

Adolescent Life Satisfaction Before Young Adulthood: The Role of “Shyness” and “Self-Efficacy”



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SUMMARY

Objective: The aim of this study was to examine the correlation between shyness, perception of general self-efficacy, and life satisfaction in young adolescents.

Method: The study participants included 489 freshman students living in Turkey and studying under different faculty at public universities in Ankara (184 female; 37.6% and 305 male; 62.4%). The subjects ranged in age between 18 (n = 207; 42.3%) and 19 (n = 282; 57.7%) years. Study data collection included the Shyness Scale (Cheek and Buss 1981), the Perception of General Self-efficacy Scale (Schwarzer and Jerusalem 1995), and the General Life Satisfaction Scale (Diener, Emmons, Laresen and Griffin 1985). The data obtained were examined through Correlation analysis, simple linear regression analysis, multiple linear regression analysis and the sobel test.

Results: The results of the study showed that there was a moderately significant negative correlation between shyness and perception of general self-efficacy, moderately significant negative correlation between shyness and life satisfaction and moderately significant positive correlation between the perception of general self-efficacy and life satisfaction. Finally, the level of shyness and perceptions of general self-efficacy significantly predicted life satisfaction.

Conclusion: The findings of the present study may contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between shyness, perception of self-efficacy and “life satisfaction. The results are discussed in the context of the current literature on these topics.

Keywords: Shyness, self-efficacy, life, personal satisfaction, adolescent

INTRODUCTION

Psychological research in the last fifty years indicated that the emotions, views and acts are shaped by a number of personal variables. In addition, personal characteristics lead to self-directed questions such as “if I talk to them, will they laugh at me?” or “Can I cope with this?” or “When will I be happy?”. Such questions represent the concepts of shyness, self-efficacy and life satisfaction.

Cheek and Buss (1981) defined shyness as restlessness, frustration and avoidance of social interaction. Jones, Smith and Briggs (1986) argued that shyness is a tendency to avoid

social interaction and to effectively engage in social occasions. Shyness was regarded as a desired quality in the past. However, it is now considered to be a personal characteristic that negatively affects interpersonal relationships (Cardduci and Zimbardo 1995, Durmuş 2007, Yüksel 2002). Research suggests that shy people avoid communicating out of fear of being regarded poorly by others and have difficulty expressing themselves in social settings and avoid social occasions (Ervin and Presler 2011, Gard 2000, Henderson and Zimbardo 1998, Kozanoğlu 2006, Miller 1995, Şahin 2013, Tackett et al. 2013, Yüksel 2002, 2005). In addition, both the perception of self-efficacy (Caprara et al. 2003, Hermann and Betz

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2004, Hill 1989) and self-esteem (Butt et al. 2011, Gökçe 2001, Hamarta and Demirtaş 2009, Şahin and Gizir 2014, Tackett et al. 2013, Yüksel 2002, 2005) significantly predict shyness. Therefore, it may be argued that shy people have negative self-perception.

Self-perception refers to an individuals' feelings and evaluation of their own qualities, ability and personality (Bacanlı 2003). Self-evaluation by individuals may occur in different domains. Self-efficacy is a related parameter. Self-efficacy occurs as either perceived self-efficacy or self-efficacy beliefs and is a significant concept used in Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura 1977, 1997). Bandura (1977, 1997) argued that self-efficacy is one of the basic factors guiding an individual's behavior and that beliefs about skills affect both behavior and thinking processes and motivation. Individuals with positive self-efficacy perceptions initiate an action on their own desire and tend to be determined and insistent; they do not avoid difficulties, instead they try to overcome these through improving their potential (Pajares and Schunk 2001). On the other hand, individuals with negative self-efficacy perceptions avoid difficulties, give up on difficult tasks and become unsuccessful under stressful situations (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy 2001). Research indicates that academic-social-emotional and general self-efficacy perceptions significantly predict life satisfaction (Caprara and Steca 2005, Lightsey Jr et al. 2013, O'Sullivan 2011, Özbay et al. 2012, Telef and Ergün 2013, Sahranç 2007, Vecchio et al. 2007). Therefore, individuals with positive self-efficacy perceptions have higher levels of life satisfaction.

