

My Happiness at School Reflects on My Life: The Role of Demographic Variables in Shaping the Relationship Between Academic Satisfaction and Well-Being

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Okuldaki Mutluluğum Hayatıma Yansıyor: Akademik Doyum ile İyi Oluş Arasındaki İlişkinin Demografik Değişkenler Açısından İncelenmesi

ABSTRACT

The university years represent a critical developmental stage in which academic satisfaction and subjective well-being are shaped by demographic factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and year of study. This study examined the relationship between academic life satisfaction and subjective well-being among undergraduate students in Turkey, while exploring the moderating roles of gender, socioeconomic status, and year level. Participants were 427 undergraduates (77.52% female, N = 331; 22.48% male, N = 96). Data were collected through the Personal Information Form, the Academic Life Satisfaction Scale, and the Short Form of the General Well-Being Scale. Results revealed a strong positive association between academic life satisfaction and subjective well-being. Importantly, gender significantly moderated this relationship, with the association being stronger among female students. These findings highlight the importance of considering gender differences in student support programs and suggest that efforts to improve academic satisfaction may foster students' overall psychological well-being.

Keywords: Academic life satisfaction, subjective well-being, demographics, undergraduate students

Öz

Üniversite yılları; akademik doyum ve öznel iyi oluşun cinsiyet, sosyoekonomik düzey ve sınıf düzeyi gibi demografik faktörler tarafından şekillendiği kritik bir gelişim dönemini temsil etmektedir. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki lisans öğrencileri arasında akademik yaşam doyumunu ile öznel iyi oluş arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeyi ve bu ilişkide cinsiyet, sosyoekonomik düzey ve sınıf düzeyinin düzenleyici (moderatör) rollerini araştırmayı amaçlamıştır. Araştırmanın katılımcılarını 427 lisans öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır (%77,52 kadın, N = 331; %22,48 erkek, N = 96). Veriler Kişisel Bilgi Formu, Akademik Yaşam Doyumu Ölçeği ve Genel İyi Oluş Kısa Formu kullanılarak toplanmıştır. Bulgular, akademik yaşam doyumunu ile öznel iyi oluş arasında güçlü ve pozitif bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir. Daha da önemlisi, bu ilişkide cinsiyetin anlamlı bir düzenleyici rol oynadığı ve ilişkinin kadın öğrencilerde daha güçlü olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu sonuçlar, öğrenci destek programlarında cinsiyet farklılıklarının dikkate alınmasının önemine işaret etmekte ve akademik doyumunu artırmaya yönelik çabaların öğrencilerin genel psikolojik iyi oluşunu da güçlendirebileceğini düşündürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akademik yaşam doyumunu, öznel iyi oluş, demografik değişkenler, lisans öğrencileri

Introduction

University life represents a critical period in which individuals not only acquire academic knowledge but also build social relationships, pursue personal development, and construct their identities across different domains of life. During this process, students' satisfaction with their academic experiences becomes an important determinant not only of their academic achievement but also of their psychological well-being. Higher education institutions provide a multidimensional environment that supports both students' cognitive and affective development; the experiences gained in this context can have direct effects on individuals' overall life satisfaction and mental health.

In recent years, the relationship between academic life satisfaction and subjective well-being has attracted increasing attention in the psychology and education literature. The extent to which students are satisfied with their university experiences shapes not only their current psychological state but also their academic performance, social relationships, and future aspirations. However, the role of demographic variables—particularly gender—in this relationship has not yet been sufficiently clarified in the existing research. To gain a deeper understanding of the interplay between students' levels of academic satisfaction and their well-being, it is essential to analyse such individual differences carefully.

