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Hope as a Mediator between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mental Well-Being in University Students

Özge Erduran Tekin¹

Abstract

There is a significant increase in adverse childhood experiences of university students, and there is a need to improve these experiences for mental well-being. Hope can contribute to both preventive and intervention guidance services. In this context, the mediating role of hope in the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and mental well-being was investigated. The study group consists of 440 students who continue to study in universities in Turkey in the 2024-2025 academic year. The Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale, the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale Short Form, and the Trait Hope Scale were used as data collection tools. Exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and internal consistency analysis were performed to examine the suitability of the scales for the study group. The relationships between the variables were examined by Pearson correlation analysis and regression analysis Process Macro (model 4). The mediation relationship was also evaluated with the Bootstrap technique. According to the results of the analyses, it was observed that there were significant negative relationships between adverse childhood experiences, mental well-being, and hope, and significant positive relationships between hope and mental well-being. In addition, adverse childhood experiences are a predictor of mental well-being, and hope has a partial mediating role in the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and mental well-being. The results may contribute to research on the use of hope-based practices to prevent the adverse childhood experiences of university students from affecting their mental well-being. In addition, hope can be considered as one of the resources that can be utilized to increase mental well-being.

Keywords: Adverse Childhood Experiences, Mental Well-Being, Hope, Positive Psychology, University Students

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2025, 14 (1), 52-70 | Araştırma Makalesi

Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Olumsuz Çocukluk Deneyimleri ile Mental İyi Oluş Arasında Bir Aracı Olarak Umut

Özge Erduran Tekin¹

Öz

Üniversite öğrencilerinin olumsuz çocukluk yaşantılarında önemli bir artış vardır ve mental iyi oluş için bu yaşantıların iyileştirilmesine ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Umudun hem önleyici hem de müdahale edici rehberlik hizmetlerine katkı sağlayabilir. Bu kapsamda çalışmada olumsuz çocukluk yaşantılarının mental iyi oluş ile ilişkisinde umudun aracı rolü araştırılmıştır. Çalışma grubu Türkiye'deki üniversitelerde 2024-2025 eğitim öğretim yılında öğrenim görmeye devam eden 440 öğrenciden oluşmaktadır. Veri toplama aracı olarak Olumsuz Çocukluk Yaşantıları Ölçeği, Warwick-Edinburgh Mental İyi Oluş Ölçeği Kısa Formu ve Sürekli Umudun Ölçeği'nden yararlanılmıştır. Ölçeklerin çalışma grubuna uygunluğunu incelemek amacıyla faktör analizi, doğrulayıcı faktör analizi ve iç tutarlılık analizi yapılmıştır. Değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiler Pearson korelasyon analiziyle ve regresyon analizi Process Macro (model 4) ile incelenmiştir. Aracılık ilişkisi de Bootstrap tekniği ile değerlendirilmiştir. Analiz sonuçlarına göre olumsuz çocukluk yaşantıları, mental iyi oluş ve umut arasında negatif yönlü, umut ve mental iyi oluş arasında ise pozitif yönlü anlamlı ilişkilerin olduğu görülmüştür. Ayrıca olumsuz çocukluk yaşantıları mental iyi oluşun bir yordayıcısı olup, umudun olumsuz çocukluk yaşantıları ile mental iyi oluş ilişkisinde kısmi aracılık rolü bulunmaktadır. Sonuçlar üniversite öğrencilerinin olumsuz çocukluk yaşantılarının mental iyi oluşlarını etkilemesini önlemek adına umut temelli uygulamalardan yararlanılmasını içeren araştırmalara katkı sunabilir. Ayrıca umut, mental iyi oluşu artırmada yararlanılabilecek kaynaklardan biri olarak değerlendirilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Olumsuz Çocukluk Yaşantıları, Mental İyi Oluş, Umudun, Üniversite Öğrencileri, Pozitif Psikoloji

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Introduction

Neglect, abuse and maltreatment behaviours that people are exposed to early in life are considered adverse childhood experiences (Felitti et al., 1998, p. 246; Petruccioli et al., 2019, p. 1-2). Since adverse childhood experiences coincide with a vulnerable period such as childhood and generally consist of experiences of neglect and abuse by the caregivers of the child, these experiences are considered types of traumas that are difficult to heal (Herman, 2007). Since the first years of life are important in the development of neuroplasticity, negative childhood experiences can affect not only the developmental period but also the whole life and cause many psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, physical health problems, and various addictions in adulthood (Hinojosa et al., 2019, p. 531-532; Messman-Moore & Bhuptani, 2017; Mosley-Johnson et al., 2019).

