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# **EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL SAFETY AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING**

### **Abstract:**

What is expected from schools is to provide a safe learning environment which is suitable for raising socialized adults who will be the producing members of the society. School safety is a safe environment where mainly students and teachers and directors at school feel at home and continue their education without experiencing any anxieties and fears. Subjective well-being is a general evaluation with regard to the life satisfactions and positive - negative sensations of the individuals. This evaluation includes the individuals' emotional reactions to the events, moods, life satisfactions, cognitive judgments about life satisfactions and satisfactions in living areas such as marriage and work. People experience a high subjective well-being whenever they feel many pleasant and a few unpleasant feelings, whenever they are involved in interesting activities, whenever they experience much happiness and a little sorrow and whenever they are satisfied from their lives.

The purpose of this research is to determine school safety and subjective well-being levels based on the opinions of the teachers and students who work at the public high schools in the central districts of Konya province. This research is considered important in terms of determining the opinions of those who spend most of their time at schools in order to provide a safe environment, revealing the existing problems and bringing solution suggestions.

The research was carried out in survey model due to its conformity with the subject and purposes. Comparison type survey method was used in the solution of the data. The population of the research consists of all secondary education teachers and students within the borders of Konya province. The schools, teachers and students which are included in the sampling group were determined randomly.

"Subjective Well-Being Scale" which was developed by Tuzgöl Dost (2005) and "School Safety Scale" which was developed by Goldberg (2008) and adapted into Turkish by Çankaya and Arabacı (2010) were used as the data collection tool in the research. The data which was obtained by subjective well-being inventory and school safety scale along with personal information forms are dissolved by SPSS statistic program in computer environment.

There is a positive and significant relationship between the levels of school safety and subjective well-being of the teachers and the students. The levels of subjective well-being increase as the perceptions of the teachers and the students in terms of school safety increase.

### **Keywords:**

School Safety, Subjective Well-Being, Teachers and Students.

**JEL Classification:** I29

## Introduction

Students, teachers and directors spend most of their time at school. Schools are public institutions which are responsible for letting students gain academic success as well as responsible and safe behaviors. What is expected from schools is to provide a safe learning environment which is suitable for raising socialized adults who will be the producing members of the society. For the realization of effective teaching, it is of great importance for the students and employees to feel safe in the teaching environment. It is too difficult to realize an effective teaching and learning in the environments where the individual does not feel safe. Each student should primarily feel safe in every corner of the school as if at home (Göksoy, Emen and Aksoy, 2013).

School safety is defined in general as protecting the student and the school personnel from undesired behaviours such as crime, violence, aggressiveness, tyranny, theft, vandalism (wildness), alcohol, cigarettes and drugs, sexual and racist abuse and ensuring their life safety at the highest level in extraordinary cases which might create a crisis environment at school (e.g. armed assault, fire, earthquake, etc.) (Özer, 2006). In this case, the factors which threaten school safety can be evaluated at the dimension of physical and psychological violence. The purposes of school safety include caring the psychological health of the students, making students and teachers feel in a safe environment, making students and teachers enjoy school environment, motivating members of the school and making students focus on success (Baginsky, 2003). Dönmez and Güven (2002) define school safety as students and teachers and other workers at school feeling free in physical, psychological and emotional terms. School safety is a safe environment where mainly students and teachers and directors at school feel at home and continue their education without experiencing any anxieties and fears. The school can be considered safe if students do not encounter any negative circumstances at school, in the school garden and the surroundings (Barton, 2009).

Teachers and students feel psychologically good in a safe school while they feel fear and anxiety, and feel bad at an unsafe school. Based on a research made at schools in the USA in the academic year of 2005-2006; 6% of the students between 12-18 years old reported that they feared to be attacked or harmed at school. They stated that they avoided joining in an activity at one or several places of the school with the fear of being attacked or harmed within the last six months. Furthermore, it was reported that 46 of 100 students were involved in crime (NCES, 2007). The psychological effect created by school safety on the students and teachers affects all of their living areas, "subjective well-being" which is expressed as happiness in the colloquial language.

