

Full Length Research Paper

The relationship between conflict communication, self-esteem and life satisfaction in university students

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The current study used a survey model to analyze 306 university students to investigate relationship between life satisfaction, self-esteem and conflict communication. Data were collected from the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale, the Satisfaction with Life Scale and Conflict Communication Scale. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were determined. The results of the study show that self-esteem is positively correlated with confrontation, emotional expression, self-disclosure and life satisfaction. The results also show that life satisfaction is positively correlated with confrontation, emotional expression and self-disclosure.

Key words: Conflict communication, self-esteem, and life satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is defined as a struggle between at least two sides who have rare sources, whose aims do not correspond to each other and one of whom interferes with the aims of the other one (Hocker and Wilmot, 1995). Conflicts between people are the conflicts which occur between two or more people due to different wishes and aims of individuals. Such conflicts can take place among family members (mother-father, parents-child), friends (schoolmates, workmates or neighbors), darlings or people who do not know each other (Arslan, 2005). Conflict that can be experienced at any moment of the life does not have a positive or negative characteristic itself. But with reactions made to the conflicts, conflicts become injuring, competitive, offensive or on the contrary constructive giving a way for development (Öner, 2006). In principle, conflict is a problem situation in a social life. Efficient solution of these problems entails efficient usage of communication skills. If individuals can keep a relationship going with efficient communication, then they are evaluated as compatible with each other (Elliott and Gresham, 1993). Moreover, self understanding of an individual influences the process

of processing information relating to the problems he encounters. Heppner and Krauskoph (1997) found out that there is a remarkable relationship between social problem solving competence and self-esteem. Individuals who have a low level of self-esteem approach to the problem in a negative way, exhibit careless and impulsive behaviors to the problem and they avoid facing with the problem when compared to other people (D'Zurilla et al., 2003). Self-esteem is a state of appreciation which emerges from the approval of the self concept that the individual reaches after self-evaluation. The individual who find himself incompetent can criticize himself/herself or can either find others completely positive or like himself/herself. For self-appreciation and self-esteem, the individual do not have to possess superior qualities. Rather than considering oneself better or worse than the real situation, self-esteem is the feeling of self-appreciation. Self-esteem means finding oneself positive, worth appreciation and liking. Self-esteem is an important state of mind which allows individuals to accept themselves as they are and to allow self-confidence (Yörükoğlu, 2000). Rosenberg (1965) considered self-esteem as the positive or negative attitude of the individual towards himself. If an individual has a positive attitude in self-assessment, his self-esteem would be high; if he has a negative attitude, then his self-esteem would be low.

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The individuals with a high self-esteem tend to perceive themselves worth respect and approval, important and beneficial. On the other hand, the individuals who have a negative idea about themselves or who have low self-esteem tend to perceive themselves as not very important, lacking lovability and with no comfort in themselves and their capabilities (Temel and Aksoy, 2001). High self-esteem is considered important because it is associated with higher levels of psychological health and functioning and low levels of self-esteem are undesirable because it is associated with lower levels of psychological health and functioning (Glaus, 1999). The high self-esteem of the individual indicates that he has a positive perception about himself. The high self-esteem may have a positive effect on life satisfaction of the individual (Çeçen, 2008). Self-esteem is the general feelings of/about oneself (Robin et al., 2001) and the balance of the positive and negative feelings of individuals contribute to their life satisfaction (Diener and Larsen, 1993). According to Diener, self esteem and happiness are qualities connected to one another. Likewise, some researches revealed that life satisfaction which refers to the individual's positive feeling of his own general life (Diener, 1984; Emmons and Diener, 1985; McCoy and Heritage, 1992; Diener and Diener, 1995; Lucas et al., 1996; Yetim, 2002; Deniz, 2006; Chen et al., 2006; Çeçen, 2008) and self esteem are related to one another. Life satisfaction is defined as one's positive evaluation of his whole life according to the criteria determined by the individual himself (Diener et al., 1985) and life satisfaction is related with the fact that the individual's experiences in the important life areas (school, job, family etc.) which create positive feelings are more than the experiences that create negative feelings (Diener, 2000). Life satisfaction indicates the result which emerged after the comparison of individual's expectations with the real situation. Life satisfaction, in general, includes one's whole life and the various dimensions of this life. Life satisfaction does not mean the satisfaction of a certain situation but the satisfaction of the whole set of experiences. It refers to the state of well being in terms of happiness, morale etc. (Vara, 1999).

The purpose of this study is to investigate relationship among conflict communication, life satisfaction and self-esteem in university students. To achieve this aim, answers for the following questions were sought: 1. Is there a significant relationship between students' self-esteem and life satisfaction? 2. Is there a significant relationship between students' self-esteem and conflict communication? 3. Is there a significant relationship between students' life satisfaction and conflict communication?

METHOD

Participants

The survey model is adopted in the current study. The sample set

of the research was taken from Faculties of Selcuk University in Konya /Turkey in 2008. First, the scales were assessed individually and 34 University students who filled in the scales deficiently or erroneously were excluded from the sampling. The participants were 306 students (159 female and 147 male) who participated in the research voluntarily. The mean age of the participants was 20.33 (among 17 - 24) years with a standard deviation of 1.52.

