

How Do Adolescents Use Subjective Well-Being Increasing Strategies According To Their Personality Traits?

Ergenler Kişilik Özelliklerine Uygun Olarak Hangi Öznel İyi Oluşu Artırma Stratejilerini Kullanırlar?

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine how adolescents use strategies for increasing subjective well being according to their personality traits. A total of 246 high school students in between the ages of 14-16 participated in the study 125 of whom were female (51%) and 121 were male (49%). Subjective Well-Being Increasing Strategies Scale for Adolescents and the Big Five Personality Scale were used in the study. Regression analysis method was used for data analysis. According to results of study, the subjective well-being increasing strategies that adolescents use vary according to personality traits. In order to increase adolescent's subjective wellbeing, this findings should be considered.

Keywords: subjective well-being increasing strategies, personality traits

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, ergenlerin kişilik özelliklerine bağlı olarak kullandıkları öznel iyi oluşu artırma stratejilerini belirlemektir. Çalışmaya 14-16 yaşları arasında yer alan toplam 246 ergen katılmıştır. Ergenlerin 125'i kız iken (%51) ve 121'i ise erkektir (%49). Çalışmada Öznel İyi Oluşu Artırma Stratejileri Ölçeği ile Beş Faktörlü Kişilik ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada verilerin analizinde regresyon analizi tekniğinden yararlanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, farklı kişilik özelliklerine sahip ergenler farklı öznel iyi oluşu artırma stratejilerini kullanmaktadırlar. Ergenlerin öznel iyi oluş düzeylerinin yükseltilmesinde bu araştırma sonuçlarından yararlanılabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kişilik özellikleri, öznel iyi oluş, ergen, stratejiler

In psychology happiness is considered with the concept of subjective well-being (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schade, 2005). People are subjectively well if they are satisfied about their life conditions, frequently have positive affects and rarely have negative affect (Deiner, 2001; Lyubomirsky, 2001). Just as for the subjective well-being for adults, there are three important factors for the subjective well-beings of children and adolescents. These are life satisfaction, positive emotions and negative emotions

(Myers & Deiner, 1995). In the literature there are studies about factors effecting subjective well-being in adolescents (Hartup & Stevens 1997; Huebner, 1991; Joronen & Kurki, 2005; Jozefiak et al. 2009; Karatzias et al. 2006; McCullough et al. 2002; Park, 2004; Vargus-Adams, 2006). Nonetheless, findings and information regarding subjective well-being increasing strategies are quite new.

Subjective well-being increasing strategies are considered as part of purposeful activities. Some studies regarding subjective well-being increasing strategies in literature have been carried out by different authors. For instance, Forydce (1977;1983) has concluded that there are effective strategies that have positive effects on the subjective well-beings of individuals such as positive-optimistic thinking, engaging on new activities and having an active life, engagement in social activities, developing extrovert personal characteristics and decreasing negative thoughts. According to Buss (2000), filling the spaces that occurred between modern and primitive living conditions; developing close relations with relatives and friends; creating deep friendships; reducing subjective stress; managing competitive structures to cooperation and providing satisfaction of desires are among subjective well-being increasing strategies. Having social relations, and active and passive occupations, determining goals and implementing them, directly behaving towards subjective well-being, religious activities and providing mental control are strategies used to increase subjective well-being (Tkach & Lyubomirsky (2006). It is also observed that there are studies that are being carried out in Turkey to determine subjective well-being increasing strategies for adolescents (Eryılmaz & Yorulmaz, 2006). In another study, Eryılmaz (2010) has developed a five dimensional scale for subjective well-being strategies of adolescents. The instrument measured their desires to receive positive reaction from an environment, react positively to an environment, satisfy of desires, participate in religious activity, and retain subjective well-being, in other words mental control. It was concluded that the subjective well-being levels of adolescents who used the subjective well-being increasing strategies increased (Eryılmaz, 2011a, 2011b).

Personality is genetic based traits of a person that are shaped by interactions with the environment and are difficult to change (Atkinson et al., 1999). The model that handles personality in terms of traits and that has been widely accepted in literature is the big five personality model (McCrae & Costa, 2003). The big five model consists of five sub-dimensions of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience (McCrae & Costa, 1987).

