

# Investigation of the Relations between Religious Activities and Subjective Well-being of High School Students

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## Abstract

This study aims to investigate the relation between participation in religious activities and the subjective well-being of high school students. The study group involves 196 participants, 99 female and 97 male; all of the participants were adolescents attending high school in Eskişehir, Turkey, their ages varying from 14 to 16. The measurement scales used in this study included: Satisfaction with Life, Positive-Negative Affect, and Adolescents' Subjective Well-being Increasing Strategies. The Pearson correlation technique and content analysis method were employed. Though in low levels, quantitative findings show a significant relation between life satisfaction, positive affection, and participation in religious activities. However, no such significant relation could be found for negative affection and participation in religious activities. Qualitative findings show high school students have a better subjective well-being when involved in religious activities, ranging from praying alone to going to mosque on holy days, which helps them discharge religious duties, meets the need for building intimacy with someone, gives them sense of security, instills hope in them, fosters good manners in them, makes them feel rewarded, and helps them cope with stress.

**Keywords:** High school students • Adolescents • Subjective well-being • Participating in religious activities

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In the modern field of psychology, pathology-based approaches and positive approaches, suggest that cultural factors be taken into account in explaining human behavior (Kaslow, 1996). In consideration of particularly positive psychology, the importance of transferring ethnic, cultural, and religious factors providing positive contributions to the psychological development of high school students. As such, an investigation into the relation between the subjective well-being of high school students and performing their religious duties could make a distinguished contribution to the current literature.

### **Subjective Well-being of High School Students and Strategies towards Increasing their Subjective Well-being**

In recent times, there has been a rise in scientific studies dealing with the subjective well-being of children, particularly the subjective well-being of high school students. As was the case with subjective well-being studies concerning adults, studies involving high school students have been examined based on three vital dimensions: positive affection, negative affection, and satisfaction with life (Diener, 1984; Eryilmaz, 2012).

Related studies in the literature have been conducted based upon three significant dimensions, the first of which has looked into the relation between intra-individual features such as personality traits, intelligence, self-esteem, locus of control, and the subjective well-being of high school students (Huebner, 1991; Mcknight, Huebner, & Suldo, 2002). The second one examines the relation between socio-economic features such as age, gender, income, and the subjective well-being of high school students (Huebner, Drane, & Valois, 2000; Huebner, Suldo, Smith, & McKnight, 2004; Jozefiak, Larsson, & Wichstrom, 2009; Karatzias, Chouliara, Power, & Swanson, 2006; McCullough, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2002; Sarakauskiene & Bagdonas, 2010). The third one looks at the relation between variables such as academic contexts, familial relations, and peer relations experienced by high school students and their subjective well-being (Ash & Huebner, 2001; Joronen & Kurki, 2005; Hartup & Stevens, 1997; Park, 2004; Rask, Kurki, & Paavilainen, 2003; Suldo & Huebner, 2004). In addition, high school students' subjective well-being has been considered with respect to subjective well-being increasing strategies (Eryilmaz, 2010, 2012).

Tactics used by individuals to raise the level of subjective well-being are known as "strategies

adopted for enhancing the subjective well-being;" this was first initiated by Fordyce (1977; 1983). Since then, Buss (2002) has come to explain how subjective well-being could be increased in light of the theory of evolutionary psychology. Moreover, Tkach, and Lyubomirsky (2006), have studied strategies used by adults for increasing subjective well-being. Eryilmaz (2010; 2012) has reported five strategies towards enhancement of subjective well-being in high school students: Receiving a positive reaction from an environment, reacting positively to an environment, mental control, satisfaction of desires, and participation in religious activities. The strategy pertaining to religion was considered by Fordyce (1977) as "participating in meaningful activities," whereas Tkach and Lyubomirsky considered it as "passive leisure." As a result, participation in religious activities might be regarded as the strategies of subjective well-being increasing. Thus, it should be well documented relations between religion and subjective well-being.