Subjective well-being is a general evaluation with regard to the life satisfactions and positive - negative sensations of the individuals (Diener, 1984). This evaluation includes the individuals' emotional reactions to the events, moods, life satisfactions, cognitive judgments about life satisfactions and satisfactions in living areas such as marriage and work (Diener, Oishi ve Lucas, 2003). According to Diener (2000) people experience a high subjective well-being whenever they feel many pleasant and a few unpleasant feelings, whenever they are involved in interesting activities, whenever they experience

much happiness and a little sorrow and whenever they are satisfied from their lives (as cited in Tuzgöl Dost, 2005). High subjective well-being depends on the appropriate affect's being superior from inappropriate affect and positive cognitive judgment of the person regarding the quality of his life. Positive feelings and satisfaction related cognitive judgment can be related to several living areas and all of them reflect the general life satisfaction (Tuzgöl Dost, 2010).

A safe school environment for the teachers and students will substantially contribute to their subjective well-being and thus their happiness.

## Purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between school safety and the level of subjective well being based on the perceptions of public high school teachers and students in the central districts of Konya/Turkey. The research seeks answer for the question "Is there a relationship between the level of school safety and the level of subjective well-being based on the perceptions of teachers and students?"

This research is considered important in terms of determining the opinions of those who spend most of their time at schools in order to provide a safe environment, revealing the existing problems and bringing solution suggestions.

## Method

The research was carried out in survey model due to its conformity with the subject and purposes, and the data was collected thereby applying the scales. Comparison type survey method was used in the solution of the data which is collected by scales.

## Population and Sample

The population of the research consists of all secondary education teachers and students within the borders of Konya/Turkey province. The schools, teachers and students which are included in the sampling group were determined randomly.

Distribution of the teachers and students in the sample group is given in Table 1.

**Table 1. Distribution of the teachers and students in the sample group**

Group	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	296	19,49
Student	1223	80.51
Total	1519	100,00

The sampling group consists of 1519 persons namely 296 (19,49%) teachers and 1223 (80,51%) students.

## Data Collection Tool

“Subjective Well-Being Scale” which was developed by Tuzgöl Dost (2005) and “School Safety Scale” which was developed by Goldberg (2008) and adapted into Turkish by Çankaya and Arabacı (2010) were used as the data collection tool in the research.

Subjective Well-Being Scale consists of 46 items which contain personal judgments and positive and negative emotion expressions with regard to their living areas. The answering system is in the form of a five-Likert scale for each statement namely "(5) Completely Appropriate", "(4) Mostly Appropriate", "(3) Partially Appropriate", "(2) Somehow Appropriate" and "(1) Not Appropriate At All". The scores of each item vary between "5 and 1". 26 of the scale items were positive while 20 of them were negative systems. The scores of the negative expressions are given by reversing them. The lowest score from the scale is 46 while the highest score is 230. The highest score indicates high subjective well being. The KMO coefficient was found as .861 in the factor analysis study which was made to determine the validity of the Subjective Well Being. The scale has 12 factors and it is considered to have a general factor. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found as .93 (Tuzgöl Dost, 2005).

School Safety Scale consists of 16 items. It is in the form of a five-Likert scale namely "(5) Totally Agree", "(4) Agree", "(3) Partially Agree", "(2) Somehow Disagree" and "(1) Not Agree At All" for each statement. The scores of each item vary between "5 and 1". The internal consistency coefficient of the scale which was developed by Goldberg (2008) was determined as .840 while KMO score was determined as 789 (Çankaya and Arabacı, 2010).

## Analysis of Data

The data which was obtained by subjective well-being inventory and school safety scale along with personal information forms are dissolved by SPSS 16 statistic program in computer environment.

In the analysis of the data, t-test analysis was made by calculating the general averages of the answers given to school safety and subjective well being scales in order to determine whether there was a difference between the teachers and the students in terms of the level of school safety and level of subjective well-being. Correlation analysis was made to determine the direction of the relationship between school safety, the independent variable and subjective well-being, the dependent variable.  $p < .05$  was adopted as the significance level in the interpretation of data.

