achieve their goals are happy and those who fail to achieve them are unhappy (Arthaud-Day & Near, 2005). The present research was conducted in two public universities in Istanbul. Therefore, those students who perceive themselves to live in the lower socioeconomic level but are studying in these universities might be feeling that they "have achieved their goals". And that could be the reason why they have higher life satisfaction levels.

It was found as a study result that as three subfactors of sociotropy, concern about disapproval positively and significantly predicts life satisfaction in university students, while concern over separation and pleasing others negatively and significantly predict life satisfaction.

The literature review produced no studies exploring the relationship between sociotropy-autonomy and life satisfaction. Yet, Seymen (2019) concluded that both sociotropy and autonomy predict job satisfaction among teachers. Furthermore, Kabakçı (2001) found significant correlation between the level of stress caused by sociotropic life events and depression levels. She notes that students showing moderate to high depression symptoms experienced sociotropic events involving a greater amount of stress in the last six months when compared to non-depressive students. In the same study, Kabakçı (2001) argues that there is no significant correlation between the level of stress caused by autonomic life events and depression levels. Other studies have demonstrated that both autonomy and sociotropy renders individuals prone to depression when they are faced with stressors (Beck et al., 2003; Mazure et al., 2000) and sociotropic personality traits are associated with depression (Singh and Manjula, 2018). Given the negative relationship between depression and life satisfaction (Cirinlioğlu and Ok, 2010; Öncü and Çevik, 1999), the result of the present study that the subfactors of sociotropic personality characteristics (concern about disapproval, concern over separation, and pleasing others) negatively predict life satisfaction could be taken as an expected finding. Moreover, concern about disapproval, the desire to please others, striving to maintain relationships and fearing that a relationship might end are among the most salient characteristics of individuals with submissive personalities (Gilbert and Allan, 1994). Individuals with submissive personality traits are known to have low life satisfaction (Mamirova and Yılmaz, 2019). Hence the study result that life satisfaction is negatively predicted by sociotropic personality traits whose subfactors seem to parallel submissiveness.

In contrast, individual achievement, freedom from control, and preference for solitude as subfactors of autonomy do not significantly predict life satisfaction among university students. Research suggests positive correlation between life satisfaction and academic success (Chow, 2005; Tuzgöl Dost, 2007) and negative correlation between life satisfaction and solitude (Çeçen, 2007; Türkel, 2018). In a different vein, Türkdoğan and Duru (2011) university students have a low need for freedom. Both sociotropy and autonomy are defined as personality styles that promote the occurrence of stress in individuals (Lefevre, Jean, and Guihard, 2020). Yet, life satisfaction in individuals with autonomous personality characteristics rely on their personal achievements, individual supremacy, and control over others (Kolts, Robinson and Tracy, 2004). The result of this study that autonomy does not predict life satisfaction could be attributed to the social aspect of Turkish culture. In contrast to Western societies, individuals in Turkish culture are in general expected to adjust themselves to others, shape their goals according to social expectations, and obtain social approval (Üskül, Hynie, and Lalonde, 2004).

Concepts such as personal achievement, freedom, and solitude highlight the aspects of Western societies that are classified as “individualist”. Common social parental attitudes play a role in raising dependent individuals. In Turkish culture, individuals are usually raised as dependent people (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996).

This study has certain limitations. The students’ socioeconomic levels were based on their perceived socioeconomic levels, which could be taken as a limitation of the study. Another limitation could be that the study was exclusively conducted with students at two public universities in Istanbul. Future research may aim to determine actual, rather than perceived, socioeconomic levels of the participants and be conducted with university students from different provinces. This study only examined life satisfaction as an indicator of subjective wellbeing. Future research may also include and study positive and negative affect, which are other indicators of subjective wellbeing.

As a result of the study, life satisfaction levels were found to be significantly higher among male students when compared to female students. This difference is attributed to the fact that female students experience greater emotional stress than male students as they participate in university life and engage with the social and academic university environment (Sax, Bryant and Gilmartin, 2004). For this reason, certain practices could be developed to enhance participation in social and academic events for female university students.

Life satisfaction was found to be negatively predicted by concern about disapproval, concern over separation, and pleasing others as subfactors of sociotropy. Therefore, psychoeducation programs could be developed for university students to reduce their concerns about disapproval and separation and their tendency to please others. Future research could be carried out to test the effectiveness of such programs.

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