

Forgiveness and Subjective Happiness of University Students

Meryem Vural Batık¹, Tuğba Yılmaz Bingöl², Aynur Fırınıcı Kodaz³ & Rumeysa Hoşoğlu⁴

¹ PhD., Faculty of Education, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Samsun, Turkey

² PhD., Faculty of Education, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Foundation University, Istanbul, Turkey

³ PhD., Hatice Gani Erverdi Secondary School, Bursa, Turkey

⁴ PhD., Faculty of Education, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey

Correspondence: Meryem Vural Batık, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Faculty of Education, Samsun, Turkey.

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Abstract

This research was conducted to investigate the forgiveness and subjective happiness level of university students in terms of gender, faculty, grade, residence, and parental attitudes, and to determine predictive role of forgiveness on subjective happiness. The study group consists of 828 university students (56.3% female, 43.7% male). The data was collected through the Forgiveness Scale and the Subjective Happiness Scale. The results of the study indicated that the level of forgiveness and subjective happiness of university students did not differ significantly in terms of gender and residence. On the other hand, it was found that the forgiveness level of third and fourth grade students and students who enrolled in Faculty of Theology were significantly higher than the other students. Moreover, the students whose parents are protective and democratic attitudes reported significantly higher levels of forgiveness and subjective happiness. There is a positive relationship but low between forgiveness and subjective happiness and; forgiveness was found as a significant predictor of subjective happiness.

Keywords: Forgiveness, Subjective happiness, Well being.

1. Introduction

Forgiveness has as much history as mankind and the concept of forgiveness has a place in the art, literature and the most of the religions for many years (Droll, 1984). Although for a long time, the concept of forgiveness was within the field of interest of philosophy and religion, because of involving forgiveness of others who have wronged you, and forgiveness of yourself, psychology paid attention to the forgiveness (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Indeed, the Gestalt therapy emphasizes the importance of forgiveness by underlying the negative effects of past experiences which can be defined as unfinished business, on the individual's life.

In the literature of psychology there are many different definitions of forgiveness in the field of psychology. Enright (1996) defined forgiveness as "a willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior toward one who unjustly injured us, while fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity, and even love toward him or her" (p.113). It is also important to make distinction between forgiveness and similar constructs (Yıldırım, 2009) such as condonation. Condonation occurs when an individual who was hurt or offended knows denies the wrong behaviour and does not expect any apology or confession. Then, the anger and resentment that appeared are denied and suppressed (Scobie & Scobie, 1998). Another concept that can be confused with forgiveness is justification. In justification a person may think the behavior exhibited by someone is a wrong behavior at first but then, he makes some evaluations and the exhibited behavior is viewed as the best choice or alternative (Murphy & Hampton, 1988). Forgiveness can also be confused with forgetting. Forgetting is eliminating the conscious awareness of a painful event or events that they have experienced. Forgetting no longer allows solving the problem that disturbs the person. On the other hand forgiveness allows to think about the problem and to solve it (Fincham, Hall & Beach, 2005). Accordingly, forgiveness is not condoning, forgetting, or ignoring a hurtful action (Madsen, Gygi, Hammond & Plowman, 2009); however forgiveness occurs when a person who has suffered or hurt unjustly chooses to give up his or her right to resentment and revenge voluntarily (Enright & Coyle, 1998).

Forgiveness involves forgiveness of self that the individual forgives himself/herself because of his/her wrongdoing and forgiveness of others who hurt or offended him/her (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). However, majority of

previous research has focused on forgiveness of others. According to Scobie & Scobie (1998), a person who has offended or hurt may freely made choice to give up revenge and his or her right to resentment because of; (a) restoring an existing or changed relationship, (b) reducing the negative effects of harmful or wrong behavior for both forgiver and forgiven, (c) giving opportunity to a transgressor to repair his/her mistake and helping the forgiver to not to play a victim role and (d) getting rid of negative effects of wrong or hurtful action. An individual who forgives willingly strives to respond with generosity, compassion, and kindness toward a person who caused a hurt instead of having negative feelings, judgments behaviors such as resentment toward the wrongdoer (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000).

