

Received: October 16, 2018

Revision received: November 19, 2018

Accepted: November 22, 2017

OnlineFirst: December 13, 2018

e-ISSN: 2602-3733

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December 2018 ♦ 2(2) ♦ 166-175

Research Article

The Relationship between Adaptive-Maladaptive Perfectionism and Life Satisfaction among Secondary School Students*

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between adaptive-maladaptive perfectionism and life satisfaction among secondary school students. The participants of the study consists of 334 secondary school students (160 girls and 174 boys). A correlational research model was used in this study. In the study, some scales are used as data collection tools as follows: Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale developed by Kırdök (2002) and Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale developed by Huebner (1994) and adapted to Turkish by Çivitçi (2007). Data analysis were conducted with SPSS 23.0 statistical package program in .01 and .05 significance levels. All data were analyzed by correlation and regression. The findings of the study showed that adaptive perfectionism was positively associated with friend, school, living environment, family, self and total life satisfaction; maladaptive perfectionism was negatively associated with living environment and total life satisfaction. Also, there is no relationship between maladaptive perfectionism and friend, school, family, and self satisfactions. Implications of these findings are discussed and suggestions are presented within the context of literature.

Key Words

Adaptive-maladaptive perfectionism • Life satisfaction • Secondary school students

*This study was presented as oral presentation in the congress of "International Education and Social Science Congress" in Alanya during 28 April-1 May 2018.

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Citation: Karababa, A. (2018). The relationship between adaptive-maladaptive perfectionism and life satisfaction among secondary school students. *Research on Education and Psychology (REP)*, 2(2), 166-175.

Life satisfaction is an important indicator that shows the well-being levels of individuals. Life satisfaction involves the cognitive dimension of the psychological well-being. It includes the cognitive judgments and evaluations of the individual about his/her life (Diener, 1984). Life satisfaction results from the comparison between the individual's expectations and real situation. In a sense, it means how happy he/she is in his/her life that he/she has (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Life satisfaction level is important in terms of evaluation of subjective well-being especially in adolescence period. When the literature was investigated, it was seen that life satisfaction was negatively associated with negative psychological experiences such as anxiety (Seibel & Johnson, 2001), depression (Wang, Yuen, & Slaney, 2009), loneliness (Huo & Kong, 2014), stress (Coccia, Darling, Rehm, Cui, & Sathe, 2012), substance abuse (Zullig, Valois, Huebner, Oeltmann, & Drane, 2001); it was positively associated with positive psychological experiences such as general psychological health (Ümmet, 2017), hope (Santilli, Marcionetti, Rochat, Rossier, & Nota, 2017), happiness (Chui & Wong, 2016), meaning in life (Yıkılmaz & Demir-Güdül, 2015).

It was seen that many factors such as environmental features (Lyons, Huebner, & Hills, 2016), childhood experiences (Çeçen-Eroğul & Bilge-Türk, 2013), cognitive, emotional and social structures (Libran & Piera, 2008), sense of self (Hawi & Samaha, 2017), demographic features (Millward & Spinney, 2013) can play role in level of individuals' life satisfaction. Also, the studies have shown that personality structures have a predictor role in the life satisfaction level (Fowler, Davis, Both, & Best, 2018; Xu, Liu, Ding, Mou, Wang, & Liu, 2017). Accordingly, in the Turkish culture, one of the personality structures that is expected to play role in life satisfaction level is adaptive-maladaptive perfectionism among early adolescents. When the studies in the different cultures were examined, we see the effect of perfectionism on life satisfaction among early adolescents (Gilman & Ashby, 2003).

It was seen that perfectionism personality structure was initially conceptualized as negative and unidimensional (Burns, 1980; Hollender, 1965). Burns (1980) described perfectionists as individuals who force themselves to reach irrational goals that beyond accessibility, at the same time measure directly proportional their own values with totally productivity and success. In contrast to traditional pathological descriptions of perfectionism, it is interesting that more recent studies conceptualize it with both negative and positive dimensions (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Slaney, Rice, Mobley, Trippi, & Ashby, 2001). Slaney et al. (2001) claim that characteristics, such as setting high performance goals, order and discrepancy have an important place in the concept of perfectionism. According to Slaney et al. (2001) high performance standards and order are the positive aspects of perfectionism, while the negative aspects are the conflictions between personal standards and performance. Individuals with adaptive perfectionist personality features are defined as individuals who present functional behaviours, such as having high self-respect, setting realistic goals, being motivated with positive reinforcement, paying high effort but not changing the standards in case of failure. Individuals with maladaptive perfectionist personality features are defined as individuals who are motivated with the anxiety of making mistakes and avoid the sense of shame. As a result of failing attaining the unrealistic goals, individuals with negative perfectionist features may experience negative feelings, such as incompetency, anxiety, and depression (Enns, Cox, & Clara, 2002; Rice & Preusser, 2002). When the studies in the literature were examined, it was seen that while the adaptive perfectionism is positively associated with the positive variables such as hope, subjective well-being, optimism; maladaptive perfectionism is negatively associated with these variables (Arslan, Oral, & Karababa, 2018; Panic, Radockovic, & Pesic, 2015).

