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Multidimensional perfectionism and humor styles the predictors of life satisfaction

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Abstract

The person that has the biggest value and importance after family is the child's first teacher in his/her life. While the child met the teacher at the beginning of the primary school in the period when pre-school education did not become widespread, now the situation has changed and the importance of pre-school education has expanded, too. Consequently, teachers of pre-school education have important tasks and responsibilities in this stage. The main purpose of this research is to reveal whether there is a relationship between multidimensional perfectionism, humor styles and life satisfaction and the extent to which the variables of multidimensional perfectionism, humor styles contribute to the prediction of subjective well-being. The inputs of the research have been obtained from totally 287 Pre-school Teacher Training students of Mehmet Akif Ersoy University. Life Satisfaction Scale that was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) and adapted in Turkish by Köker and Yetim (1991) has been used to determine the students' life satisfaction levels. Besides this scale, the inputs of the study have been obtained by using Multi-Dimensional Perfectionism Scale that was developed by Hewitt and Flett (1989) and adapted in Turkish by Oral (1999) and "Humor Style Scale" that was developed by Weir (2003) and adapted in Turkish by Yerlikaya (2003). Standard multi regression analysis has been used to reveal predictive powers of their perfectionism levels' and their styles of humor's life satisfaction levels of the candidates for pre-school teaching in the research.

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1. Introduction

As the importance of and necessity for education in early childhood goes up, teachers and candidate teachers who are supposed to give that education become more and more important as well. In particular, candidate teachers should be educated and well-equipped with the required qualities in terms of their professional field knowledge as well as their physical attributes and characteristics. It is considered that the higher education rendered for four years provides the pre-requisites sufficiently for a candidate teacher to have required qualities and qualifications. Furthermore, it is also important to know whether the candidate teachers possess the required qualities and qualifications in terms of personal attributes and to make them acquire such qualities sufficiently.

Life satisfaction represents the cognitive aspect of the subjective well-being which is a concept concerning human happiness (Diener, 1984) and is defined as evaluation of her life by an individual herself positively in accordance with the criteria which the individual himself defines (Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin, 1985). Life satisfaction and positive affect are among the subjects on which researchers in the field of subjective well-being conduct studies (Diener, 1984). Despite the fact that it is known that there is a correlation between life satisfaction and positive affect, it is yet to be fully understood. Life satisfaction distinguishes the period of positive affect conceptually and plays a role in theoretical measurement of subjective well-being (Larsen, Diener & Emmons, 1985). Subjective well-being examines the ways and reasons of positive experiences of an individual containing her cognitive evaluations and emotional reactions (Diener, 1984).

An analysis of the researches on life satisfaction shows us studies on the correlations between life satisfaction and self-esteem (Chow, 2005; Zhank, 2005, Bartoletti, 2006, Kapıkıran, 2013), socioeconomic level (Daraei and Mohajery, 2013), humour styles (Fındıklı, 2013) and problem-solving skills (Kabasakal and Uz-Baş, 2013) of an individual. In candidate teachers, particularly humour and perfectionism are among important personal attributes. Both humour and perfectionism have some dimensions containing both desired and non-desired characteristics.

Humour is a comprehensive concept that contains comic things people say or do, that are perceived as comic by others as well tending to make them laugh, and that requires using cognitive and emotional processes when thus doing (Öner, 2012). Sense of humour is a personal attribute and is only specific to humans, and this feeling is expressed through behaviours such as finding something funny, smiling or bursting into laughter (Deckers and Ruch, 1992).