Academic Life Satisfaction

Academic life satisfaction is a multidimensional construct that reflects students' evaluations of the university environment, academic processes, interactions with faculty members, learning experiences, and campus life, as well as their overall satisfaction with these experiences (Zalazar-Jaime et al., 2022). This concept encompasses not only students' academic performance but also their emotional attachment to the university, the extent to which they feel safe and supported in the academic context, and their search for meaning throughout the educational process. In the literature, academic satisfaction has been examined both as an outcome variable (e.g., the level of satisfaction produced by the quality of instruction) and as a causal factor (e.g., an element influencing psychological well-being) (e.g., Lent et al., 2012, 2014). Research conducted within the framework of social cognitive career theory further demonstrates that academic satisfaction is directly associated with self-efficacy beliefs, motivation to achieve academic goals, and career planning (Lent et al., 2007). Thus, students' satisfaction with their educational

experiences not only reflects their perceptions of the current learning environment but also shapes their outlook on the future.

Key factors influencing academic life satisfaction include relationships with faculty, academic support systems, the quality of learning materials, campus social opportunities, and students' attitudes toward learning (Komarraju et al., 2010). For example, instructors' ability to communicate openly, provide constructive feedback, and establish positive relationships with students are core elements that enhance satisfaction (Komarraju et al., 2010). Similarly, the adequacy of institutional support services (e.g., guidance, counseling, academic mentoring) strengthens students' sense of belonging, thereby contributing positively to academic satisfaction (Thomas et al., 2025).

A considerable body of empirical research has confirmed that academic satisfaction is positively associated with students' levels of psychological well-being. For instance, Çivitçi (2012) found that among Turkish university students, academic satisfaction was significantly related to life satisfaction and psychological well-being. Likewise, Malkoç and Yalçın (2015) reported that increases in indicators of subjective well-being accompanied higher levels of academic satisfaction. These findings indicate that academic satisfaction reflects not only the ability to meet educational needs but also the capacity to address emotional and social needs. Conversely, low levels of academic satisfaction have been linked to negative outcomes such as depression, burnout, lack of academic motivation, and thoughts of withdrawal from university (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Krumrei-Mancuso et al., 2013). The first year of university, in particular, is considered a critical period in shaping students' academic satisfaction levels. Negative academic or social experiences during this time may weaken students' attachment to the institution and to academic life (Tinto, 2012).

Finally, cultural context plays an important role in shaping how academic satisfaction is experienced. Studies conducted in Western countries suggest that in highly individualistic societies, personal achievement and a sense of individual progress enhance satisfaction, whereas in collectivist cultures, belonging, group support, and social approval are more decisive (Kim & Choi, 2014). In culturally collectivist contexts such as Turkey, students' academic satisfaction tends to be rooted in perceptions of social support and community bonds within the university environment. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that academic life satisfaction is not only an indicator of contentment with the educational process but also a

complex construct intertwined with students' psychological health, social integration, and future orientation. Therefore, understanding and enhancing academic life satisfaction among university students holds the potential to strengthen not only their academic performance but also their general well-being.

Subjective Well-Being

Subjective well-being is a psychological state defined by an individual's overall satisfaction with life, frequent experience of positive emotions, and lower levels of negative emotions (Diener, 1984). This concept is based on individuals' subjective evaluations of their quality of life and mental health. In the context of university students, subjective well-being is shaped not only by academic achievement but also by a combination of multiple factors such as social support, personal competence, economic conditions, life purpose, and sense of belonging (Keyes & Annas, 2009).

Seligman (2011), one of the leading theorists of the positive psychology approach, conceptualized subjective well-being from a broader perspective by developing the PERMA model. According to this model, well-being consists of five core components: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment. The coexistence of these components enhances both happiness and meaning in life. Research conducted particularly among university youth shows that these elements of the PERMA model are associated with positive outcomes such as academic engagement, psychological resilience, hope, and life satisfaction (Kern et al., 2015; Umucu et al., 2020).

Studies conducted in Turkey similarly emphasize the multidimensional nature of subjective well-being. Malkoç and Yalçın (2015) found that subjective well-being among university students is closely related to variables such as self-compassion, social support, and psychological resilience. Likewise, Çivitçi (2012) highlighted the determining effect of perceived social support on subjective well-being, noting that students' psychological health is shaped not only by individual but also by environmental factors.