Instruments

Conflict communication scale

Scale was developed by Goldstein (1999) and adopted by Arslan (2005). The scale consists of 75 questions and five subscales, which are "confrontation", "public/private behavior", "emotional expression", "approach/avoidance" and "self-disclosure". High scores received from the scale indicate higher levels of confrontation, public behavior, emotional expression, approach and self-disclosure. Internal consistency Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the sub-scale scores of the scale were confrontation = 0.70, emotional expression = 0.75, public/private behavior = 0.83, approach/avoidance = 0.83 and self-disclosure = 0.75.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

RSES was developed by Rosenberg (1965) and adapted to Turkish samples by Çuhadaroglu (1986). Reliability and validity studies have previously been conducted on the Turkish translation of the Rosenberg scale used in this study. The Rosenberg Self-esteem scale consisted often statements to which the respondents were asked to select either "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," or "strongly disagree." Sample items are: "I certainly feel useless at times" and "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" Evaluation was on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 for "strongly agree" to 4 "strongly disagree." Scores could range from 40 through 10 with higher ratings denoting higher self-esteem. Cuhadaroglu (1986) reported test-retest reliability coefficients of 0.75 during a 4 weeks period.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

SWLS developed by Diener et al. (1985) and adapted to Turkish by Köker (1991) was used. The SWLS measures global life satisfaction and consists of 5 items of which the values are evaluated according to 7 scores (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). According to the results of the reliability study of the scale, the test retest reliability was $r = 0.85$ and item total correlations varied between 0.71 and 0.80. Higher scores of the scale indicate higher life satisfaction (Köker, 1991).

Data analysis

The Pearson correlation coefficient technique was used to determine the relations among self-esteem, life satisfaction and conflict communication approach. In data analysis, SPSS 14.0 was used.

RESULTS

The relations between self-esteem and life satisfaction were analyzed by using Pearson correlation analysis

Table 1. Correlations between self-esteem and life satisfaction.

	Self-esteem
Life satisfaction	0.382*

*p < .01

Table 2. Correlations between self-esteem and conflict communication approaches.

	Confrontation	Puplic/private behavior	Emotional expression	Approach-avoidance	Self disclosure
Self-esteem	0.245*	0.012	0.253*	-0.041	0.281*

*p < 0.01.

Table 3. Correlations between life satisfaction and conflict communication approaches.

	Confrontation	Puplic/private behavior	Emotional expression	Approach-avoidance	Self disclosure
Life satisfaction	0.205*	-0.017	0.255*	-0.061	0.214*

*p < 0.01.

technique and the results are presented in Table 1.

As can be seen in Table 1, there is a statistically significant ($p < .01$) negative relationship between life satisfaction and self esteem.

Relationships between self-esteem and conflict communication approaches were studied by Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients and results are given in Table 2. Table 2 show that self-esteem is positively correlation to confrontation, emotional expression and self-disclosure.

Finally, relationships between life satisfaction and conflict communication approaches were investigated by Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Results show that life satisfaction was significantly positively related to confrontation, emotioanal expression and self-disclosure.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the relationship among conflict communication, self esteem and life satisfaction of the Turkish University students was investigated. It was found that there was a significantly positive relationship between the life satisfaction and self esteem of the Turkish University students. This result suggests that as the self esteem of adolescents increase, life satisfaction also increases. Self esteem is about one's evaluating himself positively or negatively and the high level of self esteem shows that the individual has a positive opinion about himself (Rosenberg, 1965; Yörükoğlu, 2000, Temel and Aksoy, 2001). Life satisfaction, however, is one's general

evaluation of one's life, positively. The high level of life satisfaction suggests that the individual is in a positive mood while evaluating his life (Vara, 1999; Diener, et al., 1985; Diener, 2000). Clearly, both self esteem and life satisfaction terms are related with individual's positive feelings. For this reason, it is an expected result that individuals who have high self esteem have high levels of life satisfaction. In addition to this, a positive relationship was found to exist between self esteem and life satisfaction in other studies analyzing the relationship between the two (Diener, 1984; Emmons and Diener, 1985; McCoy and Heritage; 1992; Diener and Diener, 1995; Lucas et al., 1996; Yetim, 2002; Deniz, 2006; Chen et al., 2006; Çeçen, 2008). The results of these studies support the findings of our study.

Another result of our research is that there is a positive relationship among confrontation, emotional expression, self-disclosure, self-esteem and life satisfaction. A high level of self-esteem reflects the positive approach of the individual towards himself (Rosenberg, 1965) and a high level of life satisfaction reflects a general positive evaluation of the individual's life (Vara, 1999; Diener et al., 1985; Diener, 2000). Conflict is a problem experienced in social relationships. In addition, it was found that the individuals who have effective and positive social problem solving approach have a high self-esteem (D'Zurilla and Nezu, 1999; D'Zurilla et al., 2003; Hamarta, 2009). It can be expected that one with high self-esteem may confront, express his emotions and disclose himself more freely and easily because of his confidence and positive stance in/towards himself.

It is known that easy emotional expression causes po-

sitive feeling, thus, happiness (DeNeve and Cooper, 1998). Therefore, the fact that an individual can confront in a conflict, express his emotions and disclose himself is related to the fact that he has a more positive life satisfaction. An individual who is able to express his feelings and himself easily can solve the problems he encounters.

Consequently, as a result of the study, it was found that there is a positive relationship among confrontation, emotional expression, self-disclosure and self-esteem and life satisfaction in university students. This result suggests that high levels of self esteem increase the level of life satisfaction, confrontation, emotional expression and self-disclosure. These results indicate that it is necessary to attach importance to increasing the self esteem of students for their psychological health and happiness. Besides, it was also found out that if confrontation, emotional expression and self-disclosure increase, life satisfaction increases accordingly. This result shows that it is important to express thoughts and feelings in terms of positive evaluation of the life. Therefore, the fact that students are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings in every place influences their life in a positive way.

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