The current research was carried out among secondary school students. Secondary school education is generally a process that takes place during the early adolescence development period. In this period, individuals are faced with many physiological, cognitive, and socio-emotional (Santrock, 2012). Since it is the transition period from childhood to adulthood and it is evaluated as an important phase in the course of life. Life satisfaction is an important issue among adolescents in terms of feeling happy at school, having positive thoughts and feelings related to school activities and school life. The process of the secondary school can be evaluated as a risky period in terms of life satisfaction (Santrock, 2014). The effort to adapt these changes can also be considered as a challenge for individuals. In order to overcome these changes, the life satisfaction is an important power resource. However, low level life satisfaction is also a risk factor. In the adolescence period, low level of life satisfaction may lead to depression, substance abuse, low academic achievement (Huo & Kong, 2014; Zullig et al., 2001). Along with the transition to secondary school, students also face with many academic changes. Individuals set many goals for themselves academically (Santrock, 2012). In this respect, it is important to determine healthy and realistic goals. One of the factors that play a role in determining the goal is the personality structure. The current research is important because it contributes to reveals factors influencing life satisfaction among early adolescents and to determine how to support their life satisfaction levels. Therefore, it is important that the factors predicting the life satisfaction are examined among early adolescents. Also, there is no the study examining relationship between adaptive-maladaptive perfectionism and life satisfaction in the Turkish culture among early adolescents. It is expected that this study will fill the gap in the literature and will guide other researches. In light of this information, the aim of the study was to examine the relationship between adaptive-maladaptive perfectionism and life satisfaction among secondary school students. In accordance with this purpose, the answers to the following questions are sought:

1. Are there significant correlations between life satisfaction and adaptive-maladaptive perfectionism among secondary school students?
2. Do adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism predict life satisfaction among secondary school students significantly?

Method

Study Group

In line with purpose of the research, the study was conducted by relational screening model. The sample of the study consists of 334 the early adolescents (160 female-174 male) studying at the secondary school from the city of Denizli/Turkey, aged from 11 to 14 years old, who accepted to participate in the research voluntarily, during 2017-2018 education year.

Instruments

Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale. Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale developed by Kırdök (2004) was implemented in the study in order to collect data about student's perceptions of positive and negative perfectionism. Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale consists of 17 items. The negative perfectionism dimension of the scale was used in the current study. The negative perfectionism dimension consists of 7 items. Ratings are made on a four-point scale. For the negative perfectionism dimension, the range of possible score varies from a minimum score of 7 to a maximum score of 28. The higher scores show higher

perfectionism level. Exploratory factor analysis was applied for factor analysis of the scale. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis, a structure of two sub-dimensions was found out. It was seen that two dimensions of the scale explain 37% of the total variance. Positive perfectionism sub-dimension has .81; negative perfectionism sub-dimension has .78 Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients. And also positive perfectionism sub-dimension has .75; negative perfectionism sub-dimension has .78 test-retest reliability coefficients (Kırdök, 2004).

Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale. In the study, in order to determine the participants’ school life satisfaction level, school life satisfaction sub-dimension of “Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale” was used. “Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale”, which was developed by Huebner (1994) and adapted to Turkish by Çivitci (2007) consists of 36-items and has five sub-dimension: School, friend, family, living environment, and self. In adaptation study of the scale, internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach Alpha) were calculated to be .76 for school subscale, .85 for friend subscale, .74 for family subscale, .70 for self subscale, .75 for living environment subscale, and .87 for total life satisfaction.

Data Analysis

The data of the present research were collected from secondary school students on voluntary basis during 2017-2018 education year. Before the procedures, the participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and how to answer data collection tools, and the procedures were implemented by the researcher in the classroom environment. Before the data collected from the data collection tools were analysed, they were checked and the forms with missing information were excluded. Data were analysed on SPSS 23.0 program. Pearson Correlation coefficient was used to test the correlation levels between the variables; and linear regression analysis was used to test whether independent variables (adaptive perfectionism and maladaptive perfectionism) predict the dependent variable (life satisfaction).

Findings

In this part of the research primarily, the correlations between adaptive perfectionism, maladaptive perfectionism and life satisfaction were presented. Subsequently, it was tested whether variables of adaptive perfectionism and maladaptive perfectionism predict life satisfaction.

