Subjective Happiness and Hope*

Felicidad y esperanza subjetiva

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to examine the relationships between subjective happiness and hope. The participants were 435 university students. In this study, the Integrative Hope Scale and the Subjective Happiness Scale were used. The relationships between were examined using correlation analysis and Structural Equation Model (SEM). In correlation analysis, trust and confidence, positive future orientation, and social relations and personal value sub factors of hope were found positively related to subjective happiness. On the other hand, lack of perspective sub factor of hope was found negatively correlated to subjective happiness. Structural Equation Model showed that subjective happiness was predicted positively by trust and confidence, positive future orientation, and social relations and personal value. However, subjective happiness was negatively explained by lack of perspective. According to standardized beta coefficients ($\beta = 0.34$), the most significant predictor of subjective happiness was trust and confidence. Results were discussed in the light of the related literature.

Keywords

happiness; hope; future; trust; confidence

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RESUMEN

El objetivo de esta investigación es examinar las relaciones entre la felicidad subjetiva y la esperanza. Los participantes fueron 435 estudiantes universitarios. En este estudio, se utilizaron la Escala de Esperanza Integrativa y la Escala de Felicidad Subjetiva. Las relaciones fueron examinadas usando análisis de correlación y modelo de ecuaciones estructurales (SEM). En el análisis de correlación, la verdad y la confianza, la orientación positiva al futuro, y las relaciones sociales y los subfactores de valores personales de esperanza presentaron una relación positiva con la felicidad subjetiva. Por otro lado, la falta del subfactor de perspectiva de esperanza se encontró una correlación negativa con la felicidad subjetiva. El Modelo de Ecuaciones Estructurales mostró que la felicidad subjetiva se predijo positivamente por la verdad y la confianza, orientación positiva al futuro, y las relaciones sociales y el valor personal. Sin embargo, la felicidad subjetiva se explicó negativamente por la falta de perspectiva. De acuerdo con los coeficientes beta estandarizados ($\beta = 0.34$), el predictor más importante de la felicidad subjetiva fue la verdad y la confianza. Los resultados se discuten a la luz de la literatura relacionada.

Palabras claves

Felicidad; esperanza; futuro; la confianza; confianza

Introduction

Traditionally in psychology, the focus has been on identifying and treating abnormal structures such as depression, anxiety, stress and etc. This is critically important for those facing mental problems however; it provides an incomplete picture of mental health (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Within the field of Positive Psychology, the early definitions made by Diener (2000), describe happiness as having positive affect and life satisfaction over experiencing less negative effect. In other words, positive psychology focuses on well-being, happiness, flow, personal strengths, wisdom, creativity, imagination and characteristics of positive experiences (Marujo & Neto, 2008; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005). What about positive experiences? Myers and Diener (1995) focused on happiness in order to explain positive experiences. Happiness identified as 'a state of well-being and contentment' or 'a pleasurable or satisfying experience'. Happiness is often used in place of subjective well-being term in the psychology (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004; Sagiv, Roccas, & Hazan, 2004). Put another way, happiness is an emotion combined with other positive emotions, resulting in subjective well-being. Diener (2000) identifies subjective well-being as being positive emotions of person are much more than negative emotions and life satisfaction.

Happiness has two affective constituents. One of them is called affective constituent refers to 'hedonic level' is 'the degree to which the various affects a person experience are pleasant', Second of them, cognitive constituent is called 'contentment' is "the degree to which an individual perceives his aspiration to be met" (Brülde, 2007; Chekola, 2007; Haybron, 2003; Kashdan, 2004; Sirgy *et al.*, 2006; Veenhoven, 2005). Due to these two dimensions of happiness, Haybron (2003) and Chekola (2007) defines happiness as having two parts: psychological happiness focusing on state of mind and prudential happiness focusing on well-being. Indeed, happiness depends on both cognitive and emotional components. In this respect, it could be argued that happiness presents the individual as a whole. Namely, subjective happiness is an essential factor for social happiness or life satisfaction.

Hope

Conventional psychologists have examined to hope level by means of hopelessness, because they have worked on problem-focused. In other words, hopelessness is central to the concept of recovery from mental disorders, both as a trigger of the recovery process and as a maintaining factor (Bonney & Stickley, 2008; Whitley & Drake, 2010). Hopelessness is a trigger factor for depression (Çetintürk, 2001; Wong & Lim, 2009), besides it is evaluated under the symptoms of depression (Farina, Hearth, & Popovich, 1995). However, in recent times, positive psychologist offer a number of reasons why hope is a relevant variable in mental health practice and research: In this view, subjective well-being is increasingly viewed as a primary outcome of therapeutic strategies, and hope is considered an important factor associated with well-being (Slade, 2009).