According to positive and negative characteristics, humour has four dimensions as affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating. Affiliative humour is a harmonious style that supports and develops interpersonal relations. Self-enhancing humour represents exerting efforts to develop effective strategies in coping with stress by taking into account the needs of the individual and others. Aggressive humour is utilization of humour by an individual about others in a socially inappropriate fashion to accommodate only his/her own needs. Such a style of humour does give harm to interpersonal relations, and is inharmonious and unhealthy. Self-defeating humour, on the other hand, includes one's self-criticism and self-disparaging in a humorous way in order to make others laugh. Such a style of humour is also inharmonious and unhealthy because of giving harm to subjective well-being and self-acceptance, creating a lower self-perception and creating barriers to interpersonal relations (Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray & Weir, 2003). Benefits of humour are considered in a multi-dimensional manner with the special emphasis being given to physiological, social, psychological and cognitive benefits (Aydın, 2005). Looking at the events from an optimist point of view against unpleasant developments and keeping away from stress is only possible through humour. The contribution that humour can make against unpleasant and stressful events can make individuals more resilient against both psychological and physiological illnesses (Sayar, 2012).

The concept of perfectionism was considered *prima facie* by some researchers with a negative perspective that was interested only in one's perfectionism only towards himself or herself and seen to be a pathological personal characteristic. Nevertheless, Adler was one of those who first pointed out that perfectionism had two dimensions, one being negative and the other positive (Altun and Yazıcı, 2010). Adler (2004) suggested that it is the impulse of excellence that exists in all human beings and lies in the background of the entire creative action. (Ref: Çepikkurt, 2011).

This study was conducted with a view to finding whether the level of excellence and humour styles of candidate preschool teachers predicts their university life satisfaction levels. Differences of individuals in their experience and perceptions also lead to different personalities among candidate teachers. Some attributes of candidate teachers such

as being positive towards life, witty, happy and healthy play an utmost important role for them to teach and educate healthy individuals. Teachers, who are supposed to facilitate children to know themselves, should first know themselves. It is extremely important for a teacher to know what her personality characteristics are and how they influence her, and to educate herself in this field. Before they start their career, and even before they select their profession, it is very important for candidate teachers to know themselves in these aspects. Identifying the factors that improve life satisfaction of youngsters can serve as a tool of prevention and intervention for professionals who provide psychological help. It is therefore considered that this study would contribute significantly in researchers and practitioners not only in the field of preschool education but also in psychological consultation and guidance areas.

2. Method

In this study, we used standard multiple regression analysis in order to find out how predictive the humour styles and levels of perfectionism of students preschool teachers are on their life satisfaction levels. Moreover, we used one-way analysis of variance to examine life satisfaction levels of students of preschool education departments according to the grade variable.

a. Research Group

Research group of the study was composed of a total of 287 students (248 (86.4%) females and 39 (13.6%) males) attending the grade 1, 2, 3 and 4 in Department of Preschool Education in Mehmet Akif Ersoy University. 84 (29.3%) students in the research group attended the grade 1 while 104 students (36,2%) were in grade 2; 54 students (18,8%) were in grade 3 and 45 students (15,7%) were in grade 4.

b. Data Collection Tools

The study used the Life Satisfaction Scale, developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) in order to measure the overall life satisfaction levels and adapted into Turkish by Köker and Yetim (1991) as well as the Humour Styles Scale, developed by Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Gray and Weir (2003) and adapted into Turkish by Yerlikaya (2003) and the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale developed by Hewitt and Flett (1989) in order to measure the levels of perfectionism and put into Turkish by Oral (1999) (MDPS). In the Humour Styles Scale; sub-scales of the Scale, “Affiliative Humour” and “Self-Enhancing Humour”, were harmonious while the subscales of “aggressive humour” and “self-defeating humour” were inharmonious. The MDPS consists of three sub-scales such as “self-oriented”, “other-oriented” and “socially-prescribed perfectionism”. Self-oriented perfectionism sub-scale consists of items about determination of unrealistically strict standards by the individual for himself while the other-oriented perfectionism sub-scale is composed of items about determination of unrealistically strict standards by the individual for others, and the socially-prescribed perfectionism sub-scale has items concerning perceptions of an individual about the expectations of his environment.