### **Relations between Subjective Well-being and Religion**

There are many studies into how humans enhance their level of subjective well-being and while some of these have emphasized such variables as personality traits, others have drawn attention to demographic factors like gender, education, and income (Diener, 1984; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Eryilmaz, 2012). Other studies have pointed out goal-oriented activities to increase subjective well-being (Buss, 2000; Fordyce, 1977, 1984; Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Spirituality and religiousness have been evaluated as internal factors, including: self-esteem, locus of control, and personality traits that have an impact upon subjective well-being of individuals (Holder, Coleman, & Wallace, 2010). Spirituality and religiousness are regarded as part of seeking meaning in life in the realm of positive psychology. Positive psychologists (Diener, 1984; Diener, Nickerson, Lucas, & Sandvik, 2002; Diener & Seligman, 2002, 2004; Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2004; Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005) claim that there are some resources feeding life with meaning, such as personal projects, family, job, affection and love, and religion (Emmons, 1986). However, spirituality and religion do not mean the same thing, given that spirituality is defined as an internal system of belief that provides individuals with power and peace. Religiousness includes institutional rituals, practices, and beliefs (Houskamp, Fisher, & Stuber, 2004). A large

number of people would describe themselves as both spiritual and religious (Zinnbauer et al., 1997). It has been argued that religion and spirituality have something in common, in that they both foster a sense of transcendence within humans and acquisition of meaning in one's life (Pargament, 1999; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999).

Scientific studies dealing with the relation of religion and spirituality and subjective well-being have analyzed not only direct but also indirect effects of religion and spirituality upon the subjective well-being of individuals. Results of the studies into the indirect effects of religion and spirituality have demonstrated that religion and spirituality provide individuals with resilience (Masten, 1999; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), apart from providing them with an ability to cope with stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Likewise, forgiveness constitutes an essential part of many religions; for instance, those exhibiting forgiveness behavior have been shown to feel psychologically much better than those who do not (McCullough, 2000; McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000; Van Dierendonck & Mohan, 2006; Wuthnow, 2000). Furthermore, many religious ideologies ask individuals to love and respect one another (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2002), and so it is possible within a shared lifestyle for partners to love and respect each other (Myers & Diener, 1995).

Several studies in the literature examine the direct relation of religiousness and spirituality with subjective well-being of adults, many of them reporting either modest or low levels of positive relation regarding the relevant variables and subjective well-being of adults (Argyle, 2001; Clark & Watson, 1999; Ellison, 1991; Francis, Jones, & Wilcox, 2000; Francis, Robbins, & White, 2003; French & Joseph, 1999; Kelley & Miller, 2007; Watson & Clark 1993; Wills, 2009). Studies conducted on university students have revealed a positive relation between subjective well-being and religion, while they have reported a negative relation between religion and psychopathology (Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2007; Abdel-Khalek & Naceur, 2007; Abdel-Khalek & Thorson, 2006).

### Problem Statement

In keeping with formal reasoning, some adolescents examine and discuss religious rules, so religion constitutes a part of their identity (Santrock, 2008, 2010). Furthermore, adolescents evaluate religion in terms of institutional, humanistic, and supernatural aspects (Rich & Cinamon, 2007; Urbani & Tirri,

2006). For example, 95% of American adolescents believe in God, 87% of them report participating in pray, 38% of them go to church weekly or get involved in religious activities, and another 16% do so at least once a month (Steinberg, 2010). While the statistical number of Turkish adolescents that profess a belief in a deity not known for sure, approximately 95%–97% of the Turkish population is known to be Muslim (Smits, Ruiter, & Van Tubergen, 2010). Therefore, it can be presumed that religion and religious activities are important in the life of high school students (Steinberg, 2010).