On the other hand, access to economic resources is one of the important variables affecting students' levels of subjective well-being. Financial difficulties, when combined with stress and academic pressure, may negatively impact psychological resilience (Eisenberg et al., 2016). Therefore, enhancing subjective well-being should be addressed not only through individual interventions but also through

structural and environmental support.

University years represent a developmental period marked by increased autonomy, identity exploration, academic pressure, and social role transitions. Although this period offers opportunities for personal growth, a growing body of research indicates that university students are also at heightened risk for psychological distress. Studies consistently report elevated levels of stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and academic burnout among university populations (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 2007). Social challenges such as adaptation to new environments, separation from family, financial strain, and uncertainty about future careers further contribute to fluctuations in well-being during this period. Consequently, subjective well-being among university students does not merely reflect general life satisfaction but captures a dynamic interplay between academic demands, social integration, and psychological resilience. Examining well-being within this specific population is therefore theoretically and practically significant.

The Relationship Between Academic Life Satisfaction and Subjective Well-Being

A substantial body of empirical research has documented a positive association between academic life satisfaction and indicators of psychological well-being among university students (Çivitçi, 2012; Kaya & Erdem, 2021). For example, Çivitçi (2012) found that academic satisfaction was significantly related to life satisfaction and psychological well-being in a university sample from Turkey. Similarly, Malkoç and Yalçın (2015) reported that higher academic satisfaction was associated with greater resilience and subjective well-being. Beyond individual studies, large-scale investigations and meta-analyses have also demonstrated links between academic experiences and broader well-being outcomes (Kaya & Erdem, 2021; Zalazar-Jaime et al., 2022). These findings collectively suggest that academic satisfaction represents not merely an educational outcome but a psychologically relevant correlate of students' overall functioning.

In the meta-analysis by Robbins et al. (2004), the effects of gender on academic satisfaction and performance were found to be complex, with some cases showing higher academic satisfaction among female students. Similarly, Eisenberg et al. (2007), in their study examining the relationship between gender, academic stress, and satisfaction, reported that women experienced more academic stress, but the effect of stress on satisfaction differed by gender. However, the role of demographic

variables -particularly gender- in the relationship between academic satisfaction and psychological well-being among university students has not yet been sufficiently investigated.

Therefore, gender emerges as an important determinant in the relationship between academic life satisfaction and general well-being. The literature highlights significant differences between male and female students in the prevalence of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, somatic complaints, and sexual violence (Nogueira et al., 2022). For instance, in a cross-sectional study in Portugal involving 560 first-year university students aged 18–24 and 79.6% of whom were female, female students reported significantly more negative outcomes compared to males in terms of mental health, academic life satisfaction (particularly in the “personal satisfaction” sub-dimension), and perceptions of psychological vulnerability. These findings underscore the strong influence of gender on the relationship between academic satisfaction and general well-being and highlight the need for mental health and satisfaction interventions tailored to the specific needs of female students (Nogueira et al., 2022).

In Turkey, studies with university students have more often examined gender differences in relation to general adjustment, life satisfaction, and psychological resilience. For example, Çelik and Çırak (2020) examined general adjustment levels of students at Siirt University and found no significant differences by gender. Similarly, Kazımoğlu and Oğuz-Duran (2019) investigated the relationship between life satisfaction and demographic variables among Meskhetian university students in Turkey and reported no significant gender differences. On the other hand, in a study with young adults, Yukay Yüksel et al. (2020) found no gender differences in life satisfaction but reported significant gender-based differences in psychological resilience and social media addiction. However, these studies did not directly focus on the concepts of academic life satisfaction or subjective well-being.

