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*Research Article*

## An Analysis of the Relationship between Values and Optimism among Adolescents

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the relationship between values and optimism among adolescents. The research was carried out by using relational scanning model which is a sub-genre of general scanning model. The study group of the research was selected by random sampling method in four different high schools, in Konya during 2012-2013 academic year. A total of 439 students, 247 female and 192 male, participated in the study. Humanitarian Values Scale (HVS) and Optimism Scale were used in the research. The results were analyzed by using the SPSS 16.00 program. In the statistical analysis of the study, Pearson moments product correlation and multiple linear regression analysis techniques were used. It was found that values had positive relationship with optimism. The results showed that values predicted optimism among adolescents.

### Key Words

Values • Optimism • Adolescents

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The word value, derived from the root of "to touch" refers to "in response to something" in Turkish (TLA, 1988). According to Şişman (2002) values is a measure to determine what is right or wrong, what is good or bad. According to Rokeach (1973), value is a system of beliefs which exhibits continuity related to a particular behaviour, either individually or socially. Values are the factors which determine individual's behaviours, beliefs, attitudes and principles (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1994). Hence, it has an important place in the formation of personality. Values attract notice as they are considered in both person's own development and the evaluation of others. It is also one of the measures that someone considers when evaluates other people in terms of their characteristics, desires, intentions and behaviours (Dilmaç, 1999). As a result, values determine the behaviours of the individual while also defining the norms of the society (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1972) in which the individual lives; thus, it is possible to mention individual and social values harmonization. Values that have an important place in the formation of personality can also be an instrument for evaluating oneself and others. It is expected that values, an element that determines attitudes, beliefs and principles about behavior (Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1994), may be related to optimism in individuals. The optimistic situation, which is the tendency of the individual to perceive very positive events from negative events (Türküm, 1999), can be related to the sense of value. Optimism is, in the broadest sense, the tendency to hope for the best that can be (Scheier & Carver, 1987) and the ability to adapt to life (Daco, 1989). That is, at the same time, a tendency to perceive very positive events from adverse events while adapting to life (Türküm, 1999). Csikszentmihalyi considers happiness within the framework of Flow Theory. This also indicates that happiness is not something that is a luck or a coincidence, it depends on how they are interpreted, not on external events (Csikszentmihalyi, 2005). Individual's hope for the life, taking responsibility can also be seen as a way of developing self control (Hoy, Hoy & Kurz, 2008). According to Seligman (1998), optimism is a style of explanation that covers how events that occur within the development process are interpreted. Optimism, like hope, can be explained as an expectation that in spite of difficulties and obstacles in general, everything will go well in life.

When characteristics of optimistic people are observed, optimists hope for positive results when they get into a situation (Kurz, 2006). Furthermore, they can easily resist any kind of difficulty and do not mind difficulties so much, they have self confidence and can easily adopt a happy attitude towards life. They do not expect too much from life since they evaluate themselves in a good way and do not consider themselves as someone who is unimportant or neglected. It is quite possible to recognize optimists from their attitudes and actions. They are not tremble; they speak openly and freely; neither are they modest, nor are they hindered and timid. They do not have difficulty in making friends or establishing relations with others, because they are not unconfident (Kutlu, Balci & Yılmaz, 2004).

## Method

### Model of The Research

This research is a relational screening model which is a subtype of the general screening model. Relational search models are research models that aim to determine the presence of covariance change and / or extent between two or more variables (Karasar, 2008).

### **Working Group**

The study group of the study was selected by random cluster sampling method among the students studying at different high schools and classes in the different districts of the city of Konya in the academic year of 2012-2013. The study group, 192 of which were male and 247 were female, consisted of a total of 439 high school students whose ages range from 14 to 18 and whose average age was 15.85 (se: 1.04).

### **Measurement Tools**

**Human Values Scale.** In this research, "Human Values Scale (HVS)" developed by [Dilmaç \(2007\)](#) for the students at secondary school level (adolescents) was used to determine the human values of the students. In the scale, human values process is measured with 42 items in six dimensions which are a. Responsibility (7 items) b. Friendship / Fellowship (7 items) c. Being Peaceful (7 items) d. Respect (7 items) e. Tolerance (7 items) f. Honesty (7 items). The increase / decrease in the scores shows whether the individual has more of the human values or not.

Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) of HVS were calculated for the reliability study. The internal consistency coefficient of the "Responsibility" subscale, consists of 7 items, was calculated as alpha: ,73. The internal consistency coefficient of "Friendship / Fellowship" subscale, consists of 7 items, was calculated as alpha: ,69. The internal consistency coefficient of "Being Peaceful" subscale, consists of 7 items, was calculated as alpha: ,65. The internal consistency coefficient of "Respect" subscale, consists of 7 items, was calculated as alpha: ,67. The internal consistency coefficient of "Honesty" subscale, consists of 7 items, was calculated as alpha: ,69. The internal consistency coefficient of "Tolerance" subscale, consists of 7 items, was calculated as alpha: ,70 and the internal consistency coefficient for the whole 42-item scale is alpha. ,92 is determined. The stability coefficients in assessment instrument was determined as: for "Responsibility", 73; for "Friendship / Fellowship", 91; for being "Peaceful", 80; for "respect", 88; for "honesty", 75; for "tolerance", 79. It was found that the coefficient of determination for all of the scales was ,87 ([Dilmaç, 2007](#)).

**Optimism Scale.** Optimism Scale was developed by [Balci & Yılmaz \(2002\)](#). It is a scale that consists of 24 items, developed for measuring people's optimism levels. The validity of the scale was examined in relation to the "Life Orientation Test" ([Aydmn & Tezer, 1991](#)). The test retest reliability coefficient of the scale is .61. The optimism scale items are quadratic likert type measure of how individuals perceive themselves as optimistic. The high score on the scale indicates that the level of optimism is high. As a result of the factor analysis done, it turns out that the scale is one-dimensional. The consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.79 for this study group ([Balci & Yılmaz, 2012](#)).

### **Analysis of Data**

The Pearson Moments Correlation Technique was applied to determine whether there is a relationship between the levels of optimism of the adolescents and the values they possess. The Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Technique was used to reveal the power of explaining the optimism levels of the values that the adolescents have. The data obtained from the data collection tools in the study were analyzed in the SPSS 16.00 program.

### Findings

Results related to sub-problems are included in this section. The relation between the optimism of the adolescents and the values they possess and the power of explaining the optimism of the values that the adolescents possess are examined.

Table 1

#### *The Relationship between Values and Optimism*

	Responsibility	Friendship	Being Peaceful	Respect	Honesty	Tolerance
Optimism	.40**	.22**	.32**	.43**	.34**	.23**

\*\*  $p < .01$

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that there is a positive significant relationship between optimism scale scores and responsibility subscale ( $r=.40$ ,  $p<.01$ ), one of the subscales of the value scale, and again there is a significant positive correlation among friendship ( $r=.22$ ,  $p<.01$ ), being peaceful ( $r=.32$ ,  $p<.01$ ), respect ( $r=.43$ ,  $p<.01$ ), honesty ( $r=.34$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and tolerance ( $r=.23$ ,  $p<.01$ ).

Table 2

#### *Multiple Linear Regression Analysis on Optimism*

Optimism	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> <sub>ch</sub>	<i>F</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
(Constant)	.50 <sup>a</sup>	.25	.23	15.37	6/439	33.76		6.21	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Responsibility						.45	.19	3.05	.002
Friendship/Fellowship						-.05	-.02	-.41	.679
Being Peaceful						.02	.01	.15	.880
Respect						.55	.25	3.25	.001
Honesty						.32	.10	1.77	.009
Tolerance						.27	.18	1.70	.078

a. Predictors: (Constant), Responsibility, Friendship/Fellowship, Being Peaceful, Respect, Honesty, Tolerance

b. Dependent Variable: optimism

\*\*  $p < .01$

As can be seen in Table 3, according to regression analysis results, the values scale sub-dimensions explain the optimism at 25% level. In other words, subscales of the values scale's explaining power of optimism is %25. Although this value is not considered to be high, it is meaningful at the level of 0.01 ( $F = 15,37$ ). This situation can be interpreted as while %25 variability about optimism results from the sub-scales of values scale, the rest results from variables not included in the survey. In addition, when the subdimensions of the values scale are examined, subscales like responsibility, respect and honesty significantly explain optimism ( $t = 3,05$ ;  $t = 3,25$ ;  $t = 1,77$ ) and other subdimensions such as friendship/fellowship, peace, tolerance do not explain optimism ( $t = -415$ ,  $t = 15$ ,  $t = 1.70$ ).

