

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ADOLESCENTS' CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF HAPPINESS AND PEACE, LIFE SATISFACTION, AND PERCEIVED PARENTAL ATTITUDES

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Received: February 12, 2024 **Accepted:** May 14, 2024 **Published:** June 30, 2024

Suggested Citation:

Yilmaz, F., & Bulut Serin, N. (2024). The relationships between adolescents' childhood memories of happiness and peace, life satisfaction, and perceived parental attitudes. *International Journal of Global Education (IJGE)*, 9(1), 1-9.



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Abstract

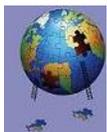
This study aims to examine the relationship between adolescents' childhood memories of happiness and peace, life satisfaction, and perceived parental attitudes. The research sample consists of 571 high school students studying in six different high schools in the Nicosia district of the TRNC during the 2023-2024 academic year. The sample group includes 372 female (65.1%) and 199 male (34.9%) students. This sample was determined using a non-random sampling method called convenient sampling. The data were obtained using the "Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace Scale," adapted into Turkish by Akin et al. (2013), and the "Life Satisfaction Scale," adapted into Turkish by Dağlı and Baysal (2016). For data analysis, the Pearson Correlation method and Multiple Linear Regression analysis were employed to explain the relationships. The research results indicate that the level of life satisfaction significantly differs according to perceived parental attitudes. A significant and positively moderate relationship was found between childhood memories of happiness and peace and life satisfaction. According to the correlation analysis of parental attitudes and variables in this study, childhood parental attitudes influence childhood memories of happiness and peace more than current parental attitudes. Both variables have a moderate and positive level of influence.

Keywords: Childhood memories, happiness, peace, life satisfaction, parental attitude, adolescent.

INTRODUCTION

From the perspective of current theories related to childhood mental health, childhood should not be overlooked as a critical time for an individual's mental health and social development. The gains acquired during this period impact the person's entire life (Akpınar et al, 2019). Life is a developmental process that is continuously interconnected. Therefore, childhood should not be perceived as a past time period but as a phase with ongoing effects (Şakar, 2019). When examining theories in the field of mental health, childhood emerges as a crucial period for an individual's development in all aspects.

Positive and negative childhood experiences undeniably affect individuals' psychological states and behaviors in later life. Various studies support this notion. Hudaynazaravo (2022) found that having positive childhood experiences and being exposed to threatening memories affect the level of forgiveness in adolescents. Similarly, another study showed that individuals who did not experience traumatic events during childhood have higher spiritual understanding and the ability to forgive themselves, others, and

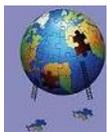


situations compared to those who experienced trauma (Güloğlu et al., 2016). In a different study, it was found that the number of siblings or birth order does not affect executive functioning in childhood (Özsoy, 2023). Looking at childhood from a happiness perspective, it is observed that positive childhood experiences contribute to individuals' mental health and well-being (Yılmaz & Büyükcebeci, 2019).

According to positive psychology, emphasizing individuals' strengths can be effective in protecting mental health and reducing behavioral problems and adjustment issues (Köroğlu, 2019). The growing popularity of positive psychology focuses on the quality of individuals' lives and the processes affecting it (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder & McCullough, 2000; Bulut & Serin 2016). According to Heubner (2004), discourses should include not only individuals' pathological conditions but also their well-being, highlighting areas where individuals excel (Ercan, 2019). When we look at the interests of positive psychology, the concept of life satisfaction also comes to the forefront. In general, satisfaction refers to the balance between individuals' desires, needs, and expectations (Meriç, 2022; Serin, Serin, & Özbaş, 2010). Ryff (1989) discusses six dimensions related to life satisfaction. These are: positive self-evaluation, personal growth, having a purpose in life, establishing and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships, making physical adjustments according to desires and needs, and making decisions for these purposes. When children explain the concept of happiness, they generally describe it as fun, things that involve smiling, sharing, having positive feelings, eating favorite foods, and giving and receiving gifts (Giacomoni et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2015; Ünüvar et al., 2015; Simsaroglu-Beydola, Karagülmez, Ruso, Kaptan, & Serin, 2022).