Recent studies also indicate that socioeconomic status and grade level moderate the relationship between academic life satisfaction and subjective well-being. For instance, it has been reported that university students with lower perceived socioeconomic status have significantly lower life satisfaction scores compared to those with medium or high levels (Yıkılmaz & Demir-Güdül, 2015). In an international study, happiness in the school environment was found to mitigate the negative effects of low income on academic performance, whereas in 10th grade, the relationship between school happiness and academic achievement was

stronger among students with higher socioeconomic status and male students (Hochschild Ovalle et al., 2024). Meta-analyses have also shown that the relationship between academic achievement and well-being differs significantly depending on moderator variables such as students’ grade level and school level (Kaya & Erdem, 2021). Furthermore, a study conducted in Portugal reported that students with lower socioeconomic status and higher grade levels had greater perceptions of psychological vulnerability and lower subjective well-being (Nogueira et al., 2022). These findings demonstrate the multidimensional role of socioeconomic status and grade level in student experiences, suggesting that educational interventions addressing academic satisfaction and well-being should take these demographic differences into account.

In the Turkish cultural context, family interdependence and collectivist values remain influential in shaping youth experiences, even as individual autonomy increases (Ayçiçeği-Dinn & Caldwell-Harris, 2013; Kagıtcıbası, 2005). Research with university students from Turkey has shown that familistic and individualistic tendencies coexist, with female students often reporting higher adherence to familistic values (Önder-Erol & Altınoluk-Düztaş, 2016), suggesting that gendered social expectations persist in educational settings. In such a context, educational attainment may not only reflect personal accomplishment but carry broader social and relational significance, particularly for women.

Although the association between academic life satisfaction and well-being has been widely documented, less attention has been given to the conditional nature of this relationship. Specifically, it remains unclear whether and for whom academic satisfaction translated more strongly into general well-being. Most studies have focused on average associations rather than examining whether this link varies systematically across demographic groups (e.g., gender). Addressing this gap, this study investigates the moderating roles of gender, socioeconomic status, and grade level within a multi-university undergraduate sample from Turkey, extending the literature beyond main-effect findings.

This Study

The main aim of this study is to examine the relationship between university students’ academic life satisfaction and general well-being, and to test the moderating roles of gender, socioeconomic status, and grade level in this relationship. The findings are expected to contribute to the theoretical discussion on whether the relationship between

academic life satisfaction and well-being represents a uniform association or a demographically conditioned process. By testing moderation effects, this study extends the literature beyond main-effect approaches. The results may also inform the development of gender-sensitive intervention programs in higher education.

Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant relationship between university students' academic life satisfaction and their general well-being?
2. Do gender, socioeconomic status, and grade level play a significant moderating role in this relationship?

Based on these research questions, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between university students' academic life satisfaction and their general well-being.

H2: Gender, socioeconomic status, and grade level moderate the relationship between university students' academic life satisfaction and their general well-being.

Methods

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of undergraduate students enrolled at various universities across different regions of Turkey (Ahi Evran University, Akdeniz University, Alaaddin Keykubat University, Atatürk University, Avrasya University, Çanakkale 18 Mart University, Çoruh University, Ege University, Gazi University, Giresun University, Gümüşhane University, Hacettepe University, Istanbul University, Karadeniz Technical University, Kocaeli University, Ordu University, Samsun 19 Mayıs University, Samsun University, Trabzon University). The participants were studying in a variety of departments, including psychology, law, medicine, dentistry, interior architecture, preschool education, pharmacy, philosophy, and sociology. A total of 427 participants took part in the study ($N = 427$; $M_{age} = 21.63$; $SD_{age} = 2.86$; 17–40). Of these, 331 were female ($M_{age} = 21.72$; $SD_{age} = 3.07$; 18–40), and 96 were male ($M_{age} = 21.35$; $SD_{age} = 1.97$; 17–28). For participants' demographic information, see Table 1.

Measures

Demographics Form

This form, prepared by the researchers, collected information on participants' universities and departments, age, gender, grade level, and perceived income level. These variables were considered to describe the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample and to include as moderator variables in the analyses.

