

# The Relationship Between Adolescents' Subjective Well-being and Positive Expectations Towards Future

Ali Eryılmaz<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assist. Prof. Dr., Eskişehir Osmangazi University, Faculty of Education, Department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, Eskişehir- Turkey

## ABSTRACT

The relationship between adolescents' subjective well-being and positive expectations towards future

**Objective:** This study examines the association between positive expectations towards future and subjective well-being among adolescents.

**Method:** The participants of the study included a total of 233 adolescents (121 male and 112 female) aged between 14 and 17. The data of the study were obtained through the use of the Adolescents' Subjective Well-Being Scale and Positive Future Expectations Scale. The data were evaluated using basic linear regression analysis method.

**Results:** The study findings indicated that positive expectations towards future were positively correlated with adolescents' subjective well-being. Positive expectations towards future explained 24% variance of adolescents' subjective well-being.

**Discussion and Conclusions:** The findings of the study suggest that there is a statistically significant relationship between adolescents' subjective well-being and positive expectations towards future. Results of this study may be used in subjective well-being improvement programs.

**Key words:** Adolescent, subjective well-being, positive expectations towards future

## ÖZET

Ergen öznel iyi oluşu ile olumlu gelecek beklentisi arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi

**Amaç:** Bu çalışmada, ergenlerin öznel iyi oluşları ile olumlu gelecek beklentileri arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

**Yöntem:** Çalışmaya, Ankara'nın Keçiören ilçesinde lise eğitimi gören, 14-17 yaşları arasında, 112'si kız (%48,1) ve 121'i erkek (%51,9), toplam 233 ergen katılmıştır. Çalışmada Ergen Öznel İyi Oluşu Ölçeği ve Olumlu Gelecek Beklentisi Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde basit doğrusal regresyon analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır.

**Bulgular:** Çalışmada, olumlu gelecek beklentisine sahip olan ergenlerin öznel iyi oluş düzeylerinin yükseldiği bulunmuştur. Olumlu gelecek beklentisinin ergen öznel iyi oluşunu %24 oranında açıkladığı sonucuna varılmıştır.

**Sonuç ve Tartışma:** Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, öznel iyi oluş ve olumlu gelecek beklentisi arasında istatistikî açıdan anlamlı ve önemli bir ilişkinin olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu çalışmanın bulguları, öznel iyi oluşu artırma programlarında kullanılabilir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Ergen, öznel iyi oluş, olumlu gelecek beklentisi

Address reprint requests to:  
Assist. Prof. Dr. Ali Eryılmaz, Osmangazi University 26100 Eskişehir - Turkey

Phone: +90-222-339-3750

Fax: +90-222-229-3124

E-mail address:  
erali76@hotmail.com

Date of receipt:  
December 24, 2010

Date of acceptance:  
March 24, 2011

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most important goals of human being in life is to be happy. Several scientific disciplines are interested in happiness to ease individuals accomplishing this goal. Psychology and psychiatry are examples of these scientific disciplines. Happiness is being evaluated with subjective well-being concept in psychology (1). Subjective well-being means evaluating own positive and negative affections and life satisfaction of individuals (2). If people experience positive feelings frequently and negative feelings rarely and highly

satisfied from their lives, then they have a high level of subjective well-being.

People need an important tool to give meaning to their lives and control it; this tool is time. It can be seen from literature that human beings had long been interested in time issue; however, studies about time orientation are relatively new (3,4). Time has been evaluated in psychology as a concept related with inner experiences and conscious states of people. There is not a consensus on definition of time in psychology. McGrath and Kelly reported that (5) there are 211 different definitions of time in the literature. When

these studies are analyzed, it can be seen that time issue was evaluated under topics such as attitudes towards time, time perspective, time orientation, time perception and possible future identities (6-8).

Current studies about time generally focus around future time frame (9-11). Two important concepts which are future time orientation and future time perspective are evaluated in the literature about heading towards future. These two concepts are different from each other. Future time perspective means realistic planning of people towards future (12). Future time orientation term is used to determine that people prefer future more than past and present in their thoughts and behaviors (8). Future time orientation concept is also used to explain how individuals approach to future (12).