When a literature survey regarding subjective well-being is conducted, it is seen that the neuroticism and extraversion dimensions of the five factor model have an impact on the subjective well-beings of individuals (Costa & McCrae, 1980; Diener & Lucas, 1999; Francis & Katz, 2000; Furnham & Cheng, 1999; Huebner, 1991; Wilson & Gul-lone, 1999). Whereas the effects of openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness personality traits on the subjective well-beings of individuals are limited. It is especially seen that agreeableness has no statistically significant effect on subjective well-being (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Francis & Katz, 2000; Furnham & Cheng, 1999).

In literature, there are also studies regarding the relationships between personality traits and subjective well-being increasing strategies (Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006).

These studies have been carried out on university students. It is known that the structure of the big five personality model is even evident in children between the ages of 3-8 (Shiner & Caspi, 2003). Studies that put forth the relationships between personality traits and subjective well-being increasing strategies to improve the subjective well-beings of adolescents may contribute to the literature. Besides, nowadays increasing subjective well-being and being subjectively well are not issues that are important only for people who live in capitalist and democratic Western countries. Along with globalization many people will look for ways to be subjectively happy (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schade, 2005). Subjective well-being is one of the important goals that people want to attain (Deiner, 2001). Determining ways to be subjectively well are important for adolescent individuals as well. In literature there is a vast amount of information and a result regarding what subjective well-being is and what the traits of subjectively well people are (Diener, 1984; Diener & Myers, 1995). These information and data have been obtained through studies conducted on adults. Besides, adolescence is a period during which immense physical, social, cognitive, moral and emotional changes are undergone (Collins & Laursen, 2004; Eberly & Montemayor 1999; Erikson, 1968; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Piaget & Inhelder, 1973; Steinberg, 2005). During this period adolescents are faced with positive and negative stress sources that make it difficult for them to adapt to their environments (Collins et al. 1997; Hecht et al. 1998; La Greca & Lopez, 1998; Steinberg, 2004, 2005; Wires et al. 1994). Whereas these changes may help adolescents to develop, sometimes they might also cause orientation problems (Mcknight, Huebner and Suldo, 2002). Studies regarding the subjective well-being increasing strategies for adolescents may enrich and develop the field while at the same time helping adolescents to lead a positive development stage and stay away from problems regarding harmony. As a result, the objective of this study is to examine how adolescents use strategies for increasing subjective well-being according to their personality traits.

1. Method

Research Design and Procedure

This study aims to investigate the relationships between strategies to increase subjective well-being and personality traits for adolescents attending high school. In this study, frequency and percentage analyses have been used to analyze the demographic features of the participants. In order to test the relationships between variables, multiple regression analysis method was employed. Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were used for normality analysis. Significant level was chosen as $p < 0.05$. Sample selection method was purposive sampling (Fraenkel and Wallen 1993). In order to determine the sample, inclusion and exclusion criteria were used. Some inclusion criteria for the study were the following: participants should be between 14-17 years-old and should be attending a general high school; however, some exclusion criteria for the study were not to have a chronic illness and should not have a psychiatric diagnosis.

This study was carried on adolescents attending a state high school in Ankara, Turkey. A cross-sectional model was used, as data was collected at one time. The data was collected by asking the participants to fill out the scales individually. All participants

were volunteers and were required to provide personal identity information. The implementation of the scales took 60 to 70 minutes. In analyzing process, firstly 5 % empty scales were not considered to evaluate and analysis. Thus, 13 students were excluded from the study.

Participants

The study group initially consisted of 281 participants. Prior to data analyses, the participants' answers were reviewed. As a result of this review, 23 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. Seven adolescents who have chronic illness and five adolescents who have psychiatric diagnosis were excluded from the data set. As a result, a total of 246 adolescents, 121 (49 %) males and 125 (51 %) females, participated in the study. Their ages varied between 14 and 17 years. The mean age of subjects was 15.32 years. The sample was divided between 164 (69.9 %) ninth grade students and 82 (30.1%) students in the tenth grade. The adolescents were asked to grade their socio-economic level and 197 (79%) specified it as middle, 29 (12 %) as lower, and 20 (9%) as higher socio-economic level.

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 socio-economic level was used to reveal the demographic features of the participants.

