

Subjective Well-Being Levels of Vocational High School Students

Yılmaz Akgündüz¹, Övünç Bardakoğlu²

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to determine whether the subjective well-being levels of the students who were attending to vocational schools vary in terms of their internship, class and gender. Within the framework of this goal whether the level of subjective well-being of vocational high school students changed according to their gender, training status and the professional field were investigated. High-school version of subjective well-being scale is 37-item scale which consists of personal judgments and positive and negative statements that affect an individual's life satisfaction. A number of 200 vocational high school students in the centre of Kuşadası, which is a town of Aydın, participated in this present study in 2009-2010 academic year. The data were analyzed by using t-test and ANOVA. The results did not indicate significant differences in students' level of subjective well-being in terms of gender; however, there were significant differences in terms of their training status and class levels. If it is made possible for the adolescents to be happy by training them to be well and to feel well during their education, the infrastructure will have been prepared for their being successful in both school life and business life. This study aims to focus on identifying such problems and providing concrete suggestions to them.

Keywords: *Subjective well-being, life satisfaction, school life.*

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, meslek liselerinde eğitime devam eden öğrencilerin öznel iyi oluş düzeylerinin staj, sınıf ve cinsiyet düzeyinde farklılık gösterip göstermediğinin belirlenmesidir. Bu amaç çerçevesinde meslek lisesi öğrencilerinin öznel iyi oluş düzeylerinin cinsiyete, staj durumuna ve meslek alanlarına göre değişip değişmediği incelenmiştir. Öznel İyi Oluş Ölçeği (Lise Formu), kişinin yaşam doyumunu etkileyen alanlara ilişkin kişisel yargılar ile olumlu ve olumsuz duygu ifadelerinden oluşan 37 maddelik bir ölçektir. Araştırmanın örneklemi 2009-2010 öğretim yılında Aydın İli, Kuşadası İlçe Merkezi'nde bulunan meslek liselerine devam etmekte olan 200 lise öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Verilerin analizinde t-testi ve tek faktörlü varyans analizi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, öğrencilerin öznel iyi oluş düzeylerinin cinsiyet açısından anlamlı bir farklılık göstermediğine işaret etmektedir. Diğer yandan, öğrencilerin öznel iyi oluş düzeyleri, staj durumları ve sınıf düzeyleri açısından anlamlı farklılık göstermektedir. Ergenlere verilen eğitim sırasında iyi olma, kendini iyi hissedebilme öğretilerek bireyin mutlu olması sağlanabilirse gerek okul gerekse iş hayatında başarılı olması için gerekli altyapı hazırlanmış olacaktır. Çalışmada bu alanla ilgili sorunların hangi noktalarda yoğunlaştığı belirlenip somut çözüm önerileri getirilmeye çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Öznel iyi oluş, yaşam doyumu, okul yaşamı.*

INTRODUCTION

Using knowledge correctly in the world economy and providing the qualified outcome with less time and cost has gained considerable importance nowadays in which competition is growing (Boylu, 2007). At that point, the concept of quality appears. It is clear that the more quality man power has the more qualified production can be obtained. At the same time, the level of knowledge can only increase by means of qualified education to which individuals are exposed. In this respect, it can be claimed that if the education which is served to individuals from primary school has a high quality, the economy can grow briskly in the same country. Professional education is composed of efforts that aim to prepare unspecialized or semi-specialized work force for duties which have special quality and require being specialized (Ağaoğlu, 1991). Moreover, professional education can be defined as a variety of preparation in fundamental and advanced level which requires knowledge from theoretical

¹ Dr., Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, e-mail: yilmazakgunduz@mynet.com

² Yrd. Doç. Dr., Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, Seferihisar Fevziye Hepkon SBMYO, e-mail: ovuncbardakoglu@hotmail.com

knowledge to practical learning and also which requires learning appropriate professional ethics and basic principles of profession (Göçen, 2007).