3. Findings

Descriptive statistics of the scores of levels of life satisfaction, humour styles and perfection levels of students of the Preschool Education Department can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of the scores of levels of life satisfaction, humour styles and perfection levels of students of the Preschool Education Department

Variables	Alpha	n	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.Life Satisfaction	.82	287	7.00	35.00	23,54	5,58
2.Self-Enhancing Humour	.79	287	8.00	56.00	33,41	9,36
3.Affiliative Humour	.61	287	8.00	56.00	43,03	8,57
4. Aggressive Humour	.62	287	8.00	56.00	20,56	7,06
5.Self-Defeating Humour	.69	287	8.00	56.00	24,93	8,11
6.Self-Oriented Perfectionism	.87	287	15.00	105.00	71,47	15,54

7.Other-Oriented Perfectionism	.54	287	15.00	105.00	60,75	9,67
8.Socially-Prescribed Perfectionism	.65	287	15.00	105.00	55,12	10,45

It was observed that the alpha reliability levels of all scales used in the analyses conducted on the data collected throughout the study varied between .54 and .87. Table 1 shows that the life satisfaction scores varied from 7 to 35 and the scores of humour styles varied between 8 and 56 while the perfectionism scores varied from 15 to 105.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics about variables and correlation coefficients between variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Life Satisfaction	-							
2. Self-Enhancing Humour	,176**	-						
3. Affiliative Humour	,078	,357**	-					
4. Aggressive Humour	-,241**	,040	-,103	-				
5. Self - Defeating Humour	-,118**	,234**	,123*	,254**	-			
6. Self-Oriented Perfectionism	,052	-,019	-,026	-,273**	-,155**	-		
7. Other-Oriented Perfectionism	,135*	-,007	,077	-,055	-,093	,481**	-	
8. Socially-Prescribed Perfectionism	-,168**	-,126*	-,134*	,046	,220**	,201**	,170**	-

**P<0.01
*P<0.05

Table 2 shows us positive and significant correlations between “self-enhancing humour” and life satisfaction (r=0,176, p<0.01) and between “affiliative humour” and “self-enhancing humour” (r=0,357, p<0.01). A significant and inverse correlation was found between “Aggressive Humour” and life satisfaction (r= -0,241, p<0.01) and “self-defeating humour” and life satisfaction (r= -0,118, p<0.01). Furthermore, there are significant and positive correlations between “self-defeating humour” and “self-enhancing humour” (r=0,234, p<0.01); “self-defeating humour” and “affiliative humour” (r=0,123, p<0.05), and “self-defeating humour” and “aggressive humour” (r=0,254, p<0.01). When we examine the subgroups for perfectionism, we observe significant and inverse correlations between “self-oriented perfectionism” and “aggressive humour” (r= -0,273, p<0.01), and “self-oriented perfectionism” and “self-defeating humour” (r= -0,155, p<0.01). Furthermore, there are significant and positive correlations between “other-oriented perfectionism” and life satisfaction (r=0,135, p<0.05), and “other-oriented perfectionism” and “self-oriented perfectionism” (r=0,481, p<0.01). We can also observe significant and inverse correlations between “socially-prescribed perfectionism” and life satisfaction (r= -0,168, p<0.01); “socially-prescribed perfectionism” and “self-enhancing humour” (r= -0,126, p<0.05); and “socially-prescribed perfectionism” and “affiliative humour” (r= -0,134, p<0.05). Moreover, there are significant and positive correlations between “socially-prescribed perfectionism” and “self-defeating humour” (r=0,220, p<0.01), “socially-prescribed perfectionism” and “self-oriented perfectionism” (r=0,201, p<0.01), and “socially-prescribed perfectionism” and “other-oriented perfectionism” (r=0,170, p<0.01).

