

INVESTIGATION ON THE EFFECT OF VOLUNTARY SIMPLE LIFESTYLE ON MENTAL WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research is to measure the effect of a voluntary simple lifestyle on mental well-being. The subsidiary objective of the research is determining the differences in the effect of a voluntary simple lifestyle on mental well-being based on gender and educational status. The data were acquired on a voluntary basis from 608 participants aged 18 and over by convenience sampling method in the study. The confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling were implemented on the acquired data. Based on the research findings, individuals' voluntary simple lifestyles have a significant and positive effect on their mental well-being. Also, at the same time, it was ascertained that there are differences in the effect of people's voluntary simple lifestyle on mental well-being, according to gender and educational status.

Keywords: *Mental well-being, Simple life, Voluntary simplicity, Voluntary simple lifestyle*

Jel Codes: *M10, M19, M31*

1. INTRODUCTION

Whereas the concept of mental well-being expresses the general state of an individual's emotional, psychological, and social health, it as well explains how individuals feel, how they think, their ability to cope with life's difficulties and to establish meaningful relationships with others. The concept also encompasses factors that help individuals find meaning and purpose in their lives, realize their potential, and contribute to the society (Keyes, Shmotkin and Ryff, 2002). Mental well-being is significant for human life since it increases individuals' satisfaction with life, contributes to their ability to cope with daily difficulties, and makes individuals feel happy by assessing themselves positively. Individuals having a high level of mental well-being contribute to society and their environment by fulfilling their social duties (World Health Organization, 2022:1). In this research, it is targeted to explain the concept of mental well-being, which is effective on the quality of life of individuals, and to

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reveal the effect of the voluntary simple lifestyle, which is the predecessor of this concept and realized as a consequence of a conscious choice, on mental well-being.

The voluntarily simple lifestyle corresponds to a status that prioritizes what people care about and opposes current materialism and excessive consumption. Voluntary simplicity, also referred to as “simple living,” may be considered a philosophy or social movement which encourages individuals to simplify their lifestyles, reduce their consumption, and prioritize the pursuit of meaning and satisfaction over material wealth. The lifestyle in question requires getting rid of objects other than those that are really needed and valued, avoiding excessive consumption and being in harmony with nature, protecting nature, reducing environmental waste, and using energy efficiently. Moreover, in this lifestyle, it is targeted to allocate time and energy to issues that will contribute to relationships, experiences, personal development, and community welfare instead of material goods (Alexander, 2011). The objective of the voluntary simple lifestyle is to reduce the complexity in the lives of individuals and increase their quality of life, sense of freedom, and meaningfulness. Accordingly, it has the potential to develop a sense of inner satisfaction. This lifestyle enables the individuals to focus on what they truly care about, resulting in more satisfaction, less stress, and a better existence. Moreover, it is also known that the voluntary simple lifestyle encourages people to carry out activities that produce introspection, joy, and meaning (Johnston and Burton, 2003).

It is assumed that the sense of inner satisfaction and happiness generated by the voluntary simple lifestyle will have a positive effect on the mental well-being of the individuals. The wish to get rid of material objects as much as possible and to seek a more meaningful existence in life, support personal development, and a sense of environmental sensitivity can enable individuals to take action as a motivation tool. Accordingly, the voluntary simple lifestyle, which is a conscious choice, may also positively affect the mental well-being of individuals. In this study, it is predominantly targeted to analyze the effect of voluntary simple lifestyles on the mental well-being of individuals. Another target of the study is to reveal whether the effect of voluntary simple lifestyles on their mental well-being differs based on gender and educational status. Moreover, in this research, the answers are sought to the research questions in order to analyze the differences based on the voluntary simple lifestyles and mental well-being levels of the individuals, as well as their gender and educational status. As the international literature is analyzed, it is observed that there are studies that explain the relationship or effect between a voluntary simple lifestyle and mental well-being (Brown and Kasser, 2005; Chowdhury, 2018; Hook, Hodge, Zhang, Van Tongeren and Davis, 2021; Kasser, 2017). Also, in the national literature, there are separate studies regarding the voluntary simple lifestyle (Cengiz and Torlak, 2018; Çınar, 2021; Özgül, 2011; Saygılı and Bil, 2017) and mental well-being (Duman, Göksu, Köroğlu and Talay, 2020; Özgüneş, Bozok, Avcıkurt and Güleç, 2019; Tatar, Kılıç and Bekiroğlu, 2022; Yıldız, Dumlu and İbrahimağaoğlu, 2021; Zengin, 2022).

