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The Effect of Hopelessness on Life Satisfaction: The Mediator Role of Self Esteem

Umutsuzluğun Yaşam Doyumu Üzerindeki Etkisi: Benlik Saygısının Aracı Rolü

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Abstract

Most of the life of today's people is spent in the business environment. However, various situations and events that may cause tension, desperation, burnout, and a decrease in job satisfaction in business life can cause them to think that they are at a dead end and to experience hopelessness. At the same time, this process negatively affects people's psychological well-being and social relations, leading to a decrease in the satisfaction they receive from their lives in general. This study was conducted to determine whether self-esteem plays a mediating role in the effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction. The study group comprised 175 tourism employees, 84 women and 91 men. The study used the Beck Hopelessness Scale,

Öz

Günümüz insanının yaşamının büyük bölümü iş ortamında geçmektedir. Ancak iş yaşamında gerilime, çaresizliğe, tükenmişliğe ve iş doyumunun düşmesine neden olabilecek çeşitli durumlar ve olaylar, onların bir çıkmazda olduğunu düşünmelerine ve umutsuzluk yaşanmalarına neden olabilmektedir. Aynı zamanda bu süreç kişilerin psikolojik iyi olma hallerini ve sosyal ilişkilerini de olumsuz yönde etkileyerek genel olarak yaşamlarından aldıkları doyumun da azalmasını beraberinde getirmektedir. Bu çalışma umutsuzluğun yaşam doyumunu üzerindeki etkisinde, benlik saygısının aracı bir role sahip olup olmadığının belirlenmesi amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu 84 kadın, 91 erkek olmak üzere

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Satisfaction with Life Scale, and Self-Esteem Scale. According to the analysis results, the relationships between hopelessness, life satisfaction, and self-esteem are negative and significant. On the other hand, a positive and significant relationship was determined between life satisfaction and self-esteem. According to the results of the mediating variable analysis using PROCESS Multiple Mediation Model 4, self-esteem plays a mediating role in the relationship between hopelessness and life satisfactions. The study results were discussed and interpreted within the literature framework, and recommendations were made.

Keywords: Hopelessness, Satisfaction with Life, Self-Esteem, Tourism, Mediating Effect

toplam 175 turizm çalışanı oluşturmuştur. Araştırmada, Beck Umutsuzluk Ölçeği, Yaşam Doyumu Ölçeği ve Benlik Saygısı Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Analiz sonuçlarına göre umutsuzluk ile yaşam doyumu ve benlik saygısı arasındaki ilişkiler negatif yönde ve anlamlıdır. Yaşam doyumu ve benlik saygısı arasında ise pozitif yönde anlamlı bir ilişki belirlenmiştir. PROCESS Multiple Mediation Model 4 kullanılarak gerçekleştirilen aracı değişken analizi sonucuna göre de benlik saygısı, umutsuzluk ve yaşam doyumu arasındaki ilişkide aracılık rolüne sahiptir. Araştırma sonuçları alan yazın çerçevesinde tartışılarak, yorumlanmış ve önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Umutsuzluk, Yaşam Doyumu, Benlik Saygısı, Turizm, Aracı Etki

Introduction

Emotions are important determinants of individuals behavior in their private and professional lives. For example, emotions affect the individuals enjoyment of his job, his approach to colleagues and managers, and the level of his relationships with them. Therefore, these emotional influences in different aspects of work life also become determinants of satisfaction and happiness in one's private life based on work-life balance.

Yetim (2001) and Kırcı Çevik and Korkmaz (2014) stated that individuals want to shape their lives according to their own goals and expectations. To the extent they can achieve this, their life satisfaction will increase. In this process, in addition to the positive aspects of life, such as happiness, well-being, subjective-social well-being, and high quality of life, negative aspects, such as pain, sorrow, grief, frustration, and deprivation, will also be focused on. However, a third aspect of life must be evaluated along with pleasant emotional aspects, such as happiness and joy, and painful and, unpleasant emotional aspects, such as anger and sadness. This is satisfaction with life in general.