Damaging events such as adverse childhood experiences can cause significant and permanent problems in development through changes in the immune system (Guidi et al., 2021, p. 1-2). Studies specifically link having multiple adverse childhood experiences to higher risks of psychosis, suicidal ideation, and serious mental health problems (Barrera et al., 2019, p. 1-2; Ding et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2019). However, in order to prevent and reduce the long-term effects of adverse childhood experiences on the well-being of the individual, it would be beneficial to increase the number of studies on this subject (Elmore et al., 2020; Hinojosa et al., 2019, p. 531-532). From a developmental point of view, since neuroplasticity decreases significantly after young adulthood and three-quarters of many mental health disorders occur by the age of twenty-four, it is assumed that it is important to improve the negative childhood experiences of the young adult age group and to prevent the transmission of these experiences to the next generation (Kays et al., 2012; Kessler et al., 2005, p. 593-601).

Recent studies have shown that the rate of university students coming to university campuses exposed to childhood traumas has increased, and it is important to examine the effects of adverse childhood experiences on the mental health of university students (Erduran Tekin, 2024; Lee & Rawlings, 2023, p. 5-8; Zhang et al., 2020, p. 1-2). The well-being levels of university students in the transition phase decrease after starting school, and students become more vulnerable to depression (Ibrahim et al., 2013, p. 391-392; Ratanasiripong et al., 2018). Since having an additional negative childhood trauma in this transition process will negatively affect the well-being and adaptation processes of university students, it is important to explain how university students' negative childhood experiences affect their well-being with current studies (Lee & Rawlings, 2023, p. 5-8).

1. Conceptual Framework

In this section, the relationships between the variables that constitute the purpose and sub-objectives of the research are discussed within the scope of the relevant literature.

1. 1. Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mental Well-Being

Exposure to negative childhood experiences reduces well-being and life satisfaction, but increased life satisfaction is a protective factor for mental health (Logan-Greene et al., 2014; Üstüner Top & Çam, 2021, p. 544, 550-551). Improving quality of life contributes significantly to coping with the effects of adverse childhood experiences (Davies et al., 2022, p. 219-221; Dhungana et al., 2022). Studies on well-being and life satisfaction deal

with the emotional and cognitive dimensions of individuals feeling less negative emotions and having more positive feelings towards life and satisfaction (Diener, 2000, p. 34-40; Seligman, 2002).

In the literature, the concept of well-being is analyzed separately as subjective well-being and psychological well-being. While subjective well-being expresses that a person experiences positive emotions in life and feels much more satisfaction with their life, psychological well-being emphasizes that it is important for a person to lead a much more functional life in addition to the positive emotions they experience (Diener, 2000, p. 34-40). However, assuming that these two concepts do not fully explain well-being, the concept of mental well-being was expressed. Mental well-being combines the concepts of subjective and psychological well-being and is explained as having functional experiences in which people can experience more life events that make them feel good (Kayaş & Satıcı, 2019, p. 1497; Keyes, 2002, p. 207-211).

Mental well-being helps individuals to adapt to the environment, to notice and develop their positive aspects, and to cope more easily with the challenging life events they face. Mental well-being contributes significantly to both feeling better and being more productive in life (Trenoweth, 2017, p. 164-183). At this point, it is seen that mental well-being is important in terms of mental health, and it is thought that examining the variables to prevent the negative childhood experiences of university students from affecting their mental well-being is important in terms of both preventive and intervention guidance activities.

Because developing positive mental health resources for individuals helps them to cope with the difficulties they face in life (Luthar et al., 2014, p. 858-877), according to the studies, individuals supported by preventive and interventionist methods have become easier to cope with the effects of adverse childhood experiences, their well-being has increased, and their ability to find meaning has improved. At this point, it is known that hope is an important resource in coping with the effects of negative childhood experiences (Munoz et al., 2020).