The process of thinking about one's goals, along with the motivation to move toward (agency- goal-directed energy) and the ways to achieve (pathways- planning to meet goals) those goals (Snyder, 1995). Positive thoughts and expectations for the future among people had a positive influence on their resilience. In this context, hope to be the best predictor for resilience was in line with the literature suggesting that hope encourages resilience (Benard, 1999; Brooks, 2006; Gizir, 2004; Masten, 2001; Ong, Edwards, & Bergeman, 2006; Synder *et al.,* 2000). Moreover, hope is a protective factor for human adaptation, and for psychotherapeutic change (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999; Hayes *et al.*, 2007), being consistently identified as a key factor in psychological counseling by client, family members and therapists in various settings (Schrank, Stanghellini, & Slade, 2008; Redlich, Hadas-Lidor, Weiss, & Amirav, 2010).

The present study

Hope and subjective happiness have been extensively studied in the last decades within the frame-

work of positive psychology which give emphasis on human growth and strengths as well as well-being. Happiness is associated with well-being (Ahuvia, 2002), life satisfaction (Linley, Nielsen, Gillett, & Biswas-Diener, 2010), flourishing (Diener, *et al.*, 2009) positively, unlike major/minor depression (McGreal & Joseph, 1993; Layous *et al.,* 2011), neuroticism (Joseph *et al.,* 2005). Although the relationships between subjective happiness and other concepts have been widely examined, much less research has focused on subjective happiness and its relationship with hope. Hope may be one of the most important structures to understand subjective happiness, because it has not only positive dimensions such as trust and confidence, lack of perspective, positive future orientation, and social relations and personal value but also negative dimensions like as lack of perspective. The another reason for relations of these concepts: Hope has also positive relations with psychological well-being (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999), life satisfaction (Wong & Lim, 2009), optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1993; Carver & Scheier, 2000b), internal locus of control (Gizir, 2004), resilience, self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992), while negative relationships with depression (Çetintürk, 2001), anxiety (Onwuegbuzie, 1998), external locus of control (Gizir, 2004), pessimism (Carver & Scheier, 2000b) like subjective happiness. The purpose of this study was to examine the dimensions of hope as related to subjective happiness. Hence, it was hypothesized in this study that as hope and its positive characteristics increase, subjective happiness may increase or vice versa. However, if lack of perspective increase, subjective happiness may decrease.

Method

Participants

The present research was carried out with a sample of 435 university students 218 of whom (50%) were females, 217 (50%) were male students from different grade levels enrolled in different departments of Education Faculty in Sakarya University and Dumlupinar University, Turkey. The departments of these students were early childhood education (n=111), psychological counseling and guidance (n=72), social sciences education (n=78), primary education (n=120), Turkish literature (n=30), and special education (n=24). Their ages ranged from 17 to 31 years and their mean age was 23.42 years. 91 students (21%) were freshmen, 85 (19.5%) were sophomores, 122 (28%) were juniors and 137 (31.5%) were seniors students.

Instruments

Subjective Happiness Scale: Happiness was measured by using Subjective Happiness Scale- (Lyubomirsky & Lepper 1999). Doğan and Totan (2013) had done Turkish adaptation of this scale. The scale consists of four items (e.g., I think I am a happy person), and each item was presented on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = very unhappy, 7 = very happy). The total scores ranged from 4 to 28, with a higher score indicating higher subjective happiness. The goodness of fit index values of the Turkish university students group model were (NFI= 0.92, CFI= 0.93, IFI= 0.93; GFI= 0.96, RMSEA= 0.019, RMR = 0.066). The internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach alpha) for the Turkish SHS was 0.65 for university students and 0.70 for community sample.

Integrative Hope Scale (Schrank, Woppmann, Sibitz, & Lauber, 2011). The Integrative Hope Scale contains 23 items on a 6-point scale (1 = I disagree, 6 = I agree). The scale has four sub-dimensions: Trust and confidence (TC, nine items, e.g., "I have deep inner strength"), lack of perspective (S-E, six items, e.g., "It is hard for me to keep up my interest in activities I used to enjoy."), positive future orientation (S-E, four items, e.g., "There are things I want to do in life."), and social relations and personal value (AL, four items, e.g., "I have someone who shares my concerns"). A Turkish adaptation study was carried out by Sarıçam and Akın (2013). As original form and that the four-dimensional model was well fit (x^2/df= 2.75, RMSEA=0.062, CFI=0.94, IFI=0.94, NFI=0.90, and SRMR=0.063). Factor loadings ranged from 0.25 to 0.67. Internal consistency coefficients were

found as 0.76 for overall scale and as 0.80, 0.71, 0.68, and 0.45, for four subscales, respectively. Corrected item-total correlations ranged from 0.24 to 0.57.