The protection and development of mental well-being are significant for the general health of the individual and society, as it has a wide range of effects, including not only the absence of mental health problems but also positive mood and life satisfaction. Investigating the effect of voluntary simplicity, which is a conscious lifestyle choice, on mental well-being, which is a concept with a wide range of individual and social impact, constitutes the original value of the study. Moreover, investigating whether this effect varies when demographic factors such as gender and education are taken into account, contributes to its original value.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1. Voluntary Simple Lifestyle

The concept of voluntary simple lifestyle is utilized to describe a lifestyle that emphasizes living with less and reduces the focus on material things and consumption. However, other terms such as “deliberate slowdown” and “post-welfare society” are also utilized in the literature, which refers to a voluntary simple lifestyle (Power and Mont, 2010). A voluntary simple lifestyle is a lifestyle movement embraced as an alternative to consumer society and consumerism, where selfish individual preferences and materialistic tendencies are the focus (Ors, 2016). Voluntary simplicity is a conscious choice from materialistic and consumer-oriented lifestyles to focusing on personal satisfaction, sustainability, and community well-being (Alexander, 2011). When we consider the environmental problems we encounter, it emphasizes the significance of avoiding excessive and unrequired consumption by focusing on individual awareness at the point of ensuring environmental sustainability of the voluntary simple lifestyle (Köroğlu, Asmadili, and Asmadili, 2022). Consequently, the concept basically involves keeping material needs as simple as possible, providing them directly, minimizing expenditure on consumer goods and services, and seeking generally non-material sources of satisfaction, meaning, and spirituality (Elgin and Mitchell, 1977; Shama, 1985). Moreover, it channels the individuals to personal development, meaningful experiences, close and friendly human relations, and efforts toward health rather than focusing on material wealth (Johnston and Burton, 2003).

As the literature is analyzed, it is observed that there are studies that show that individuals' voluntary simplicity preferences differ in terms of demographic characteristics. A study carried out in Sweden set forth that gender, as a demographic factor, was a statistical determinant of a simple lifestyle (Eimermann, Lindgren, and Lundmark, 2021). According to another study conducted on voluntary simplicity, gender is one of the variables that define different orientations among consumers; Moreover, it set forth that there is explanatory information about the relationships between age, education level, and income level (Kury, 2000). In his study, Çınar (2021) ascertained that the factors of planned shopping, simple life, longevity, self-sufficiency, and material wealth differed significantly according to some demographic variables. In a study conducted by Cengiz and Torlak (2018), the demographic and behavioral characteristics of consumers who adopt voluntary simplicity as a daily lifestyle in the

USA and Turkey were compared. Individuals who choose a voluntarily simple lifestyle differ statistically in terms of education, age, and working hours. Again in the same study, it was concluded that those who prefer a simple lifestyle in Turkey and the USA do not vary statistically in terms of demographic variables such as income, marital status, number of children, and gender. In a similar way, Johnston and Burton (2003) and Kury (2000) designated that voluntary simplicity did not differ statistically by gender, according to their study findings. Özgül (2011) designated in his study that the people with the highest level of voluntary simple lifestyle are those with relatively lower education and income levels, middle and older age, and married and female consumers. Albeit there are different findings in the literature on whether the voluntary simple lifestyle differs in terms of demographic characteristics, it can be stated that more research is needed to understand how socio-demographic characteristics affect the adoption of the voluntary simple lifestyle. In line with this point of view, the research question to be answered with this research is as follows;

Do individuals' voluntary simple lifestyles differ according to gender and education status?

2.2. Mental Well-Being

According to the World Health Organization (2022:1) “mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. Mental health is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development”. The concept of “well-being” is deemed as two basic approaches: hedonic and eudaimonic. The hedonic approach is basically explained by subjective well-being and is based on the happiness of individuals (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Within the hedonic approach, it is considered that maximizing the satisfaction one receives from one's life and always turning to things that give pleasure is the best way to happiness (Huta and Ryan, 2010). The eudaimonic approach focuses on psychological well-being and emphasizes well-being, in contrast to the pleasure and happiness emphasized by the hedonic perspective (Ryff, 1989). The eudaimonic approach is concerned with the consequences of human development, self-realization, individual goals, and the well-being of the individual (Ryan and Deci, 2001). The concept of mental well-being inherits a structure that combines subjective and psychological well-being (Keyes, 2002).