1.2. The Mediating Role of Hope

Hope theorist Snyder (2000) explains the concept of hope as a cognitive-based motivational theory consisting of two components. These components are pathways, which are mental processes that enable individuals to achieve their goals, and actions, which are mental forces that push individuals to achieve these goals. Hope is defined as a positive desire to achieve a goal. Hope increases positive thoughts in the person, makes them optimistic about the future, and increases psychological well-being (Snyder et al., 2002, p. 3-9).

According to the resilience theory, individuals can cope with the difficulties they face in life more easily through positive psychological resources such as hope and can develop themselves positively (Masten, 2001, p. 227-235). Again, from the perspective of resilience theory, hope, which is a protective resource, helps to reduce the negative impact of stressful life events on life satisfaction and is an important predictor of subjective well-being (Bonanno, 2004, p. 20-26). Studies show that hope improves the person both mentally and physically, facilitates setting constructive goals for the future, and reduces depression (Hellman et al., 2017, p. 270-271). In addition, studies have found that hope, a factor that supports resilience, can be a mediator between adaptive variables such as life

satisfaction and maladaptive variables such as psychological distress (Duggal et al., 2016; Rustøen et al., 2010).

Recent studies show that hope is a feature that can be increased and developed and that increasing hope level increases the subjective well-being of the person and facilitates the use of effective coping strategies (Lin et al., 2024, p. 3). Based on all these, it is thought that the fact that hope acts as a protective function against psychological distress and facilitates the ability to plan more positive goals for the future by reducing negative self-evaluations may be a protective variable in preventing the negative childhood experiences of university students from reducing their mental well-being.

1.3. The Present Study

Studies are showing that early traumas that constitute adverse childhood experiences continue to affect the later periods of the individual's life negatively, but if the balance of risk and protective factors is provided appropriately, adverse childhood experiences do not completely determine the fate of the present and future life of individuals (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000, p. 859-866). These traumas affect the physiological and psychological well-being of the person and continue to be transmitted through generations when not healed, and the university age is a developmentally critical period for this transmission (Haynes et al., 2020; Lee & Rawlings, 2023, p. 5-8). However, a study examining the mediating role of hope in the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and the mental well-being of university students was not found in the domestic literature.

Hope is defined as a cognitive structure that expresses the perceived capacity of the person to make purposeful decisions, to plan ways to serve this purpose, and to use the planned ways by motivating oneself (Snyder, 2002, p. 3-9). At this point, considering the effect of hope on mental well-being, it is thought that it may be a protective variable in reducing the effect of adverse childhood experiences. Examining the role of hope as one of the factors that support adaptive and purposeful activities can contribute to both preventive and intervention guidance services.

According to recent studies, there is a significant increase in adverse childhood experiences of university students. In this context, it is thought that this study will make an important contribution to the mental health services provided to Turkish university students and may increase hope-oriented practices. In this context, the study aims to examine whether hope has a mediating role in the relationship between negative childhood experiences and the mental well-being of university students. The sub-objectives of the study created within the scope of this purpose are as follows:

- Is there a statistically significant relationship between adverse childhood experiences and the mental well-being of university students?
- Is there a statistically significant relationship between adverse childhood experiences and hope levels of university students?
- Is there a statistically significant relationship between hope levels and the mental well-being of university students?
- Is the mediating role of hope statistically significant in the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and the mental well-being of university students?

2. Method

2.1. Procedure

In this study, the relational survey model was used to examine the mediating role of hope in the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and mental well-being. The relational survey model aims to explain the relationships between the variables examined within the scope of the research and to make predictions about the results.

2.2. Participants

While determining the size of the study group, the number of people in the study group was determined by meeting the requirement that each indicator variable to be measured should be at least 15 units and the size of the group should be at least five times the number of variables (Büyüköztürk, 2002, p. 480; Stevens, 2009). In this context, the study group of the research consists of 440 university students aged between 19 and 28 ($\bar{x}=21.46$) from state universities in Turkey who continue to study in the 2024-2025 academic year.

In this study, the convenience sampling method was used to facilitate access to university students in different cities. In the study, the data were collected from students studying at universities in 22 different provinces of Turkey in order to represent the university students in Turkey. In this context, the research data were collected online via Google Forms with the help of academicians in other cities. In the online form prepared, information was given about how to ensure confidentiality in the research, how the collected data would be destroyed afterward, and the consent form signed by the researcher that the process would be carried out by paying attention to data confidentiality and ethical principles was also shared.