Life satisfaction, which significantly affects an individuals psychological state and social relations, is the result of comparing one's goals and expectations with what one already has. In other words, it is the individuals evaluation of the quality of their current private and professional life with the criteria they have created about how a good life should be. In other words, it is the cognitive

judgment of the individual about whether their living conditions are in accordance with the general living standards. According to another definition, life satisfaction is the level of satisfaction with the processes in all areas of an individuals life (Özer & Karabulut, 2003; Huebner, 2004; Yılmaz & Aslan, 2013). It is stated that life satisfaction emerges from a three-stage process. The first is the state of well-being created by comparing the individuals life with external criteria. The second is the state of emotion the individual reaches by evaluating their life individually. The last is the state of satisfaction arising from daily relationships. Individuals' life satisfaction is affected by many factors, such as happiness arising from their private or professional lives, meaning attributed to life, achieving goals, having a positive individual identity, feeling physically well, economic security, and social relationships (Yetim, 2003; Yılmaz & Aslan, 2013).

Individuals private and professional life areas will impact their satisfaction with their life in general and overall well-being. Many factors related to work, such as position in work life, wage, job security, promotion and reward opportunities, and job routine, significantly affect the individual's life satisfaction. Because most of today's lives are spent in the work environment, the level of happiness and satisfaction an individual achieves due to their job will also affect their other areas of life. The happiness in family life, primarily mental and physical health, will be positively affected, and finally, the process will be completed with increased productivity in working life. In other words, people whose position in their work life is in line with their career goals and expectations, who have a high level of income, who are autonomous in their work, and whose working hours are flexible will increase their satisfaction with their lives as well as their work. However, unfavorable working conditions such as poor working conditions, obstacles, compulsions, conflicts, high working hours, and low salaries will negatively affect people's family life, psychological well-being, and social relationships. They will reduce their life satisfaction in general. In addition, it should not be forgotten that the ability of businesses to compete and survive depends on their ability to use their resources effectively and efficiently. Therefore, an enterprise has to take and implement the necessary measures throughout the organization to ensure that its employees, who are its most important and dynamic resources, are satisfied with their jobs for them to show high performance and be productive (Acar Arasan, 2010; Ümme, 2012; Taştan, 2021).

In addition, the fact that the employee's goals and expectations in his professional life cannot be met due to situations arising from him and/or organizational conditions being suitable may cause him to make negative evaluations about the future. At the same time, preventing them from looking to the future with hope is also possible. Unfortunately, such situations are frequently experienced and may cause people to feel intensely hopeless. In general, hopelessness is a psychological reaction to negative events. A state of helplessness arises with the thought that it cannot change the future (Dunn, 2005). Beck et al. (1974) defined hopelessness as a cognitive disorder that occurs in a person's perception of current conditions and future expectations that may lead to negative consequences in the future. According to Horney (1999), hopelessness is a form of reaction to situations that are evaluated as a failure and not proportional to the actual dimensions of the situation. Taslak and Işıkyay (2015) defined hopelessness as a person's belief that he will never overcome any problem or failure and will never be able to solve his problems, attributing false meanings to his experiences without a

realistic reason, and accepting negative results from the beginning without making any effort to achieve his goal. According to these definitions, hopelessness generally refers to a lack of well-being, unwillingness, and aimlessness. It is also a cognitive process in which life events are perceived negatively. In short, it characterizes current and future situations as negative (Erdoğan, 2013).

In working life, which is generally characterized as a meaningful, important, valuable, satisfying, and dignity-providing activity for employees, it is quite possible for an individual to experience professional dissatisfaction when he feels that he has failed, that his work has become insignificant and that he cannot make a difference. This occupational dissatisfaction and/or tension-creating factors in the work environment will cause the individual to feel helpless, exhausted, and hopeless. In other words, the fact that the individual is unsatisfied with his job and thinks he is at a dead end will cause a feeling of hopelessness. In other words, hopelessness will arise due to the employee's problems with managers and other employees, the lack of opportunity for self-development, and the lack of satisfaction with his work. Therefore, hopelessness is a result of negative conditions in the work environment. These negative conditions will cause the individual to feel inefficient, decrease his commitment to work, and decrease his self-esteem (Dündar, 2008; Kaya, 2012; Özben & Argun, 2003).

Self-esteem, which is another concept addressed within the scope of the research, is a positive state of mind that enables a person to accept himself as he is without seeing himself as superior or inferior, to be satisfied with himself, to find himself worthy of admiration and love, and to trust himself (Yılmaz Tekirgöl, 2011). Rosenberg (1965) defined self-esteem as the sum of an individual's positive and negative evaluations of themselves. He states that self-esteem includes different components, such as social competence, personal value, and body perception. The degree of importance of each of these components is different. When a judgment is made about the self, it is first necessary to determine how the individual evaluates each of these characteristics (as cited in Kaya, 2011).