It is stated that experiences during childhood leave certain traces in an individual's life (Eryavuz, 2016; Kutlu et al., 2007). Parents are responsible for meeting the basic needs necessary for their children's overall health, and children expect to have a secure and healthy communication environment within the family (Polat, 2001). When making choices during developmental stages, individuals review their past experiences. It is believed that accumulating positive memories during childhood is important for the development of one's personality (Kutlu et al., 2007). Adolescence is a transitional period where the individual cannot fully define themselves. In this phase, the child feels like an adult but hasn't fully become one yet. During this period, the adolescent makes decisions about life, continues to live in many ways like an adult, and remains engaged with themselves and their surroundings, marking a significant process for the individual (Yazgan, 2006). Adolescence is highlighted as a period where an individual's outlook on life is shaped, social skills and norms find meaning, academic orientation occurs, and the search for satisfaction and happiness is prominent (Lintonene & Rimpela, 2004).

From the moment a child opens their eyes to the world, they are in contact with their caregivers and those around them. Through these interactions, the child gains various life experiences. The emotional bonds, compassion, and protection provided by the people they interact with daily shape the child's social norms and bring forth their feelings, thoughts, and stories about life, social environment, and self (Sarıca, 2013). The relationships and experiences individuals have with the groups they interact with support the formation of their self-perception and temperament (Cüceloğlu, 2008). Parents are the most important figures for the overall development of children. It is invaluable for parents to be actively involved in their child's educational process during all stages of childhood (Melanlıoğlu, 2012). Throughout a person's life, certain developmental stages are crucial for psychological and physiological growth (Arı, 2003). One of these critical stages is early childhood, during which physical, social, cognitive, and emotional development occurs. This period is the most precious for an individual. In other words, early childhood is the cornerstone of life. Providing early childhood education and care during this period is essential not only for healthy development but also as a fundamental human right (Kartal, 2007).



One of the skills that families impart to children is socialization. How family members treat the child and their role within the family determines how the child perceives themselves, and these initial experiences are crucial for their socialization (Güven, 2013). Family involvement activities during early childhood can enhance parents' knowledge and skills regarding their children's education (Çamlıbel Çakmak, 2010). Family involvement practices and programs organized for families in schools are key aspects of early childhood education (Morrison, Storey, Zhang, 2015). It is also necessary to inform families about the importance and benefits of education programs. In a study conducted by Bowlby, he emphasized the significance of the first five years in personality development, indicating that maternal deprivation during this period predisposes children to criminal behavior. The same study found that 40% of individuals subjected to criminal proceedings had experienced maternal deprivation during childhood (Bahar & Seyhan, 2006). The family is the primary institution where identity formation in children begins. Time spent with family members and the knowledge and skills acquired during early childhood significantly influence character development and temperament (Can, 2004).

Studies on childhood typically focus on negative aspects. However, this study aims to take a positive approach by recalling memories that bring happiness. It is believed that the results of this study will provide significant insights for school counselors working in high schools in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. This enhances the importance of the study. Generally, the study is expected to contribute to parents, educators, professionals involved in child and mental health, and academic life. Therefore, this study is considered important.

The Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to uncover the relationship between adolescents' childhood memories of happiness and peace, life satisfaction, and perceived parental attitudes.

The Sub-Purposes of the Research

1. Is there a significant difference between adolescents' childhood memories of happiness and peace, life satisfaction, and perceived current parental attitudes?
2. Is there a significant relationship between adolescents' childhood memories of happiness and peace and life satisfaction?
3. Do childhood memories of happiness and peace predict life satisfaction in adolescents?
4. Do perceived parental attitudes, both current and from childhood, predict childhood memories of happiness and peace and life satisfaction in adolescents?

METHOD

Model of the Research

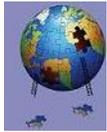
This research is a descriptive study using a quantitative research method that evaluates the relationship between perceived childhood memories of happiness and peace and life satisfaction in adolescents. The quantitative research method focuses on numerical data. (Büyükoztürk, 2002).

Participants

The research population consists of high school students studying in the Nicosia district of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus during the 2023-2024 academic year. The sample group includes 372 female (65.1%) and 199 male (34.9%) students from six different high schools in Nicosia. The research sample was determined using a non-random sampling method called convenient sampling.

Data Collection Tools

Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace Scale: This is a 5-point Likert scale developed by Richert et al. (2009) to measure individuals' childhood experiences. It consists of 20 items and has no reverse items. The scale scores range from a minimum of 20 to a maximum of 100. Higher scores indicate a greater value



of happiness in childhood memories. The Turkish adaptation of the scale was done by Akin et al. (2013). It is a unidimensional scale with an initial internal consistency of .97, and a retest value of .91, indicating its validity and reliability. In this study, the reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be .92. Life Satisfaction Scale: The life satisfaction scale used in this study was developed in 1985 by Diener et al. The Turkish adaptation was done by Dağlı and Baysal in 2016. It is a 5-item, 5-point Likert-type scale. The lowest possible score on the scale is 5, and the highest is 25. In the Turkish adaptation, the internal reliability was found to be .91. In this study, the reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be .89.

