

# An Investigation of the Relationship between Adolescents' Subjective Well-being and Perceived Parental Attitudes

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## ABSTRACT

An investigation of the relationship between adolescents' subjective well-being and perceived parental attitudes

**Objective:** In the present study, whether adolescents' subjective well-being differed according to perceived parental attitudes was investigated.

**Method:** The study population was constituted from students of secondary schools during the 2013-2014 academic year. Research sample has been formed with 659 students (351 females and 308 males) who were randomly selected from three different secondary schools. "Personal Information Form", "Parental Attitude Scale" and "Subjective Well-Being Scales for Adolescents" were used for data collection. Mann-Whitney U Test and Kruskal Wallis H Test with Bonferroni correction were used.

**Results:** Significant differences between perceived parental attitudes and subjective well-being were determined ( $p > 0.01$ ). The levels of subjective well-being of adolescents who perceived their parents as democratic and tolerant were determined higher than the ones who perceived their parents as negligent and authoritative.

**Discussion:** In the light of the findings, it is concluded that positive attitudes and supports of parents enhance the level of subjective well-being of adolescents.

**Keywords:** Adolescent, parental attitude, subjective well-being



## ÖZET

Ergenlerin öznel iyi oluşları ile algıladıkları anne baba tutumları arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi

**Amaç:** Bu çalışmada ergenlerin öznel iyi oluşlarının anne baba tutumları açısından farklılaşıp farklılaşmadığını incelenmiştir.

**Yöntem:** Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu 2013-2014 eğitim öğretim yılında ortaöğretime devam eden ve rastlantısal olarak seçilen, 659 (351 kız, 308 Erkek) öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma verilerinin toplanmasında "Kişisel Bilgi Formu", "Anne Baba Tutum Ölçeği" ve "Ergen Öznel İyi Oluş Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada elde edilen verilerin analizinde Mann Whitney U Testi, Bonferroni düzeltmeli Kruskal Wallis H Testi kullanılmıştır.

**Bulgular:** Araştırmada, ergenlerin öznel iyi oluş düzeyleri ile algıladıkları anne baba tutumları arasında anlamlı bir farklılık olduğu saptanmıştır. Anne babasını demokratik ve hoşgörülü olarak algılayan ergenlerin öznel iyi oluşları anne babasını ihmalkâr ve otoriter olarak algılayan ergenlerden göre daha yüksek bulunmuştur.

**Tartışma:** Bu bulgular ışığında, bu araştırma grubu için anne babanın olumlu tutum ve desteğinin ergenlerin öznel iyi oluşlarını yükselttiği sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Ergen, anne baba tutumu, öznel iyi oluş

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## INTRODUCTION

Happiness, which helps development of well-being in many fields of life, is a psychological power and source of joy, and it has an important place in the life of humans. Happiness issue is expressed as "subjective well-being" concept in psychology (1,2). Deiner (3) defined subjective well-being as evaluation and judgement of one's life. Subjective well-being is satisfaction level of an individual with his/her life, and this satisfaction was composed of cognitive and emotional components. Hybron (4) defined subjective well-being concept as experiencing negative feelings less frequently, whereas positive ones more frequently, and feeling the highest satisfaction levels in their lives of individuals.

Subjective well-being is also important for adolescents to have healthy lives as it is for children, adults, and elderly people (5). Adolescence is a period of transitions in which childhood is over and individuals step to the adulthood. During adolescence, basic biological elements such as changes in physical appearance and gaining reproducibility are accompanied with mental transitions which covers more developed thinking ability, and social changes which are re-definition of the individual by the population, include individual's personality development which is the basic characteristic to be gained during adolescence according to Ericson (6). The changes which are experienced as characteristics of this period may lead to appearance of some problems in the adolescent. If these problems are successfully overcome, then the adolescent will have positive relationships with the population, and can develop a positive personality. Overcoming these transitions are positively or negatively without any problems during adolescence is very important for subjective well-being of adolescents (6,7). Besides, although adolescents continue their autonomic maturation psychologically by becoming independent from their families, they continue to be connected to their parents (7). Therefore, parental attitudes to support adolescent independence and socialization have importance in the adolescence as it has been in the childhood (8-10).