According to McMullin and Cairney (2004), self-esteem is a social-psychological evaluation of an individual's perceptions of themselves. It is a person's judgment about themselves, including adjectives such as "good or bad, valuable or worthless, positive or negative, superior or inferior." It is a person's understanding of the quality of themselves. Finally, it is the degree to which the individual perceives themselves as talented, successful, valuable, admired, and worthy of love at a level that will affect their behaviors in society and determine their reactions to events.

Güloğlu and Kararımak (2010) stated that self-esteem affects everything a person thinks, says, and does. In other words, self-esteem will affect a person's view of the world, their choices about their life, their ability to give and receive love, their power to take action to change the things they perceive as problematic, the view of others toward them, and their behaviors. Akpınar (2013) stated that individuals evaluate their characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors in the same way as they observe and evaluate other people. Thus, this "judgment of worthiness" about oneself will be the main determinant of the individual level of self-esteem. If they perceive themselves as admirable, their self-esteem will be high; on the contrary, if they evaluate themselves as unappreciated and unloved, their self-esteem will be low.

According to Şentürk (2010), individuals with high self-esteem are self-confident, do not show frustration despite difficulties, want to succeed, and believe they are important and useful to others. These individuals are open to new ideas, friendly, creative, and forgiving. On the other hand, individuals with low self-esteem are constantly worried about failure, shyness, self-disliking, timidity, avoid close relationships, are withdrawn, lack confidence in themselves and others, experience feelings of rejection, are unforgiving, passive, and are more prone to psychosomatic diseases. Olcay and Çelik (2010) stated that choosing a profession and a job suitable for the individual's interests, abilities, values, expectations, and personality traits will positively affect his psychological state and private and professional life. According to them, such a process will contribute positively to all aspects of the individual life and increase self-esteem. However, a career choice or work environment that is not suitable for the individual's characteristics, that does not allow him to use his talents and develop himself, that does not provide opportunities to show his creativity, that does not provide social security, advancement, and social respectability will cause the employee to be dissatisfied with his work and to decrease the value he gives to his work. As a result, both self-esteem and life satisfaction will decrease.

As mentioned before, individuals may face many problems in their working life. For example, problems with managers and other employees, not finding the opportunity to improve themselves, or dissatisfaction with their job may cause them to fall into despair. In such a situation, the individual can think that he has failed, that his work has become insignificant, and that he cannot make a difference. This process will cause the individual to feel helpless and exhausted, leading to professional dissatisfaction. All these negativities will also affect the satisfaction and fulfillment levels in other areas of the individual life, especially in private life. It will be possible to reduce the possible negative effects of hopelessness on the satisfaction level of the individual's life by increasing his positive evaluations of himself, self-confidence, desire for success, optimism, creativity, assertiveness, and self-esteem. This study aims to determine whether self-esteem has a mediating role in the effect of hopelessness, which emerges from a negative evaluation of current situations and the future, on life satisfaction, which expresses the general level of satisfaction with life. The research hypotheses formed within the framework of this purpose are as follows:

H₁. There are significant relationships between hopelessness, life satisfaction, and self-esteem.

H₂. Self-esteem plays a mediating role in the effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction.

The conceptual model of the mediation effect is given in Figure 1.

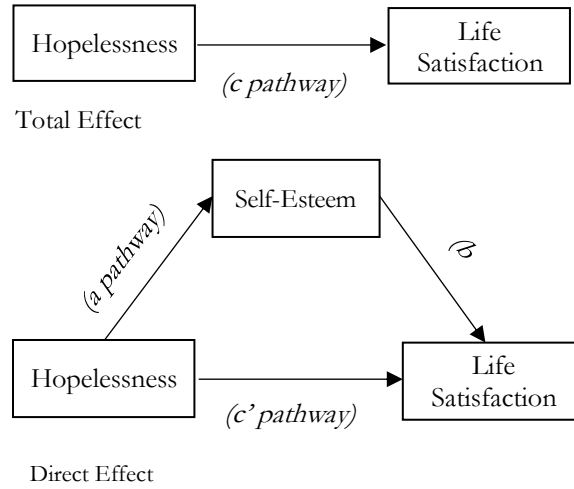


Figure 1. The total effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction and mediating effect conceptual model that addresses the direct effect on self-esteem

Method

Participants

A total of 175 tourism employees, 84 (48%) females and 91 (52%) males, participated in the study. The average age was 27.53 years ($S = 4.95$). The average age of female employees was 27.74 ($S = 5.28$), while the average age of male employees was 27.34 ($S = 4.64$).