There are studies in the literature that reveal that socio-demographic characteristics affect the well-being of individuals (Mäkikangas, Kinnunen, Feldt and Schaufeli, 2016; Ryff, Boylan and Kirsch, 2021; Tatar et al., 2022). Based on the findings of the study conducted by Özgüneş et al. (2019), which targets to ascertain the differences between the mental well-being of domestic tourists participating in rural tourism activities according to their socio-demographic structures, no statistically significant difference was designated in terms of gender, age, educational status and marital status of people. Within the same study, the mental well-being of people differs according to different income groups. Based on the study conducted by Duman et al. (2020) in which they analyzed the relationship between mental

well-being and psychological resilience in university students, no significant difference was designated between the mental well-being levels of university students and gender. Being different from these findings, based on the results of the study in which Zengin (2022) analyzed the relationship between the metaphorical perceptions of individuals regarding the concept of consumption and their mental well-being levels, the mental well-being of individuals differs according to gender. In the aforementioned study, the well-being level of men was designated to be higher than the level of well-being of women. In a similar way, according to a study conducted by Yıldız et al. (2021), the psychological well-being of employees differs according to gender. Based on this information, another research question is as follows;

Do individuals' mental well-being vary according to gender and education status?

2.3. The Relationship Between Voluntary Simple Lifestyle and Mental Well-Being

The voluntary simple life encompasses a series of features that change over time but can be characterized as the minimum consumption of objects or materials in principle and is a lifestyle associated with subjective well-being (Connelly, 2020; Elgin and Mitchell, 1977). People who have voluntarily embraced a simple life tend to have a meaningful existence that provides real satisfaction by moving away from the desire for material objects. Voluntary simplicity is not just about minimizing physical assets and it is a conscious and deliberate orientation/consumption and mental posture. By avoiding materialism and excessive consumption, individuals can achieve inner peace and calm, and reduce stress and anxiety. The voluntarily simple lifestyle channels individuals to a slower rhythm of life, offering the opportunity to savor the moment, gain awareness, and ultimately achieve mental and emotional well-being. At the same time, voluntary simple living provides the opportunity to establish deeper relationships and bonds with other people (Alexander, 2011). Another notable aspect of voluntary simplicity is its potential to develop a sense of inner satisfaction. Reducing dependence on the consumption of material objects implies that true happiness is based on close relationships and individual bonds rather than consuming and accumulating. Adopting this lifestyle enables individuals to focus on what they truly care about, resulting in greater satisfaction, less stress, and a better existence. It is stated that the voluntary simple lifestyle encourages people to engage in activities that produce introspection, joy, and meaning (Johnston and Burton, 2003).

Within the literature, there are studies that positively find the relationship between voluntary simplicity and well-being (Brown and Kasser, 2005; Chowdhury, 2018). In line with the findings of a systematic literature review carried out by Hook et al. (2021) on the concepts of minimalism, voluntary simplicity, and well-being, there is a relationship between voluntary simplicity and well-being. In line with studies carried out, a voluntary simple lifestyle that focuses on reducing consumption and excesses enables individuals to prioritize their values and increases well-being (Hook et al., 2021). Kasser (2017) argues that personal characteristics such as giving significance to internal values and having awareness

and a simple lifestyle cause both pro-environmental behaviors and well-being. In line with this information, the research hypotheses have been stipulated below;

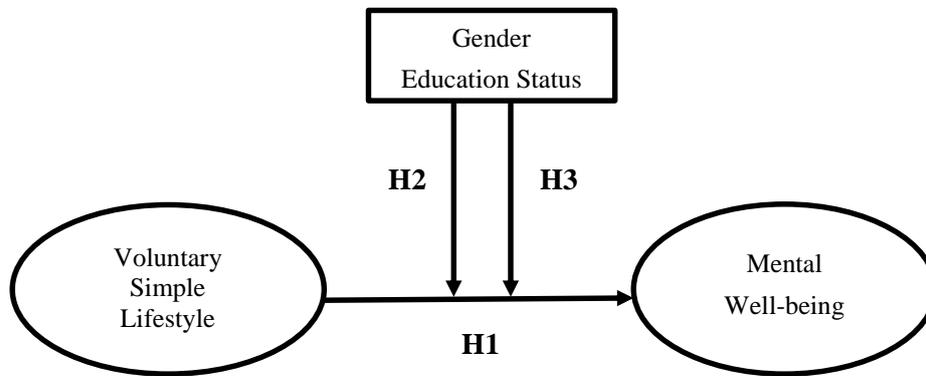
Hypothesis 1: Individuals' voluntary simple lifestyles have a positive effect on their mental well-being.

Hypothesis 2: The effect of individuals' voluntary simple lifestyles on their mental well-being differs based on gender.