Table 3 Multiple Regression Analysis Scores concerning predictability of Life Satisfaction Levels by Humour Styles and Perfectionism Levels

Variables	B	Sh	β	t	p
1.Life Satisfaction					
2.Self-Enhancing Humour	,122	,037	,205	3,338	,001
3.Affiliative Humour	-,026	,040	-,040	-,650	,516
4. Aggressive Humour	-,189	,048	-,239	-3,964	,000
5. Self-Defeating Humour	-,047	,043	-,068	-1,092	,276
6. Self-Oriented Perfectionism	-,029	,024	-,081	-1,204	,230
7. Other-Oriented Perfectionism	,106	,037	,184	2,847	,005
8. Socially-Prescribed Perfectionism	-,076	,032	-,142	-2,344	,020

R= ,380 R²= ,145 F (7-285)= 6,720, p <.01

According to Table 3, self-enhancing humour, aggressive humour, other-oriented perfectionism and socially-prescribed perfectionism explain 15% of the total variance of life satisfaction ($R = .380$ $R^2 = .145$ $F(7-285) = 6.720$, $p < .01$). The t-test results for significance of regression coefficients show that the self-enhancing humour ($t = 3.338$, $p < .01$) and other-oriented perfectionism ($t = 2.847$, $p < .01$) significantly predict life satisfaction in a positive manner. It is also observed that aggressive humour ($t = -3.964$, $p < .01$) and socially-prescribed perfectionism ($t = -2.344$, $p < .05$) significantly predict life satisfaction in an inverse direction. Furthermore, affiliative humour ($t = -.650$, $p > .05$), self-defeating humour ($t = -1.092$, $p > .05$) and self-oriented perfectionism ($t = -1.204$, $p > .05$) do not significantly predict life satisfaction. According to standardized regression coefficients, significant predictors of life satisfaction are as follows respectively: aggressive humour ($\beta = -.239$), self-enhancing humour ($\beta = -.205$), other-oriented perfectionism ($\beta = .184$) and socially-prescribed perfectionism ($\beta = -.142$). To summarize the findings obtained through standard multiple regression analysis; life satisfaction is predicted positively by self-enhancing humour and other-oriented perfectionism whereas inversely by aggressive humour and socially-prescribed perfectionism.

One-way analysis of variance was conducted in order to examine whether life satisfaction of students of preschool education departments differ significantly according to their grade levels. M Test of Box was conducted in order to examine the homogeneity of variance-covariance matrixes as a premise of MANOVA. Findings have shown that variance and covariance among dependant variables are the same for each level of factors and there is not any significant difference between them [Box's $M: 3.283$, $F(6,499) = 5.13$, $p > .05$].

Table 4 Variance Analysis Results according to Grade Levels

	Variance Source (Grade Level)	N	\bar{x}	s	F	P	η^2	Significant difference
Life Satisfaction	1. Grade (A)	84	25,11	6,83	3,941	,009	,04	A-C
	2. Grade (B)	104	23,14	4,91				
	3. Grade (C)	54	21,96	4,83				
	4. Grade (D)	45	23,60	4,78				

According to Table 4, average scores for life satisfaction vary significantly according to grade levels. Average scores of the first graders for life satisfaction are significantly higher than those of the third graders. In this study, the impact size of the variable of grade level on life satisfaction scores was measured by means of partial eta square.

Based on the recommendation of Stevens (1992), partial eta square values were taken as small for $\eta^2 \leq 0.01$, medium for $\eta^2 = 0.06$ and large for $\eta^2 = 0.14$. The partial eta square value concerning the impact of grade level was found to be $\eta^2 = 0.04$ for life satisfaction. According to this value, the impact of grade level is lower than medium.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

