

Investigation of the Life Satisfaction Levels of Turkish EFL Teachers in Terms of Several Variables

Selma Deneme^{1,*}

¹Faculty of Education, English Language Teaching Department, Trakya University, Turkey

*Correspondence: Faculty of Education, English Language Teaching Department, Trakya University, Turkey. E-mail: selmadeneme@trakya.edu.tr

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Abstract

In the present study, the purpose was to investigate the life satisfaction levels of Turkish EFL (English as a foreign language) teachers in terms of several variables. The general survey method was used in the study. The life satisfaction scale, which was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985), adapted into Turkish by Dağlı and Baysal (2016), was used to collect the data in the study. The data were collected through the internet from the teachers who taught English as a foreign language between January and March 2021. The software SPSS 24 version was used for the data analyses along with Spearman Correlation Coefficient, Kruskal-Wallis Test, and Mann Whitney U-Test. According to the results of the study, it was found that the life satisfaction levels increased in favor of female teachers in terms of the gender variable and in favor of married teachers according to the marital status variable; additionally, was found to increase in favor of those who received support from administrators and colleagues when it comes to the support received from administrators and colleagues. In the same way, life satisfaction levels were found to increase as age increased and in favor of those who considered themselves at upper-income level economically.

Keywords: teacher, EFL teachers, life satisfaction

1. Introduction

Life satisfaction is the subjective and internal evaluation of the quality of life of an individual as a whole (Mc Dowell, 2010: 70). In other words, life satisfaction is not only about a living space of an individual but is also related to his/her positive perception of life. For this reason, job satisfaction does not mean that the person is satisfied with his entire life. The job can increase an individual's satisfaction, but it does not replace life satisfaction. Life satisfaction covers all areas of an individual's life (Veenhoven, 1996). It is also described as the situation or the outcome achieved as a result of comparing the expectations of a person with what s/he has at hand (Özer and Karabulut, 2003: 72). Life satisfaction has 6 components which are; a) financial income, b) job and social status, c) social opportunities, d) prosperity, e) current administrative policies, and f) environment and human relations (Appleton and Song, 2008). According to Schmitter (2003), the life satisfaction of individuals might be affected by some factors. Some of these are listed as the sense of happiness perceived from daily life, meaning attributed to life, compliance in achieving life targets, positive self-perception, physical health, financial security, and social relations. However, he also argued that life satisfaction is a dynamic structure which can alter due to current living conditions and personal standards (Diener, 1984). In actual fact, life satisfaction can be expressed as a concept varying from person to person.

Life satisfaction of teachers refers to the conditions such as professional seniority and titles, work environment, financial condition, targets and life expectations affecting life satisfaction (Avşaroglu, Deniz & Kahraman, 2005). Teachers' being role models for future generations, having great responsibilities in the quality of education, and being among people with whom students spend the most time aside from their parents make teachers the backbone of society. The quality of education of a country is one of the most important indicators of the development of societies. In this sense, teachers are the most important elements in education. A teacher who feels energetic, does his/her job lovingly, enjoys life, in other words, who is happy in every aspect, will raise happy generations (Karaaslan, Uslu &

Esen, 2020). Life satisfaction is closely related to the economic level of the country, success of the healthcare sector, quality of education, and many other opportunities. Individuals should be provided with these opportunities to increase their life satisfactions. When the satisfaction of people increases, they will become happier. In this way, there will be people who have more agreement with the society and who are more productive in the society (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Reviewing the literature, it was found that there are few studies examining the life satisfaction levels of EFL teachers. It is considered that this study will enrich the literature with this aspect. Also, it is important to know the variables affecting life satisfaction. In other words, if the variables affecting life satisfaction are known, programs to increase the life satisfaction of teachers can be implemented. When the life satisfaction of a teacher is high, s/he will be a beneficial individual for students and for society. It is considered that the present study will contribute to the literature in this aspect. For this reason, the present study aimed to examine the life satisfaction levels of Turkish EFL teachers in terms of several variables. Answers to the following questions were sought in this regard:

1. Do the life satisfaction levels of EFL teachers show significant differences in terms of gender, marital status and age?
2. Do the variables of receiving support from administrators and colleagues contribute to the life satisfaction levels of EFL teachers?
3. Does the level at which they perceive themselves economically affect the life satisfaction levels of EFL teachers?