Materials

In the study, Beck Hopelessness Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale, and Self-Esteem Scale were applied to the participants.

Beck Hopelessness Scale: The Beck Hopelessness Scale (HS) developed by Beck et al. (1974) was used to measure the participants' negative expectations for the future. The scale consists of three subdimensions (feelings about the future, loss of motivation, and hope) and 20 items. Scale items are scored between 0 and 1. The higher the score, the higher the level of hopelessness. Durak and Palabıyıkoglu (1994) stated that the scale gave valid and reliable results in determining the level of hopelessness for individuals with psychiatric and chronic-physical diseases and normal people. The Turkish adaptation study determined the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient for the whole scale as 0.85 and the two-half test reliability coefficient consisting of single and double items as 0.85 (Durak & Palabıyıkoglu, 1994). In this study, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient for the whole scale was 0.89.

Satisfaction with Life Scale: The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener et al. (1985) was used to measure the individual's cognitive evaluations and judgments reached by

comparing their expectations and goals from life with what they already have. The scale consists of 5 items and is evaluated on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1 point) to "strongly agree" (7 points). A high score on the scale indicates a high degree of life satisfaction, while a low score indicates a low degree of life satisfaction. Diener et al. (1985) determined the test-retest reliability coefficient of the scale as 0.82 and the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient as 0.87 (as cited in Turan, 2013). In the adaptation study of the scale into Turkish conducted by Köker (1991), the test-retest reliability coefficient was 0.85 at a three-week interval (as cited in Tuzgöl-Dost, 2007). This study determined the scale Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient as 0.87.

Self-Esteem Scale: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), developed by Rosenberg (1963), was used to measure the subjective judgments of the individual about himself. The scale consists of 10 items. In this study, a four-point Likert-type response format ranging from "very true" (4 points) to "very false" (1 point) was used. A high score on the scale indicates high self-esteem and a low score indicates low self-esteem. In the adaptation study of the scale into Turkish, Yılmaz Irmak (2008) determined the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient as 0.82. In this study, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was 0.82.

Procedure

The research was conducted between September 2019 and November 2019. The scales used in the study were arranged in different orders to control the order effect and turned into batteries. Participants were informed about the research, and the scales were administered after their verbal consent was obtained. They were also asked to answer the questions per the instructions without leaving any questions blank, and it was also stated that the answers would be kept strictly confidential and used only for research purposes. The application took approximately 20 minutes.

Data Analysis

Before analyzing the dataset, was examined for outliers using descriptive statistics and graphical techniques, and 21 participants with outlier values were removed from the dataset. For the normality of the distribution of the variables, it was examined whether the skewness coefficient was between -1 and +1, and it was seen that the scale scores were normally distributed (Morgan et al., 2013).

Results

The relationship levels between the variables were first determined to test the hypotheses according to the research purpose. Then, it was examined whether self-esteem plays a mediating role in the effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction.

The levels of the relationships between the research variables of hopelessness, life satisfaction, and self-esteem were determined using The Pearson Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r). The results of the analysis and the mean and standard deviations of the participants' scores from the scales are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation coefficients between research variables and mean and standard deviation values

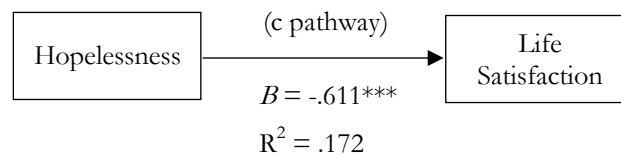
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Hopelessness	4.97	4.60	-		
2. Life Satisfaction	19.38	6.79	-.41**	-	
3. Self-Esteem	33.27	5.39	-.64**	.42**	-

N = 175, **p*<.05, ***p*<.01

When the analysis results presented in Table 1 are examined, it is seen that there are negative and significant relationships between hopelessness and life satisfaction and self-esteem ($r = -.41, p < .01$ and $r = -.64, p < .01$, respectively). On the other hand, there was a significant positive relationship between life satisfaction and self-esteem ($r = .42, p < .01$). According to these results, Hypothesis H₁ was supported.