Within the scope of this study, participants were asked whether they were currently receiving psychological support and whether they had a psychiatric diagnosis, and those who had a diagnosis and were in the process of receiving psychological support were excluded from the study. Therefore, this study was conducted in a non-clinical sample. Of the 440 university students constituting the study group, 245 (55.7%) were female and 195 (44.3%) were male. Of the students, 31 (7%) were in the preparatory class, 123 (28%) in the first year, 150 (34.1%) in the second year, 59 (13.4%) in the third year, 44 (10%) in the fourth year, 33 (7.5%) in the fifth year and above. The students in the study group continue to study at the faculties of medicine, law, science and literature, education and health sciences.

2.3. Measures

Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale: This scale was created as a result of a long-term epidemiological study conducted by the Kaiser Permanente Health group in California to examine the long-term physical and psychological consequences of adverse experiences in childhood (Dube et al., 2003, p. 564-566). The reliability and validity study was conducted by Gündüz et al. (2018, p. 68-73) to examine the suitability of the scale for use in Turkish culture. The scores obtained from the scale vary between 0 and 10, and the questions in the scale contain only 'yes' options. Otherwise, they are left blank. During the scale adaptation study, Cronbach's alpha value calculated to determine internal consistency was found to be .74. Due to the scoring form of the scale, its suitability for use in this study was examined through exploratory factor analysis instead of confirmatory

factor analysis. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, the KMO value was calculated as .84, and the Barlett Sphericity test value was calculated as $p < .000$. The unidimensional structure of the scale (51% of the total variance was explained) was also confirmed in this data set. In addition, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .84 in this study. It is considered statistically appropriate to use the scale in this study.

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale: The scale, whose short form was adapted into Turkish by Demirtaş and Baydemir (2019, p. 654-662), was developed by Tennant et al. (2007, p. 1-13). In order to determine the internal consistency in the adaptation study of the scale into Turkish, Cronbach's alpha value was analyzed in two different study groups, and values such as .84 and .86 were found to be highly reliable. The goodness of fit values obtained as a result of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis conducted to determine whether the scale is suitable for use in this study is within the acceptable range, and the unidimensional structure of the scale is confirmed. [$\chi^2 (14) = 55.502, p < 0.01, \chi^2 / df = 3.96, RMSEA = .08, IFI = .95, CFI = .95, GFI = .96, AGFI = .93, SRMR = .04$]. In addition, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .82 in this study. It is thought that the use of the scale in this study is statistically appropriate.

Dispositional Hope Scale: The scale was developed by Snyder et al. (1991, p. 820-826) and adapted into Turkish by Tarhan and Bacanlı (2015, p. 2010-2024). The scale, which aims to measure the level of continuous hope, consists of two sub-dimensions, namely Actuating Thought and Alternative Ways of Thinking, and a total of twelve items. Total scores obtained from the scale can vary between 8 and 64. As a result of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis conducted to determine whether the scale is suitable for use in this study, it is seen that the goodness of fit values obtained are within the acceptable range and the two-dimensional structure of the scale is confirmed [$\chi^2 (12) = 31.270, p < 0.01, \chi^2 / df = 2.61, RMSEA = .06, IFI = .98, CFI = .98, GFI = .98, AGFI = .94, SRMR = .03$]. Additionally, in this study, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as .91. The use of the scale in this study is considered to be statistically appropriate.

Ethics Committee

The approval of the ethics committee, dated 02.10.2024 and numbered E-35592990-050.04-4025992, was received from the Research and Publication Ethics Committee of the National Defense University. All procedures performed in these studies were by the APA ethical guidelines, the ethical standards of the institutional research committee, and the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its later amendments.

2.4. Analysis

Prior to the analyses, skewness, kurtosis, and Mahalanobis outlier analyses were performed, and 22 data that were found to be unsuitable for the analyses were excluded. It was determined that the standardized values of the remaining 440 data were in the range of +3 and -3, and there were no one-way outliers in the data set (Schumacker & Tomak, 2013, p. 114). It was observed that the VIF values of the variables in the model were 1.21, TV values were .83, and there was no multicollinearity problem. The mediating role of hope in the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and mental well-being was examined with the Regression of the Bootstrapping Technique. The significance of the mediation effect was analyzed by increasing the number of samples to

determine the significance of direct and indirect effects, and the lower and upper confidence intervals and Bootstrap coefficient were determined by Bootstrapping 5000 (Hayes, 2017, p. 77). The analyses were conducted using SPSS 26 PROCESS software.