Procedure

Permission for participation of students was obtained from related department managers. Teachers voluntarily participated in research. Prior to administration of scales, all participants were informed about purposes of the study. Relationships between two variables (Subjective happiness and hope) and their sub-dimensions were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at .01 probability level. Moreover, data were analyzed by means of confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM) using the LISREL 9.1 program. SEM is a statistical methodology that takes a confirmatory approach to the analysis (Byrne 2006). In this approach a hypothesized model of relations between variables is tested statistically to determine the extent to which it is consistent with the data, which is referred to as the goodness of fit. If the goodness of fit is adequate it supports the plausibility of the relations among the variables. To assess model fit, we used well-established indices such as GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, RFI, IFI, SRMR and RMSEA as well as the chi-square test statistics. For the GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, RFI, and IFI indices, values greater than 0.90 are typically considered acceptable and values greater than 0.95 indicate good fit to the data (Byrne 2006; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

For well specified models, SRMR and RMSEA of .06 or less reflect a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). For the analysis of data SPSS 17 and LISREL 9.1 were utilized.

Results

Inter-correlations and Descriptive Data

Table 1 shows the inter-correlations of the variables, means, standard deviations, and internal consistency coefficients of the variables used.

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that there are significant correlations between hope, dimensions of hope and subjective happiness. Hope ($r=0.61$, $p<0.01$), trust and confidence ($r=0.46$, $p<0.01$), positive future orientation ($r=0.41$, $p<0.01$), social relations and personal value ($r=0.34$, $p<0.05$) related positively to happiness. In contrary, lack of perspective ($r=-0.33$, $p<0.01$), was found negatively associated with happiness. There were also significant correlations between dimensions of hope.

Structural Equation Modeling

Hypothesized model was examined via structural equation modeling (SEM). According to this model, subjective happiness is predicted by trust and confidence, lack of perspective, positive future orientation, and social relations-personal value. Figure 1 presents the results of SEM analysis, us-

TABLE 1. *Descriptive statistics, alphas, and inter correlations of the variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Trust and confidence	1					
2. Lack of perspective	-0.48**	1				
3. Positive future orientation	0.57**	-0.46**	1			
4. Social relations and personal value	0.39**	-40**	0.42**			
5. Hope	0.76**	-0.64**	0.69**	0.53**	1	
6. Happiness	0.46**	-0.33**	0.41**	34*	0.61**	1
Mean	43.76	-29.60	17.44	15.83	106.63	23.13
Standard deviation	7.81	8.36	7.12	14.95	13.69	9.48
Alpha	0.77	0.82	0.71	0.70	0.64	0.88

*p<0.05, **p<0.01
Source: own work

ing maximum likelihood estimations. The model demonstrated excellent fit (χ^2/df = 2.31, GFI = 0.90, AGFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.89, NFI = 0.90, RFI = 0.91, IFI = 0.90, SRMR=0.053 and RMSEA = 0.059) and also accounted for 34% of the subjective happiness variances.

Discussion and conclusion

According to the results of the study, there is a statistically significant relationship between hope and happiness. Besides, the hope plays a role as predictive factor of happiness on the Turkish university students. As we mentioned before, previous research findings emphasized that high scores of hope is not only positively related to psychological health (Allott, Loganathan, & Fulford, 2002), psychological strength (Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2006), psychological well-being and self compassion (Raque-Bogdan, 2010), self-esteem (Ciarrochi, Heaven, & Davies, 2007), life satisfaction and optimism (Bailey, Eng, Frisch, & Snyder, 2007),