2. Method

2.1 Study Pattern

In the present study, the life satisfaction levels of Turkish EFL teachers (teachers of English as a foreign language) were examined in terms of gender, marital status, support received from administrators, support received from colleagues, the level at which they perceive themselves in economic terms, and age variable. For this reason, the general survey method was used in the study. General survey methods are the surveys made on the whole of the universe or a group of sampling to be taken from the universe to reach a general judgment about a universe consisting of many elements (Karasar, 2005).

2.2 Study Group

The study group consisted of 365 Turkish EFL teachers who worked in the fall semester of 2020-2021 academic year between January and March 2021. The participants were teaching English as a foreign language at various levels in public and private schools in Turkey.

2.3 Data Collection Tools

The data of the study were gathered via the “Personal Information Form” and “Life Satisfaction Scale”.

2.3.1 Personal Information Form

The Personal Information Form, which was developed by the researcher, included information on the gender, marital status, support from administrators support from colleagues, the economic level perception, and age variables of the teachers.

2.3.2 Life Satisfaction Scale

The Life Satisfaction Scale was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985), and was adapted into Turkish by Dağlı and Baysal (2016). The validity and reliability study of the scale was conducted. The original scale consisted of five items. The scale is in the form of a 5-Point Likert scale. Its validity and reliability study was conducted and had one dimension. The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.88, and test-retest reliability was found as 0.91.

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The data were created in Google Forms and were sent only to English teachers through social media. The teachers who volunteered to participate in the study filled the scale. The SPSS 24 version was used to analyze the data. Before the analyses of the data, the accuracy of the data entry and the conformity of the distribution of the variables to normal distribution were tested. The analyses of the data were made for 365 teacher candidates. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was used to test the normal distribution of the study data, and it was found that the data were not normally distributed. The Mann Whitney U-Test, Kruskal-Wallis Test, and Spearman Correlation

Coefficient were used for the data analyses.

3. Results

Table 1. Mann Whitney U Test Results in Terms of Gender Variable

| | | N | Mean Rank | Rank Sum | U | P |
|--------|--------|-----|-----------|----------|---------|------|
| Gender | Female | 209 | 188.80 | 58338.00 | 2172.00 | .013 |
| | Male | 156 | 151.02 | 8457.00 | | |

The Mann-Whitney U-test was conducted to determine whether the life satisfaction levels of the teachers differed according to the gender variable. According to the results of the Mann-Whitney U-test, significant differences were detected in terms of the gender variable ($U = 2172.00$, $p = .013$). As a result of the findings, it can be speculated that the life satisfaction is higher in female teachers than in male teachers.

Table 2. Mann Whitney U Test Results According to Marital Status Variable

| | | N | Mean Rank | Rank Sum | U | P |
|----------------|---------|-----|-----------|----------|----------|------|
| Marital Status | Married | 230 | 194.87 | 44820.50 | 12794.50 | .005 |
| | Single | 135 | 162.77 | 21974.50 | | |

The Mann-Whitney U-test was used to determine whether the life satisfaction levels of teachers differed according to the marital status variable. According to the results of the Mann-Whitney U-test, significant differences were detected in terms of the marital status variable ($U = 12794.50$, $p = .005$). As a result of the findings, it can be speculated that the life satisfaction levels of married teachers are higher than single teachers.

Table 3. Mann Whitney U Test Results According to Receiving Support from Administrators

| | | N | Mean Rank | Rank Sum | U | P |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----------|----------|-----------|------|
| Receiving support from administrators | Yes | 233 | 201.72 | 47001.00 | 11016.000 | .000 |
| | No | 132 | 149.95 | 19794.00 | | |

The Mann-Whitney U-test was used to determine whether the life satisfaction levels of the teachers differed according to the receiving support from administrators variable. According to the results of the Mann-Whitney U-test, significant differences were detected in terms of the receiving support from administrators variable ($U = 11016.000$, $p = .000$). As a result of the findings, it can be speculated that the level of life satisfaction is higher in those who receive support from administrators in terms of the receiving support from administrators variable.