Subjective well-being is the most important part of the field of positive psychology, and has also been investigated by many researchers. Seligman (2002) noted that engaged life, pleasant life, and meaningful life are the most important indicators of individuals' subjective well-being. Religion and religious activities might be considered as a part of meaningful life (McCullough et al., 2000). If individuals have meaningful, engaged, and pleasant life, they tend to be healthier, more satisfied within marriage, more cooperative in social life, more prolific at work, more apt to observe the rules mandated by citizenship, and much better at coping with stress (Diener & Seligman, 2002; McCullough, 2000; McCullough et al., 2000; Van Dierendonck & Mohan, 2006). Additionally, positive psychology studies indicate that if students have higher levels of subjective well-being, their capacities and perspectives will broaden, and they will tailor the effects of negative past experiences (Fredrickson, 2001; Hefferon & Boniwell, 2010). Thus, the investigation of the relations between religious activities and subjective well-being might provide an important contribution to the related literature with respect to know the direction of these relations.

Some studies, which were carried out on youths, indicated that religious activities were found to be related to some variables such as self-acceptance and anxiety (Hayta, 2000), self-esteem (Koç, 2009) and feeling good (Hökelekli, 2008). In international literature, some studies were conducted on high school students about subjective well-being and religious activities (Abdel-Khalek, 2002, 2009; Francis et al., 2000; Pearce, Little, & Perez, 2003); however, no previous study examined the relations between subjective well-being and religious activities in Turkey. It is necessary to demonstrate how religious activities affect subjective well-being and to demonstrate which ways the affect(s) occur with a comprehensive research method. At this point, it is important that factors increasing levels

of the subjective well-being of high school students be determined and then implemented. This study attempts to investigate the relation between participation in religious activities and subjective well-being of high-school students; for this reason, answers to following two questions were examined:

1. What type of a relation exists between the subjective well-being of high school students and participating in religious activities, which one of the strategies for increasing subjective well-being is in use?
2. How do high school students tend to relate their subjective well-being to participating in religious activities?

## Method

### Research Design and Procedure

In the study, both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were used. The data was obtained from individuals of various ages, and a cross-sectional research model was employed. More than one reason exists for choosing a mixed methodology in the study. It allows for strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research, and provides more comprehensive evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone. It is practical since individuals tend to solve problems using both numbers and words, and they combine inductive and deductive thinking (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993; Greene, 2006; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). More specifically, this study was intended to answer how high school students' views from standardized instruments converged or departed. Moreover, it was intended to use qualitative data to explain the quantitative results. This study primarily focuses on the relation between strategies used by adolescents for increasing subjective well-being and their own subjective well-being in a quantitative way. However, this study additionally focuses on how adolescents tend to relate their subjective well-being to participating in religious activities in a qualitative way.

The sample selection employed a purposive sampling, allowing the researcher to be able to select one or more sub-sections from the selection pool in place of a more random representative sampling. The purposive sampling allows researcher to select the most suitable observation unit (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1993). The researcher using purposive sampling can choose a specific unit based upon theoretical knowledge and specific

goals of his study. With this taken into account, criteria were established for inclusion and exclusion of the adolescents willing to participate based on the purpose of the study. The criteria were set at: (1) being a high-school student, (2) being 14 to 16 years of age, (3) being a Muslim, (4) lack of a chronic disease. Initially 225 high school students were included in the study. The study has sufficient participants based on the description Kline (1998) made about sample sizes; if the sample size is below 100, the study does not have sufficient participants. However, if the sample is between 100 and 200, the sample size has a medium level, and if the sample is over than 200, the sample size has a high level.

The data for this study was obtained from 225 high-school students, between February to May 2013, in the city of Eskisehir, Turkey. The quantitative data was obtained within one hour in a classroom environment, while the qualitative data was obtained through one-on-one interviews. Care was taken to comply with ethical principles, and it was ensured that everyone was voluntarily involved in the study. The participants were informed briefly about the content of the study before the means of collecting data could be implemented. Afterwards, those willing to participate in the study were given scales. Moreover, the participants were provided with extra information whenever a need arose.