Attitudes during raising children are defined generally as the whole of attitudes, behaviors, and expectations directed to the child (11). The three basic parental attitudes, such as authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive, proposed about attitudes in child rearing by Baumrind, have formed the basis of studies performed in this field. Differently from Baumrind, Maccoby and Martin (12) investigated parental attitudes in two perspectives as responsiveness and demandingness/control, and they defined four types of parents when these perspectives were intersected. These are authoritarian, authoritative, permissive-tolerant, and permissive-negligent parental attitudes. When especially the Western literature is reviewed, it is observed that parental attitudes have important impacts on subjective well-being of adolescents. For example, Rask et al. (13) determined that subjective well-being of adolescents was increased if there were open communication, presence of mutual emotional closeness, absence of isolation from the family, and presence of confidence at the basis of interactions. According to study of Joronen and Kurki (14), there were six factors related to the family affecting subjective well-being of adolescents. These factors were safe home environment, affection atmosphere, open communication, the feeling of the family member belonging to the family, external relationships, and feeling of self-importance in the family. In another study by Park (15), it was reported that there were four important factors affecting subjective well-being of adolescents. These were supportive parents, overcoming difficult situations, positive life events, and high degree of satisfaction obtained from relationships with important individuals. When aspects of subjective well-being of adolescents are evaluated, it is observed that the satisfaction level of adolescents with familial relationships is an important factor (14).

When related literatures are reviewed, there are findings between adolescent mental health and the family which have both positive and negative impacts. For example, substance addiction, and anti-social personality disorder patterns were observed in some adolescents of parents who had authoritarian attitudes (15). However, the family affects adolescent

mental health in a favorable direction. For example, parents who provide emotional support for their adolescent children contribute to self-esteem development of adolescents (16). In another study, it was reported that if adolescents took part in family management, and positive communication was constituted, these would have positive impacts in their subjective well-being (17).

Each individual's definite wish is to have a healthy and happy life. Happiness of family members is important both for family system and community (18). Positive or negative adolescent behaviors are related to family environment and structure. It has been observed that adolescents who cannot receive understanding and support from their families, show problematic behaviors, whereas the ones who receive support and acceptance, have fewer problematic behaviors (5). Therefore, it is important to know parental attitudes which provide better subjective well-being of adolescents. Although there are studies performed about this issue in the Western literature review, there are limited number of studies in our country about parental relationships and subjective well-being of adolescents (17). However, there is no study which has directly investigated adolescent perception of complete parental attitudes, and their subjective well-being. Therefore, the aim of the present study was to evaluate whether adolescent subjective well-being differed according to parental attitudes, and to fill the gap about this issue, and also to provide the basis for further studies in this issue.

## METHOD

The present descriptive study was performed to determine whether perception level of adolescent about their subjective well-being differed significantly according to parental attitudes. Relationship screening method, which determined concomitant change rate between two or more variables, was used in the study. The study was approved by the Ethical Committee. Informed consent was obtained for the study.

Sample size was constituted from 659 students who were attending the school, and randomly assigned

from three different secondary schools in the City of Karabuk. Easily accessible sampling method was used in sample selection. At the initiation, when data collected from 662 students were reviewed, 3 students were excluded because they did not reply some questions, and data from 351 female and 308 male subjects were analyzed. Of the samples, 53.3% were females and 46.7% were males.

## Measuring Tools Used in the Study

**Personal Information Form:** In this form prepared by investigators, there were questions inquiring about age, gender, school level, and demographic characteristics of subjects.