Analysis of Data

The Pearson Correlation Method was used to evaluate the relationship between adolescents' perceived childhood memories of happiness and peace and life satisfaction, based on the responses participants provided to the data collection tools. Additionally, Multiple Linear Regression analysis was conducted to further analyze these relationships in depth. The significance level was accepted as .05 for the entire study.

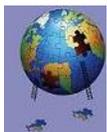
RESULTS

Findings on the Significance of the Differences Between Adolescents' Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace, Life Satisfaction, and Perceived Parental Attitudes

Table 1. Comparison of Scale Scores According to Adolescents' Perceived Parental Attitudes

Scales	Groups	N	\bar{X}	Sd	F	p	Significant Difference
Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace	Authoritarian - Repressive ¹	80	3,13	6	21,429	,000	1< 3,6 ve 7 2<3, 5, 6 ve 7 3>4 4<7
	Unrelated ²	29	2,68	534			
	The Overly Permissive ³	15	4,17	540			
	Inconsistent - Unstable ⁴	58	3,18				
	Overprotective ⁵	78	3,68				
	Perfectionist ⁶	50	3,76				
	Democratic - Tolerant ⁷	231	3,96				
	Total	541	3,63				
Life Satisfaction	Authoritarian - Repressive ¹	79	2,36	6	26,560	,000	1 ve 2<3, 5, 6 ve 7 3>4 4<5,6 ve 7
	Unrelated ²	29	2,40	527			
	The Overly Permissive ³	14	3,71	533			
	Inconsistent - Unstable ⁴	57	2,62				
	Overprotective ⁵	77	3,29				
	Perfectionist ⁶	49	3,48				
	Democratic - Tolerant ⁷	229	3,49				
	Total	534	3,15				

According to the analysis results, the CMHP and LS scale scores of the adolescents participating in the study significantly differ based on perceived parental attitudes ($p < .05$). Multiple comparison tests were conducted to determine between which groups these significant differences exist. According to the test results, the CMHP scale score significantly differs between those with authoritarian-punitive parental attitudes ($M = 3.13$) and those with excessively permissive ($M = 4.17$), perfectionist ($M = 3.76$), and democratic-tolerant ($M = 3.96$) parental attitudes. Accordingly, the CMHP level of individuals with authoritarian-punitive parental attitudes is lower compared to those with excessively permissive, perfectionist, and



democratic-tolerant parental attitudes. The CMHP scale score also significantly differs between those with indifferent parental attitudes ($M=2.68$) and those with excessively permissive, overprotective ($M=3.68$), perfectionist, and democratic-tolerant parental attitudes, with the CMHP level of individuals with indifferent parental attitudes being lower than others. Additionally, the CMHP scale score significantly differs between those with excessively permissive parental attitudes and those with inconsistent-indecisive ($M=3.18$) parental attitudes, with individuals with excessively permissive parental attitudes having a higher CMHP level than those with inconsistent-indecisive parental attitudes. There are significant differences in CMHP scale scores between individuals with democratic-tolerant parental attitudes and those with inconsistent-indecisive parental attitudes, with the CMHP level of those with democratic-tolerant parental attitudes being higher. The LS scale scores of participants significantly differ between those with authoritarian-punitive ($M=2.36$) and indifferent ($M=2.40$) parental attitudes, and those with excessively permissive ($M=3.71$), overprotective ($M=3.29$), perfectionist ($M=3.48$), and democratic-tolerant ($M=3.49$) parental attitudes. The CMHP scale scores of those with excessively permissive, overprotective, perfectionist, and democratic-tolerant parental attitudes are higher compared to those with authoritarian-punitive and indifferent parental attitudes. Additionally, the LS scale scores significantly differ between those with excessively permissive parental attitudes and those with inconsistent-indecisive ($M=2.62$) parental attitudes, with individuals having excessively permissive parental attitudes showing higher LS levels. The LS scale scores also significantly differ between those with inconsistent-indecisive parental attitudes and those with overprotective, perfectionist, and democratic-tolerant parental attitudes, with the LS levels of those with inconsistent-indecisive parental attitudes being lower compared to others.