3. Results

3.1. Pearson Analysis

As the skewness and kurtosis values vary between +2 and -2, it is assumed that the data have a normal distribution (George & Mallery, 2016, p.114). Within the scope of the sub-objectives of this study, the results of the correlation analysis examining the relationships between the variables are presented in Table 1. When the relationships between the research variables are examined, there was a significant negative relationship between adverse childhood experiences and mental well-being ($r = -.51, p < .01$) and hope ($r = -.41, p < .01$). When the relationship between mental well-being and hope is analyzed, there was a significant positive relationship ($r = .58, p < .01$). Accordingly, as adverse childhood experiences increase, mental well-being decreases and as hope increases, mental well-being increases.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables and Relationships between Variables

	<i>n</i>	Min.	Max.	\bar{x}	<i>Ss</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Adverse childhood experiences	440	4	6	5.19	4.94	-.36	-1.31	1	-.51**	-.41**
(2) Mental well-being	440	11	39	23.45	5.56	.48	-.53	-.51**	1	.58**
(3) Hope	440	15	64	35.34	5.24	-.04	-.75	-.41**	.58**	1

** $p < .01$

3.2. Mediation Analysis Results

Within the scope of the aim of the research, the mediating role of hope in the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and mental well-being was analyzed by Regression Based Bootstrapping Technique. The model for mediation is designed according to Model 4, proposed by Hayes (2017, p. 77), in the presence of one independent, one dependent, and one mediator variable. In this context, the shape of the model is shown in Figure 1, and the results of the Bootstrapping Technique analysis of mediation are presented in Table 2:

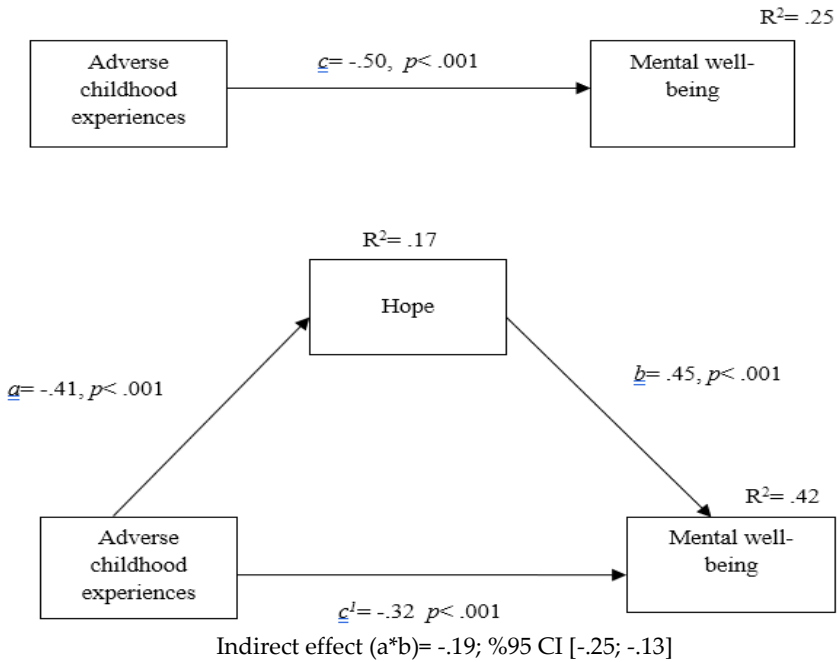


Figure 1. The Mediating Role of Hope [R² = .42; F (2,437) = 159.879; p < .001]