Hypothesis 3: The effect of individuals' voluntary simple lifestyles on their mental well-being varies based on their education status.

The research model generated in line with the research hypotheses is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Model



3. METHOD

3.1. Sampling and Procedure

With the purpose to test the effects of people's voluntary simple lifestyle on their mental well-being, the research sample consists of people over the age of 18 who volunteered to participate in the research. The convenience sampling method, which is not based on probability, was embraced in determining the sample. The convenience sampling method provides convenience to the researcher in terms of time and cost in obtaining research data and enables the data to be collected quickly (Malhotra, 2004). The online survey method was utilized as a data collection tool. A pilot study was carried out on 20 people, the required changes and adjustments were made in the questionnaire, and the form was finalized. In identifying the sample size, it was tried to reach the number of participants ten times the scale expressions in the questionnaire (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010). The total number of the scale expressions utilized in the research was 36, and 608 participants were reached as a result of the online survey application.

3.2. Scales

There were questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants and two different scales were encompassed in the questionnaire form generated for the research. The Voluntary Simplicity Lifestyle Scale (VSLS) developed by Iwata (1997) and comprising of 20 items was utilized to measure the voluntary simple lifestyle of individuals. The degree of participation to the scale statements was implemented with a 5-point Likert scale (1: I totally disagree... 5: I totally agree). With the purpose to ascertain the mental well-being levels of the participants, “The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)” generated by Tennant et al. (2007) was utilized. The scale comprises of 14 items and was measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree... 5: strongly agree).

In this study, an ethical approval was obtained with the decision of Bandırma Onyedi Eylül University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee, dated 13.05.2022 and numbered 2022-5, prior to proceeding to the data collection phase.

3.3. Data Analysis Process

SPSS 26 and AMOS 26 package programs were utilized to analyze the data. A two-stage method process was followed in the analysis of the research data obtained from the participants (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). During the first stage, the convergent and discriminant validity of all the scales in the measurement model were analyzed. Confirmatory factor analysis was also performed to ensure internal consistency and reliability. After ensuring the validity and reliability of the measurement model, the research hypotheses, which is the second stage, were tested with Structural Equation Modeling.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Demographic Findings

When the demographic characteristics of the people participating in the research are analyzed, it is observed that 53.8% of the 908 people are female and 46.2% are male. While the proportion of those aged 31 to 40, who constitute the majority of the participants, was 34.4%, this was followed by those aged between 18 and 23 with 22.7%. The participants with the lowest rate were those aged 51 and over with 4.6%. When the educational status of the participants is analyzed, it is observed that the majority of them are university graduates with 46.1%, followed by post-graduate students or graduates with 32.7%. 78.8% of the participants have at least undergraduate education and the level of education is rather high (see Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic Features

Gender	f	%	Age	f	%
Female	327	53.8	18 to 23 years old	138	22.7
Male	281	46.2	24 to 30 years old	134	22.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>608</i>	<i>100</i>	31 to 40 years old	209	34.4
Education Status	f	%	41 to 50 years old	99	16.3
Primary – High school graduate	35	5.8	51 years and older	28	4.6
University student	94	15.5	<i>Total</i>	<i>608</i>	<i>100</i>
University graduate	280	46.1			
Postgraduate student/graduate	199	32.7			
<i>Total</i>	<i>608</i>	<i>100</i>			

Within the frame of the main findings of the research, the mean and standard deviations of the voluntary simple lifestyle and mental well-being scales utilized in the research were given priority. Moreover, the differences between the voluntary simple lifestyles and mental well-being levels of the people who formed the research questions were tested based on gender and educational status.

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of Variables

Construct	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (δ)
Voluntary Simple Lifestyle	3.628	0.808
Mental Well-being	3.820	0.690

In Table 2, the mean and standard deviations of the voluntary simple lifestyle and mental well-being scales utilized in the study are presented. The mental well-being averages of the participants were higher than the averages for a voluntary simple lifestyle.

Table 3. Voluntary Simple Lifestyle and Mental Well-Being Means and Standard Deviations by Gender

Gender	Voluntary Simple Lifestyle		Mental Well-being	
	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (δ)	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (δ)
Female	3.578	0.840	3.738	0.679
Male	3.686	0.765	3.916	0.692

As it can be observed from Table 3, the voluntary simple lifestyle averages of individuals differ according to gender and are higher for men than women. With the purpose to test whether this difference is significant or not, the t-test was implemented to the data. Based on these results, the difference was not significant since $p=0.100 > 0.05$.