Life-satisfaction is one of the most significant factors for mental health (Diener 1995, Diener et al. 1985, Diener and Suh 1997, Myers and Deiner 1995, Neugarten et al. 1961, Wan et al. 1996). The concept of life-satisfaction was first examined by Neugarten et al (1961). Neugarten et al (1961) defined life satisfaction as an outcome of a individual's evaluation of their expectations and what they own. Diener et al argued that individuals can achieve life satisfaction to the extent that their desires and expectations are met (Diener 2000, Diener et al. 1985, 2003). Individuals who report positive emotions and perceptions about life have a more productive life. The level of life satisfaction is closely related to welfare, health care and educational opportunities in society and the basic goal of educational and health-care services should be to improve individual life satisfaction (Diener 2000, Diener and Seligman 2004, Seligman 2000, Diener and Suh 1997). Research also indicates that those individuals with higher levels of life satisfaction lead a healthy life in terms of psychological-social-physical dimensions, have higher levels of social functionality and have positive interpersonal relationships, and have a personality consistent with their life and a cognitive pattern which is open to personal development (Diener 1984, 1994, 2000, Diener et al. 1999). In addition, these individuals are

known to be efficient problem- solvers and are determined and focused under stressful conditions (Huebner et al. 2004, Matheny et al. 2002, Sahranç 2007).

Research indicates that the self perception of shy people is negative, "shyness and negative self perception hinder individuals from acting and that people with negative self perception also have negative perceptions about their life. These three qualities are significant for undergraduate students. The period of university education covers the transition from adolescence to young adulthood and during this period people come across novel situations and difficulties. Adolescents should have both internal (positive emotions and perceptions about themselves and life) and external (family support, socioeconomic situations) support to adapt to their new life environment and to navigate this period in a healthy way. Research suggests that shyness, self-efficacy perceptions and life satisfaction are useful parameters for gaining insights into adolescent development. Although previous studies have examined self concept and shyness or self-concept and life satisfaction, the number of studies dealing with all three of concepts is limited (Çelik 2012, Mowrer and Parker 2004, Neto 1993). In a study by Mowrer and Parker (2004) shyness, self-esteem and life satisfaction were analyzed. Neto's study (1993) the analyzed self-concept, shyness and life satisfaction. Çelik (2012) dealt with sexual shyness, sexual self-perception (self-esteem and self-efficacy) and marriage life satisfaction. In studies dealing with shyness, shyness was used as a predicted variable, whereas social self-efficacy perception (Caprara et al. 2003, Hermann and Betz 2004, Hill 1989) or self-esteem (Butt et al. 2011, Gökçe 2002, Hamarta and Demirtaş 2009, Şahin and Gizir 2014, Tackett et al. 2013, Yüksel 2002, 2005) were employed as predictor variables. There is no consensus agreement on the following questions: Is shyness the reason for lower self perception or is lower self perception the reason for shyness? Or are both shyness and lower self perception interrelated? These two factors have rarely been analyzed in relation in a cause-effect framework. On the other hand, Kemple (1995) argued that self-esteem and shyness affect each other and Henderson and Zibardo (1998) suggested that negative experience leads to both lower self-esteem and shyness. Wadman et al (2008) argued that in predicting self-esteem, shyness functions as a mediating variable. All these findings indicate that the relationship between self concept and shyness is controversial. Therefore, this study aims to provide some insight into these controversial correlations. Previous studies do not provide sufficient data on self-evaluation among people who are shy and hold negative self-perceptions. Therefore, this study will investigate how shy and anxious adolescents evaluate their own personal competency. In addition, the findings of the study will guide specialists working at the counseling and guidance units, researchers, educators and university administrators.