When Figure 1 is analyzed, adverse childhood experiences directly predict hope negatively ($B = -.41; p < .001; \%95\text{ CI} [-.49; -.33]$). Similarly, hope directly predicts mental well-being positively ($B = .45; p < .001; \%95\text{ CI} [.35; .55]$). In addition, adverse childhood experiences negatively predicted mental well-being, and the total effect was significant ($B = -.50; p < .001; \%95\text{ CI} [-.57; -.43]$). When the mediating variable hope is included in the model, this effect is $-.32 (p < .001; \%95\text{ CI} [-.41; -.23])$, and the coefficient resulting from the inclusion of the mediating variable in the model is still significant, so there is a partial mediation effect. The bootstrapping coefficient and 95% confidence intervals (CI) for the significance of the indirect effects of partial mediation determined in the model are given in Table 2:

Table 2. Bootstrapping Results Regarding the Mediation of Hope in the Relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Mental Well-Being

Indirect effects	Coefficient	S.e.	%95 CI		R²	F(2,437)
			LLCI	ULCI		
ACE → H → MWB	-.19	.09	-.25	-.13	.42	159.879
Direct effects	Coefficient	S.e.			t value	
ACE → H	-.41	.21	-.49	-.33	-9.51**	
H → MWB	.45	.02	.35	.55	11.29**	
Total effect	Coefficient					
ACE → MWB	-.50		-.57	-.43	.25	

Note: ** $p < .001$; ACE; Adverse childhood experiences; H; Hope; MWB: Mental Well-Being; Se: Standard error; CI: Confidence Interval

When Table 2 is analyzed, it is understood that the partial mediation model is significant [$F_{(2, 437)} = 159.879, p < .001$]. Negative childhood experiences and hope explained 42% of the variance in mental well-being. In the mediation analysis conducted using the Bootstrapping technique, it was determined that the 95% confidence interval (CI) values obtained as a result of the analysis did not contain zero (0) to support the research hypothesis (Preacher ve Hayes, 2008, p. 884), and the mediating role of hope in the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and mental well-being was found to be significant (Bootstrap Coefficient = $-.19$; %95 CI [$-.25; -.13$]).

4. Discussion

In this study, it was aimed to examine the mediating role of hope in the relationship between negative childhood experiences and the mental well-being of university students. According to the literature, adults with negative childhood experiences have lower subjective well-being than those without (Bellis et al., 2013, p. 1-8). Studies show that negative childhood experiences cause many negative conditions, such as poor health outcomes and depression (Ródenas-Perea et al., 2023, p. 142-143; Szabo et al., 2020, p. 29-34), and reduce mental well-being (Downey & Crummy, 2022, p. 2). The results of the analyses obtained from the study are consistent with the literature, and negative childhood experiences of university students negatively predict their mental well-being.

According to the results of the analyses, while there is a significant negative relationship between negative childhood experiences and hope levels of university students, there is a significant positive relationship between hope levels and mental well-being. Similarly, in the study conducted by Savi Çakar et al. (2018, p. 85), it was observed that childhood negative experiences predicted the level of hopelessness. Negative experiences in childhood damage the individual's concept of hope and negatively affect well-being by causing the individual to show depressive symptoms (Helvacı Çelik & Hocaoğlu, 2018, p. 706-708). The increase in hope levels of university students is associated with an increase in their mental well-being. This situation shows that hope can contribute as an important coping source in increasing the mental well-being of university students.

Since the cognitive and linguistic abilities of the young adult age group, including university students, are less developed than adults, they need more help in coping with the experiences that stressful situations may create (Meyerson et al., 2011, p. 950-962). Therefore, it is important to examine what coping resources university students need to increase their mental well-being. According to the analyses conducted within the scope of the research, it was seen that hope has a mediating role in the relationship between negative childhood experiences of university students and mental well-being. According to the studies, university students in Turkey are in the risk group in terms of hopelessness, and many young people experience intense hopelessness and pessimism as a result of the negative experiences they encounter in the course of life (Erkan et al., 2012, p. 176; Korucuk, 2023, p. 1262-1263).

When the literature was analyzed, Durğun and Taylan (2023, p. 24) examined the relationship between healthy family structure, perceived stress, and hope in Turkish university students and found a positive correlation between having a healthy family and the hope levels of university students. In a study conducted by Karıcı and Topkaya (2023, p. 99) with Turkish adolescents, individuals with high levels of parental acceptance and interest had high levels of hope and well-being. In the study conducted by Savi Çakar et

al. (2018, p. 85), having childhood traumas and hopelessness levels explained the psychological symptoms experienced. Kardaş and Tanhan (2018, p. 1) concluded that hopelessness affects posttraumatic growth. All these show that having negative childhood experiences negatively affects well-being in many aspects and that hope is an important coping resource that can increase well-being. However, there is no study directly examining the mediating role of hope in the relationship between negative childhood experiences and the mental well-being of university students in Turkey, and it is assumed that this study will contribute to the field.