As the mental well-being averages of individuals are analyzed, it is observed that men are at a higher level than women. Since $p=0.001 < 0.05$ as a result of the t-test, it can be stated that this difference is significant in the 99% confidence interval.

Table 4. Voluntary Simple Lifestyle and Mental Well-Being Averages and Standard Deviations by Educational Status

Education Status	Voluntary Simple Lifestyle		Mental Well-being	
	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (δ)	Mean (\bar{x})	Standard Deviation (δ)
Primary – High school graduate	3.971	0.821	4.050	0.697
University student	3.459	0.855	3.594	0.763
University graduate	3.591	0.820	3.783	0.663
Postgraduate student/graduate	3.699	0.742	3.938	0.658

In Table 4, the averages of voluntary simple lifestyle and mental well-being based on the education level of the participants are shared. When the table is analyzed, it is observed that the average of individuals' voluntary simple lifestyle differs in line with their education level. High school-primary school graduates had the highest level of voluntary simple lifestyle, followed by post-graduate students or graduates. A one-way ANOVA test was implemented to the data with the purpose to test whether the differences seen in the voluntary simple lifestyle in line with education level are significant. In line with the findings, since $p=0.005<0.05$, there was a significant difference in the 99% confidence interval. This difference is significant in these two groups, between high school-primary school graduates and post-graduate students or graduates ($p=0.016<0.05$). The voluntary simple lifestyle levels of high school-primary school graduates are higher than post-graduate students or graduates.

As the mental well-being averages of the individuals are analyzed, it is observed that the participants differ according to their educational status. Based on Table 4, the group with the highest level of mental well-being is high school-primary school graduates. This is followed by post-graduate students or graduates. University students have the lowest level of mental well-being. Since $p=0.000<0.05$ based on the one-way analysis of variance findings, it was ascertained that there was a significant difference between the groups in the 99% confidence interval. There is a significant difference between high school-primary school graduates and university students in terms of mental well-being, and the mental well-being levels of high school-primary school graduates are higher ($p=0.010<0.05$). Yet another significant difference is between university students and post-graduate students or graduates ($p=0.001<0.05$). The mental well-being levels of university students are lower than post-graduate students or graduates.

4.2. Measuring Model

The measurement model including all research scales was tested as the first step in testing the research model. For the validity and reliability analyzes of the measurement model, confirmatory factor analysis was implemented to the data, and factor loads, Cronbach alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) values were analyzed. To test the internal consistency reliability, standardized regression coefficients (λ), CR, and CA values of the expressions encompassed in the variables; for convergent validity, standardized regression coefficients and AVE values were also

analyzed. The discriminant validity of the measurement model was also tested with the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio) values.

The standardized regression coefficients analyzed to ensure internal consistency reliability and convergent validity are shared in Table 5. As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis implemented in the measurement model, the expressions with low factor loading (VSL4: 0.400; VSL6: 0.100; VSL8: 0.198; VSL10: 0.162; VSL12: 0.237; VSL13: 0.204; VSL15: 0.289; VSL17: 0.002; VSL18: 0.286; VSL19: 0.215) in the voluntary simple lifestyle scale and the expressions with high covariance value (VSL11; VSL14; VSL16; VSL20) were removed from the analysis. The fit indices of the model were analyzed and it was observed that a good fit developed (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, and Müller, 2003). Accordingly, the voluntary simple lifestyle variable was encompassed in the model with six expressions and one dimension. When the confirmatory factor analysis findings of the statements in the mental well-being scale were analyzed, the expressions with high covariance values with more than one variable were excluded from the analysis (MWB1; MBW4; MBW10; MBW11; MBW13). The model was well-fitted with nine statements and one dimension. The standardized regression coefficients of the expressions of the variables are required to be above 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). As a result of the confirmatory factor analysis implemented in the measurement model, the standardized regression coefficients of the expressions of the voluntary simple lifestyle variable were between 0.533 and 0.787; The coefficients of the expressions in the mental well-being variable varied between 0.530 and 0.780.

When CA and CR values for the internal consistency reliability of the variables in the measurement model were also analyzed, the CA values for the voluntary simple lifestyle and mental well-being variables were designated to be 0.828 and 0.880, while the CR values were designated to be 0.831 and 0.880 (see Table 5). As for internal consistency reliability, CA and CR values are expected to be above 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). Since CA and CR values of the voluntary simple lifestyle and mental well-being variables are over 0.80 and the factor loads of the variables are over 0.50, it can be stated that the internal consistency reliability of the variables in the measurement model is ensured.