In the second stage of the analyses, PROCESS Multiple Mediation Model 4 (Hayes, 2013), in which the sample was randomly resampled 5000 times with the bootstrap method, was used to determine whether self-esteem plays a mediating role in the relationship between hopelessness and life satisfaction. The INDIRECT program for SPSS developed by Preacher and Hayes (2004) is used in this model. The 95% Bias-Corrected and Accelerated Confidence Interval (BCA CI) values obtained to determine the mediation effect in the analysis should not include a zero (0) value (Hayes, 2013; MacKinnon et al., 2004).

According to the "mediator effect conceptual model" given in Figure 1, the total effect of the predictor variable on the predicted variable without the mediator variable was examined first. The results of the analysis are presented in Figure 2.



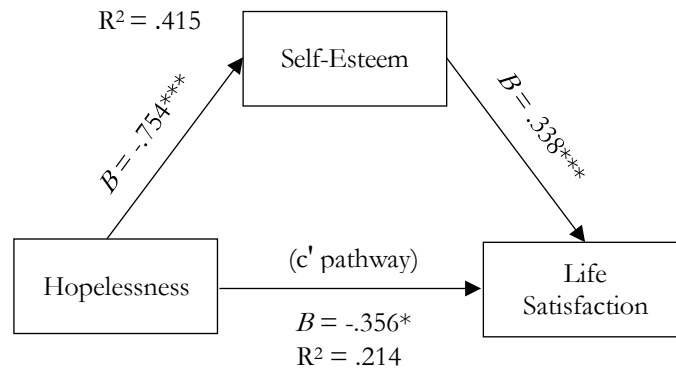
Total Effect (c pathway): $B = -.611, SE = .102, t = -5.99, p < .001$
 Notes: $N=175$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$; Unstandardized beta coefficients (B) are reported. R^2 value: Variance explained

Figure 2. The total effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction

According to the analysis results presented in Figure 2, the total effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction is negative and significant ($B = -.611, SE = .102, 95\% CI = [-.8123, -.4095], t = -5.99, p < .001$). Hopelessness explained approximately 17.2% ($R^2 = .172$) of the variance in the life

satisfaction variable ($F_{1,173} = 35.85, p < .001$). Without including self-esteem, this result shows that as the employees level of hopelessness increases, the level of life satisfaction decreases (pathway c).

The results of the regression analysis performed based on the bootstrap method to determine whether self-esteem has a mediating role in the effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction are presented in Figure 3.



Direct Effect (c' pathway): $B = -.356, SE = .130, t = -2.73, p < .05$
 Indirect Effect: $B = -.255, SE = .086, 95\% CI [-.4331, -.0989]$

Notes: $N=175$; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$; Unstandardized beta coefficients (B) are reported. SE: Standard Error. R^2 value: Variance explained, 95% BCA CI: 95% Bias-Corrected and Accelerated Confidence Interval.

Figure 3. The mediating role of self-esteem in the effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction

According to the analysis results presented in Figure 3, hopelessness negatively and significantly affects self-esteem ($B = -.754, SE = .068, 95\% CI = [-.8889, -.6201], t = -11.08, p < .001$). Hopelessness explains approximately 41.5% ($R^2 = .415$) of the variance in the self-esteem variable ($F_{1,173} = 122.86, p < .001$). According to this result, as the level of hopelessness increases, self-esteem decreases (a pathway). Secondly, regression analysis showed that self-esteem had a significant positive effect on life satisfaction ($B = .338, SE = .111, 95\% CI = [.1188, .5586], t = 3.04, p < .01$). Accordingly, as an employee self-esteem increases, the level of life satisfaction also increases (b pathway). When the mediating variable self-esteem was included, the direct effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction (c' pathway) was found to be negative and significant ($B = -.356, SE = .130, 95\% CI = [-.6128, -.0982], t = -2.73, p < .05$). Hopelessness and self-esteem together explained approximately 21.4% ($R^2 = .214$) of the change in life satisfaction ($F_{2,172} = 23.40, p < .001$). Finally, the indirect effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction was also significant. This result shows that self-esteem mediates the relationship between hopelessness and life satisfaction ($B = -.255, SE = .086, 95\% CI = [-.4331, -.0989]$). According to the bootstrapping analysis, the 95% adjusted bias and accelerated confidence interval values (95% BCA CI) exclude 0 (zero). The completely standardized effect size of the mediation effect is (K^2) = 0.173. This value indicates an effect size close to a high effect (Preacher & Kelley, 2011). These results showed that the H_2 hypothesis was supported.