Objective

The aim of this study was to examine the correlation between shyness, perception of general self-efficacy, and life

satisfaction in young adolescents. In parallel to this aim the study attempts to answer the following questions:

Is there a significant correlation between the level of shyness, self-efficacy perceptions and life satisfaction in adolescents?

Do self-efficacy perceptions play a significant role as a mediating variable in the relationship between shyness and life satisfaction?

Does shyness play a significant role as a mediating variable in the relationship between self perception and life satisfaction?

Do shyness and self-efficacy perception have significant effects on each other?

METHOD

This section presents information on the study design, the participants, data collection tools, procedures and data analysis.

Study Design

The study was designed as descriptive research using a correlational scanning model. Correlational scanning attempts to identify the existence of simultaneous changes in two or more variables and the degree of change (Karasar 2003).

Participants

The participants in the study were 489 freshman students living in Turkey and studying under different faculty at public universities in Ankara. In terms of gender, female students (n=184) accounted for 37.6% of the study group and male students (n=305) made up 62.4%. 42.3% of the participants were 18 years-old (n=207) and 57.7% were 19 years-old (n=282).

Data Collection Tools

The study data were collected through the use of the following three scales: the shyness scale, the Perception of General Self-efficacy Scale, and the General Life Satisfaction Scale.

Shyness Scale

The shyness scale (SS) was developed by Cheek and Buss (1981). The scale was adapted into Turkish by Güngör (2001). The SS can be used in both adolescents and adults. The scale is made up of twenty items and has no sub-dimensions. The answers are given on a Likert-type scale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of shyness, while lower scores indicate lower levels of shyness. An example item from the scale is as follows: "I feel myself uneasy when I am with people whom I recently meet." In the original study, the Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.88. In Güngör's study (2001) the Cronbach-alpha

internal consistency coefficient was 0.91. In the current study the Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was 0.89.

General Self Efficacy Scale

Developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) the General Self Efficacy Scale was adapted into Turkish by Yeşilay (1996). The scale can be used in both adolescents and adults. It is made up of ten items and has no sub-dimensions. The answers to the items are given on a Likert-type scale. Higher scores indicate high levels of self-efficacy perceptions, while lower scores indicate low levels of self-efficacy perceptions. An sample items is as follows: "I meet challenges calmly, because I always believe in my ability." In the original study the Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.82. Yeşilay (1996) reported a Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of 0.83. In the current study the Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was 0.84.

General Life Satisfaction Scale

Developed by Diener et al (1985) the General Life Satisfaction Scale was adapted into Turkish by Köker (1991). The scale can be used in both adolescents and adults. It is made up of five items and has no sub-dimensions. The answers to the items are given on a Likert-type scale. Higher scores on he scale indicate positive perceptions about one's own life. An sample item is as follows: "My life conditions are very good". In the original study the Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was 0.87. Köker (1991) reported a Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of 0.85. In the current study the Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was 0.75.

Procedure

The participants of the study were chosen using a convenience sampling technique. This sampling technique is employed to choose people who are available for study and willingly choose to participate (Erkuş 2011). The study data were collected by the author in May of the 2013-2014 school year. All subjects completed an informed consent form and were informed about the aim and significance of the study, privacy of personal information, and how to answer items in the scale. The participants were provided with their final scores on each of the study scales. Although 497 undergraduate participated in the study, data from eight students were excluded due to inappropriate answers.

Data Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using SPSS 22.00. The data were initially evaluated for linearity, multivariate normality, missing values, and extreme values. In order to examine the correlation between shyness, self-efficacy perceptions and life

satisfaction, the Baron and Kenny (1986) hierarchical regression model was employed. This model requires four conditions. First, there must be a significant correlation between the independent variable and a mediator variable. Second, there must be a significant correlation between the independent variable and a dependent variable. Third, there must be a significant correlation between a dependent variable and a mediator variable. Finally, the correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable should be reduced or become insignificant when independent variables and mediator variables are included in the regression analysis. Correlation analysis was used to evaluate the first three conditions. Simple linear regression analysis and multiple linear regression analysis were employed to evaluate the correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The Sobel test was used to identify the significance level of the decrease in beta values of independent variables in multiple linear regression analysis.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the analyses carried out to evaluate the correlation between shyness, self-efficacy perceptions and life satisfaction.