It was observed that the self-enhancing humour levels and other-oriented perfectionism of students of preschool education departments significantly predict their life satisfactions in a positive direction. There are four different styles in which people use humour. Self-enhancing and affiliative humours represent harmonious and positive aspects of humour whereas self-defeating and aggressive humours express inharmonious and negative aspects of humour. Self-enhancing humour represents looking at the life through a humorous perspective even in challenging circumstances and utilizing humour as a coping-with strategy (Yerlikaya, 2007; Yılmaz, 2011). When we look at the literature, we see some studies suggesting that positive and harmonious humour styles have positive correlations with life quality (Kuiper, Martin, Dance, 1992), optimist and self-confident coping-with styles (Durmuş and Tezer, 2001), harmony in marriages (Fidanoğlu, 2006) and emotional intelligence skills (Tümkeya, Hamarta, Deniz, Çelik and Aybek 2008). Life satisfaction is in a general sense accommodation of needs, desires and wishes, and represents the cognitive aspect of the subjective well-being (Ünal, Karlıdağ and Yoloğlu, 2001). It is expected that positive and harmonious humour styles such as self-enhancing humour have a positive correlation with life satisfaction of the individual.

Other-oriented perfectionism contains beliefs and expectation concerning what other can do. It also entails blaming others and feeding negative feelings about others. Therefore, when there is other-oriented perfectionism, the individual sets high standards for others and expect them to follow those standards. There are researchers who consider perfectionism negatively while others consider it as something merely positive. Today, researchers handle perfectionism both positively and negatively (Hewitt and Flett, 1991; Kırdök, 2004; Gül, Yılmaz and Berksun, 2009; Uz Baş, 2010). Bilge et al. (2010) found in a study on multidimensional relationships that other-oriented perfectionism was a significant variable in predicting the relationship satisfaction. In this study, we found that other-oriented perfectionism predicts life satisfaction significantly in a positive direction. As other-oriented perfectionism represents one's doing his best and expecting the others to do the same, it is safe to consider that it significantly predicts life satisfaction in a positive direction.

Another finding of the study suggests that aggressive humour and socially-prescribed perfectionism significantly predicts life satisfaction in an inverse manner. As mentioned before, aggressive humour represents the negative and inharmonious aspects of humour. Humour can vary according to the environmental circumstances and social conditions and can create anger in an individual by making a negative impact (Öner, 2012). Yerlikaya (2003) suggests that aggressive humour contains insulting and mocking others. Therefore, one can suggest that any individual who often applies to such a humour style is in pursuit of meeting his need to exhibit himself as superior. There are some studies suggesting that the aggressive humour and expression of anger (Soyaldın, 2007) is associated with being neurotic, angry and aggressive (İlhan, 2005) as well as the submissive coping-with method as a way to cope with stress (Yerlikaya, 2007). As aggressive humour is an inharmonious and negative humour style, it is an expected result that there is a significant inverse correlation between humour and life satisfaction. In socially-prescribed perfection, an individual believes that others have high expectations from him and he must achieve those standards to be approved by others (Gül, Yılmaz and Berksun, 2009; Kırdök, 2004), which is believed to have negative impact on life satisfaction because it increases self-expectations of the individual and turns down his self-confidence.

The last finding of the study suggests that average scores of life satisfaction vary significantly according to the grade levels. Average scores of the first graders for life satisfaction are significantly higher than those of the third graders. It is an expected finding that life satisfaction level increases as the grade level goes up. Nevertheless, the reason why this difference is between the first and third grader students may be the job-finding concerns of last graders or they get prepared for post-graduation exams. Moreover, the fact that third-graders have a busier content of courses in various fields in both semesters compared to other grades and they have more applied classes than other grades might have an impact on this situation.

Recommendations

Studies on different variables have an impact on life satisfaction of candidate teachers should be examined in future research. Furthermore, similar studies can be conducted in larger groups. Also further studies should be planned in which can be tested theoretical models to explain life satisfaction.

Psychological counselling and guidance centres of universities should form psychological counselling groups in line with the needs of students to carry out psycho-educational workshops in order to promote positive perfectionism, positive humour and life satisfaction. Promote studies and works to develop and improve humour skills of candidate teachers and also promote development of their personality characteristics by making them know their strong and weak points should be planned.

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