Table 4. Mann Whitney U Test Results According to Receiving Support from Colleagues

| | | N | Mean Rank | Sum Total | U | P |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----------|-----------|----------|------|
| Receiving support from colleagues | Yes | 276 | 194.90 | 53793.00 | 8997.000 | .000 |
| | No | 89 | 146.09 | 13002.00 | | |

The Mann-Whitney U-test was used to determine whether the life satisfaction levels of teachers varied according to the receiving support from colleagues variable. According to the results of the Mann-Whitney U-test, significant differences were detected in terms of the receiving support from colleagues variable ($U = 8997.000$, $p = .000$). As a result of the findings, it can be speculated that life satisfaction levels are higher in those who receive support from colleagues in terms of the receiving support from colleagues variable.

Table 5. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results According to the Economic Level Perception

| | | N | Mean Rank | SD | x ² | P |
|---------------------------|----------------|-----|-----------|----|----------------|------|
| Economic level perception | Low level | 90 | 106.95 | 2 | 69.783 | .000 |
| | Moderate level | 216 | 203.17 | | | |
| | High level | 59 | 271.50 | | | |

The Kruskal-Wallis Test was conducted to determine whether the life satisfaction of teachers varied according to the economic level perception. According to the results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test, significant differences were detected in terms of the economic level perception variable (χ^2 (SD = 2, n = 365) = 69.783; p < .000). As a result of the findings, it can be speculated that the level of life satisfaction is high at high-income level.

Table 6. Spearman Correlation Coefficient Results in Terms of Age Variable

| Spearman's RHO | Life satisfaction | Age |
|-------------------|-------------------------|--------|
| Life satisfaction | Correlation Coefficient | 1,000 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | . |
| | N | 365 |
| Age | Correlation Coefficient | ,191** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | ,000 |
| | N | 365 |

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Spearman Correlation Coefficient Technique was used to determine whether the teachers' life satisfaction varies depending on the age variable. According to the results, positive and significant relations were detected between the life satisfaction and age variable ($r = -.191^{**}$, $p = .000$).

4. Discussion, Interpretations and Recommendations

According to Diener (1984), gender is among the factors that affect life satisfaction. According to the results of the present study, significant differences were discovered in favor of female teachers in terms of the gender variable. When the literature was reviewed, it was found that the study results coincide with the results of some other studies (Şahin, Zade & Direk, 2009; Recepoglu, 2013; Tuzgöl-Dost, 2007; Dağlı & Baysal, 2016). There are also contradictory study results. For example, Karavas (2010) found in her study conducted with Greek EFL teachers that the job satisfaction levels of male teachers were higher than those of women, which may be a sign about their life satisfaction levels as well. On the other hand, in their study, Hekmatzadeh, Khojasteh and Shokrpour (2016) found significant differences between the professional satisfaction levels of female and male teachers. According to the results of the present study, the reason why the life satisfaction levels of female teachers were found to be high might be that the teaching profession is preferred by women more, and teaching is suited to women more in society.

The findings of the present research suggest that the life satisfaction levels of married teachers were higher in terms of the marital status variable. The results of this study are in line with the results of some other studies conducted in the literature. In their study that examined the life satisfaction levels of classroom teachers, Dağlı and Baysal (2017) found that the marital status of teachers affected their life satisfaction at significant levels, and married teachers had higher life satisfaction levels. In their study, Wan, Jaccard and Ramey (1996) reported that marriage had strong relations with social support, which is an important concept in life satisfaction. It seems that being married increases life satisfaction. Linn et al. (1985) also found that married individuals had higher life satisfaction levels, which is in line with the results of our study. In their study conducted on physicians, Ünal, Karlıdağ and Yoloğlu (2001) found significant differences between married and single people in terms of life satisfaction scores. The satisfaction level of married teachers may be higher also because they have someone to give them a kind of support since they share life with others (husband or wife) and this could give them a kind of stability and security that reflects on their professional life. Single teachers, on the other hand, have to worry not only with professional work but also with private life.