In line with the purpose of this study, the Pearson Correlation Technique was employed to determine the relation between subjective well-being and strategies used for increasing it. The adolescents in the qualitative group were asked two open-ended questions; the responses provided by the participants were then subjected to the technique of sentence-based content analysis. Help was sought with the content analysis from a theologian, an educational psychologist, and an expert of measurement and evaluation, all of whom have Ph.D.'s. Studies and theoretical explanations for subjective well-being and religion-spirituality were taken advantage of (Abdel-Khalek, 2009; Bowlby, 1989; Fordyce, 1977, 1983; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Pargament, 2002; Prager, 1995; Schulman, 2002; Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006) while categorizing the finding obtained through the qualitative research.

### Study Group

The study was divided into two sub-groups (qualitative and quantitative) to determine the adolescents that frequently used the strategy of participating in religious activities for the purpose

of increasing their subjective well-being. Not every subjective well-being strategy yields the same results for everyone, and not everyone employs the same strategy to increase the level of their subjective well-being (Tkach & Lyubomirsky, 2006). This being the case, any data obtained from the adolescents that were more actively involved in religious activities would appear to better suit the purpose of this study.

**Quantitative Study Group:** Initially, 225 adolescents were included in the study. During preliminary investigations, 14 adolescents failed to answer the items, accounting for at least 5% of all the items, and were excluded, along with three students with religious ideologies other than Islam, and two students who held no religious ideologies. Of the remaining 206 adolescents, four males and six females were excluded from this study for having chronic diseases. The study was conducted during the educational semester of 2012 to 2013 in Eskisehir on 99 (50.5%) females and 97 (49.5%) males attending high school. The participants' ages varied from 14 to 16; 77 (39.3%) of these adolescents were 14 years old, 90 (45.9%) of them were 15, and 29 (14.8%) of them were 16. 12 of the participants had divorced parents (6.1%) and 4 of them had a dead parent (2%). The other 180 adolescents (91.8%) lived with their parents. Of the participants, 79 (40.3%) had mothers who were high school graduates, 63 (32.21%) had mothers who were primary school graduates, 42 (21.4%) had mothers with bachelor's degrees, 9 (4.3.6%) had college graduate mothers, and 3 (1.5%) had a mother with a master's degree. 81 participants (41.3%) had graduate fathers, 65 (33.2%) had fathers that were high school graduates, 31 (15.8%) had fathers that were primary school-graduates, 15 (7.7%) had college graduate fathers, and 4 (2%) had a father with a master's degree.

**Qualitative Study Group:** Of the 196 adolescents that were administered the scale of Subjective Well-being Increasing Strategies, 107, whose points for "participating in religious activities strategy" were determined to be above the mean levels ( $M \geq 9.71$ ), were chosen. These adolescents were informed that they would be administered another qualitative study whose purpose was explained to them. Afterwards, 30 females and 30 males were included in the qualitative study group on a voluntary basis. Half of the students were in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and the second half were 10<sup>th</sup> grade students, their mean age was 15.16.

## Instruments

The study used: the Personal Information Form, Qualitative Question Form, Satisfaction with Life Scale, Positive-Negative Affect Scale, and Adolescents' Subjective Well-being Increasing Strategies Scale. Given below is the information about the instruments employed in the study:

**Personal Information Form:** This form was drawn up to determine demographic properties of the adolescents participating in this study. In this form, information was provided for the following variables: age, gender, education, religious belief, demographic properties of the parents, and chronic diseases.

**Qualitative Question Form:** A qualitative form was drawn up for the adolescents so that they could answer the following two questions:

- a) What do you do to perform your religious duties?
- b) In what way do you think performing your religious duties helps increase your subjective well-being?

In addition, information was provided for such demographic variables as age, gender, and class.

