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General self-efficacy beliefs, life satisfaction and burnout of university students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relations between general self-efficacy beliefs, life satisfaction and burnout of university students. Research group consists of 354 (131 female, 223 male) university students. To determine the Life Satisfaction of students' "Life Satisfaction" scale which is developed by Diener et al. (1985) is applied. Additionally, "General Self-Efficacy Scale" developed by Jerusalem & Schwarzer (1992) is applied to students to determine the general self-efficacy beliefs. The burnout levels of students are determined by the "Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey" which is developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). To calculate the relations between the variables, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used. As a result of analysis, between the general self-efficacy beliefs, life satisfaction and burnout of university students were statistically found significant relations at 0.01 and 0.05 levels. The findings were discussed according to the literature.

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Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).**Keywords:** General Self-Efficacy Belief; Life Satisfaction; Student Burnout

1. Introduction

1.1. General Efficacy Belief

The efficacy belief, one of the most significant concepts of Social Learning Theory, is defined as "one's beliefs about his own capabilities to organize the behaviours required to realize a performance and to realize these behaviours (Bandura, 1986). The self-efficacy belief which makes difference about how people feel, think, and behave (Bandura, 1997) determines which activities they will choose, how much effort they will make to realize these activities and how persistent they will behave when encountered with a problem (Bandura, 1977). General self-efficacy belief, in a wide range of behaviour, has been defined as one's belief about his ability related to the outcomes which he believes to make and the behaviours that he can perform by Luszczynska, Gibbons, & Tckozel (2004) while it has been defined as one's belief about his ability to cope with a stressful situation spreading on a large area or the demands coming from outside and leaving him in a difficult situation by Luszczynska, Scholz, & Schwarzer (2005). Individuals having a general self-efficacy belief have some principal features in the way that the feeling of the ability to cope with difficulties has improved, a certain stability in reactions towards stressful situations has been reached and a certain continuity of the feeling of this self-efficacy belief has been provided (Schwarzer, 1994; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

1.2. Life Satisfaction

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Life satisfaction, one of the three major components of subjective well-being concept, has been conceptualised as a structure representing cognitive and overall evaluation of the quality of one's life as a whole (Pavot & Diener, 1993) and has been defined as evaluating his own life positively in the light of the criteria determined by himself (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). At the same time, life satisfaction expresses the states of well-being from various aspects such as happiness and morale (Vara, 1999). According to Schmitter (2003), individuals' life satisfaction has been affected by the factors like taking pleasure in life, finding life meaningful, consistency at the matter of reaching goals, positive individual identity, feeling well physically, economical security and social relationships. On the other hand, according to Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough (2002), individuals have to motivate themselves, lead their lives despite misfortunes, avoid thinking negative and troubling things, put themselves into others' places and never let their hopes fade away in order to have a high life satisfaction level. In the studies analyzing the relationship between life satisfaction and educational opportunities and services, it has been pointed out that life satisfaction grows as the satisfaction in relation to academic life increases (Gundogar et al., 2007). For this reason, the strengthening of students' life satisfaction has been considered an important mission of education (Chow, 2005; O'Neill, 1981).

1. 3. Students' Burnout

The concept of "burnout", being studied as a research matter from 70s on, initially started to be analyzed in the occupational groups where face-to-face relationship and interaction are required such as doctors, nurses and social workers but in the result of the later research it was also seen to have occurred in the fields other than human occupations (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). In recent years, one of the fields on which burnout studies have been conducted is students (Capri, Gunduz, & Gokcakan, 2011; Hu & Schaufeli, 2009; Kutsal, 2009; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Schaufeli et al., 2002a; 2002b; Yang, 2004; Yang & Cheng, 2005; Zhang et al., 2005). According to Schaufeli & Taris (2005), students are, actually neither employees nor being a student can be considered a job. But from a psychological perspective, their core activities can be considered as "work" (e.g., compulsory activities such as attending classes and doing assignments and specific tendencies like passing classes) and it states a meaning equal to "work". Hence, being a work-related phenomenon, burnout may also exist in students where it manifests itself through exhaustion because of study demands, having a cynical and detached attitude towards one's study, and feeling incompetent as a student (Meier & Schmeck, 1985; Schaufeli et al., 2002b).

It has been revealed that when the literature about general self-efficacy belief, life satisfaction and burnout variables discussed within the context of this research was analyzed, there were negative significant relations between burnout and self-efficacy beliefs (Salanova, Peiro, & Schaufeli, 2002; Tang, Schwarzer, & Schmitz, 2001; Yang & Farn, 2005) and life satisfaction (Avsaroglu, Deniz, & Kahraman, 2005; Gumus, 2006; Unal, Karlidag, & Yologlu, 2001; Orkun, 2011; Sahin, 2008; Sahin, 2010); there were positive significant relations between efficacy beliefs and life satisfaction (Charrow, 2006; Coffman & Gilligan, 2002; Dahlke, 1992; Tong & Song, 2004). Yet, it has been shown that very few of these studies were conducted on students (Coffman & Gilligan, 2002; Tong & Song, 2004; Yang & Farn, 2005). Specifically, a study where university students' general self-efficacy beliefs, life satisfaction and their burnout levels are dealt with together does not exist.

For this reason, the purpose of this study is to analyze the relations between university students' general self-efficacy beliefs, life satisfaction and burnout.

2. Method

2.1. Participant

354 volunteer students, [131 female (37,00%) and 223 male (63,00%)] who have been studying at different departments of Mersin University participated in the study.