## Discussion

In this study, the relation between the values that adolescents have and the levels of optimism and whether the values possessed by the adolescents explains the optimism were studied. According to the results obtained in the research; it has been found that there is a significant relationship between the values possessed by the adolescents and the levels of optimism. While human values of adolescents such as responsibility, honesty and respect explain optimism, it is seen that others like friendship / fellowship, being peaceful, and tolerance cannot explain optimism. Relations of the sub-dimensions of human values, namely responsibility, honesty, respect, friendship, peacefulness and tolerance with optimism are separately discussed and interpreted below.

Aral (2008)'s study of the values in the 6th grade Turkish textbook prepared by Ministry of National Education can support the present research results. In this study, values like justice, giving importance to family unity, independence, peace, scientificness, hard work, solidarity, honesty, religious values, sensitivity, hospitality, aesthetics, freedom, love, respect, responsibility, benevolence and patriotism have been determined. Responsibility, respect and honesty values have been also determined in the results in this research. It can be said that the values in the textbooks are important for the students to acquire these values. On the other hand, in the research carried out by Kolaç (2010), the Turkish Education Programs prepared by the Ministry of National Education (1-5; 6-8) are evaluated in terms of how they include the concepts of "values" and "tolerance" and when they are examined in terms of "values and tolerance" concept, it is seen that these concepts are not included at the desired level and the necessary emphasis has not been put on these concepts, the emphasis is insufficient in giving tolerance, and the emphasis is not out of the general expressions.

In the study of Şen (2008), it is seen that the values are not included remonstrantly, they are not discussed in different titles and when emphasis on tolerance is examined, it is seen that the accents are very general and faded, and that tolerance is not emphasized as a value. Tural (1996) ascertains that wars, ideologies, rapid changes in science and technology especially since 20th century and their netagive effects decreased tolerance, so it brings dissociation with it. In the above research it is seen that the values of tolerance and peacefulness are not sufficiently processed in the books and that the value of tolerance is decreasing; therefore, it comes to mind that the values of tolerance and peacefulness may not be assimilated by the students. Thus, the values of tolerance and being peaceful, which have not been adequately assimilated, have been discussed as not explaining optimism.

Gençoğlu (2006) found that as students university students' optimism level students increases, their social relation level increases significantly as well. In a study by Ergün Başak (2012), it was determined that one of the factors that predicted optimism is social commitment. There are research results that suggest optimistic adolescents have more friends, are more likely to adapt to new school, and are happier (Brisette, Scheier, & Carver, 2002). In Güleri (1998)'s study, pessimism was found with 56% in 16-24 year old youth. There is no significant difference in optimism between girls and boys.

Eryılmaz (2012) reports that no significant difference was found when university students' optimistic scores are compared according to the age variable. It is determined 19-21, 22-24, above 24 age group students have similar optimistic levels and the age variable is not an important factor leading to differentiation in the optimistic levels of university students. On the other hand, there are studies that indicate increased optimism with age.

[Parmaksız \(2011\)](#) found a significant difference between the mean scores of the optimists according to the class variable of the teacher candidates. 4th graders' average optimism level was found to be significantly higher than those of second and third grade students. In terms of the class levels of the students, the first and third classes differ significantly in optimistic approaches in favor of third classes. [Binboğa \(2002\)](#), in his research with the students of the College of Health, found that those in the upper classes were more optimistic. [Aşan \(1996\)](#) found that subjective optimism and age were negatively related to each other in his study in which he evaluated future expectations and considerations of Turkish university students and adults. As people age, adults are found to be more optimistic than students, depending on many different factors related to them and the decrease of the differences in expectation about themselves and others.

In the results obtained, the concept of social loyalty and social support explain optimism; however, it is seen that between age and optimism there are different researches with different results. As a result of our work, the value of friendship (fellowship) is found not to explain the optimism. This situation has been discussed in the way that since the average of our sample group closer to the lower limit of the adolescents, friendship (fellowship) value has not explained optimism.