**Parental Attitude Scale:** Parental Attitude Scale was developed by Lamborn et al. and was adapted to Turkish by Yilmaz (18). The scale was divided into three factors, such as acceptance/attention, control/supervision, and psychological independence, depending on factor analysis performed on scale points. Acceptance/attention factor aimed to determine at what extend those adolescents perceived affection, attention, and participation of their parents; control/supervision factor aimed to determine at what extend those adolescents perceived that their parents were controlling and supervising; and psychological independence factor aimed to determine at what extend parents applied authoritative attitudes, and they encouraged adolescent independence. The items in the first and third dimensions were evaluated by using a 4-grade Likert type scale, whereas the first two items in the second dimension were evaluated by using a 7-grade Likert type scale, and other items were evaluated by using a 3-grade scale. The reliability of parental attitude scale was assessed separately among primary school, high school, and university students. Reliability and inner consistency coefficients among high school students forming the sample were 0.82 and 0.70 for acceptance/attention subscale; 0.88 and 0.69 for control/supervision subscale; 0.76 and 0.66 for psychological independence subscale (18). Reliability coefficients of Parental Attitude Scale and its subscales were re-calculated in the present

study because the sample was different. The reliability coefficients of Parental Attitude Scale among secondary school students were defined as 0.75 for acceptance/attention sub-dimension; 0.66 for psychological independence sub-dimension, and 0.71 for control/supervision sub-dimension.

### **Subjective Well-being Scale for Adolescents:**

Subjective Well-being Scale for Adolescents which was developed by Eryilmaz (19) and aimed to measure levels of subjective well-being of adolescents, was used in the study. The scale was composed of 15 items and four sub-dimensions. Of items of the scale, 4 were about satisfaction in familial relationships; 4 were about satisfaction in relationships with others; 3 were about life satisfaction; and 4 were about positive feelings. As points received from sub-dimensions of the scale were increased, it might be claimed that the subject had higher degree of properties with the related sub-dimension. The scale gave also a total score. The higher the points, the better the subjective well-being in adolescents. The highest score obtained from the scale was 60, whereas the lowest one was 15 points (20). The reliability of subjective well-being for adolescents was determined by internal consistency and item-total correlation methods. Cronbach Alpha values calculated for total and sub-dimensions of the scale were 0.86 for the total, 0.81 for satisfaction in familial relationships, 0.73 for satisfaction in other important relationships, 0.81 for life satisfaction, and 0.66 for positive feelings subscale. Spearman Brown values for total of the scale was 0.83, 0.83 for satisfaction in familial relationship subscale, 0.61 for satisfaction in other important relationships, 0.79 for life satisfaction, and 0.54 for positive feelings subscale. As the sample was different in the present study, separate reliability studies were performed for Subjective Well-being Scale for Adolescents and its sub-dimensions. According to the study results, the reliability coefficients were determined as 0.91 for the total scale, 0.88 for satisfaction in familial relationship subscale, 0.78 for satisfaction in other important relationships, 0.91 for life satisfaction, and 0.66 for positive feelings subscale.

### **Procedure**

Study data were obtained from measurement tools which were applied to students from 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades in the City of Karabuk during the 2013-2014 academic calendar. Measuring tools were applied on voluntary basis to students in their classes during counselling and guidance lessons after obtaining permissions and appointments from the school managements. During the application, students were informed about the aim of study, and applications of measuring tools. Applications took approximately for 20-25 minutes.

### **Statistical Analysis**

The study data were analyzed by using SPSS 20.0 package program. Frequency and percentage distributions of data were given. After examination for normal distribution of data, abnormally distributed data were analyzed by using Bonferroni corrected Kruskal Wallis H test. When differences between the groups were examined, the level of significance was defined as  $p < 0.05$ . Correlations between variables were analyzed by using Correlation Analysis, and the level of significance was determined as  $p < 0.05$ .

### **RESULTS**

Results of Kruskal-Wallis test which was performed to determine whether there were significant differences in adolescent subjective well-being according to perceived parental attitudes are given in Table 1.

There was statistically significant difference in sub-dimension points of familial relationships satisfaction between perceived parental attitudes and subjective well-being scale ( $p < 0.001$ ). Sub-dimension points of familial relationships satisfaction were significantly higher among adolescents with authoritative parents than the ones with negligent and authoritarian parents ( $X = 14.7$ ). The same sub-dimension points were significantly higher in adolescents with permissive parents ( $X = 15.1$ ) than the ones with negligent and authoritarian parents.