Findings on the Correlation Between Adolescents' Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace and Life Satisfaction

Table 2. Correlation Analysis of Adolescents' Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace and Life Satisfaction Scales

Scales	CMHP	LS
Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace	1	
Life Satisfaction	.564**	1

Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace (CMHP)

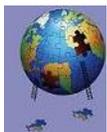
A moderate positive correlation was found between the Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace scale scores (CMHP) and the Life Satisfaction scale scores ($r=.564$).

Findings from the Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Life Satisfaction by Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace in Adolescents

Table 3. Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Life Satisfaction by Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace in Adolescents

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	B	β	t	R	R ²	F	p
Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace	Life Satisfaction	.922	.564	6.47	.564 ^a	.318	261.96	.001

As a result of the regression analysis, it was found that childhood memories of happiness and peace have a positive and moderately significant effect on life satisfaction in adolescents. The explanatory power, represented by the R² value, was found to be .318 ($R=.564$; $R^2=.318$; $p<.05$). Accordingly, 31.8% of the variance in life satisfaction can be explained by the independent variable, childhood memories of happiness and peace. Childhood memories of happiness and peace have a significant impact on life satisfaction.



Findings from the Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace and Life Satisfaction by Perceived Current and Childhood Parental Attitudes in Adolescents

Table 4. Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace and Life Satisfaction by Perceived Current and Childhood Parental Attitudes in Adolescents

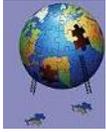
Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	B	β	t	R	R ²	F	p
Current Parenting Attitudes	Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace	.2850	.376	31,31	.376 ^a	.142	88,898	.001
Parental Attitudes During Childhood		.2325	.516	23,44	.516 ^a	.267	199,234	.001
Current Parenting Attitudes	Life Satisfaction	.2185	.433	22,87	.433 ^a	.188	123,028	.001
Parental Attitudes During Childhood		.2117	.375	18,13	.75 ^a	.140	88,375	.001

According to the regression analysis, perceived current parental attitudes have a positive and moderately significant effect on adolescents' childhood memories of happiness and peace. The explanatory power, represented by the R² value, was found to be .142 (R=.376; R²=.142; p<.05). Similarly, perceived childhood parental attitudes have a positive and moderately significant effect on adolescents' childhood memories of happiness and peace, with an explanatory power of .267 (R=.516; R²=.267; p<.05). Thus, current parental attitudes explain 14.2% and childhood parental attitudes explain 26.7% of the variance in childhood memories of happiness and peace. It was found that perceived current parental attitudes have a positive and moderately significant effect on life satisfaction in adolescents. The explanatory power, represented by the R² value, was found to be .188 (R=.433; R²=.188; p<.05). Similarly, perceived childhood parental attitudes have a positive and moderately significant effect on life satisfaction in adolescents, with an explanatory power of .140 (R=.375; R²=.140; p<.05). Thus, current parental attitudes explain 18.8% and childhood parental attitudes explain 14% of the variance in life satisfaction.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and SUGGESTIONS

Discussion on the findings regarding the differences in adolescents' childhood memories of happiness and peace and life satisfaction levels based on the variable of current and childhood parental attitudes. According to the research results, the level of childhood memories of happiness and peace significantly varies based on parental attitudes. Those who grew up with democratic-tolerant and excessively permissive parental attitudes have higher levels of childhood memories of happiness and peace. The lowest levels were observed in those with authoritarian-punitive parental attitudes. Children who lack agency, support, and are suppressed often experience accompanying mental health issues. Parental attitudes also influence children's outlook on life. In one study, children with punitive parental attitudes were more prone to fears and lying (Derman & Başal, 2013). Supported and accepted children can establish healthy communication with the outside world. A democratic family structure positively affects adolescents' individual, social, and overall adaptation (Bostan, 1993).

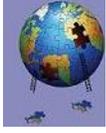
The life satisfaction scale also shows significant differences based on parental attitudes. Life satisfaction significantly differs for those with democratic-tolerant and excessively permissive parental attitudes compared to others. Erol and Kaba (2018) reached similar conclusions in their study, finding that life satisfaction levels were higher in those who perceived their parents as democratic. Whether a child or an adolescent, everyone seeks acceptance from their family. Similar results are abundant in the literature. According to the correlation analysis conducted on the data in this study, childhood parental attitudes



influence childhood memories of happiness and peace more than current parental attitudes. Both variables have a moderate and positive level of influence. However, for adolescents' perception of life satisfaction, current parental attitudes have a greater impact. According to the related regression analysis, current parental attitudes influence adolescents' childhood memories of happiness and peace by 14.2%, while childhood parental attitudes influence them by 26.7%. In terms of life satisfaction, while the results are similar, current parental attitudes have an influence of 18.8%, whereas childhood parental attitudes have an influence of 14%.