Academic Life Satisfaction Scale

This self-report scale, originally developed by Nogueira et al. (2019) and adapted into Turkish by Odaci et al. (2021a), measures individuals' general satisfaction with their academic life. The scale consists of 8 items, such as "I am satisfied with the higher education institution I attend." Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*. Scores are calculated for two sub-dimensions - "personal satisfaction" and "academic environment satisfaction" - ranging from 4 to 20 each, and a total score ranging from 8 to 40. Higher scores indicate higher levels of academic life satisfaction. Exploratory factor analysis on the original version revealed a two-factor structure (personal satisfaction and academic environment satisfaction) that explained 57.24% of the total variance. Factor loadings ranged between .50 and .80, with internal consistency coefficients of .72 for personal satisfaction, .74 for academic environment satisfaction, and .80 for the overall scale (Nogueira et al., 2019). Confirmatory factor analysis on the Turkish version supported the original two-factor structure and showed good model fit. Factor loadings ranged between .51 and .82, and the Cronbach's alpha was reported as .82. These results indicated that the Turkish version is a valid and reliable instrument (Odaci et al., 2021a). In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was .80.

Short Form of the General Well-Being Scale

This self-report instrument, developed by Longo et al. (2018) and adapted into Turkish by Odaci et al. (2021b), assesses individuals' general psychological well-being. It consists of 14 items, such as "I feel happy" and "I feel close to the people around me." Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "Not true at all" to 5 = "Always true." The total score ranges from 14 to 70, with higher scores indicating higher levels of general well-being. In the validation of the original form, confirmatory factor analysis supported a one-factor structure (CFI = .934, TLI = .922, RMSEA = .090), with factor loadings ranging from .61 to .87.

Reliability was evaluated using McDonald's hierarchical omega (ω_h), which was reported as .86 (Longo et al., 2020). For the Turkish version, confirmatory factor analysis supported a one-factor structure, with factor loadings ranging between .44 and .59. Cronbach's alpha was found to be .84, indicating acceptable reliability (Odaci et al., 2021b). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha was .89.

Procedure

Data were collected through the online survey platform Qualtrics (<https://www.qualtrics.com>). At the beginning of the study, participants were provided with an information sheet describing the study's aim, scope, voluntary participation principle, and data confidentiality. After digitally approving the informed consent form, participants

proceeded to complete the study. During data collection, participants first completed the demographic information form, followed by the Short Form of the General Well-Being Scale and the Academic Life Satisfaction Scale. All instruments were set to mandatory response to prevent missing data. Completion time for the instruments was approximately 8–10 minutes. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time. Data collection was carried out between May 18, 2025, and June 16, 2025.

This study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Social and Human Sciences at Karadeniz Technical University (Ethics Approval Code: C85FD04A-8B92-4D03-BAED-69BB82901C8C / Ethics Approval Date: June 10, 2025).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Participants

| | | Female | | Male | |
|--------------|----------------------|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| | | <i>N</i> | % | <i>N</i> | % |
| Gender | | 331 | 77.52 | 96 | 22.48 |
| Grade level | 4 th year | 96 | 29.00 | 25 | 26.04 |
| | 3 rd year | 78 | 23.56 | 26 | 27.08 |
| | 2 nd year | 68 | 20.54 | 21 | 21.88 |
| | 1 st year | 89 | 26.89 | 24 | 25.00 |
| Income level | Low | 11 | 3.32 | 6 | 6.25 |
| | Lower-Middle | 62 | 18.73 | 19 | 19.79 |
| | Middle | 199 | 60.12 | 52 | 54.17 |
| | Upper-Middle | 55 | 16.62 | 17 | 17.71 |
| | High | 4 | 1.21 | 2 | 2.08 |