There are many factors that may affect the tendency of individuals to forgive. McCullough and Hoyt (2002) noted that some people are more likely to forgive than others. It has been suggested that this difference is due to personal characteristics (Kamat, Jones & Row, 2006) such as empathy, having common sense, emotional maturity and being resilient to negative feelings and being hurt. Moreover, the level of intimacy in the relationship is an important determinant of tendency to forgive. Additionally, Bugay and Demir (2011) stated that the features of transgression were important in forgiving others. Accordingly, the features of transgression such as responsibility of transgression, repairability of transgression, the outcomes of transgression, transgression severity, apologizing, the subject of transgression (family, education, romantic relations, social life, friendship), whether the transgression was intentional or not and transgression whom it was made play a larger role in forgiving others. In short, forgiveness involves personal and interpersonal processes (McCullough, Pargament & Thoresen, 2000).

Previous research has examined the influence of forgiveness on individuals as well as the factors influencing the tendency of individuals to forgive. For example, Tse and Yip (2009) indicated that forgiveness of others is positively related to interpersonal adjustment and psychological well-being. Similarly, numerous studies have shown that individuals who forgive transgressions tend to experience greater subjective well-being and psychological well-being (Allemand, Hill, Ghaemmaghami & Martin, 2012; Bono, McCullough & Root, 2008; Chan, 2013; Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006; McCullough, 2000; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). In addition forgiveness was found related with happiness and more happy individuals tend to forgive more than less happy individuals (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Friedman, 1992; Maltby, Day & Barber, 2005; Toussaint & Friedman, 2009; Worthington, Berry and Parrott, 2001). Forgiveness enhances positive thinking (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick & Johnson, 2001; Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and happiness represents positive emotions (Fordyce, 2005). From this point of view, it is not surprising that these two concepts are related.

In many of the definitions made about happiness it can be seen that happiness, subjective well-being and psychological well-being used interchangeably and subjective well-being and psychological well-being are two constructs that are closely related with happiness. While subjective well-being is defined as a general and subjective evaluation of happiness; psychological well-being is defined as the evaluations and decisions of mental health professionals about an individual's life (Myers & Deiner, 1995, Diener, 2000). Basically, happiness is a feeling that is felt or an individual's situation during this feeling (Bülül & Giray, 2011). There are three components in the definition of happiness. First one is positive affect which emphasized experiencing positive emotions such as joy, joy, enthusiasm, interest and excitement more frequently. Second one is negative affect that reflects experiencing unpleasant emotions such as anger, fear, anxiety, guilt, hate and sadness. The third one is life satisfaction that involves cognitive evaluations of an individual's about various domains of his/her life (work, marriage, health, education, etc.) (Doğan, Eryılmaz & Ercan, 2014). In short, subjective happiness can be defined "subjective evaluations of a person that he/she is happy or unhappy" (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999).

Individuals with high subjective happiness have more positive thoughts about themselves, see the world as supporting their happiness, and respond more quickly to adverse events (Lee & Im, 2007; Seidlitz, Wyer & Diener, 1997). While some individuals can be happy with small things despite their negative living conditions and difficulties, some individuals may be seem chronically unhappy even they have good circumstances (Lyubomirsky, 2001, Myers & Diener, 1995). Therefore, many researchers have attempted to examine the relationship between happiness and personal factors. The level of subjective happiness proved to be associated with factors such as life events (Lee & Im, 2007), income level (Takashi & Kobayashi, 2011), emotion, thought and behaviors (Layous, Nelson & Lyubomirsky, 2012). In addition to factors that may effect subjective happiness, research has also examined the impact of subjective happiness on individuals. Subjective happiness was found positively correlated with positive emotions, satisfying relationships (Diener & Seligman, 2002), self-esteem (Furnham & Cheng, 2000), mental health (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005), life satisfaction (Diener, 2000) and forgiveness (Maltby et al. , 2005). Maltby et al. (2005) emphasizes the importance of forgiveness as a human strength and they indicated the relationship between forgiveness and happiness. Based on the previous studies mentioned above and taken into account that the

forgiveness is the reflection of an individual's positive thinking, it is expected that forgiveness may have a crucial impact on subjective happiness. Additionally other variables which may have an influence on forgiveness and happiness should also be considered. Thus, this research was conducted to investigate the forgiveness and subjective happiness level of university students in terms of gender, faculty, class, residence, and parental attitudes, and to determine the possible predictive role of forgiveness on subjective happiness.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The current study which aims to examine the forgiveness and subjective happiness level of university students in terms of different variables has been conducted in accordance with general screening model.