**Satisfaction with Life Scale:** This scale was developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffen (1985) and then adapted to Turkish by Koker (1991) and Yetim (1993). This scale consists of five items with a seven point Likert-type scale. In the study by Koker, the Cronbach Alpha was determined to be 0.76, whereas it was found to be 0.86 by Yetim. Our study investigated reliability and explanatory factor analysis of this scale. According to analysis results, the explained variance was 59.61% and the Cronbach Alpha was 0.81.

**Positive-Negative Affect Scale (PANAS):** This scale was developed by Watson, Tellegen, and Clark (1988), and consists of 20 items (10 positive and 10 negative affects) with a five point Likert-type scale. It was adapted to Turkish by Gençöz in 2000. The Cronbach Alpha was determined to be 0.83 for the positive affection dimension and 0.86 for the negative affection dimension by Gençöz. The validity of this scale was computed by Beck Depression and Beck Anxiety Scales, as a result of which the validity of the scale was found satisfactory. According to analysis results, the Cronbach Alpha was 0.78 for the positive affection and 0.79 for the negative one.

**Adolescents' Subjective Well-being Increasing Strategies Scale:** This scale was developed by Eryilmaz (2010), and is composed of five sub-

dimensions: participating in religious activity, receiving positive reaction from an environment, reacting positively to an environment, mental control, and satisfaction of desires. This scale consists of 17 items with a 4-point Likert-type scale. Getting high scores on this scale means using the aforementioned strategies in high levels. The Cronbach Alpha of the total scale was 0.89, while the Cronbach Alpha of the sub-dimensions was as follows: participating in religious activity (0.92), receiving positive reaction from an environment (0.91), reacting positively to an environment (0.90), mental control (0.71), and satisfaction of desires (0.68). The validity of this scale was computed by Satisfaction with Life Scale as a result of which the validity of the scale was found satisfactory. In this study group, the Cronbach Alpha of sub-dimensions varied between 0.71 and 0.92.

## Findings

### Quantitative Findings

The participants' mean scores and standard deviation values are presented in Table 1. Likewise, the results of the Pearson Correlation Analysis pertaining to subjective well-being increasing strategies, satisfaction with life, and positive-negative affect are presented in Table 2.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics*

	M	SD
Life satisfaction	23.45	5.87
Positive affect	35.80	5.95
Negative affect	21.57	5.78
Participating in religious activities	9.71	2.41
Receiving positive reaction from an environment	13.69	2.12
Reacting positively to an environment	11.26	1.79
Mental control	12.10	1.92
Satisfaction of desires	13.53	2.36

Table 2  
*Pearson Correlations among Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Life satisfaction	1	.37**	-.25**	.27**	.24**	.36**	.27**	.17*
2. Positive affect		1	-.12	.37**	.14*	.29**	.18*	.06
3. Negative affect			1	-.09	-.18*	-.22**	-.13	.04
4. Participating in religious activities				1	.39**	.39**	.43**	.26**
5. Receiving positive reaction from an environment					1	.59**	.54**	.34**
6. Reacting positively to an environment						1	.51**	.38**
7. Mental control							1	.42**
8. Satisfaction of desires								1

\*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$

According to the correlation analysis results given in Table 2, there was a positive, significant relation, though in low levels, between participating in religious activities and satisfaction with life, and positive affection. However, no significant relation could be determined between participating in religious activities and negative affection.

### Qualitative Findings

The participants in the qualitative data group were asked the following question: "What do you do to perform your religious duties?" The answers given to the question are presented in Table 3.

Table 3  
*Distribution of Religious Activities*

Religious Activities	f	%
Praying	23	38.33
Performing religious duties as a whole	19	31.67
Fasting	6	10
Reading five-time daily prayers	5	8.34
Going to mosque on Friday	3	5
Going to mosque to pray on Holy Nights	2	3.34
Going to mosque during the Holy Ramadan	1	1.66
Reading the Holy Book Quran	1	1.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

An analysis of Table 3 reveals that adolescents can be understood to perform some religious activities due to feeling an urge to do so. The most striking find appears to be that the majority of them are in the habit of praying. The second highest score was given to participating in religious activities as a whole. The remaining activities were fasting, reading five-times daily prayers, going to mosque on Friday, going to pray in mosque on holy nights, going to mosque during the holy Ramadan, reading the holy book Quran, respectively.