Table 1

The Correlations between the Variables of the Study

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Mean	S.d.	Skew.	Quort.
1.	1.00								31.84	5.59	.16	.95
2.	.03	1.00							18.21	4.65	.09	-.63
3.	.19**	-.11	1.00						26.84	4.41	-1.17	1.17
4.	.53**	-.07	.35**	1.00					23.37	4.87	-.40	-.22
5.	.14**	-.15**	.34**	.42**	1.00				22.07	4.52	-.85	.27
6.	.38**	-.05	.28**	.47**	.44**	1.00			23.57	4.10	-1.27	1.84
7.	.33**	-.06	.49**	.47**	.31**	.46**	1.00		19.26	3.08	-.65	.30
8.	.44**	-.12*	.68**	.77**	.71**	.73**	.71**	1.00	115.11	15.18	-1.13	1.02

1. Adaptive perfectionism, 2. Maladaptive perfectionism, 3. Friend satisfaction, 4. School satisfaction, 5. Living environment satisfaction, 6. Family satisfaction, 7. Self satisfaction, 8. Total life satisfaction

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

When considering Table 1. the findings of the study have shown that adaptive perfectionism is positively associated with friend ($r=.19, p<.01$), school ($r=.53, p<.01$), living environment ($r=.14, p<.01$), family ($r=.38, p<.01$), self ($r=.33, p<.01$) and total life satisfaction ($r=.44, p<.01$); maladaptive perfectionism is negatively associated with living environment ($r=-.15, p<.01$) and total life satisfaction ($r=-.12, p<.05$). Also, there is no relationship between maladaptive perfectionism and friend ($r=-.11, p>.05$), school ($r=-.07, p>.05$), family ($r=-.05, p>.05$), and self satisfactions ($r=-.06, p>.05$).

Table 2

Result of Regression Analysis on Prediction of Adaptive Perfectionism to Life Satisfactions

Predictor Variable	Depended Variable	B	S.H.	Beta	t	F	R	R ²
Adaptive Perfectionism	Friend Satisfaction	.15	.04	.19	3.535	12.497	.19	.04*
	School Satisfaction	.46	.04	.53	11.396	129.868	.53	.28*
	Environment Satisfaction	.12	.04	.14	2.626	6.896	.14	.02*
	Family Satisfaction	.28	.04	.38	7.371	54.325	.38	.14*
	Self Satisfaction	.18	.03	.33	6.267	39.276	.33	.11*
	Total Life Satisfaction	1.18	.13	.44	8.812	77.651	.44	.19*

* $p<.01$

When considering the results of analysis in the Table 2., the findings have shown that adaptive perfectionism is positively significant predictor of friend ($R=.19, R^2=.04, F_{(1-332)}=12.497, p<.01$), school ($R=.53, R^2=.28, F_{(1-332)}=129.868, p<.01$), living environment ($R=.14, R^2=.02, F_{(1-332)}=17.405, p<.01$), family ($R=.38, R^2=.14, F_{(1-332)}=54.325, p<.01$), self ($R=.33, R^2=.11, F_{(1-332)}=39.276, p<.01$) and total life satisfactions ($R=.44, R^2=.19, F_{(1-332)}=77.651, p<.01$). Also, in the findings, it has been seen that adaptive perfectionism explains 4% of the total variance relation to friend satisfaction, 28% of the total variance relation to school satisfaction, 2% of the total variance relation to living environment satisfaction, 14% of the total variance relation to family satisfaction, 11% of the total variance relation to self satisfaction and 19% of the total variance relation to total life satisfaction.

Table 3

Result of Regression Analysis on Prediction of Maladaptive Perfectionism to Life Satisfactions

Predictor Variable	Depended Variable	B	S.H.	Beta	t	F	R	R ²
Maladaptive Perfectionism	Friend Satisfaction	-.10	.05	-.11	-1.962	3.850	.11	.01
	School Satisfaction	-.07	.06	-.07	-1.181	1.394	.07	.00
	Environment Satisfaction	-.14	.05	-.15	-2.664	7.099	.15	.02*
	Family Satisfaction	-.15	.05	-.05	-.957	.917	.05	.00
	Self Satisfaction	-.04	.04	-.06	-1.066	1.135	.06	.00
	Total Life Satisfaction	-.39	.18	-.12	-2.220	4.927	.12	.02*