Results of Correlation Analysis

The results of correlation analysis first demonstrated that there is a negative and significant correlation between shyness and self-efficacy perception ($r = -0.467$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, adolescents with higher levels of shyness also tend to have negative self-efficacy perceptions. Secondly, the correlation between shyness and life satisfaction was found to be moderate, negative and significant ($r = -0.556$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, adolescents with higher levels of shyness tend to have lower levels of life satisfaction. Finally, the correlation between self-efficacy perception and life satisfaction was moderate, positive and significant ($r = 0.492$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, adolescents with higher levels of self-efficacy perceptions have also higher levels of life satisfaction. The results of the correlation analysis showed that the first three conditions included in the

Table 1. Results of Correlation Analysis Between Variables

Variables	\bar{x}	SD	1	2	3
1. Shyness	38.77	10.08	1	-0.467*	-0.556*
2. Self-Efficacy Perceptions	41.93	4.15		1	0.492*
3. Life Satisfaction	27.66	4.02			1

N=489, * $p < 0.01$

Baron and Kenny (1986) model were met. Table 1 presents the results of our correlation analysis.

Findings About Regression Analysis

In order to build a comprehensive picture regarding the correlation between shyness, self-efficacy perception and life satisfaction in regression analyses, we conducted additional regression analyses. First, regression analysis was used to examine life satisfaction alone. Second, we examined self-efficacy perception alone. Third, multi regression analysis was used to examine the predictive power of these two variables on the overall sense of life satisfaction.

Shyness was a significant predictor of life satisfaction ($\beta = -0.56$; $p < 0.001$) accounting for 31% of the total variance ($R = 0.56$; $R^2 = 0.31$; $F(1, 487) = 218.29$; $p < 0.001$). Self-efficacy perception was a significant predictor of life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.49$; $p < 0.001$) accounting for 24% of the total variance ($R = 0.49$; $R^2 = 0.24$; $F(1, 487) = 155.62$; $p < 0.001$). In the third step multi regression analysis shyness ($\beta = -0.42$; $p < 0.001$) and self-efficacy perception ($\beta = 0.30$; $p < 0.001$) together were a significant predictor of life satisfaction, accounting for 38% of total variance ($R = 0.62$; $R^2 = 0.38$; $F(2, 486) = 148.08$; $p < 0.001$). Table 2 presents the results of regression analyses.

The beta values for shyness determined in the first step regression analysis ($\beta = -0.56$; $p < 0.001$) decreased in the multi-regression analysis through controlling self-efficacy perception ($\beta = -0.42$; $p < 0.001$). Similarly, the beta values for self-efficacy perceptions determined in the first step regression analysis ($\beta = 0.49$; $p < 0.001$) were decreased in the multi regression analysis through controlling shyness ($\beta = 0.30$; $p < 0.001$). As stated earlier, the Sobel test was employed to evaluate the significance of decreased beta values. The test was

Table 2. Results of Simple and Multi Regression Analyses

Phase of Analysis	Variables	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	B	Std. Error	β	t	F	p
Step 1	Constant	0.56	0.31	0.31	36.27	0.60	-	60.32	218.29	0.000
	Shyness				-0.22	0.02	-0.56	-14.78		0.000
Step 2	Constant	0.49	0.24	0.24	7.71	1.61	-	4.80	155.62	0.000
	Self-Efficacy				0.48	0.04	0.49	12.48		0.000
Step 3	Constant	0.62	0.38	0.38	22.07	2.01	-	10.96	148.08	0.000
	Shyness				-0.17	0.02	-0.42	-10.33		0.000
	Self-Efficacy				0.29	0.04	0.30	7.35		0.000