In this study, participants were 828 university students enrolled at Ondokuz Mayıs University, Turkey. Detailed information about participants' was presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' descriptive statistics

		n	%
Faculty	Faculty of Education	222	26,8
	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	207	25,0
	Faculty of Theology	157	19,0
	Faculty of Engineering	59	7,1
	Vocational High School	183	22,1
Grade	First grade	122	14,7
	Second grade	272	32,9
	Third grade	223	26,9
	Fourth grade	211	25,5
Gender	Female	466	56,3
	Male	362	43,7
Income Level	Low	50	6,0
	Medium	605	73,1
	High	173	20,9
Parental Attitude	Negligent	31	3,7
	Democratic	268	32,4
	Authoritarian	83	10,0
	Protective	446	53,9
Residence	Village-Districts	313	37,8
	City	515	62,2
Total		828	100

As is presented in Table 1, 43,7 percent of the participants were male and 56,3 percent were female. 26,8 % of the participants were studying at Faculty of Education, 25% were studying at Faculty of Arts and Science, 19% were studying at Faculty of Theology, 7,1% were studying at Faculty of engineering and 22,1% were studying at Vocational High School. In addition, of the participants, 14,7% were first-year students, 32,9% were second-year students, 26,9% were third-year students, and 25,5 were fourth-year students. The mean age of the participants was 20.99.

2.2 Data Collection Tools

The Forgiveness Scale, the Subjective Happiness Scale were administered to collect the data and a personal information form was used to collect information on demographic variables. Personal Information Form which was

prepared by researchers for the purpose of determining the participants' socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, faculty, parental attitude, income level was used.

The Forgiveness Scale (FS) was developed by Ersanlı and Vural-Batık (2015) to measure the forgiveness level of university students. Results of exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses indicated that the FS that consists of 2 subscales and these two subscales explains 46,09% of total variance. Additionally, results of confirmatory factor analysis showed that two dimensional model was well fit ($\chi^2/sd = 1.95$, RMSEA= .07, GFI= .91, AGFI= .87, SRMR= .06, NNFI= .89, CFI= .91, $p < .000$). The first subscale which is named as "Forgiveness of Other" contains 10 items and the second subscale which is named as "Forgiveness of Self" contains 3 items. A positive correlation which computed for convergent validity was found between the FG and The Tolerance Scale ($r = .56$, $p < .001$). The internal consistency coefficient of the FS was .74. The split half reliability coefficient was found as .71 for the first half, and .77 for the second half. The FS is a 7-point Likert-type scale and scores range from 13 to 91 with higher scores pointing higher levels of forgiveness.

The Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) which was developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) to measure the level individual perception of happiness, adapted to Turkish culture by Akin and Satici (2011). Results of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis which was applied to determine the factor structure of the Turkish SHS indicated that single-factor structure with 4 items and an explained total variance of 46%. Results of confirmatory factor analysis also revealed that that model was fitted well ($\chi^2/sd = 0.71$, RMSEA= .000, NFI= .99, CFI= 1.00, IFI= 1.00, RFI= .98, GFI= 1.00, AGFI= .99, SRMR= .015, $p = 0.49$). The Cronbach alpha internal consistency of the SHS was found .86 and test-re-test correlation was found .73. The SHS is a 4-item instrument and each item rated on 7-point scoring system. Higher scores indicate a greater level of subjective happiness.

2.3 Data Collection

All the participants were informed about the aim of the study, how the fill the scales and filling the scales was voluntary by the researcher. The data collection tools administered in one session. All the participants were voluntarily participated for this study. It took nearly 15 minutes to complete the data collection tools.