Data Analysis

First, missing data and normality assumptions were checked. The examinations showed that there was no missing data in the dataset. In addition, the normality assumptions were met for all variables. When examining the assumptions of normality, use standardized z-scores to identify potential univariate outliers. For multivariate normality, the Mahalanobis distance criterion was calculated using $df = 3$ and $p = .001$, yielding a critical value of 16.266 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Mahalanobis distance values were evaluated. For standardized scores, the threshold of ± 3.29 was used. The results indicated that the dataset met the assumptions of normality. Subsequently, multicollinearity among the variables was assessed. Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were examined to assess multicollinearity. To satisfy the assumption of no multicollinearity, tolerance values should exceed .10, and VIF values should be below 10 (Field, 2024). The analyses indicated that there was no evidence

of multicollinearity among the variables. For comparisons of variables by gender, an independent samples t-test was conducted; for examining the relationships between variables, Pearson correlation analysis, moderation analysis, and slope analysis were used. Analyses were carried out using the IBM SPSS 25.0 (IBM SPSS Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) statistical program and the Process add-on.

Results

First, an independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether participants' academic life satisfaction and general well-being scores differed by gender (see Table 2).

As shown in Table 2, university students' general well-being did not differ significantly by gender ($t_{(425)} = .46, p = .646$). Similarly, their academic life satisfaction did not differ significantly by gender ($t_{(425)} = .13, p = .898$).

Table 2*Comparison of Academic Life Satisfaction and General Well-Being Scores by Gender*

| | Gender | N | M | SD | t | df | p |
|----------------------------|--------|-----|-------|------|-----|-----|------|
| General Well-Being | Male | 96 | 48.48 | 8.30 | .46 | 425 | .646 |
| | Female | 331 | 48.02 | 8.61 | | | |
| Academic Life Satisfaction | Male | 96 | 27.97 | 4.52 | .13 | 425 | .898 |
| | Female | 331 | 27.90 | 4.86 | | | |

Next, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships among grade level, socioeconomic level, general well-being, and academic life satisfaction. The findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3*Correlations Among Grade Level, Socioeconomic Level, General Well-Being, and Academic Life Satisfaction*

| | Grade Level | Socioeconomic Level | General Well-Being |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Socioeconomic Level | .03 | | |
| General Well-Being | .17** | .26** | |
| Academic Life Satisfaction | .04 | .18** | .52** |

** $p < .01$

As seen in Table 3, there were significant positive relationships between general well-being and grade level, socioeconomic level, and academic life satisfaction.

Table 4*Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship Between Academic Life Satisfaction and General Well-Being*

| | b | SE | t | p | LLCI | ULCI |
|------------|-------|-----|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| Constant | 48.13 | .35 | 137.11 | <.001 | 47.44 | 48.82 |
| Gender | -.41 | .84 | -.48 | .629 | -2.06 | 1.25 |
| ALS | -.92 | .07 | 12.51 | <.001 | .78 | 1.07 |
| Gender*ALS | .44 | .18 | 2.38 | .018 | .08 | .80 |

Note. ALS = Academic Life Satisfaction; LLCI = Lower Limit Confidence Interval; ULCI = Upper Limit Confidence Interval