## Findings

1. *Is there a difference between the perceptions of the teachers and the students in terms of school safety?*

t-test results of the teachers and student' school safety level scores are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. t-test results of the teachers and students' school safety level scores**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig.
Teacher	296	3,188	0,645	1517	9,551	0,000*
Student	1223	2,729	0,764			

\*p<,05

The perceptions of the teachers and the students in terms of school safety had a significant difference based on Table 2. The perceptions of the teachers in terms of school safety (mean=3,188) are more positive than those of the students (mean=2,729).

2. *Is there a difference between the perceptions of the teachers and the students in terms of the level of subjective well-being?*

t-test results of the teachers and student' subjective well-being level scores are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. t-test results of the teachers and students' subjective well-being level scores**

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	t	Sig.
Teacher	295	3,890	0,552	1516	8,332	0,000*
Student	1223	3,580	0,578			

\*p<,05

The level of subjective well-being of the teachers and students had a significant difference based on the result of the t-test analysis. The level of subjective well-being of the teachers (mean=3,890) are more positive than that of the students (mean=3,580).

3. *Is there a relationship between the level of school safety and level of subjective well-being based on the perceptions of the teachers and the students?*

Table 4 shows the result of the correlation analysis which was made to determine the relationship between the level of school safety and level of subjective well-being based on the perceptions of the teachers and the students.

**Table 4. The result of the correlation analysis between the level of school safety and subjective well-being**

Variable	N	r	p
School safety	1519	0,159	0,000*
Subjective well-being			

\* p<,01

Table 4 determines a positive and significant relationship in statistical terms between the levels of school safety and subjective well-being as a result of the correlation

analysis which was made to determine the relationship between the level of school safety and the level of subjective well-being based on the perceptions of the teachers and the students ( $r=0,159$ ,  $p<,01$ ). Accordingly, it can be said that the levels of subjective well-being increased as the perceptions of the teachers and the students in terms of school safety increased.

## **Discussion and Results**

The following results were obtained as a result of the analysis of the research data.

The perceptions of the teachers and the students in terms of school safety have a significant difference. The perceptions of the teachers in terms of school safety are more positive when compared to those of the students.

There is a significant difference between the levels of subjective well-being of the teachers and the students. The teachers' level of subjective well being is more positive when compared to that of the students.

There is a positive and significant relationship between the levels of school safety and subjective well-being of the teachers and the students. The levels of subjective well-being increase as the perceptions of the teachers and the students in terms of school safety increase. In other words, teachers and students feel better and have positive feelings as their perceptions in terms of school safety increase.

It is supposed that teachers and students at a safe school will not feel fear and anxiety, they will have positive feelings, they will feel better psychologically and they will be more successful. In the research made by Çankaya, Töremen and Şanlı' (2011), it is seen that there is a significant, medium level and double-way relationship between the anxiety, job satisfaction and motivation levels of the teachers and school safety. And it can be said that teachers and students at an unsafe school will feel fear and anxiety, and this will affect their happiness. In the research made by Aktaş Baran (2008) at high schools, it was found that 72.6% of the teachers encountered with violence and crime events at school in the recent year and this made the teachers anxious. In the research made by Kapçı (2004) at elementary schools, it was found that there was a reverse relationship between happiness and self-respect with the tyrant behaviours to which the students were exposed.

## **Suggestions**

Schools should be made physically and psychologically safe environments and it must be assured that teachers and students are more successful, happier at school and all living areas by increasing the levels of subjective well-being of the teachers and the students.

Conferences, interviews, sportive and cultural events should be organized to increase the perception of safety in the students and thus it must be assured that students are more peaceful at school by increasing their levels of subjective well-being.

It will be useful to compare the results by conducting similar researches in relation to school safety and subjective well-being at elementary and higher education as well.

Moreover, intercultural comparisons can be made by conducting similar researches in different countries as well.

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