2.4 The Analysis of the Data

Descriptive statistics were computed to determine the levels of forgiveness and subjective happiness of university students. One sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to test normality and the results proved that the data has not a normal distribution. Thus non-parametric test were used for statistical analysis. The Mann-Whitney U test was applied to test whether there is a significant mean difference in forgiveness and subjective happiness scores of university students according to gender and residence. Kruskal-Wallis test and post hoc analysis were applied to analyze whether significant differences in forgiveness and subjective happiness level of students existed in terms of faculty, grade and parental attitudes. Simple linear regression analysis was used to examine the predictive role of forgiveness on subjective happiness. The significance level was considered as .05 in this study.

3. Results

This section deals with the findings of the statistical analysis of the data obtained from the study. The mean scores and Standard deviations of participants' scores on the Forgiveness Scale and the Subjective Happiness Scale were shown at Table 2.

Table 2. Participants' mean scores an standard deviations on the Forgiveness Scale and the Subjective Happiness Scale

	n	Mean	Standard deviation
Forgiveness	828	54.23	12.182
Happiness	828	19.22	4.251

As it seen in Table 2, the mean forgiveness scores of the participants is 54.23.48 (sd = 12.182) and the mean subjective happiness score of the participants is 19.22 (sd = 4.251). Therefore, mean scores demonstrated that participants tended to exhibit a average level of forgiveness and subjective happiness.

The results of Mann-Whitney U test which was applied to test whether there is a significant mean difference in forgiveness and subjective happiness scores of university students according to gender and residence were presented at Table 3.

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U test results for significant mean difference in forgiveness and subjective happiness scores of university students according to gender and residence

			n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Forgiveness	Gender	Female	466	54.26	12.081	414.89	193338.5	84164.5	.958
		Male	362	54.18	12.327	473.38	172310.0		
	Residence	Village	313	54.94	12.066	430.09	134617.0	75719.0	.144
		City	515	53.79	12.243	405.03	208589.0		
Subjective Happiness	Gender	Female	466	19.40	4.163	428.68	199767.0	77736.0	.052
		Male	362	18.98	4.357	396.24	143439.0		
	Residence	Village	313	19.31	4.340	418.48	130985.5	79350.5	.708
		City	515	19.16	4.200	412.08	212220.5		

As it presented in table 3, the forgiveness level of university students didn't differ significantly between groups and was not related to their gender (U=84164.5, p>.05) and residence(U=75719.0, p>.05). In addition the subjective happiness level of participants also didn't differed significantly according to gender (U=77736.0, p>.05) and residence (U=79350.5, p>.05).

The results of Kruskal-Wallis test which was applied to analyze whether there are significant differences in forgiveness and subjective happiness level of students according to faculty were presented at Table 4.

Table 4. Kruskal Wallis test results for significant mean difference in forgiveness and subjective happiness scores of university students according to faculty

		Faculty	n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	df	χ²	p
Forgiveness		Education	222	53.26	11.894	398.53	4	17.764	.001*
		Arts and Science	207	54.31	10.552	417.96			
		Theology	157	57.31	12.761	469.79			
		Engineering	59	56.37	12.080	455.85			
		Vocational High S.	183	51.97	13.207	369.20			
Subjective Happiness		Education	222	19.15	4.071	413.38	4	6.775	.148
		Arts and Science	207	18.80	4.458	391.32			
		Theology	157	19.90	3.757	453.21			
		Engineering	59	18.80	3.827	389.33			
		Vocational High S.	183	19.33	4.698	416.99			

*p<.01

As it presented in table 4, the subjective happiness level of participants didn't differ according the faculty (χ²=6.775, p>.05) which the participants were studying, but, the forgiveness level of participants differed significantly according the faculty (χ²=17.764, p<.01) which the participants were studying. The independent samples Kruskal- Wallis test (post hoc) used to determine the source of difference and the result demonstrated that students who were studying at Faculty of Theology reported higher level of forgiveness than students who were studying at Faculty of Education and Vocational High School.