[Yiğittir & Öcal \(2010\)](#), in their study about value orientations of 6th grade primary school students, determined that the students prefer 97 different values in the interview form in order to determine the values they want to see in the people around them; however, they preferred more some of the values such as environmental cleanliness, respect, good word and behavior, honesty, diligence, environmental sensitivity, helpfulness, good man, tolerance, love of nature, cleanliness, love and reliability.

As a result of his study, [Yılmaz \(2006\)](#) found that primary school administrators participating in the study see those values in the top five individual values: "justice, honesty, human dignity, hard work and responsibility", primary school teachers' top five individual values rank is "justice, honesty, human dignity, equality and responsibility". [Yiğittir \(2010\)](#) in a study of his about the value preferences of the elementary school student parents found that they attach the most importance to family cohesion, hard work, respect for the flag and independence march, patriotism, responsibility, honesty, truthfulness, respect, benevolence and courage. Respect, honesty, hard work and charity were seen to be preferred by students as well. In a meeting attended by 21 counsellors in New Jersey, USA, 4 core values were defined for public schools. These include self-esteem, respect for others, responsibility for citizenship, and respect for the natural environment ([Kinnier, Kernes & Dautheribes, 2000](#)). Lickona has included the following values in his list of values he created in 1991: responsibility, respect, tolerance, forehandedness, self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation, courage, honesty, fairness and democracy. In [Doğan & Gülüşen \(2011\)](#) studies, the texts in Turkish textbooks (6-8) were examined in terms of values, it was determined that national values (30) and responsibility (24) are the most commonly used values in the total of 76 texts in 6th, 7th and 8th grade, while zoolatry (3) and hospitality (3) were used rarely. Similar results have been observed in studies conducted on the subject ([Ekici Çelikpazu & Aktaş, 2011](#); [Karagöz, 2009](#); [Parlakıyıldız, 2009](#); [Somuncu, 2008](#); [Şen, 2008](#)).

In the survey conducted on 200 state schools in America, 98% of the headmasters expressed responsibility, %37 of them expressed honesty and good citizenship are important values that should be included in the school curriculum ([Aydn, 2008](#)). [Beldağ \(2012\)](#) stated that in the qualitative results of the study, plenty of teachers and parents gave feedback that studentts / children gained such values in the Social Studies Curriculum: respect for

differences, patriotism, aesthetics, honesty, fairness and peace. Yiğittir and Öcal (2010) reached the conclusion that the value of honesty is the most preferred values by the students. It can be expressed that this result supports the research results.

According to Güngör (1998), values other than the values preferred by individuals in the first place are like a tool for the individual's psychological and social well-being. According to Güngör (1998), the value found in the first or highest rank of a person's value sequence can be considered his fundamental value. Theoretically, if all possible values are presented to a person and they are ordered, the value that he puts on top of it is actually the value which affects him the most. Other values are tools for the psychological and social well-being of the individual. According to the above research results, it is seen that the responsibility, honesty and respect values that explain optimism in our research are in the first place in the personal value orders; values like friendship (fellowship), being peaceful, tolerance which do not explain optimism are usually in the last lines of lists. Thus, it can be argued that the order of personal value preferences may be decisive in explaining optimism.

Moreover, there is a significant difference between the scores of male and female students regarding "having responsibility" in Akbaş (2004) 's evaluation of "The Affective Objectives of the Turkish National Education System in the Evaluation of the Second Degree of Realization in the Second Level" in terms of responsibility. Results have shown that the gender factor influences students' responsibility behaviors. Within the scope of Akbaş' research; female students are more aware of their responsibilities than male students. In our research responsibility explains optimism, which can be explain as the number of the female students in the sample is more.

The following suggestions can be made when the results and the related literature are considered: In most of the studies carried out on human values, the participants were primary school students and in most of the studies on optimism, university students were chosen as the participants. It is suggested that similar studies can be carried out on different age groups. In addition, it may be appropriate to carry out experimental studies by developing curriculum in order to increase optimism in the students. Meanwhile, it is suggested that while studying the relation between values and optimism variable, other variables such as family attitudes, personality characteristics, and educational attitudes that are not addressed in this study should also be considered.

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