The aim of professional and technical education is to prepare man power that is employed in industry. Therefore, there is a close relationship between technology and scientific studies in professional education (Doğan, Alkan, Sezgin, 1980). With the education that served in vocational high schools, it is tried to get students to gain some qualifications such as associating theoretical and practical knowledge; providing qualified staff for related area; providing professional formation and increasing knowledge and skills (Öztaş, 1995).

There are three fundamental aims in principles that professional and technical education has to prepare young people for life;

- Preparing appropriate learning environment
- Developing necessary skills
- Composing required behaviours (Alkan, Doğan, Sezgin, 1996)

While students are getting prepared for life in vocational high schools, they should be supported by apprenticeship education. Apprenticeship is a kind of effort to convert academic knowledge that individuals having theoretical-professional knowledge to behaviours by applying acquired knowledge (Çetin, 2005). In this respect, it is clear that professional education and apprenticeship education is a whole. However, that students get the highest benefit depends on the efficiency and comprehension of the students. At the same time, there is a close relationship between psychological condition of individual and comprehension and efficiency with high or low level. On the other hand, as a result of age group emotional fluctuations of adolescents who attend high school often affect their daily life in negative way. When they feel happy and become efficient, suddenly they can feel completely irrelevant and reckless.

Educationalists have an important role and feel highly responsible for this point due to the fact that education in vocational high school requires a great amount of care and interest. Experience of such psychological changes of the young people can be explained with the concept of subjective-wellbeing. The actions that people have through their life are devoted to the aim of being happy. According to Wilson (1967), happiness can be acquired when people reach their needs and aims. Studies conducted so far reveal that individuals who have work and life satisfaction contribute to purposes and efficiency of organization they work for.

Subjective well-being defined as life satisfaction and a general evaluation of positive-negative emotions of individuals (Diener, 1984) includes some variables such as positive psychological conditions and emotions along with lack of depression, satisfaction of marriage, life (Diener, Suh, Oishi, 1997). According to Concept of Justice which aims to explain subjective well-being, the level of subjective well-being is related to the results of comparisons between some standards and real conditions. If the real condition is higher than the condition pointed by individuals, individuals experience happiness (Diener, 1984).

Subjective well-being is measured with satisfaction scale. Satisfaction in life satisfaction scale is one dimensional and it contains to measure cognitive existence of life satisfaction of the individual. On the other hand, emotion is measured by using positive and negative reaction scales. It is composed of two sub-categories such as positive emotion and negative emotion scales. While positive emotion sub-scale measures the level of individual positive emotional expressions negative emotion scale measures the level of negative emotion of individual experiences (Watson, Clark, Tellegen, 1988).

According to Diener (1984), subjective well-being not only subjective due to including evaluation of individuals but also a general evaluation of the whole sides of life related to positive scales of individuals and their own lives. Diener defines factors that affect subjective well-being as *high income, individualism, human rights, social justice*. Even though the level of income can be controlled statistically, individualism is also an important factor. In general,

application of human rights, social justice, and positive signs in level of income in developed countries indicate subjective well-being levels of individuals are considerably high. However, such signs cannot reach adequate levels in undeveloped and developing countries as subjective well-being of individuals is low (Diener & Suh, 2000).

The present study aims to identify any probable subjective well-being differences of vocational high school students in terms of their internship, class and gender. The study aimed to reveal subjective well-being levels of the students in the following departments: 'Accommodation and Travel Services', 'Clothing Production Technology', 'Graphic and Photography', 'Child Development and Education', and 'Catering Services'. This study is important as it identifies life satisfactions of trainee vocational high school students who are regarded as 'workers' in many of the training enterprises; moreover this study is unique as there are no other studies which focus on vocational high school students.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Instrument

In order to collect data, the researchers administered a 36-item questionnaire to the participants. The scale, which aimed to reveal subjective well-being levels of high school students, consisted of both positive and negative questions on the factors that affect their life satisfaction. Originally, the scale was developed for university students by Tuzgöl (2004) and it was later adapted for high school students by Özen (2005) who provided validity and reliability of the scale for high school version.