Relationship between future time orientation and several variables was reviewed in the literature (13). Together with individuals' orientation to future, quality of their attitudes in this orientation is also important. At this point, people orientate to future from two points which are either positive or negative (14,15). Individuals having a positive future orientation are optimistic about future and look at it with hope. From this point of view, people having a positive future orientation put more effort to reach their future goals without intimidation than individuals having a negative orientation (16).

There are studies about subjective well-being of adolescents that were done in Turkey. These studies were done in context of comparing normal and problematic adolescents from life satisfaction levels, comparison of self-esteem and life satisfaction levels of adolescents from reformatories, under supervision or not committed crime, investigating ways of being happy for adolescents, development of adolescent subjective well-being scale, a model study about intermediary role of coping strategies between subjective well-being of adolescents and personality characteristics and development of a scale for strategies of increasing subjective well-being of adolescents (17-22). It was observed that relationship between subjective well-being of adolescents and positive future expectation has not been investigated in the national literature.

Adolescence is a period which various physical,

cognitive, social and ethical changes occur. Advances achieved through changes at this period also bring adjustment problems for adolescents. In order to experience this period healthful, it is important to determine preventive mental health characteristics of adolescents and implement them (23). In this context, data from literature about subjective well-beings of adolescents which represent positive side of their mental health can be examined. When literature is reviewed, it can be concluded that individuals having a higher subjective well-being are more social and creative, have a better immune system, live longer, earn more money, are better citizens, are more productive in business life, have a higher marriage satisfaction and cope with stress better (24-29). According to studies done in mental health field, 450 million people worldwide have a mental or behavioral disorder. Besides these, one out of every four people experiences a mental or behavioral problem at least once in a lifetime (30). Mental disorders both bring psychological, social and economic burden to society and also increase risk of physical diseases. People's adaptation to life impairs consequently (31). Thus, people continue their lives unhappily. At this point, it is important to find one's inner and outer sources which lead mental health of adolescents to positive side.

When studies examining relationship between subjective well-being and time are analyzed, it can be seen that most of these studies were done in adults. Moreover, relationship between positive attitudes of individuals towards future and their subjective well-beings were not evaluated in these studies. Starting from these information and findings, we aimed to investigate the relationship between subjective well-beings of adolescents and their positive future expectations.

## METHODS

This study was conducted on relational screening model. Data were collected from individuals at different ages and cross-sectional research design was used. Investigating the relationship between positive future expectation and subjective well-being of adolescents

was aimed in this study. In order to determine to what extent positive future expectation predicts subjective well-being, simple linear regression analysis method was used.

### Sample

Individuals whom assessment tools will be carried out were determined by purposeful sampling method. In purposeful sampling, investigator forms a sample based on previous theoretical information about the universe, his/her own knowledge and special aim of the research. In this study, Maximal Variety method was used among purposeful sampling types to determine the research group. Participants were selected from high school graduates and from 14-17 age group by considering representation of the universe and assessment scales were applied to these individuals.

Data collection tools used in the study was applied to 250 participants. Responses of participants to data collection tools were reviewed before data analyses. According to this review, a total of 17 people whom left most of the scale items blank (at least 5%) or showed deviation errors in the center were excluded from the data set. In conclusion, this study was conducted in 2010-2011 academic year in 233 adolescent high school students from Keçiören county of Ankara whom were between 14 and 17 years old and containing 112 girls (48.1%) and 122 boys (51.9%). Sixty-eight adolescents (29.2%) were 14 years old, 86 were 15 years old (36.9%), 46 were 16 years old (19.7%) and 33 were 17 years old (14.2%). Mothers of 71 adolescents were primary school (30.4%), 83 were high school (35.6%), 27 were vocational school (11.6%), 45 were university (19.3%) graduates and 10 of them had master's degree (3%). Fathers of 37 adolescents were primary school (15.9%), 74 were high school (31.8%), 68 were university (18.9%) graduates and 10 of them had master's degree (4.3%). Parents of 15 adolescents were separated (6.4%), one of the parents was dead at 6 adolescents (2.6%) and parents of 212 adolescents (91%) were married. No medical history was present in 221 adolescents (94.8%) and 12 of them (5.2%) had a chronic health problem.