The participants in this qualitative group were asked another question: "In what way do you think



Table 4  
Reasons for an Increase in Adolescents' Subjective Well-being as regards Religious Activities

Dimensions	Example of Sentences	f	%
Discharging my religious responsibilities	*I become happy because I discharge my religious responsibilities when I am worshipping. *Discharging the religious responsibilities appointed by God gives me a huge relief. *Having done my religious duties makes me feel good, so I feel relieved from the burden of anxiety and boredom.	17	21.79
Cherishing a hope that my desires will be fulfilled	*When I am praying, I feel as if I'm sharing all my wishes and desires with God, which I hope will be fulfilled someday, and this makes me happy. *Asking God for good things with hope and knowledge that He can fulfill them someday makes me feel very happy. *Asking a Supreme Being helps me keep believing and hoping that my requests will be answered someday.	16	20.51
Getting rewarded	*I'm happy to be working for both this world and the Hereafter, so that I can be rewarded in both worlds as long as God helps me, because He helps good people. *I try doing good deeds, through which I will end up in Paradise, as thinking of getting rewarded in the Hereafter makes me feel happy. *I not only raise my chances for a good place in the Hereafter by performing my religious duties but also gain favor with my religious family members who give me more care and attention for my being religious, thus I can feel happy in both worlds.	15	19.23
Coping	*Participating in religious activities helps me relive my mind of chaos and confusion by focusing on only one direction, which is a big relief to me. *Praying to God in helplessness makes me feel so empowered. *I feel that somebody over there is lending me His support	10	12.83
Sense of Security	*Believing in a Supreme Being gives me the sense of security, because I don't feel alone in this gigantic space despite its awesomeness. *Knowing that someone high above is always behind me is what feeds me with power and makes me feel secure. *Knowing that I have someone in whom I can always have absolute trust makes me feel very happy.	8	10.26
Meeting the need for building intimate relations	*Before I go to bed every single night, I pray to God and find a lot to share with Him. *Communicating with God by praying makes me feels delighted. *Praying to God is like speaking to your best confidant, a type of self-disclosure on my part, which gives me a good deal of relief.	6	7.69
Good manners	*Avoiding the deeds forbidden by God is a great feat. *I owe my good manners to my religious beliefs and so try to be a good person. *I feel proud of myself when I have done something worthwhile.	6	7.69
Total		78	100

performing your religious duties helps increase your subjective well-being?" The answers given to the question were analyzed through the sentence-based content analysis method and are presented in Table 4.

The results displayed in Table 4, shows how adolescents enhance their subjective well-being by participating in religious activities. As such, adolescents appear to develop a better subjective well-being when involved in religious activities, ranging from praying all alone to going to mosque on holy days, which in turn helps them discharge religious duties, meets the need for building intimacy with someone, gives them sense of security, instills hope in them, fosters good manners in them, makes them feel rewarded, and helps them cope with stress.

### Discussion

This study focused on the relations between subjective well-being of students and their participation in religious activities. Findings indicated that participating in religious activities were positively related with students' subjective well-being.

Results of the study show that high school students' (adolescents) subjective well-being was related with participating religious activities. These findings might be evaluated with the perspective of positive psychology. According to studies that stem from positive psychology, religious activities have been considered an aspect of a meaningful life (Diener & Seligman, 2002). Moreover, religious activities have been considered as one of the most important subjective well-being increasing strategies (Fordyce, 1977, 1998; Eryilmaz, 2010, 2012; Tkach & Lyubmorsky, 2006). However, there has been little empirically validated evidence found between religious activities and subjective well-being on the context of subjective well-being increasing strategies. Thus, the findings of the present study make an important contribution to the related literature.