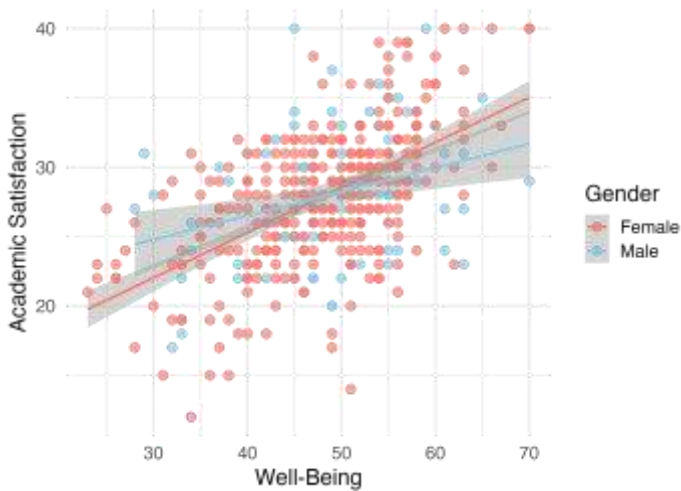
Next, a slope analysis was conducted to examine in more detail the moderating role of gender in the relationship between academic life satisfaction and general well-being (Figure 1). The results of this analysis showed that the slope was significant for both male and female students (respectively; $\beta = .58$, $SE = .16$, $t = 3.53$, $p < .001$, $CI [0.26, 0.91]$; $\beta = 1.02$, $SE = .08$, $t = 12.42$, $p < .001$, $CI [0.86, 1.18]$). Thus, as academic life satisfaction increased, general well-being also increased in both male and female students. However, this relationship was found to be stronger among female students compared to male students. On the other hand, socioeconomic level and grade level were not found

Accordingly, as participants' grade level, socioeconomic level, and academic life satisfaction increased, their general well-being levels also increased. Furthermore, a significant positive relationship was found between academic life satisfaction and socioeconomic level, indicating that higher socioeconomic levels are associated with higher general well-being.

Lastly, moderation analyses were conducted to examine whether gender, grade level, and socioeconomic level moderated the relationship between academic life satisfaction and general well-being. Results showed that the model consisting of gender, academic life satisfaction, and their interaction (gender*academic life satisfaction) significantly predicted general well-being ($F_{(3,423)} = 55.69$, $R^2 = .28$, $p < .001$). Moreover, gender was found to play a moderating role in the relationship between academic life satisfaction and general well-being ($\beta = .44$, $SE = .18$, $t = 2.38$, $p = .018$, $CI [0.08, 0.80]$); see Table 4.

to significantly moderate the relationship between academic life satisfaction and general well-being (respectively; $\beta = .10$, $SE = .07$, $t = 1.58$, $p = .114$, $CI [-0.03, 0.23]$; $\beta = .08$, $SE = .09$, $t = .88$, $p = .379$, $CI [-0.10, 0.27]$).

Figure 1
Moderating Role of Gender in the Relationship Between Academic Life Satisfaction and General Well-Being.



Discussion

The present study examined the association between academic life satisfaction and general well-being among university students and tested whether this association varied according to gender, socioeconomic level, and grade level. Consistent with H1, academic life satisfaction was positively associated with general well-being. However, H2 was partially supported: gender significantly moderated the association, whereas socioeconomic level and grade level did not.

The findings largely align with previous research. Studies highlighting the role of academic satisfaction in predicting overall life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Çivitci, 2012; Malkoç & Yalçın, 2015; Zalazar-Jaime et al., 2022) support the findings. Academic life satisfaction is a multidimensional experience that reflects not only students' educational processes but also their social relationships, sense of belonging, and self-efficacy. Therefore, students with higher academic satisfaction would be expected to report higher levels of general well-being.

A key contribution of the study concerns the moderating role of gender. The literature provides evidence that gender can influence the academic satisfaction–well-being relationship in different ways. For instance, Robbins et al. (2004) and Eisenberg et al. (2007) reported that female students generally experience higher stress in academic processes, but the effect of this stress on satisfaction may differ from that of male students. In this study, the stronger link between academic life satisfaction and well-being among female students may be explained by the fact that

women tend to see satisfaction from academic experiences as a more central component of their psychological well-being. Furthermore, the importance women place on emotional experiences and social bonds may strengthen the connection between academic satisfaction and general well-being (Nogueira et al., 2022).

Importantly, no significant difference was found in mean academic life satisfaction or general well-being scores between genders, which is consistent with some previous studies (Çelik & Çırak, 2020; Kazımoğlu & Oğuz-Duran, 2019). That is, while male and female students may report similar average levels of satisfaction and well-being, gender-based differences can still exist in how these two variables are related. However, moderation analysis revealed that the strength of the association between variables differed by gender. This distinction highlights a methodological difference between mean-level comparisons and relational dynamics. Thus, the observed gender effect reflects a difference in *relational strength* rather than in average levels.