### Assessment Tools

Adolescent Subjective Well-being Scale and Positive Future Expectation Scale were used in the study. Psychometric properties of the scales are as follows.

#### Adolescent Subjective Well-being Scale:

Adolescent Subjective Well-being Scale was developed by Eryılmaz (20). This scale consists of 15 items assessing satisfaction and positive affection of adolescents in different areas of life. Adolescent Subjective Well-being Scale consists of four sub-factors: satisfaction in family relations, satisfaction from life, positive affection and satisfaction from relations with important people. Reported variance of these four dimensions is 61.64. Cronbach alpha reliability value of the scale is 0.87, Spearman-Brown value is 0.83. Adaptation validity of the scale was evaluated with Life Satisfaction Scale and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation technique in this study group. Adolescent Subjective Well-being Scale had a correlation with Life Satisfaction Scale at a level of 0.63 after the analyses. The scale was concluded to have an adequate validity according to this finding.

#### Positive Future Expectation Scale (PFES):

Positive Future Expectation Scale was developed by İmamoğlu (13,32). PFES is five-item scale. PFES aims to assess the level of positivity of individuals about their personal future. Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was reported as 0.85 and 0.92 in previous studies (13,32,33). In this study group, factor structure of the scale was analyzed by exploratory factor analysis method. Five-item scale was gathered in single dimension and variance of this single dimension was found 65.98%. Reliability of the scale was also examined in this study group. Inner consistency coefficient for the scale was found 0.87 after the analyses.

### Statistical Analysis

This study was conducted in descriptive scanning model. SPSS 15.0 package software was used for data analysis. Relations between variables were analyzed by simple regression analysis. In this context, subjective well-being was selected as predicted variable and

**Table 1: Descriptive statistical results about variables in the study**

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Adolescent Subjective Well-being Scale Total Score	49.58	6.89
Positive Future Expectation Scale Total Score	19.54	3.39

**Table 2: Predictive level of positive future expectation of subjective well-beings of adolescents**

	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	B	SEB	Beta	t	p
Positive Future Expectation	0.49	0.24	76.63	1.94	0.22	0.49	8.63	<0.001

positive future expectation was selected as predicting variable consistent with its purpose. Descriptive statistical analyses such as mean and standard deviation about dependent and independent variable were also performed. Statistical significance level was taken as  $p < 0.05$ .

Preliminary analyses were also performed in this study in order to decide whether demographic variables will be included to regression equation as "dummy" variables. Descriptive statistical analyses showed that adolescents were not evenly and proportionally distributed to age groups. For this reason, age variable was excluded from regression analysis. Also, whether subjective well-being differentiated with gender or not was examined by t-test method for independent groups. Subjective well-being of adolescents was not found to be differentiated with gender. For this reason, gender variable was not included into regression analysis. Areas such as academic performance and socio-economic status were not included into regression equation due to lack of data.

## RESULTS

Findings were collected under two main topics. First, descriptive statistics of variables evaluated in the study were analyzed. After that, simple linear regression analysis results were reported.

### Descriptive Statistics about Variables in the Study

Evaluated variables in the study were total scores from adolescent subjective well-being scale and positive

future expectation scale. Mean and standard deviation values about these variables were shown in table 1 (Table 1).

When table 1 is evaluated, mean score of adolescents of the study group for adolescent subjective well-being scale was  $49.58 \pm 6.89$  and mean score for positive future expectation scale was  $19.54 \pm 3.39$ .

### Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Relations between subjective well-being of adolescents and positive future expectations were analyzed by simple linear regression analysis method. Findings from the analysis are shown in table 2 (Table 2).