**Table 1: ANOVA (Kruskal Wallis H Test) results to determine whether subjective well-being of adolescents differ according to their parental attitudes**

|   | Groups                  | n   | $\chi^2$ | SD  | H     | p      | Binary Comparison |
|---|-------------------------|-----|----------|-----|-------|--------|-------------------|
| <b>Satisfaction in family relations</b>                     | 1=Authoritative parents | 167 | 14.7     | 2.6 | 108.6 | <0.001 | 1-2               |
|   | 2=Negligent parents     | 176 | 13.4     | 2.8 |       |        | 1-3               |
|   | 3=Authoritarian parents | 153 | 13.5     | 2.3 |       |        | 4-2               |
|   | 4=Permissive parents    | 163 | 15.1     | 2.0 |       |        | 4-3               |
| <b>Satisfaction in relations with important individuals</b> | 1=Authoritative parents | 167 | 14.1     | 2.8 | 51.4  | <0.001 | 1-2               |
|   | 2=Negligent parents     | 176 | 12.9     | 3.0 |       |        | 1-3               |
|   | 3=Authoritarian parents | 153 | 12.9     | 2.8 |       |        | 4-2               |
|   | 4=Permissive parents    | 163 | 14.4     | 2.3 |       |        | 4-3               |
| <b>Life satisfaction</b>                                    | 1=Authoritative parents | 167 | 8.7      | 2.4 | 83.6  | <0.001 | 1-2               |
|   | 2=Negligent parents     | 176 | 7.7      | 2.7 |       |        | 1-3               |
|   | 3=Authoritarian parents | 153 | 6.9      | 2.3 |       |        | 4-2               |
|   | 4=Permissive parents    | 163 | 9.3      | 2.3 |       |        | 4-3               |
| <b>Positive emotions</b>                                    | 1=Authoritative parents | 167 | 13.3     | 2.6 | 34.5  | <0.001 | 1-2               |
|   | 2=Negligent parents     | 176 | 12.2     | 2.4 |       |        | 1-3               |
|   | 3=Authoritarian parents | 153 | 12.2     | 2.5 |       |        | 4-2               |
|   | 4=Permissive parents    | 163 | 13.1     | 2.4 |       |        | 4-3               |
| <b>Total subjective well-being</b>                          | 1=Authoritative parents | 167 | 50.9     | 8.3 | 12.8  | <0.001 | 1-2               |
|   | 2=Negligent parents     | 176 | 46.2     | 8.2 |       |        | 1-3               |
|   | 3=Authoritarian parents | 153 | 45.5     | 6.8 |       |        | 4-2               |
|   | 4=Permissive parents    | 163 | 51.9     | 7.0 |       |        | 4-3               |

Statistically significant difference was determined in sub-dimension points of satisfaction with relationships with important people between perceived parental attitudes and subjective well-being scale ( $p < 0.05$ ). Sub-dimension points of satisfaction with relationships with important people were significantly higher among adolescents with authoritative parents than the ones with negligent and authoritarian parents ( $X = 14.1$ ). Sub-dimension points of satisfaction with relationships with important people were significantly higher among adolescents with permissive parents than the ones with negligent and authoritarian parents ( $X = 14.4$ ).

There was a statistically significant difference between perceived parental attitudes and sub-dimension point of life satisfaction ( $p < 0.05$ ). Sub-dimension points of life satisfaction were significantly higher among adolescents with authoritative parents than the ones with negligent and authoritarian parents ( $X = 8.7$ ). Sub-dimension points of life satisfaction were higher among adolescents with

permissive parents than the ones with negligent and authoritarian parents ( $X = 9.3$ ).

There was a statistically significant difference between perceived parental attitudes and points of positive emotions ( $p < 0.01$ ), which were significantly higher among adolescents with authoritative parents than the ones with negligent and authoritarian parents ( $X = 13.3$ ). Points of positive emotions were significantly higher among adolescents with permissive parents than the ones with negligent and authoritarian parents ( $X = 13.1$ ).