Subjective Well Being Increasing Strategies Scale for Adolescents: This scale was developed by Eryilmaz (2010). The scale is composed of 17 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 59% of the variance in five dimensions: (a) receiving positive reaction from an environment, (b) participating in religious activity, (c) reacting positively to an environment, (d) satisfaction of desires, and (e) protecting subjective well being or mental control. A higher total and subscale score indicates a higher level of using subjective well-being strategies. The internal consistency of the scale for receiving positive reaction from an environment is .85, for doing religious activities .92, for reacting positively to environment .90, for satisfaction of desires .68, for protecting subjective well being or mental control .71, and for the whole scale .86. The item-total correlations also supported the internal consistency of the scale. The items were moderately correlated with the total point (.53-.74 range). A sub-sample of individuals (n=60) completed a 2-week test-retest session, which yielded a reliability coefficient of .89. In the present study, the reliability of the sub-scales and total point of the scale also were computed. According to results, the reliability of receiving positive reaction from an environment dimension was 0.79; participating in religious activity was 0.74; reacting positively to an environment was 0.82; satisfaction of desires was 0.66, mental control was 0.58, and also total point of the scale was 0.84. 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. Getting high scores from this scale indicate that adolescents use more strategies.

In the present study, female and males' mean score of these sub-dimensions of the scale were computed such results are found: Male students got 9,98 point and females got 9,33 point from the sub-scale of receiving positive reaction from an environment. Male students got 13,33 point and females got 14,63 point from the sub-scale of reacting positively to an environment. Male students got 9,14 point and females got 9,57 point from the sub-scale of participating in religious activity. Male students got 12,05 points and females got 11,67 points from the sub-scale of satisfaction of desires. Male students got 9,89 points and females got 9,24 points from the sub-scale of protecting subjective well being or mental control.

Big Five Inventory: The "Big Five" personality traits of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism were measured by using the 44-item Big Five Inventory (BFI; John and Srivastava, 1999). This scale was adapted to Turkish by Evinc (2004) working with youth. In this scale, participants rated the extent to which it described how they typically behave (e.g. "can be moody" for neuroticism) using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Getting high scores from these sub-scales indicate that individuals have highly these traits. Cronbach's alphas suggest that internal reliabilities for all of the factors are within an acceptable range (openness = .81; conscientiousness = .82; extraversion = .88; agreeableness = .79; neuroticism = .84). The scale has also demonstrated good convergent and discriminant validity (John & Srivastava, 1999). In the current sample, Cronbach's alphas suggest that internal reliabilities for all of the factors are within an acceptable range (openness = .73; conscientiousness = .72; extraversion = .73; agreeableness = .70; neuroticism = .68).

2. Results

First, statistical findings related to the dependent and independent variables are presented. Thereafter, the findings related to the multiple regression analysis result during this study are reported.

Descriptive Statistical Findings Related to the Dependent and Independent Variables in the Research

Mean and Standard Deviation measures related to the dependent and independent variables in the study were calculated. The results of the analysis are given in Table-1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Extraversion	28.54	4.63
Neuroticism	22.34	5.74
Conscientiousness	31.30	6.02
Openness	38.35	5.38
Agreeableness	35.75	5.05
Receiving Positive Reaction From An Environment	14.49	2.06
Participating In Religious Activity	9.75	2.38
Reacting Positively To An Environment	10.27	1.78
Satisfaction Of Desires	12.53	2.34
Mental Control	10.07	3.0

Results of Correlation Analysis Related to the Dependent and Independent Variables in the Research

In this study, the relationships between the dependent and independent variables were analyzed by using the Pearson correlation method. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 2. Correlation analysis shows that there is a moderate and low relationship between subjective well-being increasing strategies and personality traits at some degree.

Table 2. Summary of Intercorrelations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Receiving Positive Reaction From An Environment	.26**	-.21**	.18**	.28**	.24**
Participating In Religious Activity	.11	-.14*	.18**	.38**	.22**
Reacting Positively To An Environment	.28**	-.19**	.29**	.30**	.25**
Satisfaction Of Desires	.20**	-.12	.03	-.04	-.03
Mental Control	.17*	-.30**	.16*	.26**	.19**

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$, 1.Extraversion 2.Neuroticism 3.Openness 4.Conscientiousness 5.Agreeableness

Results of Regression Analysis

In the study, multiple regression analysis method has been used to determine at what levels the subjective well-being increasing strategies predict personality traits. The tables below contain information about the levels of prediction by each strategy regarding personality traits.