* $p<.01$

When considering the results of analysis in the Table 3., the findings have shown that maladaptive perfectionism is negatively significant predictor of living environment ($R=.15$, $R^2=.02$, $F_{(1,332)}=7.099$, $p<.01$) and total life satisfactions ($R=.12$, $R^2=.02$, $F_{(1,332)}=4.927$, $p<.01$). In the findings, it has been seen that maladaptive perfectionism explains 2% of the total variance relation to living environment satisfaction and 2% of the total variance relation to total life satisfaction. Also, in the findings, it has been seen that maladaptive perfectionism is not significant predictor of friend, school, family and self satisfactions.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between adaptive-maladaptive perfectionism and life satisfaction among secondary school students. The findings of the study have shown that adaptive perfectionism is positively associated with friend, school, living environment, family, self and total life satisfaction; maladaptive perfectionism is negatively associated with living environment and total life satisfaction. Also, there is no relationship between maladaptive perfectionism and friend, school, family, and self satisfaction. Firstly, it can be said that the studies showing predicting role of personality structures in the life satisfaction level are parallel with the finding of the current study. Considering the literature, we can say that the studies showing effect of perfectionism personality structure on life satisfaction among different participants support the finding of the current study (Gilman, Ashby, & Ongen, 2009; Sverko, Florell, & Varjas, 2005; Wang et al., 2009).

The findings of the study have shown that adaptive perfectionism is positively associated with friend, school, living environment, family, self and total life satisfaction; also the findings have shown that adaptive perfectionism is positively significant predictor of friend, school, living environment, family, self and total life satisfaction. Accordingly, it can be said that as the adaptive perfectionism levels of early adolescents increase; their life satisfaction levels increase as well. Considering the literature, we see the studies supporting the finding of the current research. In the study conducted by Wang et al. (2009) among adolescents whose age ranged from 14 to 21, it was seen that there was a positive relationship between adaptive perfectionism and life satisfaction. Adaptive perfectionists expect perfection from them within the bounds of possibility, so their wiggle room against to mistakes rises. Accordingly, they not only make an inference themselves after success but also may positively evaluate the results in case of any failure. Therefore, it can be said that adaptive perfectionists can healthfully overcome a problem that can negatively affects their life satisfaction level. Adaptive perfectionists have higher realistic standards (Enns et al., 2002). It is more likely that adaptive perfectionists reach to their goals. Accordingly, when it is thought that the difference between expectation and real situation is at lower level; it is expected that adaptive perfectionists' life satisfaction level is at higher level.

The findings of the study have shown that maladaptive perfectionism is negatively associated with living environment and total life satisfaction. The findings have also shown that maladaptive perfectionism is negatively significant predictor of living environment and total life satisfaction. Accordingly, it can be said that as the maladaptive perfectionism levels of early adolescents increase; their life satisfaction level decreases. Negative perfectionists don't endure against to mistakes and they don't evaluate according to the conditions. This personality structure may reveal feelings of inadequacy and inferiority and it may reduce to despair (Enns et al., 2002; Slaney et al., 2001). Considering the literature, it was seen that the studies showing a negative relationship between maladaptive perfectionism and happiness (Suh, Gnilka, & Rice, 2017), positive emotions (Bulina, 2014), psychological well-being (Park & Jeong, 2014) support the finding of the current study. Maladaptive perfectionists may feel negative feelings such as depression, anxiety etc. in the event of a failure.

The study conducted by [Suh et al. \(2017\)](#) among college students showed that adaptive perfectionists exhibited the lowest levels of happiness and the highest levels of search for meaning than adaptive and non-perfectionists. One of the basic characteristics of maladaptive perfectionists is that they set unapproachable and unrealistic goals ([Enns et al., 2002](#)). Accordingly, it can be said that it is hard that maladaptive perfectionists reach to desired their goals that increase their life satisfaction levels. Contrary to literature, in the study, we see that maladaptive perfectionism has not a predictor effect on their friend, school, family and self satisfaction levels. The presence of moderating variables eliminating the negative effect of maladaptive perfectionism can be considered.

As a result, the current study showed the predictor role of personality structure in life satisfaction level. Therefore, it is important that individuals get an awareness of his/her personality structure. Educational institutions, particularly psychological counselors can concentrate on works enhancing an awareness of students. The approaches are important in the formation of adaptive-maladaptive perfectionism personality structure of individuals. Especially demanding parents' role is more dominant. Therefore, the implementations can be conducted to raise awareness of parents about parenting styles. In the research, it was also seen that there is no relationship between maladaptive perfectionism and friend, school, family and self satisfactions. Future studies can examine mediating variables that may play role in the relationship. The present research has some limitations. These limitations can be stated in a few points. First, the datas of the research were obtained only from Denizli/Turkey. Secondly, the datas were got through self-reports instruments. Finally, the participants of the research is limited with students attending secondary school. The limitations of the research have an important role in interpretation of the results. Therefore in the later researches, it is important that the relationship between adaptive-maladaptive perfectionism and life satisfaction is evaluated with different variable, analysis and sample.

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