The results of Kruskal-Wallis test which was applied to analyze whether there are significant differences in forgiveness and subjective happiness level of students according to their class were presented at Table 5.

Table 5. Kruskal Wallis test results for significant mean difference in forgiveness and subjective happiness scores of university students according to the grade

	Grade	n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	df	χ^2	p
Forgiveness	First grade	122	54.98	12.229	421.85	3	14.905	.002*
	Second grade	272	51.83	12.050	369.86			
	Third grade	223	55.35	12.982	435.32			
	Fourth grade	211	55.68	11.022	445.80			
Subjective Happiness	First grade	122	19.63	4.560	413.38	3	6.776	.079
	Second grade	272	18.82	4.387	391.32			
	Third grade	223	19.62	4.101	453.21			
	Fourth grade	211	19.06	4.009	416.99			

*p<.01

As it presented in table 5, the subjective happiness level of participants didn't differ according their grade ($\chi^2=6.776$, $p>.05$), but, the forgiveness level of participants differed significantly according their grade ($\chi^2=14.905$, $p<.01$). The independent samples Kruskal- Wallis test (post hoc) used to determine the source of difference and the result revealed that third-grade students and fourth grade students reported higher subjective happiness than first-and second-grade students.

The results of Kruskal-Wallis test which was applied to analyze whether there are significant differences in forgiveness and subjective happiness level of students according to the parental attitudes were presented at Table 6.

Table 6. Kruskal Wallis test results for significant mean difference in forgiveness and subjective happiness scores of university students according to the parental attitudes

	Parental Attitudes	n	Mean	SD	Mean Rank.	df	χ^2	p
Forgiveness	Negligent	31	53.52	13.127	416.23	3	16.696	.001*
	Democratic	268	56.09	11.467	446.45			
	Authoritarian	83	49.71	11.724	324.12			
	Protective	446	54.00	12.408	412.00			
Subjective Happiness	Negligent	31	16.87	6.546	323.34	3	8.938	.030**
	Democratic	268	19.31	3.926	417.97			
	Authoritarian	83	18.41	4.311	368.64			
	Protective	446	19.48	4.177	427.29			

*p<.01, p<.05

As it presented in table 6, the forgiveness level of participants differed significantly according to parental attitudes ($\chi^2=16.696$, $p<.01$). The independent samples Kruskal- Wallis test (post hoc) used to determine the source of difference and the result indicated that students who perceive their parents as authoritarian reported lower forgiveness than the students who perceive their parents as democratic and protective. In addition the subjective happiness level of students differed significantly according to parental attitudes ($\chi^2=8.938$, $p<.05$). The independent samples Kruskal- Wallis test (post hoc) used to determine the source of difference and the result revealed that

students who perceive their parents as negligent reported significantly lower level of subjective happiness than the students whose parents are democratic and protective.

The results of simple linear regression analysis which was conducted to determine predictive role of forgiveness on subjective happiness were presented at Table 7.

Table 7. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Dependent Variable	Predictor	Reg. Coef.	St. Error	β	t	p	r	R ²	F
Subjective Happiness	Constant	15.779	.664	-	23.776	.000	.182	.033	28.202
	Forgiveness	.063	.012	.182	5.311	.000			

As it presented in table 7, there is a positive but low correlation between predictor (forgiveness) and dependent variable (subjective happiness) ($r=.182$). The results of t value and regression in table 7 showed subjective happiness is significantly predicted through forgiveness ($t=5.311$, $p=.000$). However, forgiveness only accounted for 3% ($R^2=.033$, $F(2, 826) = 28.202$, $p < .000$) of the variance of subjective happiness.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

With the emergence of positive psychology, psychology has paid more attention to individual strengths in last two decades (Keyes & Haidt, 2003) and begun to investigate concepts such as subjective well-being, psychological well-being, happiness, life satisfaction, optimism and forgiveness (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Therefore subjective happiness and forgiveness which are important concepts of positive psychology have gained increasing interest of researchers. In the current study the forgiveness and subjective happiness level of university students was examined and the results were discussed in the light of relevant literature.