Table 5. Measuring Model Results

	Std. Regression Coefficient (λ)	Cronbach Alpha (α)	CR	AVE
Voluntary Simple Lifestyle		0.828	0.831	0.460
VSL 1. I try to live a simple life and not to buy articles which are not necessary.	0.647			
VSL 2. I do not do impulse buying.	0.707			
VSL 3. When I shop, I decide to do so after serious consideration of whether an article is necessary to me or not.	0.787			
VSL 5. Material affluence is very important to me.	0.717			
VSL 7. Except for traveling, I enjoy my leisure time without spending too much money.	0.620			
VSL 9. I prefer products with simple functions to those with complex functions.	0.533			
Mental Well-being		0.880	0.880	0.460

MWB 2. I have been feeling useful.	0.752
MWB 3. I have been feeling relaxed.	0.720
MWB 5. I have had energy to spare.	0.613
MWB 6. I have been dealing with problems well.	0.669
MWB 7. I have been thinking clearly.	0.530
MWB 8. I have been feeling good about myself.	0.721
MWB 9. I have been feeling close to other people.	0.615
MWB 12. I have been feeling loved.	0.618
MWB 14. I have been feeling cheerful.	0.780

$\chi^2=360.311$, $df=172$; $\chi^2/df=2.095$; $GFI=0.928$; $AGFI=0.899$; $CFI=0.947$; $TLI=0.935$; $RMSEA=0.043$

Notes: CR: Composite Reliability = $(\sum\lambda)^2 / (\sum\lambda)^2 + \sum e$; AVE: Average Variance Extracted = $\sum\lambda^2 / \sum\lambda^2 + \sum e$ and $e=1 - \lambda^2$.
 χ^2/df – Chi-Square Test Statistic /Degrees of Freedom; GFI – Goodness of Fit Index; AGFI – Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index;
 TLI – Tucker and Lewis Index; CFI – Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA – Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Standardized regression coefficients and AVE values were also analyzed for the convergent validity of the variables in the measurement model. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested that AVE values above 0.50. In the event that this value cannot be achieved, values slightly below 0.50 can also be accepted. When Table 5 is analyzed, it is observed that the AVE values for both variables are 0.46. Hair et al. (2010), convergent validity can be accepted if the CR values are above 0.60 and the CR values are greater than the AVE values. When these criteria are assessed, it is possible to talk about the existence of convergent validity for the variables in the measurement model.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity Analysis Results based on Fornell-Larcker Criteria

Construct	Voluntary Simple Lifestyle	Mental Well-being
Voluntary Simple Lifestyle	0.678	-
Mental Well-being	0.258**	0.678

Notes: *** $p < 0.001$; The bold values represent the square root of AVE.

Discriminant validity was primarily analyzed based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion (1981). In line with this criterion, the discriminant validity is tested based on the square root of the AVE values of the variables and the correlations between the variables. The square root values of the AVEs of the variables should be greater than the correlation coefficients between the variables. When Table 6 is analyzed, since the square root values of the AVEs are greater than the correlation between the two variables, discriminant validity was provided based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion.

Table 7. Discriminant Validity Analysis Results based on Heterotrait-Monotrait Value (HTMT)

Construct	Voluntary Simple Lifestyle	Mental Well-being
Voluntary Simple Lifestyle	-	-
Mental Well-being	0.256	-

Another criterion considered for discriminant validity is testing HTMT values. The HTMT value determined by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015), is formed by dividing the average of the correlations of the items belonging to each variable by the geometric mean of the correlations of the items pertinent to each variable. In line with this criterion, the HTMT ratio should be below 0.90 to be

able to talk about discriminant validity. As it can be observed from Table 7, it can be stated that discriminant validity is provided since this value is 0.256.

4.3. Hypothesis Tests

As a result of the tests carried out for the measurement model, the internal consistency reliability of the model and the convergence and discriminant validity were ensured. Thereafter, hypothesis tests were commenced with structural equation modeling. When the fit values of the structural equation model were analyzed, it was observed that a good fit developed. As a result of the structural model, it was set forth that people's voluntary simple lifestyles had a statistically significant and positive effect on their mental well-being ($\beta=0.258$; $p=0.00<0.05$). As individuals' voluntary simple lifestyles increase, their mental well-being also increases, or as their voluntary simple lifestyles decrease, their mental well-being also decreases. Based on this finding, hypothesis H1 is supported (see Table 8).