When the results of the present study were evaluated in terms of the receiving support from colleagues variable, it

was found that the life satisfaction levels of English teachers who received support from colleagues were higher than those who did not. Parallel to our study results, in a study conducted with special education teachers, Yavuz (2019) found high life satisfaction levels of teachers who received support from their colleagues. In his study conducted with teachers, Atmaca (2019) reported that when employees had problems with their colleagues, this negatively affected them. In a study conducted by Akman (2017) with teachers, it was found that negative attitudes of some teachers could affect their colleagues negatively. According to Akman (2017), "individuals who have such characteristics reduce productivity and motivation by making themselves and their colleagues unhappy because they feed negative thoughts on the organization and their colleagues". When these results are evaluated, it is seen that one of the variables determining the life satisfaction levels of teachers is the support received from colleagues. Life satisfaction levels of teachers who receive support from colleagues increase. Also, the burnout levels of teachers who do not receive support from their colleagues were found to be higher (Yavuz & Yılmış, 2021).

It was also found as a result of the present study that the life satisfaction levels of teachers who received support from administrators were higher than those who did not. There are studies which report that the support of administrators for teachers contributes to business life and the lives of individuals positively. When the literature was reviewed, it was found that Yavuz (2019) reported that teachers who received support from their administrators had high life satisfaction levels. Hocalar (2018) argued in her study that administrators with a master's degree would act more consciously and contribute positively to teachers. According to İşık (2014), administrators who did not work with teachers about the problems at school and who did not produce solutions to these problems might cause that teachers lose their sense of trust in the institution and quit their jobs. When the literature is reviewed, an individual's profession is considered to be affecting his life satisfaction (Şahin, 2008). If the individual is not happy with his job, this will affect his life satisfaction negatively. According to the findings of this study, it is possible to speculate that the support of administrators plays an important role among the variables affecting the life satisfaction of teachers.

According to the results of this study, it was found that the life satisfaction levels of teachers who considered themselves economically at high levels were also high. Similarly, in their study examining the life satisfaction levels of teachers, Dağlı and Baysal (2017) also found that teachers who had high monthly income levels also had higher life satisfaction levels than those with low-income levels. Matheny, Curlette, Aysan and Herrington et al. (2002) also found that economic freedom has a direct correlation to life satisfaction levels. As a matter of fact, it was determined in this study that the perceived economic condition was a factor associated with the life satisfaction of teachers, which supports the study results of Chow (2005), Moller (1996), Paolini, Yanez and Kelly (2006), and Tuzgöl -Dost (2006). According to the results of this study, the reason why teachers who perceived their economic condition high had high life satisfaction levels is because good economic condition is a necessity to achieve many targets, from meeting the basic needs of individuals to participating in activities to improve themselves. For this reason, it is not surprising that the economic condition is related to the well-being of individuals and Turkish EFL teachers.

According to Diener (1984), age is among the factors that affect the subjective well-being of individuals. According to the results of the study, it was found that as the age of the teachers increased, their life satisfaction levels also increased. Parallel to this, Karavas (2010) reported in his study conducted with Greek EFL teachers that as professional experience levels of teachers increased, their job satisfaction levels also increased. Yavuz (2019) found that the burnout levels of teachers under the age of 30 were higher than those over the age of 40 in terms of the age variable. According to the results of this study, the reason for the increase in life satisfaction as the age increased might be associated with the higher professional knowledge and experience and higher financial savings of teachers.

The present study had certain limitations. It was limited to the teachers who participated in the study and the life satisfaction scale. In future studies, comparisons may be made with teachers from different branches. The relation between the life satisfaction levels of Turkish EFL teachers and variables such as self-efficacy, professional self-efficacy, or job satisfaction can be examined. Also, a mixed method can be used to examine the life satisfaction levels of EFL teachers in detail. Increasing the life satisfaction levels by examining the factors that affect the life satisfaction levels of teachers will also increase the quality of education.

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