Discussion

Employees are the most important component of tourism due to its labor-intensive characteristics. Because success of the business and its image in the eyes of consumers are largely shaped by the employees' personality traits, skills and abilities, attitudes, and behaviors. However, due to significant increases in the demand for tourism in certain periods of the year, many employees are employed seasonally. This leads to the loss of job security, high employee turnover, employment of unskilled workers, relatively low wages, lack of career opportunities, poor working conditions, long and inconvenient working hours, and low job satisfaction, resulting in large fluctuations in workers. In addition, all these unfavorable conditions lead to many problems, especially psychological ones. Hopelessness is one of them. Due to unfavorable working conditions, employees feel exhausted and tired, are unsatisfied with their work, cannot show the necessary performance, and believe there will be no improvement in these conditions. At the same time, their family life, psychological well-being, social relationships, and the level of satisfaction they get from their lives, in general, are negatively affected. Within the framework of this general evaluation, the study aims to determine the mediating role of self-esteem in the effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction. Based on this purpose, the relationship levels between hopelessness, life satisfaction, and self-esteem were analyzed. According to the analysis results, significant negative relationships were found between hopelessness and life satisfaction and self-esteem, and significant positive relationships were found between self-esteem and life satisfaction. These findings are consistent with the literature (Çevik & Yıldız, 2016, Çivilidağ et al., 2018; Dikmen ve Şahin Özdemir, 2021; Gençay, 2009; Lyubomirsky et al., 2006; Sarpkaya, 2017). As mentioned before, hopelessness emerges due to the persons negative characterization of current living conditions and negative expectations about the future. It expresses a lack of well-being, unwillingness, and aimlessness. Therefore, it is very unlikely that a person in despair can achieve sufficient satisfaction and happiness in all areas of life. This will prevent him from accepting himself as he is, being satisfied with himself, finding himself worthy of admiration and love, and trusting himself. In other words, it will cause his self-esteem to fall. On the contrary, individuals who are satisfied with themselves, have strong and positive beliefs about the future, believe that they are in control of their lives, and establish positive relationships with others will have higher levels of satisfaction and satisfaction with their lives. At the same time, these individuals with high levels of self-esteem have heightened perceptions of social support and feelings of personal control. They direct their lives according to their wishes, do not hesitate to take responsibility and risk, and are more optimistic and friendly about the future (Fogle et al., 2002; Savi Çakar & Karataş, 2012).

In order to determine the mediating role of self-esteem in the effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction, which is the study's second hypothesis, PROCESS Multiple Mediation Model 4 (Hayes, 2013), mediation effect analysis was conducted. According to the analysis results, self-esteem plays a mediating role in the effect of hopelessness on life satisfaction. In other words, the level of hopelessness decreases as self-esteem increases, which increases the employees satisfaction with life. This is consistent with the literature. Çevik and Yıldız (2016) also found that self-esteem mediates the relationship between hopelessness and happiness. As can be seen, various situations and events that

may cause tension, helplessness, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction in an individual's work-life cause him to think that he is at a dead end and experience a sense of hopelessness. An employee who falls into hopelessness shows low performance, has difficulty focusing on his work, and exhibits inappropriate behavior. Similarly, negative situations such as failures in private life, feelings of inadequacy, and insufficient social support to deal with problems will cause the individual to experience hopelessness. As a result of individuals facing such negativities in various periods of their private and professional lives, their level of satisfaction and happiness with their lives will inevitably decrease. In order to compensate for or prevent this decrease in an individual's life satisfaction caused by hopelessness, his negative perceptions about himself should be turned in a positive direction. In other words, it is necessary to increase self-esteem by enabling him to assess his importance and value. For this purpose, processes enabling the individual to perceive himself as capable, successful, valuable, admired, and worthy of being loved should be included in his life, or he should be made to feel these processes. If this is done, it will be possible to reduce the negative impact of the state of hopelessness that the individual falls into for different reasons on life satisfaction or to make it less damaging.

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