The results of this study indicated that, the forgiveness and subjective happiness level of university students did not differ according to their gender. When the previous literature was examined it can be noticed that gender is not an effective factor on forgiveness and happiness. In parallel with the results of the current study, several studies found that there is no difference between forgiveness levels of males and females (Asıcı, 2013; Brown, 2003; Macaskill, Maltby & Day, 2002; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002). Based on these results it can be said that forgiveness is a personal trait that does not differ according to gender. On the other hand, a number of studies suggested that females are more forgiving than males (Konstam, Holmes & Levine, 2003, Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006, Neff & Prommier, 2013; Ortahinkal, Vansteenwegen & Burggraeve, 2008). It is thought that this difference may be explained by the fact that forgiveness is a cultural feature. The roles expected from women can vary from culture to culture. In some cultures women are expected to be more forgiving. Thus women tend to women tend to forgive more than men. Furthermore, the characteristics of the study group in which the study was conducted may be the reason of contradictory results obtained in different studies for the effect of gender on forgiveness. Another reason of contradictory results may be the data collection tools used in the studies. For example, the Wade Forgiveness Scale considers forgiveness in terms of emotion, behavior and cognition, while the Forgiveness Scale used in this research takes into account the types of forgiveness. In addition a large number of studies demonstrated that there is no difference between subjective happiness levels of males and females which are which are consistent with the results of the current study (Aydemir, 2008; Cihangir-Çankaya, 2009; Çelik, 2008; Demir, 2017; Kara, 2010; Kartal, 2013; Küsgülü, 2014; Özen, 2005; Rasmussen & Laumann, 2014; Saygın, 2008; Şahin, 2015; Tingaz & Hazar, 2014; Tuzgöl-Dost, 2004; Uçan, 2013; Yazıcı, 2015). Diener and Myers (1997) also emphasize gender indifference in happiness. On the contrary, previous studies showing that the levels of happiness differ according to gender are also noteworthy (Akın & Şentürk, 2012; Atay, 2012; Bozdemir, 2011; Cenkseven & Akbaş, 2007; Gülcan, 2014; Şaşmaz, 2016; Tümkaya, 2011). Based on the cultural norms of a society which an individual belongs to, the happiness levels of men and women may be different. For example the cultural structure of society can lead men to be more advantageous in social life and women to live various difficulties. It is possible that this kind of a situation may reveal that men may be happier than women. However, considering the characteristics of the study group of this study, it is thought their happiness levels did not differ due to having similar living conditions. In short, forgiveness and happiness are related to cultural values and personality traits, so it can be said the results of the present study which revealed that the forgiveness and subjective happiness level did not differ according to gender are reasonable.

The results of the present study also showed that the levels of forgiveness and subjective happiness did not significantly differ according to the residence. According to this result, it can be said that the participants who live in the villages, districts, cities and metropolitan areas have a tendency to report a similar level of forgiveness and

happiness. These results are also consistent with the findings of studies which indicated that level of forgiveness (Asıcı, 2013; Uysal, 2015) and happiness isn't related to residence (Aydemir, 2008; Şahin, 2011; Yazıcı, 2015). One possible explanation for there not being a difference between students' forgiveness level in terms of residence that they have lived for a long time is that childrearing attitudes and opportunities provided to children may be similar in different areas such as village, district or city. Although some studies suggested that individuals who live in rural areas more happy than individuals who live in big cities (Gerdtham & Johannesson, 1997; Mills, 1999; Verma, 2008), this has began to changed due to the globalization. This can be explained by the fact that television, the internet, and mass media all have the same effect, so the young people may have similar feelings and attitudes.

