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Predicting university students' life satisfaction by their anxiety and depression level

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine to what extent the university students' level of life satisfaction can be predicted by their anxiety and depression level, sex, socio-economic level, satisfaction with their department, parents' education level and living quarters. The sample of the study comprises 348 students studying in different faculties in Cyprus International University in the academic year 2008-2009. The data collection tools employed in the study were the Life Satisfaction Scale, the Trait Anxiety Scale and the Beck Depression Inventory. Data were analyzed by using progressive regression analysis. The results of the analysis revealed that the students' level of life satisfaction could be significantly predicted by their anxiety, depression, satisfaction with their department and socio-economic level. "anxiety, depression and socio-economic level" were found to be the most important predictors of their life satisfaction of students.

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Keywords: Life satisfaction, anxiety, depression, university students;

1. Introduction

Life satisfaction can be defined as how far an individual reaches the aims s/he has set (Koç, 2001) and the positive appraisal of a person's whole life according to the criteria defined by that person (Diener, Emmons, Larsen & Griffin, 1985). Life satisfaction connotes a sense of well-being due to happiness or a boosted morale and the domination of positive feelings over negative feelings as regards daily relationships (Vara, 1999). The emphasis is on the fact that educational opportunities and services affect life satisfaction directly; that the satisfaction derived from academic life enhances life satisfaction and that the social policies to be developed in a country should aim to increase life satisfaction (Chow, 2005; Diener & Seligman, 2004). In the studies conducted by Gilman & Huebar (2006), teenagers who were highly satisfied with their lives scored higher points in all academic, personal and interpersonal functionality scales than those with a low level of life satisfaction. In the study they conducted with university students, Gündoğar et al. (2007) found that if students are in a field they are not truly interested in, this affects their life satisfaction negatively. Lately, in our country it can be observed that there is an increase in the number of studies conducted on variables affecting life satisfaction (Deniz, 2006; Bulut, 2007; Çivitçi, 2007; Gündoğar, 2007; Çeçen, 2008; Tümkaya et al. 2008, Cenkseven Önder & Furtal, 2008; Hiloğlu & Cenkseven Önder, 2010). The first years of university education are spent during a period of adolescence when young people have peculiar psychological characteristics. There are some studies which show that adolescents have a lot of

anxiety during these years (Hisli, 1998; Brady & Kendall, 1992; Akboy, 1990; Baltaş, 1986; Öner & Le Compte, 1983). In general, anxiety can be defined as an emotional response in a person to environmental and psychological phenomena (Öner, 1990). Explaining depression in a cognitive sense, Beck argues that depressed individuals tend to evaluate themselves, their environment and their future negatively and that there are cognitive distortions in their way of thought (Beck, 1976). Anxiety and depression lead to use of alcohol or drugs among students, to anti-social behavior, to a decrease in aptitude, to an increase in absence from school, and to a decrease in motivation and success (Cai, 2000). The results of this study, which deals with the life satisfaction of university students, their anxiety levels and depression levels, appear significant in taking measures to increase students' level of life satisfaction (Donnelly, R. 2009). The aim of this study is to analyze how far life satisfaction levels of university students can be predicted by their constant anxiety levels, their socio-economic levels, their being happy with their departments, the education level of their parents and where they live (Halstead, J., & Jiamei, X. 2009).

2. Method

2.1. Study Group

The study is a descriptive study aiming to explain the relationship between life satisfaction and certain variables. The sample of the study comprised 348 students studying in different faculties in the Cyprus International University in the 2008-2009 academic year.

2.2. Data Gathering Tools

The Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS) developed by Diener, Emmans, Lorsen & Giffin (1985), the Constant Anxiety Scale (CES) developed by Spielberger et al. (1970) and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) developed by Beck et al. (1961) were used as data collecting instruments in this study. *Life Satisfaction Scale (LSS)*: is a scale developed by Beck et al. and adapted by Hisli (1989). It has five items evaluated over a Likert Scale of seven degrees. This is a scale that measures objective well-being. Its coefficient varies between .80 and .89. *Beck Depression Inventory (BDI)*: Developed by Beck et al. and adapted by Hisli (1989), the Beck Depression Inventory is a self-evaluating scale which is most often employed in studies on depression. Points obtained from this scale vary between 0-63. *Constant Anxiety Inventory (CAI)*: It was developed by Spielberger et al. (1977) in order to determine the constant anxiety levels of individuals and it was adapted to Turkish by Öner & Le Compte (1977). The total points obtained with this scale vary between 20-80.

2.3. Analysis of Data

Data were analyzed with the SPSS 11.5 package program. Multiple linear analyses were used to determine the important predictors of students' life satisfaction levels.

2.4. Application

The university students were given information regarding the aim of the study prior to collecting data and volunteers were included in the study. During data evaluation, those scales not marked were not included in the analysis.

3. Findings

As seen in table 1, the variables anxiety and depression together have a significant and high level relationship with the life satisfaction scores of university students ($R=.526$, $R^2=.277$, $p<.01$). Both variables stated above together explain nearly 28% of the total variance.

Table 1. Results of Multiple Regression Analysis Regarding Prediction of Life Satisfaction

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Correlations		
	B	Std. Error				Zero-order	Partial	Part
(Constant)	21.550	2.353		9.157	.000			
Anxiety	.161	.052	.149	3.081	.002	-.031	.164	.141
Depression	-.357	.031	-.556	-11.482	.000	-.507	-.526	-.526

$$R=.526 \quad R^2=.277$$

$$F_{(2,345)}=66.154 \quad p=.000$$

Dependent Variable: Life satisfaction

According to the standardized regression coefficient (B), depression is relatively more effective on life satisfaction as a predictor variable. When the results of the t-test related to the significance of regression variables, it is observed that depression and anxiety are important predictors of life satisfaction. According to the results of the regression analysis, the regression equality regarding the prediction of life satisfaction (mathematical model) Life Satisfaction= $21.550 + .161\text{Kaygı} - .357\text{Depression}$.

4. Results and Discussion

In general the results obtained from the scatter diagrams which take partial relationships between predictor variables and life satisfaction as their bases show that there is a direct and negative relationship between life satisfaction and depression and anxiety.

According to this, both anxiety and depression affect life satisfaction together. That anxiety and depression are high shows low life satisfaction and that they are low shows high life satisfaction.

As the students' level of depression increases, so does their level of anxiety. Furthermore, this also indicates that anxiety and depression are closely related (Smith & et al. 2003; Vandervoot & Skorikov, 2002). In the studies they conducted, Gilman & Huebner (2005) stated that teenagers with high life satisfaction have more positive relationships with others, have a lower level of stress and compared to teenagers with low life satisfaction, they have a higher level of personal control feeling. In the studies they conducted, Charlton & et al. (2006) found that students who were happy in school and who were interested in the subjects they studied had a lower percentage of quitting school.

In general, in our country and in other countries being a university student and life in the university are sources of stress (Çuhadaroğlu, 1993; Özbay, 1991). It is necessary to take measures to improve the negative personal, familial, socio-cultural and economic factors that affect students' sense of identity negatively. Thus, the rise in life satisfaction will lead to a low level of anxiety and depression. Psychological counseling and guidance departments of universities have a lot of responsibility in raising individuals who are experts in psychological help and who are sensitive to the problems of young people.

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