Contrary to our expectations, socioeconomic level and grade level did not moderate the relationship between academic life satisfaction and well-being. One possible explanation is that while these variables may influence overall levels of well-being or academic satisfaction, they may not alter the psychological integration between the two constructs. In other words, academic satisfaction may function as a relatively stable contributor to well-being across different socioeconomic backgrounds and grade levels. It is also possible that the range of socioeconomic variability within the present sample was limited, reducing the likelihood of detecting moderation effects. Future research should examine these variables in more socioeconomically diverse sample and through longitudinal designs.

The absence of significant moderating roles for grade level and socioeconomic level indicates that these variables do not directly shape the academic satisfaction–well-being relationship. However, the positive correlations of socioeconomic level with both academic life satisfaction and general well-being suggest that financial resources support students' life satisfaction and psychological resilience. This aligns with the “accomplishment” and “access to resources” components of Seligman's (2011) PERMA model.

From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the need for gender-sensitive psychosocial support programs in university settings. For female students in particular,

counselling services, mentorship programs, and inclusive campus environments may strengthen general well-being. While the positive associations observed is theoretically meaningful, it should be interpreted cautiously given the shared self-report methodology.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, although the data were collected anonymously and via a secure platform, reliance on self-report measures introduces the possibility of both social desirability bias and common method variance. Because academic satisfaction and well-being were assessed using self-report instruments within the same survey session, the observed associations may have been partially inflated due to shared measurement context. Research in positive psychology has emphasized that social desirability and other methodological variances may inflate associations between variables (De Beer et al., 2024). Future studies could include social desirability measures such as the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) for statistical control.

Another limitation concerns the measurement of socioeconomic level, which was assessed using a single subjective item. While subjective socioeconomic status has been shown to relate to well-being, single-item measures may lack sufficient precision to detect moderation effects. Future research could employ multidimensional and objective indicators of socioeconomic status to clarify this issue.

The sample of this study represents a PRIME group (Productive, Researchable, Independent, Mobile, Educated) of university students. Lockwood and Van Den Bos (2025) highlight that PRIME samples are relatively homogeneous in demographic, cultural, and socioeconomic characteristics, which limits the generalizability of findings to other populations and cultures. While such groups are convenient for research, their overrepresentation poses challenges for generalizing findings to different age groups and addressing global issues. Moreover, the predominance of female participants (approximately 78%) may limit the generalizability of gender comparisons. Although moderation analyses indicated a significant interaction effect, the relatively smaller male sub-group may have reduced statistical power and affected the stability of the estimates for men. Therefore, the gender-based moderation findings should be interpreted with caution. Future research should employ more heterogeneous samples with more balanced gender distributions to overcome these limitations and test the cross-cultural

validity of findings.

Finally, this study was conducted in the Turkish context. Therefore, the relationships between academic satisfaction and well-being should be interpreted considering cultural differences. Conducting similar studies across cultures is crucial for assessing the universality of findings. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to examine changes in the academic satisfaction–well-being relationship over time to clarify directionality. Given the cross-sectional nature of the study, the findings should be interpreted as relational rather than causal. Moreover, comparing different university types (e.g., public–private), faculties, and cultural settings could enhance generalizability. Qualitative methods may also provide deeper insights into students’ personal experiences and meanings underlying their perceptions of academic satisfaction.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrated a positive association between academic life satisfaction and general well-being among university students and showed that this association varied by gender but not socioeconomic or grade level. The findings highlight that academic experiences are meaningfully linked to students’ well-being, while also indicating that relational dynamics may differ in the absence of average-level differences between groups. These results should be interpreted within the limits of a cross-sectional, self-report design. Future longitudinal and multi-method research is needed to clarify causal pathways and contextual influences.

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