2.2. Instrument

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES): GSES's original form was initially developed as 20 items by Jerusalem & Schwarzer and then a 10-item scale was designed (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1992) and adapted into Turkish by Celikkaleli & Capri (2008). It is a 10-item scale with a response format ranging from not at all true (1) to completely

true (4). The lowest grade of the scale is 10 and the highest is 40. The rise in the grades of the people can be interpreted as their self-efficacy belief levels have also increased.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS): The five-item Satisfaction with Life Scale has been developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin (1985) in order to assess the individuals' life satisfaction and adapted into Turkish by Koker (1991) and Yetim (1991). Participants responded to the items (e.g., "If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing") on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The test-retest reliability coefficient was .82, and coefficient alpha was .87.

Maslach Burnout Inventory-Student Survey (MBI-SS): Burnout was assessed with a modified version of the MBI-GS (Schaufeli et al., 1996) that was developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002a) for use in student samples and adapted into Turkish by Capri, Gunduz & Gokcakan (2011). The MBI-SS consists of 16 items that constitute three sub-scales: Exhaustion (EX; 5 items), Cynicism (CY; 5 items), and Efficacy (EF; 6 items). All items are scored on a 7-point frequency rating scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*always*). High scores on EX and CY and low scores on EF are indicative for burnout.

2.3. Data Analysis

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient has been calculated in order to determine the relations between university students' self-efficacy beliefs, life satisfaction and burnout scores. In the analysis with SPSS 11.5 the upper limit for error margin has been accepted as 0.01.

3. Results

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient has been applied to determine the relations between university students' self-efficacy beliefs, life satisfaction and burnout scores and the findings are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Obtained from the Relations between University Students' General Self-Efficacy Belief, Life Satisfaction and Burnout Scores, N, Mean, Standard Deviation and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient Results

	N	\bar{X}	Ss	1	2	3	4	5
1 General Self-Efficacy Belief (GSEB)	354	29,05	5,11	-				
2 Life Satisfaction (LS)	354	20,12	7,12	0,31**	-			
3 Exhaustion (EX)	354	14,19	4,43	-0,09	-0,26**	-		
4 Cynicism (CY)	354	11,20	3,89	-0,06	-0,39**	0,70**	-	
5 Efficacy (EF)	354	11,83	3,01	0,38**	0,26**	-0,20**	-0,30**	-

**p<.01

In Table 1, it has been shown that there is a positive significant relation between university students' general self-efficacy beliefs scores and life satisfaction ($r = .31, p < .01$) and MBI-SS's efficacy sub-scale scores ($r = .38, p < .01$) but there is not any significant relation between exhaustion and cynicism scores. On the other hand, it has been shown that there is a negative significant relation between life satisfaction scores and exhaustion ($r = -.26, p < .01$) and cynicism ($r = -.30, p < .01$) sub-scale scores and that there is a positive significant relation between efficacy ($r = .26, p < .01$) sub-scale and life satisfaction scores. In addition, it has been revealed that there is a negative significant relation between efficacy sub-scale scores and exhaustion ($r = -.20, p < .01$) and cynicism ($r = -.30, p < .01$) sub-scale scores and a positive significant relation between exhaustion and cynicism ($r = .70, p < .01$) sub-scales scores in terms of MBI-SS.

4. Conclusions

In this study, statistically significant findings from the relations between university students' general self-efficacy beliefs, life satisfaction and burnout scores have been obtained. Positive significant findings obtained from the relations between general self-efficacy beliefs and life satisfaction is consistent with the similar studies

(Charrow, 2006; Coffman & Gilligan, 2002; Dahlke, 1992; Tong & Song, 2004) in literature. On the other hand, while the fact that there is not a significant relation between the general self-efficacy belief and the sub-scales of MBI-SS's exhaustion and cynicism differs from the research results in the literature (Salanova, Peiro, & Schaufeli, 2002; Tang, Schwarzer, & Schmitz, 2001; Yang & Farn, 2005), a significant relation with efficacy sub-scale shows similarities with the same research results. The fact that a significant relation is only obtained between general self-efficacy belief and efficacy sub-scale of MBI-SS can be considered as an expected result. Because efficacy sub-scale of MBI-SS has been actually designed with a content to assess the self-efficacy beliefs related to a specific area about being a student. Thus, the significant relation between efficacy belief in relation to the specific area of being a student and the general self-efficacy belief can be considered as a normal result.

On the other hand, the results showing that there are significant relations between life satisfaction scores and all the sub-scale scores of MBI-SS share similarities with the research results (Avsaroglu, Deniz, & Kahraman, 2005; Gumus, 2006; Unal, Karlidag, & Yologlu, 2001; Orkun, 2011; Sahin, 2008; Sahin, 2010) pointing that burnout decreases as life satisfaction increases. Moreover, the fact that all the sub-scale scores have significant relations with each other can be regarded as an evidence showing that these three factors are the sub-factors of MBI-SS. The results obtained are consistent with the research results of Capri, Gunduz, & Gokcakan (2011).

All these results can be concluded that the more the students' life satisfaction levels are increased, the more their burnout levels will decrease. From this point of view, it can be thought that the life satisfaction acts as an important buffer to cope with the burnout (Chow, 2005; O'Neill, 1981). In addition, increasing the students' life satisfaction is a significant task of education (Chow, 2005; O'Neill, 1981). In this case, the reorganization of the university's instructional programmes by including the activities which increase students' life satisfaction will be helpful. At the same time, broadening the students' socio-cultural, artistic and sportive facilities will be able to help their satisfaction level from university life increase. It will also be made possible to increase efficacy levels in relation to general efficacy belief levels and specific area of being a student together with rising of students life satisfaction levels.

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