but also negatively related to burnout (Pompili *et al.*, 2010), anxiety (Cunningham, Gunn, Alladin, & Cawthorpe, 2008), worry (Shinn *et al.,* 2009), depression (Arnau *et al.,* 2007), stress (Landis *et al.,* 2007), rumination (Michael & Snyder, 2005) and our study results are supported by all these findings. The current study conducted with the Turkish culture also supporting the previous studies. Studies have shown that subjective happiness is associated with self-perceptions of well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001), satisfaction with life (Diener, 2000; Suh *et al.*, 1998), life orientation (Doğan & Akinci Çötok, 2011), subjective vitality (Akın, 2012), satisfying relationships, positive emotions (Diener & Seligman, 2002), emotional intelligence (Extremera, Dura´n, & Rey, 2007), and self-enhancing bias (Lee & Im, 2007) positively. But it has negative correlations with Internet addiction (Akın, 2012), depression (Doğan & Akinci Çötok, 2011), low self-esteem (Diener, & Seligman, 2002; Ryan, & Deci, 2001) and stress (Argyle, Martin, & Lu, 1995). All findings
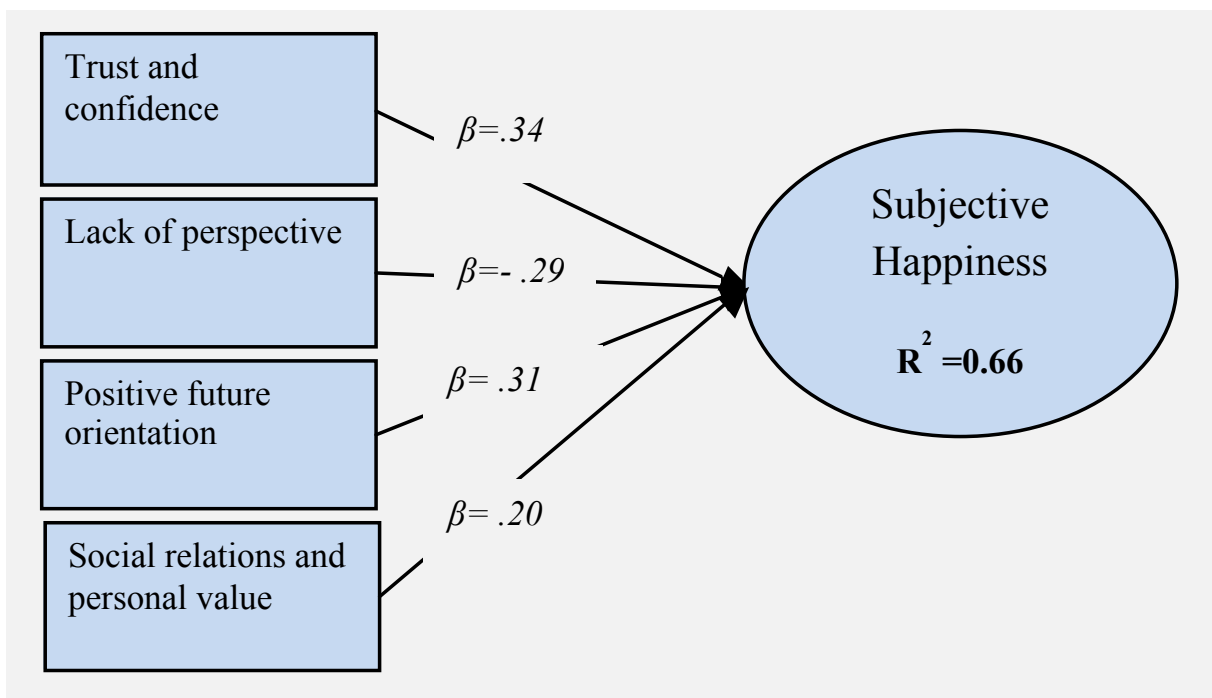

Figure 1: Path analysis between hope and subjective happiness

Source: own work

showed that subjective happiness and hope have positive or negative relationships between same concepts. Hence, there is a correlation between these two structures. Briefly, as expected, correlational results of the study showed that subjective happiness had a positive relationship with hope. The implication is that tendency to accept lack of perspective may indicate a risk for subjective happiness (Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2004).

Most people try hard to find happiness. However, it is seen that those who struggle cannot get it. Sometimes, happiness is something that comes naturally, something that comes from time to time, a kind of life satisfaction (Tiefenbach & Kohlbacher, 2013). Yet, it is necessary to think that everything goes well if you have a proper job, a good health and a good relationship in that life satisfaction (Csikszentmihalyi & Hunter, 2003). If any of them is lacking, the sadness is likely to occur (Griffin, 2007; Veenhoven & Hagerty, 2006). Sadness is one of the most important trigger of depression that source of hopeless. Therefore, if subjective happiness increases, hope levels can rise or vice versa. In other words, subjective happiness and hope are necessary for life satisfaction.

The purpose of this study was to examine the dimensions of hope as related to subjective happiness. This study demonstrates that the hope associated with subjective happiness. Also this investigation is the first to explore the relationships between hope and subjective happiness. Although many studies have suggested that subjective happiness can substantially influence hope (Lu & Hsu, 2013), no research has addressed the factors that might mediate these relationships. In other words, subjective happiness and literature is unclear about how subjective happiness increases hope or vice versa. This research suggests that the encouragement of could be subjective happiness highly beneficial for rising hope. Consequently, this research shows that subjective happiness has a direct impact on the hope. People high in trust and confidence, positive future orientation, and social relations-personal value are more likely to be happy than those high in lack of perspective.

This study has some limitations. First of all, the sample presented here is limited to education faculty university students. For that reason, it is questionable whether the findings can be generalized to different departments and age groups. Second as correlational statistics were utilized, no definitive statements can be made about causality. Finally, this research was limited by the use of self-report scales and did not use a qualitative measure of integrative hope and subjective happiness. Despite these limitations the finding that really stands out in this study is the importance of the subjective happiness in relation to hope.

In conclusion, this research reports that the hope related to subjective happiness significantly. Students high in hope are more likely to experience subjective happiness. For this reason, current study would further our understanding of the significant predictors of subjective happiness, without forgetting that more research is needed to examine the antecedents of the hope.

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