During the course of the study, some similar findings that were investigated internationally were obtained; however, no such study has ever been conducted in Turkey. According to similar international studies that were conducted on adult samples, there were indications of modest relations

between subjective well-being and religion (Francis et al., 2000; Pearce et al., 2003). Likewise exists, international studies concerning the subjective well-being and religion amongst adolescents. According to the results of a study by Abdel-Khalek (2002) on the adolescents in Kuwait, 15% of subjective well-being of the adolescents could be accounted for by religion. A study involving Saudi children and adolescents revealed a positive relation between subjective well-being of the participants and religion (Abdel-Khalek, 2009).

The findings for this study show a significant, though in low levels, relation between life satisfaction, positive affection, and participation in religious activities. These findings appear to be in agreement with those of other studies dealing both adults and adolescents, and with different religious beliefs (Abdel-Khalek, 2006; Abdel-Khalek & Lester, 2007; Abdel-Khalek & Naceur, 2007; Abdel-Khalek & Thorson, 2006; Argyle, 2001; Barkan & Greenwood, 2003; Ellison, 1991; Francis et al., 2000; Francis et al., 2003; French & Joseph, 1999; Kelley & Miller, 2007; Wills, 2009). Moreover, some studies have also failed to determine a significant relation between religion and negative affection (Clark & Watson, 1999; Watson & Clark, 1993). These findings indicate that, though people may have various religious beliefs, these beliefs appear to have the same effects upon humankind. Furthermore, the reason for a low, positive relation between subjective well-being of adolescents and participating in religious activities could be accounted for by the fact that religion tends to include institutional rituals, practices, and beliefs (Houskamp et al., 2004). On par with these findings, some authors have suggested that religion does not have many positive effects upon the subjective well-being of individuals due to its institutional, dogmatic and restrictive nature (Wulff, 1998).

The findings of this study show that religious activities influence the subjective well-being of adolescents in at least seven different ways, thus increasing their subjective well-being. These findings appear to be in agreement with other theoretical and empirical studies. First, studies in the literature have shown that religion enhances subjective well-being of individuals for the reasons that religion is believed to bestow life with a purpose, explain why human life exists in the universe, and what will happen after death, all of which ultimately serve to relieve individuals from existential anxiety (Argyle, 2001; Myers & Diener, 1995). What all of these explanations have in common is that

they all are based on how man can benefit from religion. However, in regards to the views on God, there are ideas that humans must exercise caution about (Schulman, 2002). Individuals who believe in a religion tend to be more willing to discharge their religious responsibilities, which would otherwise cause them to suffer internal conflict in the case of failure, to fulfill the duties mandated by God. Moreover, fulfilling duties that require responsibilities in a successful way contributes positively to the self of adolescents, on account of the fact that fulfillment of a task satisfies the need of individuals for competence, which, in turn, gives rise to positive emotions (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These reasons could well account for the fact that the adolescents in the study became happy when they thought they had discharged their religious responsibilities.

Second, there are some studies in which hope is conceived as a true reason for living (Linehan, Goodstein, Nielsen, & Chiles, 1983). Several studies have reported that religion and spirituality are instrumental in the rise of hopes in individuals (Revheim & Greenberg, 2007). It has been noted that religion and spirituality contribute to increasing hopes in individuals by generating personal confidence in them while they are trying to attain their wishes and goals (Pargament, 2002). Apart from supporting the information and findings given above, this study also suggests that participation in religious activities appears to be the source of cherishing a hope that their wishes will be fulfilled. The reason for this could be that an Almighty God capable of doing everything will stand by the adolescents who are careful about discharging their religious responsibilities.

Third, according to Stark and Bainbridge (1980), humans seek reward and pleasure both in this world and in the Hereafter; likewise, they have a tendency to avoid unhappiness and punishment. As in other religions, Islam also claims to provide happiness for humans both in this world and in the Hereafter, thus relieving them from sufferings (Abdel-Khalek, 2009). As a result, adolescents are more positively affected in terms of an enhancement in their subjective well-being, since they conceive participation in religious activities as a means of being rewarded.