Step 1: $R = 0.56$; $R^2 = 0.31$; $F(1, 487) = 218.29$; $p < 0.001$

Step 2: $R = 0.49$; $R^2 = 0.24$; $F(1, 487) = 155.62$; $p < 0.001$

Step 3: $R = 0.62$; $R^2 = 0.38$; $F(2, 486) = 148.08$; $p < 0.001$

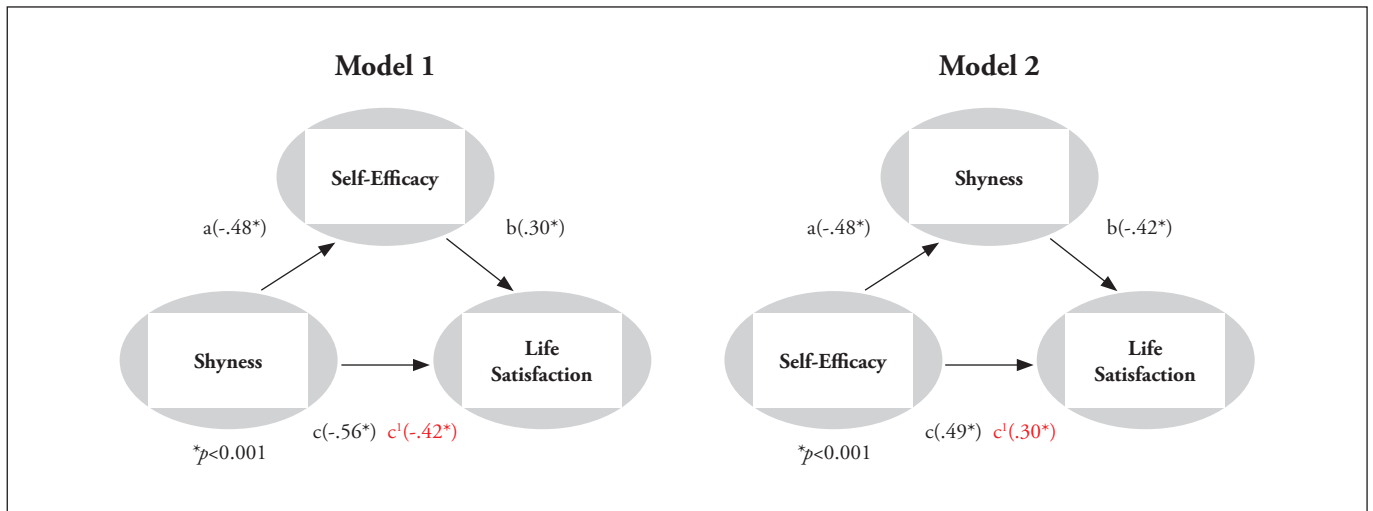


Figure 1. Correlations Between Shyness, Self-Efficacy Perceptions and Life Satisfaction

separately applied for shyness and self-efficacy perceptions. The test indicated that the decreases in beta values for shyness ($z = -6.59$; $p < 0.05$) and for self-efficacy perceptions ($z = -7.99$; $p < 0.05$) were statistically significant.

This finding showed that the last condition of Baron and Kenny's model (1986) was met (the correlation between an independent variable and a dependent variable should reduce or become insignificant when independent variables and mediator variables are taken into the regression analysis) for both shyness and self-efficacy perceptions. As seen in Figure 1, these two variables are both independent variables and mediator variables. Therefore, shyness and self-efficacy perceptions affect each other.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the correlation between shyness, perception of general self-efficacy, and life satisfaction in young adolescents. In this study shyness and self-efficacy perception were evaluated as both independent variables and as mediator variables. Life satisfaction was employed as a dependent variable. At the end of the study we concluded that all conditions included in Baron and Kenny's model (1986) were confirmed for both shyness and self-efficacy perceptions. Our results demonstrate that adolescents with higher levels of shyness have negative self-efficacy perceptions and lower levels of life satisfaction and that adolescents with positive self-efficacy perceptions have higher levels of life satisfaction. Finally, in our analysis of the correlation between shyness, self-efficacy perceptions and life satisfaction, shyness and self-efficacy perceptions appeared to function as both independent variables and as mediator variables. Therefore, the correlation between shyness and self-efficacy perception is not a cause and effect relation; instead these two variables appear to affect each other. Individuals who do not like themselves, consider themselves to be insufficient, and lack self-confidence (those