The scale consists of questions in two sections. The first sections presents questions in order to identify subjective well-being levels of 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students. The participants were asked to respond 5-scale Likert type questions by choosing one of the following statements; 'Strongly agree', 'Agree', 'Undecided', 'Disagree', and 'Strongly disagree'.

Data about independent variables of the study were collected by 'personal information form' that was developed by the researchers of the present study. This form aimed to collect data about their gender, department, and internship.

Population and Sample

The scale was administered to the participants in October 2009. A number of 485 students were appropriate to be involved in the study. However, the researchers were able to receive 212 of them and 200 of the answered forms were taken into consideration.

Data Analysis

The participants were grouped according to their grade, gender, and department by using percentage and frequency distribution. Besides, independent sample T-test was used to reveal any probable gender differences in participants' responses. Moreover, an ANOVA test was administered to detect any probable differences according to their grades and training status. Such statistical analyses were administered by SPSS (16. 0 for Windows) and interpreted by the researchers. Subjective well-being was considered as dependent; whereas gender, department, and training status were regarded as independent variables.

FINDINGS

The reliability of the findings was calculated as $\alpha = .830$ ($p < .001$). In order to provide structural validity of the study, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Tests were administered and their significance was regarded $p = .001$ whereas KMO was calculated as .704. It is possible to infer with reference to the findings in KMO table that the components in

the sample were compatible to the degree of . 704. On the other hand, the table of ‘Total Variance Explained’ indicated that subjective well-being was regarded to be correct at the ratio of . 65. These findings indicated that this study is reliable and valid; therefore the other analyses were administered.

200 students from four different grades participated into this present study. There were 47 students which consisted of 22 girls and 25 boys from 9th grade, 52 students which consisted of 24 girls and 28 boys from 10th grade, 50 students which consisted of 29 girls and 21 boys from 11th grade, and 51 students which consisted of 27 girls and 24 boys.

The distribution of participants in accordance with their departments were %30 (59 boys) in the department of ‘Accommodation and Travel Services’, %11 (22 girls) in the department of ‘Clothing Production Technology’, %27 (16 girls and 39 boys) in the department of ‘Graphic and Photography’, %15 (31 girls) in the department of ‘Child Development and Education’, and %17 (33 girls) in the department of ‘Catering Services’.

Table 1. Independent sample T-test results of subjective well-being in terms of gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	St. Error Mean	T	P
Boy	102	3, 0647	, 75644	, 07060	1, 246	, 352
Girl	98	3, 1033	, 85012	, 06851		

T-test results in Table 1 above compare subjective well-being levels of the participants in terms of their gender. It is possible to declare that there is no significant difference in the subjective well-being levels of vocational high school students in terms of their gender($p>0, 05$).

Table 2. Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) test results according to training status

Source of Variance	S. D.	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	P
General	199	43, 676			
Between Groups	3	1, 532	, 511	2, 375	0, 002
Within Groups	196	42, 144	, 215		

Table 2 indicates significant differences in subjective well-being levels among groups in terms of their training status ($F=2, 375$; $p<0, 05$).

Table 3. Multiple Comparisons – Tukey Test Results

Training status	Training completed	Training continues	Not ever trained
Training completed		-3, 8236*	, 00181
Training continues	, 38236*		3, 8417*
Not ever trained	-, 00181	-, 38417*	

Table 2 shows the source of the significant difference which is observed in Table 3 by dealing with multiple comparisons of Tukey test results. Then, there are significant differences between the participants who continue their training and who completed their training; and also between the participants who continue their training and who have not started their training yet in terms of their subjective well-being levels.

Table 4. Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) test results according to grades

Source of Variance	S. D.	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	p
General	199	43, 676			
Between Groups	3	1, 857	, 619	2, 901	, 036
Within Groups	196	41, 676	, 213		

Table 4 indicates significant differences in subjective well-being levels among groups in terms of their training status ($F=2, 901$; $p<0, 05$).