Examining how adverse childhood experiences affect the mental well-being of university students in Turkey may contribute to reducing the effects of adverse childhood experiences and increasing well-being. Considering that adverse childhood experiences are an important factor affecting the well-being of university students, it is important to examine the resilience resources that enable them to cope with these experiences, taking into account individual and cultural factors (Pasha-Zaidi et al., 2020, p. 1-12). Because in order to make effective healing interventions in trauma studies, the intervention content should be appropriate to the cultural values and needs of the group (Whitworth, 2016, p. 445). Within the scope of the study, hope was evaluated as one of the sources of coping with negative childhood experiences of Turkish university students. Hope was found to be an important variable related to the mental well-being of Turkish university students with adverse childhood experiences. However, this evaluation was made with quantitative research methods. The relationship between adverse childhood experiences and Turkish university students' mental well-being and the mediating role of hope in this relationship can be examined by using Online Photovoice (OPV) and Online Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (OIPA), which are innovative qualitative research methods, taking into account cultural values (Doyumğaç et al., 2021, p. 166-185; Tanhan & Strack, 2020, p. 2010-2025; Waalkes et al., 2024). The use of these approaches in future studies to capture the unique experiences, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of university students will also make important contributions to the field.

4. 1. Recommendations

In the study, the mediating role of hope in the relationship between negative childhood experiences and the mental well-being of university students was examined. In line with the results obtained, suggestions for researchers and practitioners are as follows:

- Reducing adverse childhood experiences contributes to increasing mental well-being. For this reason, it is recommended that individual and group intervention practices should be planned by mental health specialists working in universities to reduce the negative childhood experiences of university students.
- Hope contributes to increased mental well-being. Considering the developmental transition process of university students, it is recommended to plan activities to increase their hope levels.
- Psychoeducation programs can be designed and implemented by mental health specialists working in universities to increase students' hope levels.
- Hope has a mediating role in the relationship between negative childhood experiences and the mental well-being of university students. For this reason, it is recommended that university students with negative childhood experiences be identified, and hope-based psychological counseling practices should be

carried out within the scope of both preventive and intervention guidance services.

- Considering the importance of considering cultural bases and the needs of the group in studies on traumatic issues such as adverse childhood experiences, it is recommended to conduct qualitative studies on this subject.
- It is recommended to conduct long-term longitudinal studies examining the mediating role of hope in its relationship with the mental well-being of university students with adverse childhood experiences.

4. 2. Limitations

This study examined the mediating role of hope in the relationship between university students' adverse childhood experiences and their mental well-being. The relationship between adverse childhood experiences and mental well-being levels and the mediating role of hope in this relationship was examined using quantitative research methods. It is recommended that researchers use qualitative methods to determine how negative childhood experiences affect the mental well-being of university students, how the mediating role of hope occurs, and what students need to increase their hopes are examined using qualitative methods. The research is limited to the responses given by the students who constitute the study group to the scale questions. This study examined adverse childhood experiences independent of family and health-related issues. This can be considered as a limitation of the study. In addition, the fact that negative childhood experiences, mental well-being, and hope levels were not addressed separately according to the student's class, department, and socioeconomic levels and that this study was a cross-sectional study can be considered as a limitation.

Peer-Review	Double anonymized - Two External
Ethical Statement	<i>It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.</i> National Defense University Rectorate, Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee Decision was taken with the decision dated 02.10.2024, numbered 35592990-050.04-4025992 of the Presidency of the Publication Ethics Committee.
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Complaints	itobiad@itobiad.com
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Değerlendirme	İki Dış Hakem / Çift Taraflı Körleme
Etik Beyan	<i>Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.</i> Milli Savunma Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü, Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kurulu Başkanlığının 02.1.2024 Tarih, 35592990-050.04-4025992 Nolu kararı ile Etik Kurul Kararı alınmıştır.
Benzerlik Taraması	Yapıldı – Ithenticate
Etik Bildirim	itobiad@itobiad.com
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