According to the findings, it can be seen that positive future expectation explains subjective well-being of adolescents at a significant and important level ( $R=0.49$ ;  $R^2=0.24$ ;  $F=76.63$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). It was concluded in regression analysis that positive future expectation was significantly and positively correlated with adolescent subjective well-being ( $\beta=0.49$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). According to these findings, positive future expectation explains 24% of the variance of adolescent subjective well-being.

## DISCUSSION

Relationship between subjective well-being of adolescents and their positive expectations towards future were evaluated in this study. According to findings of the study, subjective well-being of adolescents increases at a significant and important level when they have positive expectations towards

future. In this section, findings will be discussed with the related literature.

When the literature is reviewed, individuals focusing on future have positive subjective well-being levels as well. Moreover, previous studies were generally performed with adults (34). In our study, relations between positive expectations towards future and subjective well-being were investigated in adolescents. Also it can be seen in the literature that relations between time and subjective well-being was generally evaluated from time perspective. Zimbardo and Boyd (8) evaluated time perspective as positive and negative towards past, hedonistic and pessimistic towards present and positive towards future. At this point, individuals having positive perspective towards past, hedonistic towards present and positive towards future from five important time perspectives have higher subjective well-being levels than other individuals (34,35). Although there are studies about subjective well-being and time orientation in the literature (Psychoinfo, Google Scholar and Med-Line), there are not studies investigating positive future expectations and subjective well-beings of adolescents. This study brings up the direction and power of relations between a variable which has not been evaluated in the literature and adolescent well-being.

When literature was reviewed, three important factors affecting subjective well-beings of individuals were found by studies done with both adolescents and adults. It was found that first factor which is personality characteristics, explains subjective well-being of individuals by 50%, second factor which is goal-oriented activities, has an impact of subjective well-being of individuals by 40% and third factor which is demographic factors, explains subjective well-beings of individuals by 10% (36). Furthermore, it was concluded in the literature that cognitive factors such as perceived control and reasons of survival are also effective on subjective well-beings of individuals (37-38). Expectations are also considered as cognitive factors in the literature (39). Having a positive future expectation which was evaluated in this study can also be evaluated as a cognitive factor. In this context, it can be said that findings of our study match up with

the literature.

Significant and important relations between having a positive future expectation and subjective well-beings of adolescents were found in this study. The reason for this finding can be characteristics of people heading towards future. When literature is reviewed in this context, it can be observed that individuals focusing on future display positive functionality and less psychopathology (40,41). Subjective well-beings of these individuals having all these characteristics increase consequently. Thus, subjective well-being levels of adolescents might have increased by displaying the abovementioned behaviors with attitudes towards future in this study.

It was found in the literature that there are generally positive and significant relations between subjective well-beings of individuals and their optimistic tendencies (42,43). This study was done about positive future expectation. At this point, findings of this study match up with the literature. Investigating both optimistic tendencies and positive attitudes towards future in further studies may contribute to the literature by showing the direction and power of relations between these variables.

In this study, positive and significant relations were found between subjective well-beings of adolescents and their positive future expectations. General hope levels of adolescents might have lied under this finding. There are studies in the literature which reported increasing subjective well-beings of individuals parallel to their increasing hope levels (44,45). Increasing hope levels might have caused adolescents to develop positive expectations towards future. In conclusion, increasing hope levels of adolescents might have increased their subjective well-beings as well. Relations between hope, subjective well-being and positive future expectation can be evaluated by controlling the effect of hope in subjective well-being in future studies.

The most important limitation of this study is that it was performed in adolescents being in high school and not previously got any psychiatric diagnosis. Further studies investigating subjective well-beings from positive future expectation point of view in adolescents both at high school and not; and having a psychiatric

diagnosis and not comparatively may contribute to the literature. New studies including variables such as academic performance and socio-economic level may also be performed.

## CONCLUSION

When findings of this study are analyzed, it is important for adolescents at high school to have positive future expectation to increase their subjective well-beings. Some suggestions can be developed from this finding. First of all, professionals giving psychological help can benefit from the findings of this study. They can provide positive expectations of their consulters towards future. They can ask and organize beliefs of adolescents about future at this point.