Table 8. Hypothesis Test Results

	Std. β coefficient	t value	p value	Result	
Voluntary Simple Lifestyle \rightarrow Mental Well-being	0.258	5.339	***	H1 accepted	
$\chi^2=239.650$, $df=86$; $\chi^2/df=2.787$; GFI=0.950; AGFI=0.930; CFI=0.956; TLI=0.946; RMSEA=0.054					
Female					
Voluntary Simple Lifestyle \rightarrow Mental Well-being	0.232	3.632	***	H2 accepted	
Male					
Voluntary Simple Lifestyle \rightarrow Mental Well-being	0.276	3.705	***		
$\chi^2=360.311$, $df=172$; $\chi^2/df=2.095$; GFI=0.928; AGFI=0.899; CFI=0.947; TLI=0.935; RMSEA=0.043					
Primary – High school graduate					
Voluntary Simple Lifestyle \rightarrow Mental Well-being	0.858	3.357	***	H3 accepted	
University student					
Voluntary Simple Lifestyle \rightarrow Mental Well-being	-0.002	-0.013	0.990		
University graduate					
Voluntary Simple Lifestyle \rightarrow Mental Well-being	0.226	3.230	***		
Postgraduate student/graduate					
Voluntary Simple Lifestyle \rightarrow Mental Well-being	0.300	3.362	***		
$\chi^2=666.073$, $df=344$; $\chi^2/df=1.936$; GFI=0.878; AGFI=0.830; CFI=0.912; TLI=0.892; RMSEA=0.039					
Notes: p value; ***p < 0.001					

Whether the effect of people's voluntary simple lifestyles on their mental well-being has a significant effect in terms of gender and their degrees of impact were tested with the developed H2 hypothesis. It was observed that the research model, in which the moderator effect of gender was analyzed, had good concordance values. The results showed that the voluntary simple lifestyles of men and women had a positive and statistically significant effect on their mental well-being, hence supporting the H2 hypothesis ($p<0.001$). Moreover, when the findings in Table 8 are assessed, it is observed that the effect of voluntary simple lifestyles on their mental well-being differs based on gender. The effect of voluntary simple lifestyles on the mental well-being of men ($\beta=0.276$) is slightly higher than that of women ($\beta=0.232$).

The effects and differences between the educational status of the individuals and their voluntary simple lifestyles on their mental well-being were analyzed with the H3 hypothesis. It was observed that the voluntary simple lifestyles of those who graduated from high school, primary school, and university, and those who were post-graduate students or graduates had a positive and statistically significant effect on their mental well-being, and H3 was partially accepted ($p < 0.001$) in terms of education. Among university students, no significant effect was designated on the mental well-being of voluntary simple lifestyles ($p = 0.990$).

It is observed that the degree of effect varies at the three education levels with a statistically significant effect. Based on Table 8, the group with the highest relative explanatory power in the effect of the simple voluntary lifestyle on their mental well-being was the high school-primary school graduates ($\beta = 0.858$).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Testing the effect of individuals' voluntary simple lifestyles on their mental well-being was ascertained as the primary purpose of this research. As an ancillary aim, the moderator role of gender and educational status variables in the effect of individuals' voluntary simple lifestyles on their mental well-being was analyzed. Individuals' voluntary simple lifestyles and mental well-being levels and differences according to gender and educational status were also tried to be explained with research questions in this study.

No significant difference was designated in the mean of voluntary simple lifestyle according to gender when the findings related to the research questions were analyzed. This finding is in line with the work of Johnston and Burton (2003) and Kury (2000). Based on the educational status; there was a significant difference between the two categories. The voluntary simple lifestyle levels of high school-primary school graduates ($\bar{x} = 3.971$) are higher than post-graduate students or graduates ($\bar{x} = 3.699$). This result demonstrates parallelism with the findings of the study of Cengiz and Torlak (2018) and Özgül (2011). Especially, like the findings of this study, Özgül (2011) also designated in her study that people with the highest level of voluntarily simple lifestyle are consumers with relatively lower education levels.

When the differences in the mental well-being levels of individuals are analyzed; significant differences were designated according to gender. Based on the results, men's mental well-being levels ($\bar{x} = 3.916$) are higher than women's ($\bar{x} = 3.738$). This finding is parallel to the findings by Zengin (2022) and Yıldız et al. (2021), and does not support the findings of the study by Özgüneş et al. (2019) and Duman et al. (2020). It is observed that the differences in mental well-being levels according to education level are significant. It is observed that the differences in mental well-being levels according to education level are significant. Accordingly, the mental well-being levels of primary - high school graduates ($\bar{x} = 4.050$) and post-graduate students or graduates ($\bar{x} = 3.938$) are higher than university

students ($\bar{x}=3.594$). This finding varies from the finding of Özgüneş et al. (2019). Moreover, when the individuals' voluntary simple lifestyle and mental well-being averages are analyzed; it was observed that individuals have higher mental well-being levels.