According to another finding obtained from the research, it was found that the subjective happiness levels of the participants did not differ according to the grade but third- and fourth grade students reported higher subjective happiness than first- and second-grade students. Contrary to this finding, Asıcı (2013) demonstrated that forgiveness level does not vary according to the grade. However, in a research conducted by Uysal (2015) age differences in forgiveness were observed. It can be said that the life experiences are important for the development of the forgiveness, which is accepted as a virtue. Accordingly, the level of forgiveness may be improved depending on the time that university students spend in university education. Likewise, there are also studies (Gülcan, 2014; Saygın, 2008; Şahin et al., 2012) that indicated that the happiness levels of students increase as the grade level increases. As the students spend more time in university and study at higher grades they can experience more happiness as they begin to overcome problems related to college adjustment and college life, make social relations more effective and solve their problems more effectively. However, in this research it is noteworthy that there is no difference in the level of subjective happiness according to the classes. Similar to this finding, a number of studies (Canbay, 2010; Çelik, 2008; Çevik, 2010; İlhan, 2005; Kartal, 2013; Özen, 2005; Yazıcı, 2015) have shown that subjective happiness levels of the participants did not differ according to the grade. It is thought that these different findings are caused by other variables affecting happiness.

Another remarkable finding of the current study is students who are studying at Faculty of Theology reported higher level of forgiveness than students who were studying at Faculty of Education and Vocational High School. However, subjective happiness level of participants didn't differ according the faculty. It seems that studies aimed to examine forgiveness and subjective happiness levels of students according to the faculty that they are studying are scanty. Contrary to the findings of study, a number of studies indicated that experiencing subjective happiness level may differ according to faculties that the students enrolled in (Demir, 2017, Şahin, 2015, Tingaz & Hazar, 2014). This result may be related with future employment opportunities of the faculty, whether or not they want to be a student in that faculty. It is also remarkable that while happiness levels did not differ according to the faculty, the level of forgiveness has differed. In a study conducted by Asıcı (2013), it was found that students who were studying at psychological counseling and guidance department reported higher forgiveness than students who were studying at fine arts. Accordingly, it can be mentioned that the field of education contributes to the improvement of the personal characteristics of an individual. It is thought that the students of the Faculty of Theology may be more forgiving due to the religious education they received. Thus, several studies proved that religiosity and religious education may enhance forgiveness (Ayten, 2009, Macaskill, 2007, Uysal, 2015). In addition, as the religiosity increases, individuals' subjective well-being increases (Aydemir, 2008, Kurnaz, 2015, Sevindik, 2015). All the religion focuses on the importance of forgiveness for mankind to continue its progress and encourage people to continue their lives by forgiving the injustices made to them (Smith, 2002). Forgiveness is a very valuable concept in Islam. Islamic belief attaches great importance to interpersonal forgiveness as it affects relationships, promotes social peace and tolerance (Alpay, 2009). In this respect, the high level of forgiveness of the students of the Faculty of Theology may be related religious education they received.

Another finding that is noteworthy is that the forgiveness and subjective happiness level of participants differed significantly according to parental attitudes. The students who perceive their parents as authoritarian report lower forgiveness than the students who perceived their parents as democratic and protective. Similar to this finding, Asıcı (2013) found that the perceived attitudes attitude have an impact the forgiveness. Asıcı (2013) stated that students who perceive their parent as democratic report more forgiveness than parents are authoritarian and permissive. The democratic parents set boundaries to children and control his/her but encourage the autonomy of the child. Democratic parents are warm and disciplined have expectation that match the needs and abilities of the child. They try to increase the autonomy of the child; attaches importance to the self-direction of the child, and at the same time takes responsibility for the child's behavior. They establish a proper balance between autonomy and control. Democratic parental attitude is associated with positive aspects of development. Children whose parents are democratic are self-confident and socially competent (Santrock, 2012; Steinberg, 2007). When it considered that,

learning and taking someone as a model are two important factors to gain new behaviors, it is not undeniable that the parental attitudes are influential in being a forgiving person. A child who grows in a democratic atmosphere takes on his own responsibilities during adverse events and pays attention what the other person is experiencing which may play an increasing role in forgiving tendencies. Moreover, in this study, it was demonstrated that the participants who perceive their parents as negligent reported significantly lower subjective happiness than the participants who perceive them as democratic and protective. Similarly, Demir (2014) individuals whose parents are democratic and protective are higher in subjective happiness compared to respondents whose parents are authoritarian and negligent. The attitudes exhibited in an environment that an individual lives in or grew up shape the feelings, thoughts and behaviors related to the events and situations. Moreover, subjective happiness level is influenced by various factors such as life events (Lee & Im, 2007), emotions, thoughts and behaviors (Layous et al., 2012). Studies which suggested that individuals whose parents exhibit democratic attitudes have higher subjective happiness (Tuzg d-Dost, 2004; T rkmen, 2012) support this research finding. It is reasonable that participants, whose parents control them according to certain rules, value them, take care of his/her children and have democratic attitudes may higher happiness score than the participants whose parents are repressive, authoritarian, reckless and negligent.