Consulters can be helped to achieve goals, interpret possible future situations positively and develop optimistic thinking.

There are studies in positive psychology field investigating the relationship between psychiatric diseases and their recovery process and characteristics empowering character of the individual (46,47). In this context, relations between positive future expectation and subjective well-being were investigated in this study. Looking at relationship between both psychiatric diseases and their recovery process and subjective well-being and positive future expectation may contribute to the literature from both theoretically and from clinical practices as well. In conclusion, it is important for adolescents to have positive future expectation for their subjective well-beings.

## REFERENCES

- Hybron D. Two philosophical problems in the study of happiness. *Journal of Happiness Studies* 2000; 1:207-225.
- Deiner E. Subjective well-being: the science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *Am Psychol* 2001; 55:34-43.
- Buccheri R, Gesu VD, Saniga M. *Studies on The Structure of Time: From Physics to Psychopathology*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2000, 56-88.
- McGrath JE, Tschan F. *Temporal Matters in Social Psychology*. Washington: American Psychological Association, 2004, 35-68.
- McGrath JE, Kelly JR. *Time and Human Interaction: Toward a Social Psychology of Time*. New York: Guilford, 1986, 75-132.
- Gjesme T. Future time orientation as a function of achievement motives, ability, delay of gratification and sex. *J Psychol* 1979; 101:173-188.
- Markus H, Nurius P. Possible selves. *Am Psychol* 1986; 4: 954-969.
- Zimbardo PG, Boyd JN. Putting time in perspective: a valid, reliable individual-differences metric. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 1999; 77:1271-1288.
- Lennings CJ, Burns AM. Time perspective: temporal extension, time estimation, and impulsivity. *J Psychol* 1998; 132:367-380.
- Nuttin J, Lens W. *Future Time Perspective and Motivation: Theory and Research Method*. Leuven: Leuven University Press and Erlbaum, 1985; 66-121.
- Vazquez SM, Rapetti MV. Future time perspective and motivational categories in argentinean adolescents. *Adolescence* 2006; 4:511-532.
- Calster KV, Lens W, Nuttin JR. Affective attitude toward the personal future: impact on motivation in high school boys. *Am J Psychol* 1987; 100:1-13.
- İmamoğlu EO, Güler-Edwards A. Self-related differences in future time orientations. *Turkish Journal of Psychology* 2007; 22:115-132.
- Scheier MF, Carver CS. Optimism, coping and health: assessment and implications of generalized outcome expectancies. *Health Psychology* 1985; 4:219-247.
- Snyder CR, Haris C, Anderson JR, Holleran SA, Irving LM, Sigmon ST, Yoshinobu, L, Gibb J, Langelle C, Hamey P. The will and the ways: development and validation of an individual differences measure of hope. *J Pers Soc Psychol* 1991; 60:570-585.
- MacLeod AK, Byrne A. Anxiety, depression, and the anticipation of future positive and negative experiences. *J Abnorm Psychol* 1996; 10:286-289.
- Koker S. Normal ve sorunlu ergenlerde yaşam doyumu düzeyinin karşılaştırılması. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Ankara, 1991 (Article in Turkish).
- Nalbant A. 15-22 yaşları arasında bulunan islahevindeki, gözetim altındaki ve suç işlememiş gençlerin benlik saygısı ve yaşam doyumu düzeylerinin karşılaştırılması. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi Sağlık Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara, 1993 (Article in Turkish).