Table 3. Results of Regression Analysis

<i>Strategies and Personality Traits</i>		Values			
	B	SEB	β	t	p
<i>Receiving Positive Reaction from an Environment Strategy</i>					
Extraversion	.07	.02	.17	2.64	.00**
Agreeableness	.02	.02	.05	.73	.46
Conscientiousness	.04	.02	.13	1.88	.06
Neuroticism	-.03	.02	-.10	-1.60	.11
Openness	.01	.02	.04	.66	.50
<i>Participating In Religious Activity</i>					
Extraversion	-.00	.03	-.01	-.20	.83
Agreeableness	.03	.03	.06	.92	.35
Conscientiousness	.14	.02	.35	5.16	.00**
Neuroticism	.00	.02	.00	.70	.94
Openness	.02	.02	.05	.81	.41
<i>Reacting Positively to an Environment Strategy</i>					
Extraversion	.06	.02	.15	2.50	.01*
Agreeableness	.03	.02	.09	1.39	.16
Conscientiousness	.03	.02	.10	1.52	.12
Neuroticism	-.02	.01	-.07	-1.17	.24
Openness	.04	.02	.13	2.06	.04*
<i>Satisfaction of Desires Strategy</i>					
Extraversion	.10	.03	.20	3.06	.00**
Agreeableness	-.05	.03	-.10	-1.50	.13
Conscientiousness	-.05	.02	-.10	-1.42	.15
Neuroticism	-.05	.02	-.14	-2.20	.02*
Openness	-.00	.02	-.00	-.07	.94
<i>Mental Control Strategy</i>					
Extraversion	.02	.02	.05	.85	.39
Agreeableness	.01	.02	.03	.49	.61
Conscientiousness	.04	.02	.15	2.16	.03*
Neuroticism	-.07	.02	-.21	-3.30	.00**
Openness	.00	.02	.01	.27	.78

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$,

When Table-3 is examined, according to the analysis results, the extraversion is a statistically significant and important predictor ($R = .41$; $R^2 = .16$; $F = 6.26$) for strategy of receiving positive reaction from an environment ($\beta = .17$; $p < 0.01$). Also, the conscientiousness is a statistically significant and important trait ($R = .38$; $R^2 = .14$; $F = 8.80$) for strategy of participating in religious activity ($\beta = .35$; $p < 0.01$). Moreover, the extraversion ($\beta = .15$; $p < 0.05$) and conscientiousness ($\beta = .13$; $p < 0.05$) are statistically significant and important traits ($R = .34$; $R^2 = .12$; $F = 8$) for strategy of reacting positively to an environment. Furthermore, the extraversion ($\beta = .20$; $p < 0.01$) and neuroticism ($\beta = -.14$; $p < 0.05$) are statistically significant and important traits ($R = .26$; $R^2 = .07$; $F = 3.67$).

for strategy of satisfaction of desires. Lastly, the neuroticism ($\beta = -.21$; $p < .01$) and conscientiousness ($\beta = .15$; $p < .05$) are statistically significant and important traits ($R = .34$; $R^2 = .11$; $F = 6.62$) for strategy of mental control.

The study results have been summarized in Table-4 in order to make a general evaluation regarding the relationships between subjective well-being increasing strategies and personality traits.

Table 4. General Evaluation of the Results

Variables	1	2	3	4
Receiving Positive Reaction from an Environment	Important (+)			
Participating in Religious Activity				Important (+)
Reacting Positively to an Environment	Important (+)		Important (+)	
Satisfaction of Desires	Important (+)	Important (-)		
Mental Control		Important (-)		Important (+)

Note: 1.Extraversion 2.Neuroticism 3.Openness 4.Conscientiousness

When Table-4 is examined, it can be seen if personality traits are important for subjective well-being increasing strategies or not. In this regard, extraversion is important for the strategy of receiving positive reaction from an environment; conscientiousness is important for the strategy of participating in religious activity; openness to experience and extraversion are important for the strategy of reacting positively to an environment; extraversion and neuroticism are important for the strategy of satisfying of desires and neuroticism and conscientiousness personality traits are important for the strategy of mental control. Besides all these, it is observed that as the neuroticism of neurotic individuals increases, their usage of satisfaction of desires and mental control strategies decrease in the same ratio.

3. Discussion

In this study the relationships between personality traits and subjective well-being increasing strategies have been examined. According to the study results, different personality traits are important for different subjective well-being increasing strategies. In this section, research findings have been evaluated within the scope of relevant literature.

In literature, there are a lot of studies examining the relationships between personality traits and subjective well-being. Many studies have determined that extraversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness personality traits are important for the subjective well-beings of individuals (Costa & McCrea, 1980; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Diener & Lucas, 1999; Francis & Katz, 2000; Furnham & Cheng, 1999; Huebner, 1991; Wilson & Gullone, 1999). However, it is observed that the relationships between subjective well-being increasing strategies and personality traits have not yet been studied on ado-

lescents. In studies which include young adults sample carried out to this aim, it is stated that individuals select and use the subjective well-being strategies that are best suited to their personality traits (Tkach and Lyubomirsky, 2006). The findings of this study also validate the assumption that adolescents select and use subjective well-being increasing strategies suited to their personality traits.