having negative emotions and perceptions about themselves) are described as "shy", "uncomfortable", "having difficulty communicating" and "error prone" and "unsuccessful" in interpersonal relationships and social environment (Caprara et al. 2003, Hermann and Betz 2004, Hill 1989, Kashdan and Roberts 2004, Leary and Atherton 1986; Maddux et al. 1988, Rudy et al. 2012, Thomasson and Psouni 2010). Similarly, previous reports have indicated that individuals with negative self perception hold negative feelings and perceptions about their life (Caprara and Steca 2005, Erol et al. 2015, Lightsey Jr et al. 2013, O'Sullivan 2011, Özbay et al. 2012, Telef and Ergün 2013, Sahranç 2007, Vecchio et al. 2007). Shyness, self perception and life satisfaction are strongly correlated in several studies (Çelik 2012, Mowrer and Parker 2004, Neto 1993). The findings of the present study demonstrate that these correlations are also valid for adolescents. Kemple (1995) argued that there is a vicious circle between shyness and self perception and that these two variables continuously affect each other. Shy people may develop negative perceptions about themselves and their competency based on their own expectations that they will make mistakes in interpersonal relationships and during social occasions, that they will have difficulty expressing themselves, and worries that others may mock their behavior. Similarly, people with negative self perceptions may develop shyness based on these negative feelings and thoughts that they will make mistakes in interpersonal relationships and during social occasions and the expectation that they will have difficulty expressing themselves. As a result of this negative experience, the relationship between shyness and self-efficacy perception may fuel negative feelings, views and beliefs that may become chronic habits of thought. In turn, this vicious circle produces a combined effect (i.e., shyness and negative self-efficacy perceptions) which may make people unsatisfied with their life.

Although this study contributes to the understanding of the relationship between shyness, self-efficacy perception and life satisfaction, the study was limited in that the data were

self-reported by the participants. In addition, the study only measured the qualities evaluated by the scales. The data collection tools were carefully selected and the procedure was carefully structured with the permission of the participants.

Suggestions for specialists working at psychological guidance and counseling: Counselors with negative perceptions about their life may be shy and hold negative self perceptions. On the other hand, it is the task of specialists to make individuals aware of their internal dynamics. Therefore, specialists may provide psychological-educational programs to those counselors who do not like themselves and regard themselves as insufficient, who are not bold in interpersonal relationships and in social settings and who are satisfied with their life. Psychological-educational programs attempt to help individuals coping with crisis and developmental problems or individuals who are avoiding problems. Such groups focus on preventive or remedial development of social skills (Brown 2013). Therefore, psychological-educational programs are an essential component of preventive and developmental psychological counseling and guidance services.

Suggestions for the Ministry of Family and Social Policies: Social skills allows us to have more healthy relationships. Individuals learn social skills through direct and indirect modeling (Brown 2013). Parental attitudes are important for encouraging positive feelings and perceptions about oneself (Adana and Kutlu 2009, Özkan 1994) and about quality and value of life (Tuzgöl-Dost 2007, 2010) and to reduce the impact of shyness (Erol and Avcı-Temizir 2015, Gökmenoğlu 2011, Hamarta et al. 2010). Therefore, specialists working at the ministry may provide training for parents about communicating with adolescents and positive parental attitudes. Such training activities will equip parents with the tools to raise healthy, happy, and capable young adults.

Suggestions for future studies: Individuals with positive feelings and perceptions about themselves and their life are much more successful and obtain the maximum benefit from their education. Therefore, detailed studies are needed regarding the internal dynamics of adolescents and facilitator or inhibitor factors influencing these dynamics.

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