Table 5. Multiple Comparisons – Tukey Test Results

Training Status	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Grade 9		-, 12408	-, 09522	-, 36980*
Grade 10	, 12408		, 02885	-, 24572
Grade 11	, 09522	-, 02885		-, 27458
Grade 12	, 36980*	, 24572	, 27458	

Table 4 shows the source of the significant difference which is observed in Table 5 by dealing with multiple comparisons of Tukey test results. Then, there are significant differences between the grades of 9 and 12 in terms of their subjective well-being levels.

Conclusion and Implications

The results of the present study investigate whether the subjective well-being levels of the students who were attending to vocational schools vary in terms of their internship along with the impact of class and gender. The results are explained by the following theoretical results and practical results, and limitations of the study.

Theoretical Results

The results do not indicate significant differences in subjective well-being levels of 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade vocational high school students at the departments of ‘Accommodation and Travel Services’, ‘Clothing Production Technology’, ‘Graphic and Photography’, ‘Child Development and Education’, and ‘Catering Services’ in terms of their gender. As a result of the present study, it can be implied that there are no significant differences between male and female participants in different departments in terms of their levels of subjective well being.

In their study, Fiest, Bodner, Jacobs, Miles and Tan (1995) reported that female participants outperformed the male ones on subjective well-being; however, in another study which was conducted at a science high school by Güven (2008) the results indicated higher levels for male participants in comparison to the female participants in terms of subjective well-being and being more positive view towards life. The contradictory results between the studies of Fiest et al and Güven might have occurred due to the differences in the sampling group, their educational background, incomes and life experiences.

The results of the study which was conducted in Kuşadası indicate significant differences between subjective well-being levels of the students who had completed their training and who were continuing to their training; and who were continuing to their training and who had not started their training yet.

The reason of this difference in subjective well being levels can be explained with the theoretical training of students at vocational high schools as they begin their education with great expectations and are aware of challenges in working as an employee during their theoretical training at vocational high schools.

The results do not indicate significant differences between subjective well-being levels of 10th and 11th grades. In a study by Özen (2005), the results did not indicate significant differences between grade level and subjective well-being. The present study which was conducted in Kuşadası also reaches similar results. Therefore, the results of the present study and Özen’s study support each other as there are significant differences between subjective well-being levels of 9th and 12th grades in the present study. Accordingly, it is possible indicate that students’ positive mood may decrease at the last period of school education due to the environmental conditions at vocation high school.

According to Taylor, Chatters, Hardison and Riley (2001) there is a positive and high relation between the level of subjective well-being with family closeness, support and

acceptance by the family. Therefore, in order to keep good relations with the families adolescents attend vocational schools which were directed by their family. While they were working as a worker during their theoretical education it was seen a decrease in their self-confidence and negative feelings increase towards their profession.

Results Related to Implementations

Unhealthy and illegal arrangements which are applied in the enterprises of Turkey, imposes too much burden on trainees. Long working hours, not owning vacation eligibility, not being insured, not being paid fairly are some of the most important reasons of this. Besides, being very far away from entering into university in a different department alienates them from education.

Unavoidably, these workers' productivity and efficiency decrease as they have an intention of working in different fields but work in the graduated field due to compulsory reasons. Tuzgöl (2004) has found that students who have academic success will have higher levels of subjective well-being. For this reason they should be trained on provision of how successful they might be, how they can reach the consciousness of what they wanted to do early in life. Presenting occupational fields better at primary schools will provide more realistic expectations in their occupations. Providing psychological support in order to increase students' subjective well-being levels while they are continuing their education will also result in an increase in future's workforce's added value.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of the present study are limited with 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade vocational high school students in the departments of 'Accommodation and Travel Services', 'Clothing Production Technology', 'Graphic and Photography', 'Child Development and Education', and 'Catering Services' of 2009-2010 academic year in Kuşadası town of Aydın.

The present study did not investigate adults' subjective well-being with their academic competence and psychological symptoms. It might be appropriate for further researchers to focus on academic competence. Moreover, workers' working years in the enterprise, organizational positions, and income levels might be investigated in relation with their subjective well-being levels.

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