Discussion on the Examination of the Relationship Between Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace and Life Satisfaction in Adolescents.

According to the correlation analysis conducted with the participating adolescents, a moderate positive relationship was found between childhood memories of happiness and peace and life satisfaction. As childhood memories of happiness increase, so does the level of life satisfaction. In his study, Kahlon (2020) emphasized that trust and sincerity given during childhood provide individuals with the ability to manage emotional situations encountered during adolescence and adulthood. Another study found that childhood traumatic experiences negatively impact life satisfaction (Mamur, 2020). In research on children's happiness, while children had difficulties defining the concept of happiness, they associated it with family togetherness, positive feelings and memories, laughter, and humor (Tobin, 2014). Similarly, Saltalı and Dođru (2016) found a negative relationship between distressing childhood experiences and self-esteem in adolescence. In a different study, it was found that individuals' levels of psychological resilience have a positive relationship with life satisfaction and a negative relationship with daily hassles (İnce, 2023). Üstün's 2022 study in the TRNC revealed that positive childhood experiences moderately affect life satisfaction levels. Unrealistic thoughts in adolescents lead to mental health issues like depression and negatively impact life satisfaction levels (Yavuzer & Karataş, 2013). In Mamur's 2020 study on adults examining the relationship between childhood trauma, object relations, and life satisfaction, a negative moderate relationship was found between life satisfaction and alienation. Additionally, as the levels of object relations and reality testing ability increase, life satisfaction decreases. The same study also found that negative childhood experiences (neglect-abuse) negatively impact life satisfaction. Akpınar and Kozan (2019) found a positive relationship between childhood memories of happiness and peace and individuals' resilience. This supports the findings of this study, suggesting that high levels of psychological resilience positively influence life satisfaction in the face of adverse events. Supporting this, another study identified a positive relationship between psychological resilience and life satisfaction (Alibekirođlu et al., 2018; Hatun & Serin, 2021). However, Pehlivan (2019) did not find a significant relationship between childhood memories of happiness and peace and psychological well-being, attributing this to the potential forgetting of those memories. Literature on childhood often focuses on the effects of negative experiences. This study suggests that focusing on the positive aspects of childhood can have a beneficial impact on individuals. Positive and negative childhood experiences undeniably impact individuals' psychological states and behaviors in later life. Hudaynazaravo (2022) found that experiencing positive childhood memories and being exposed to threatening memories affect adolescents' levels of forgiveness. Similarly, another study revealed that individuals who did not experience traumatic events in childhood have higher spiritual understanding and the ability to forgive themselves, others, and situations compared to those who experienced trauma (Gülođlu et al., 2016). A different study found no effect of the number of siblings or birth order on executive functioning in childhood (Özsoy, 2023; Şen, Bulut Serin & Karagülmez, 2023). Psychological resilience provides insights into individuals' emotional states, the meanings they attribute to events, and their problem-solving approaches. Research indicates that positive childhood experiences positively influence individuals' levels of psychological resilience (Dođan, 2020). Additionally, physical and emotional abuse experienced during childhood increases the tendency toward relationship-focused depression in adolescents (Durmuşođlu & Dođru, 2006).

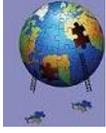


Findings from the Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Childhood Memories of Happiness and Peace and Life Satisfaction by Perceived Current and Childhood Parental Attitudes in Adolescents

In a study examining children's levels of happiness, when asked about the source of their happiness, children responded that spending time with their family was a key factor. They also metaphorically emphasized the role of family in their understanding of happiness (Yam, 2020). According to research, perceived academic pressure from the family negatively affects adolescents' life satisfaction levels, whereas supportive academic attitudes have a positive impact (Yıldırım, 2023). Vautero et al. (2021) found that family expectations, values, and belief systems also influence life satisfaction. One of the skills imparted to children by their families is socialization. How family members treat the child and their placement within the family determines the child's self-perception, and these initial experiences are crucial for their socialization (Güven, 2013). Family involvement activities during early childhood can enhance parents' knowledge and skills related to their children's education (Çamlıbel Çakmak, 2010). Family involvement practices and programs for families organized in schools are key aspects of early childhood education (Morrison, Storey, Zhang, 2015). Providing information on the importance and benefits of education to families is also necessary.

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