Lastly, the current study demonstrated that there is a positive but low correlation between forgiveness and subjective happiness and forgiveness predicted subjective happiness significantly. However, forgiveness only accounted for 3% of the variance of subjective happiness. The relationships among forgiveness, life satisfaction and subjective well-being have been widely examined in the previous literature. For instance, Eldeleklioglu (2015) found that forgiveness is positively associated with life satisfaction, forgiveness positively predicted life satisfaction but forgiveness explained life satisfaction relatively low. While some studies have indicated that the relationship between forgiveness and life satisfaction is weak (McCullough et al., 2001; Munoz-Sastre, Vinsonneau, Neto, Girard & Mullet, 2003) some other studies revealed strong relationship between these variables (Worthington et al., 2001). The reason for contrary findings among studies may be due to other variables such as self-esteem, loneliness, and rumination that affect life satisfaction (Munoz-Sastre et al., 2003). Individuals can blame themselves through ruminating about the past mistakes. Rumination may lead them to negative thoughts such as anger. This negative process may have an adverse impact on subjective well-being. If individuals forgive past events and reconcile, subjective well-being will increase. This may explain the relationship between forgiveness and subjective well-being (Bugay & Demir, 2011). Similar results have been found in a few studies (Jiang et al., 2015; Sapmaz, Yildirim, Topcuoğlu, Nalbant & Sızır, 2016) which examined the predictive role of forgiveness on subjective happiness. In a study conducted by Sapmaz et al. (2016) it was reported that self forgiveness and other-forgiveness are related to subjective happiness but these variables are not predictors of subjective happiness. On the other hand situational forgiveness was found as a predictor of subjective happiness. Happiness is evaluated in terms of different characteristics of forgiveness. Individuals who are high in subjective happiness tend to be more forgiving than those who are low in subjective happiness (Jiang et al., 2015). Happiness is positively associated with positive behaviors and emotions. Thus, it is expected that to forgive a person who has done wrong may raise a person's subjective happiness level. In addition, forgiveness leads to inner peace and clam due to involving abandoning negative thoughts and emotions. For this reason, forgiveness is expected to foster subjective happiness (Maltby et al., 2005). However, in this study it is found that the relationship between forgiveness and subjective happiness is weak, and the variance explained by forgiveness is low. False forgiveness can be shown as the reason for this result. False forgiveness is acting like forgiven someone in interpersonal relationships but not internalize forgiveness. The levels of forgiveness of individuals may vary from day to day because of everyday life events and personal needs. Individuals may not forgive the same behavior another time and forgiveness is not a stable trait. If an individual cannot internalize forgiveness it doesn't foster subjective happiness of an individual (Baumeister, Exline & Sommer, 1998). Thus, the expectation that forgiveness predicts subjective happiness may not be met.

There are some limitations of this research which is aimed to determine the levels of forgiveness and subjective happiness of university students. Firstly, this research is limited to university students studying at Ondokuz Mayıs University. Therefore the findings can not be generalized to all university students. In addition, other variables that have been shown to affect forgiveness and subjective happiness have not been examined in this study. In accordance with the results obtained from the research, some suggestions may be made. In future research, the study group can be formed from students from different universities, representing the universe. Only subjective happiness and forgiveness have been examined in this research. Future studies may examine sub dimensions of forgiveness and happiness. The effect of forgiveness and possible mediator role of it can be investigated, along with other variables that might affect the happiness levels of university students. Lastly, psychological counselors may be advised to offer

psychological counseling services to increase forgiveness and happiness. In this direction, psycho-education programs can be developed to increase the forgiveness level of university students.

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