19. Eryılmaz A, Yorulmaz A. The way of being happy for adolescents. The Xth Conference Of European Association For Research On Adolescence Abstract Book, 2006, 23-24.
20. Eryılmaz A. Ergen öznel iyi oluş ölçeğinin geliştirilmesi. Gazi Üniversitesi Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi 2009; 7:975-989 (Article in Turkish).
21. Eryılmaz A. Başa çıkma stratejilerinin kişilik özellikleriyle ergen öznel iyi oluşu arasındaki aracı rolü. Doktora Tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara, 2009 (Article in Turkish).
22. Eryılmaz A. Ergenler için öznel iyi oluşu artırma stratejileri ölçeğinin geliştirilmesi. Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi 2010; 33:81-88 (Article in Turkish).
23. Heubner ES. Correlates of life satisfaction in children. School Psychology Quarterly 1991; 6:103-111.
24. Diener E. Subjective well-being. Psychol Bull 1984; 95:542-575.
25. Diener E, Nickerson C, Lucas RE, Sandvik E. Dispositional affect and job outcomes. Soc Indic Res 2002; 59:229-259.
26. Diener E, Seligman MEP. Very happy people. Psychol Sci 2002; 13:81-84.
27. Diener E, Seligman MEP. Beyond money: Toward an economy of well-being. Psychological Science In The Public Interest 2004; 5:1-31.
28. Lucas RE, Clark AE, Georgellis Y, Diener E. Unemployment alters the set point for life satisfaction. Psychol Sci 2004; 15:8-13.
29. Lyubomirsky S, King L, Diener E. The benefits of frequent positive affect: does happiness lead to success. Psychol Bull 2005; 131:803-855.
30. World Health Organization (WHO). The World Health Report: Mental Health, New Understanding, New Hope. World Health Organization, Geneva, 2001.
31. Gültekin BK. Ruhsal bozuklukların önlenmesi: Kavramsal çerçeve ve sınıflandırma. Psikiyatride Güncel Yaklaşımlar 2010; 2:583-594 (Article in Turkish).
32. İmamoğlu EO. Need for cognition versus recognition: self and family related correlates. Unpublished article, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, 2001.
33. İmamoğlu S. Secure exploration: Conceptualization, types, and relationships with secure attachment, self-construals and other self-related variables. PhD thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2005.
34. Drake L, Duncan E, Sutherland F, Abernethy C, Henry C. Time perspective and correlates of wellbeing. Time & Society 2008; 17:47-61
35. Zaleski Z, Cycon A, Kurc A. Future Time Perspective And Subjective Well-Being: In Schmuck P, Sheldon KM (Editors). Life Goals And Well-Being: Towards A Positive Psychology Of Human Striving. Ashland: Hogrefe & Huber, 2001, 122-169.
36. Lyubomirsky S, Sheldon KM, Schkade D. Pursuing happiness: the architecture of sustainable change. Rev Gen Psychol 2005; 9:111-131.
37. Bender M. Suicide and older african-american women mortality. Mortality: Promoting the interdisciplinary study of death and dying 2000; 5:158-170.
38. Eryılmaz A, Ercan L. Öznel iyi oluş ile algılanan kontrol arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi. İlköğretim Online 2010; 9:952-959 (Article in Turkish).
39. Bandura A. Perceived self-efficacy in the exercise of personal agency. The Psychologist: Bulletin of the British Psychological Society 1989; 2:411-424.
40. Kazakina E. Time perspective of older adults: relationships to attachment style, psychological well-being and psychological distress. Doctoral Dissertation, Columbia University, 1999.
41. Guarino A, De Pascalis V, Di Chiacchio, C. Breast cancer prevention, time perspective, and trait anxiety. Unpublished Manuscript, University of Rome, 1999.
42. Lyubomirsky S. Why are some people happier than others. Am Psychol 2001; 56:239-249.
43. Seligman MEP. Authentic Happiness. New York: Free Press, 2002, 124-195.
44. Argyle M. The Psychology of Happiness. East Sussex: Routledge Press, 2001, 158-210.
45. Snyder CR. Genesis: The Birth And Growth Of Hope: In Snyder CR (editor). Handbook of Hope: Theory, Measures, And Applications. San Diego: Academic Press, 2000, 25-38.
46. Park N, Peterson C, Seligman MEP. Reply: strengths of character and well being: a closer look at hope and modesty. J Soc Clin Psychol 2004; 23:628-634.
47. Peterson C, Park N, Seligman MEP. Greater strengths of character and recovery from illness. J Posit Psychol 2006; 1:17-26.