As a consequence of the structural equation model, it was observed that people's voluntary simple lifestyles had a statistically significant and positive effect on their mental well-being ($\beta=0.258$). As the individuals' voluntary simple lifestyles increase, their mental well-being also increases, or as their voluntary simple lifestyles decrease, their mental well-being levels decrease. This finding supports the H1 hypothesis of our study. This result confirms the positive relationship between the voluntary simple lifestyle, which is the general trend of international studies, and mental well-being (Brown and Kasser, 2005; Chowdhury, 2018; Hook et al., 2021).

The research was tested and supported by the H2 hypothesis, whether the effect of the voluntary simple lifestyles of the participants on their mental well-being has a significant effect in terms of gender and the degree of influence. Based on the findings, the effect of people's voluntary simple lifestyles on their mental well-being differs according to gender and it is slightly higher for men ($\beta=0.276$) than for women ($\beta=0.232$).

The effects and differences of the participants' voluntary simple lifestyles on their mental well-being were analyzed according to their educational status with the H3 hypothesis. In terms of educational status, it was observed that the voluntary simple lifestyles of primary school, high school, and university graduates and post-graduate students or graduates have a positive and statistically significant effect on their mental well-being. Among the university students, however, no significant effect was designated on the mental well-being of voluntary simple lifestyles. Consequently, it can be stated that H3 is partially accepted. The group having the highest relative explanatory power in the effect of the simple voluntary lifestyle on their mental well-being was primary school-high school graduates. The effect of a voluntary simple lifestyle on the mental well-being of people who are high school-primary school graduates ($\beta=0.858$) is significantly higher than those who are university graduates ($\beta=0.226$) and post-graduate students or graduates ($\beta=0.300$). No data on the causality of this result or any study with which we can compare this result have been encountered. However, it is clear that this result is quite remarkable and should be studied in more detail, considering that the voluntary simple lifestyle requires a certain awareness, knowledge, and awareness of nature and society and is an intellectual choice.

Individuals who adopt a voluntary simple lifestyle attach importance to spiritual values rather than material values and prefer simplicity. Businesses or brands with a target audience of simple lifestyle adopters can focus on value-based marketing strategies. For example, developing campaigns that focus on values such as sustainability, natural products, or connecting with the community, and emphasizing functionality in product and service design may be more attractive to consumers. Based on the research findings, the positive effect of a voluntary simple lifestyle on mental well-being can be used

in advertising and communication strategies for marketing practitioners. The effects of education level and gender on a voluntary simple lifestyle and mental well-being may help marketers to identify their target audience more specifically. For example, given that primary - high school graduates are more prone to simple lifestyles, marketing minimalist and sustainable products to this audience may be more effective. Research findings suggest that demand for products and services that contribute to individuals' mental well-being may increase. This result may be an opportunity for marketers to position their products and services as "contributing to mental well-being". This research is expected to contribute to the national marketing literature by examining the relationship between voluntary simple lifestyles and mental well-being. For marketing practitioners, this research may provide guidance on how to communicate more effectively with consumers and offer them more appropriate products and services.

Considering the results of the research findings in the context of the basic hypotheses, the relationship between voluntary simple lifestyle and mental well-being, and the variables of gender and educational status, it should be noted that international and national empirical studies and data on the causality and comparison of the findings are extremely limited. It should be stated that there is a need for more comprehensive quantitative and especially qualitative research regarding the variables and demographic characteristics of the variables analyzed in this study. Demographic factors (income status, occupational group, number of children, etc.) that may affect the relationship between voluntary simple lifestyle and mental well-being can be expanded and addressed in future studies. Again, when socio-cultural, economic, or personal factors are included in the model of the effect of voluntary simple lifestyle on mental well-being, the direction and severity of the effect can be examined. In particular, examining the mediating effects of financial issues such as consumers' price sensitivity and price-performance perceptions between simple lifestyle and happiness is very important in terms of providing more in-depth information on the research topic. Which advertising and promotion strategies for consumers who adopt a voluntary simple lifestyle may be more effective on their mental well-being may be another research topic. Examining the impact of mental well-being on consumer behaviors, consumption habits, purchasing decisions, brand perceptions, preferences, and brand loyalty and conducting more comprehensive studies on the two concepts examined in this research may contribute to this gap in the marketing field.

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