The fourth aspect: one of the explanations given in the literature, as to why religions make humans happy, is that religion is seen as a source of coping. In particular, religion serves as an essential coping tool during traumatic experiences such as



divorce and unemployment (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to Ellison (1991), individuals' attachment to God diminishes their stress levels and helps them cope with stress in a better way. Another explanation is that religious activities already include social behavior; individuals with the same religious beliefs come together and as a result they can support each other socially. This, in turn, increases their subjective well-being (Myers & Diener, 1995). For the adolescents participating in this study, religion seems to be an essential source of coping.

The fifth aspect is based on Bowlby's (1989) theory that secure attachment is one of the essential means of providing optimal functioning and well-being. Upon having achieved secure attachment, the individual experiences comfort, support, help, and protection in his or her relations. According to Kirkpatrick (1999), God believers are in possession of personal, interactive, powerful, virtuous, and God-loving relations; these types of relations do include the attachment criteria. In addition, there are known to be some studies which suggest that as long as patients are closely attached to God, their well-being and personal control gets better (Gall, Miguez de Renart, & Boonstra, 2000). With these findings and information taken into account, the participation in religious activities by adolescents seems to fulfill their need for attachment and thus increases their subjective well-being.

Sixth, according to Prager (1995), humans need the existence of others, even in their smallest, life experiences, and so feel the need for establishing intimate relations so that they can attain their developmental goals. As far as human relations are concerned, being able to build intimate relations and exchange support positively affects the subjective well-being of people (Williams, 1988). Another factor facilitating intimate relations and increasing subjective well-being is self-disclosure (Collins & Miller, 1994). The aforementioned properties of mankind could also be seen in the adolescents in this study who reported to have built intimate relations with God. For this reason, this study suggests that participating in religious activities might have a positive impact on the subjective well-being of the adolescents.

Within the last aspect, religion attempts to provide individuals with good manners by motivating them

to get involved in good deeds and exhibit good manners (Schulman, 2002). Moreover, religion prohibits the behavior that is likely to provoke bad or negative deeds, so individuals lead healthier and happier lives. For example, there are some studies that note that those with sound religious beliefs have fewer tendencies to use drugs and exhibit fewer behavioral disorders (Benson, 1992; Ellison & Levin, 1998; Ellison & Sherkat, 1993; Koenig, Pargament, & Nielsen, 1998; Mahoney et al., 1999; Pargament, 1997). By means of developing good manners, individuals can become involved in society in a positive way, which is what helps increase the subjective well-being of individuals (Schweikar, 1969). Therefore, this study concludes that adolescents seem to be careful about avoiding negative situations and circumstances that could diminish their subjective well-being as long as they participate in religious activities.

Consequently, this study might provide a comprehensive point-of-view about relations between participating religious activities and subjective well-being. Although there have been similar explanations there is not a comprehensive framework to understand relations between these variables. The subject has been only considered on the context of subjective well-being increasing strategies (Fordyce, 1977, 1998; Eryilmaz, 2010, 2012; Tkach & Lyubmorsky, 2006). The question "how does participating in religious activities increase subjective well-being of individuals" has not been answered. Thus, the results, which provide a comprehensive point-of-view, from this study are an important contribution to the related literature.

Participation in religious activities has a positive impact on the subjective well-being of high school students. In this study, the relation between participating in religious activities and subjective well-being is examined in a hedonic approach. Another concept of the position of religion on the subject of well-being in psychology is known as psychological well-being, or eudemonic approach (Ryff, 1989). Future studies are needed to shed light on how the eudemonic approach relates to participation in religious activities. This study was conducted on adolescents attending high-schools; however, further studies could be conducted on adolescents deprived of education, as well as on individuals in different developmental stages.

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