In this study, it has been determined that extraversion personality trait is important for the usage of receiving positive reaction from an environment and reacting positively to an environment strategies. When this result is considered from the point of view of extraversion personality trait, this may have been caused by the fact that extraverted individuals are more sensitive to rewards. Because Lucas et. al. (1998) state that extraverted individuals are more sensitive to rewards. It is stated that as a result of this sensitivity, extraverted individuals will experience more positive emotions when they attain rewards. In addition to this, reward sensitivity enables extraverted individuals to gain more social skills. Since extraverted individuals who use these skills are more attractive for people, they will have more friends and will experience positive emotions. It is also stated in literature that personality traits are innate (Costa & McCrea, 1980; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). All this information and findings may have stated that extraverted individuals use receiving positive reaction from an environment and reacting positively to an environment strategies in order to reach rewards. Similarly, it can also be shown in the context of social relationships that adolescents who are open to experience use the strategy of reacting positively to an environment in order to experience new things.

When the results of the study are examined, it is seen that emotional stability is required in order to be able to use the mental control strategy. The reason for this may be the fact that neurotic adolescents have more negative experiences. Since, neuroticism is more closely related with negative emotions (McCrae & Costa, 2003; McCrea & Costa, 1987). Highly neurotic individuals have more negative experiences in comparison to less neurotic individuals. Negative emotions and thoughts that arise with negative experiences cause the individuals to display self-destructive behavior and hence experience neuroticism (Heady & Wearing, 1992). As results of these facts, neurotic individuals need much more to retain subjective well-being than increase it. It may be due to all these factors that statistically significant relationships are found in this study between mental control strategy and neuroticism.

In this study, positive and statistically significant relationships have been determined between implementing religious requirements and mental control strategy with conscientiousness personality trait. In studies that examine the relationships between subjective well-being and personality traits, subjective well-being is handled at a hedonic dimension. Whereas according to Veenhoven (2003), there are two important resources of subjective well-being. Individuals increase their subjective well-beings either by increasing their pleasure or by following the rules. At this point, the hedonic dimension of subjective well-being is seen to be important for both extraverted and neurotic individuals (Costa & McCrea, 1980; Fujita, 1991; Magnus & Deiner, 1991). Religious requirements are based on following rules. The personality trait related with following rules is conscientiousness. Conscientiousness requires delay of gratification, tolerance to repetitive work, being dependable and respecting detail (Costa & McCrea, 1980; McCrea &

Costa, 1987; McCrea & Costa, 2003). Hence, it can be stated that statistically significant relations have been determined between implementing religious requirements strategy and conscientiousness personality trait.

In literature no statistically significant relationship has been determined between agreeableness personality trait and subjective well-being (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Francis & Katz, 2000; Furnham & Cheng, 1999). At this point the findings of this study overlap with that of the relevant literature. It can be stated that the agreeableness personality trait which is not an important source for subjective well-being is also not an important source for subjective well-being increasing strategies.

Several suggestions can be made based on the results of this study. There are three important factors that are determinative on subjective well-being (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schade, 2005). The first and most effective of these factors is genetic susceptibility. It has been determined in conducted studies that genetic susceptibility has a 50 % determinative effect on subjective well-being (Lyken & Tellegen, 1996). It seems difficult to increase subjective well-being of individuals by manipulating their innate traits. It may be helpful to teach proper subjective well-being increasing strategies to these individuals. At this point, it may be functional for those working in fields professionals that help individuals to use the findings of this study. For instance subjective well-being increasing programs may be carried out for adolescents. To this end, scientific knowledge may be increased by carrying out further experimental studies.

In this study, cross-sectional research method has been used to present the relationships between personality traits and subjective well-being increasing strategies. This can be seen a limitation. Detailed information may be put forth in further experimental and other type of studies. The present study was conducted on adolescents who were high school students. Future, similar study can be conducted on adolescents who do not attend a high school. Furthermore, the presented study carried out with a non-clinical sample. Similar study can be conducted on adolescents who come from clinical sample.

In conclusion, personality traits are important sources for subjective well-being increasing strategies as well as for subjective well-being. Individuals may be happier by implementing strategies that are suited to their personalities.

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