There was a statistically significant difference between perceived parental attitudes and total point of subjective well-being ( $p < 0.05$ ). Total points of subjective well-being were significantly higher among adolescents with authoritative parents than the ones with negligent and authoritarian parents ( $X = 50.9$ ). Total points of subjective well-being were significantly higher among adolescents with permissive parents than the ones with negligent and authoritarian parents ( $X = 51.9$ ).

## DISCUSSION

According to this study, it may be claimed that perceived parental attitudes have effects on satisfaction with family relationships, satisfaction with relationships with important people, life satisfaction, positive emotions, and subjective well-being levels. In the literature review, it was determined that results of previous similar studies (21-25) were consistent with our results. For example, Kulaksizoglu (21) reported that general problems of adolescents who had mothers with authoritative behaviors and equalitarian attitudes, were fewer than the ones with overprotective and oppressive-authoritarian mothers; Aktas (22) showed among high school children that the self-esteem levels were increased with increasing points of perceived authoritative parents, whereas self-esteem levels were decreased with increasing protective and authoritarian points. In another study performed by Ozdemir (23), it was reported that approval/attention of parents had significant effects on subjective well-being of adolescents. Similarly, Kocayoruk (24) reported that perceiving support from parents contributed in management of autonomous personality of adolescents together with emotional well-being. Eryilmaz (25) concluded that parental attention, parental support of adolescent's perceived control, having a positive communication with adolescents, authoritative and permissive parental attitudes to adolescents, providing unity in the family, supporting autonomy of adolescents, involvement of adolescent into family management, having activities together with adolescents improved subjective well-being of adolescents more.

It was stated in related studies that self-respect, emotional well-being, psychological well-being, self-acceptance levels of adolescents with authoritative and permissive parents were significantly higher than the ones with authoritarian and negligent parents. Our results were consistent with these literature findings.

Although different classifications are defined in parental attitudes in the literature, parental attitudes are generally examined as authoritative, negligent, authoritarian, and permissive (18). Children reared in

an authoritative environment receive unconditional affection and respect; their needs are provided as well as they are supervised; they are allowed to present their abilities at the highest level independently, and also to execute themselves (26). If children are reared under negligent attitude, they receive the least affection, and least control over their behaviors, and parents are not interested in them until they bother their parents (27,28). Children reared in an authoritarian environment develop personalities characterized without self-confidence, anxious, stressed, easily affected by others, silent, obedient to authority, overfulfilling their tasks, rebellious as soon as the authority is removed, and hostile to individuals who are weaker than them (26). Permissive parents allow their children all of their wishes except some limitations, and if this permissiveness is at normal level, then it will help development of a self-confident, creative, social and happy individual. It is believed that high subjective well-being levels in adolescents who perceive their parents as authoritative and permissive, are related to parental contributions into development of adolescent self-esteem; to balance limitations and freedom in a healthy way; to have functional communication with adolescents; and to accept and respect their individualities.

In conclusion; when subjective well-beings of adolescents are investigated for their parental attitudes, it is important for practitioners of this field that subjective well-being levels of adolescents with authoritative and permissive parental attitudes are higher than the ones with authoritarian and negligent parents. In the related theoretical literature for preventive mental health studies, authoritative and permissive attitudes are recommended for parents. Results of this present study, which is the first one in this issue in our country, also support the literature findings. Therefore, some recommendations may be proposed under the light of outcomes of the present study. Firstly, field practitioners who provide psychological consultancy and guidance services can use results of this study. Parental training programs may be emphasized under scientific knowledge about effects of parental attitudes on subjective well-being of

adolescents. Public service broadcasts may be prepared about parental attitudes and subjective well-being of adolescents by using facilities of this technological era, so that attention of the public and families may be drawn to the issue. Further studies about this issue which will include demographical variables such as gender, income level of parents, socioeconomic level, and academic average, may provide important contributions into the literature. Moreover, studies in which adolescents without psychiatric problems are compared with the ones with psychiatric diagnosis may be designed, so that findings which may contribute to interventional services may be determined.

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| Contribution Categories            | Name of Author |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Development of study idea          | I.O., T.S.     |
| Methodological design of the study | T.S.           |
| Data acquisition and process       | I.O.           |
| Data analysis and interpretation   | I.O., T.S.     |
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