

Mental Well-Being as a Predictor of Life Satisfaction among University Students

Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Mental İyi Oluşun Yaşam Doyumu Üzerindeki Yordayıcı Etkisi

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Abdurrahman AKMAN
Osmaniye Korkut Ata Üniversitesi
abdurrahmanakman@osmaniye.edu.tr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7156-3172>

Makale Başvuru Tarihi / Received: 14.07.2026
Makale Kabul Tarihi / Accepted: 31.08.2026
Makale Türü / Article Type: Araştırma Makalesi

Öğr. Gör. Dr. Turgut Emre AKYAZI
Aksaray Üniversitesi
emreakyazi@aksaray.edu.tr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2800-7530>

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Oğuzhan KODALAK
Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi
okodalak@erbakan.edu.tr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1578-7435>

Doç. Dr. Nezahat KOÇYİĞİT
Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi
nkocyigit@erbakan.edu.tr
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3332-3642>

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the factors associated with university students' mental well-being and to examine the effect of mental well-being on life satisfaction. The study was carried out with a sample of 320 associate degree students enrolled at Osmaniye Vocational School of Osmaniye Korkut Ata University. Research data were collected using a questionnaire and analysed through variance-based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS software. The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between students' mental well-being and life satisfaction, which indicates that higher levels of mental well-being are associated with greater life satisfaction. Furthermore, statistically significant differences in mental well-being were identified with respect to gender and field of study, whereas life satisfaction differed significantly according to year of study and field of study. The study findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on mental well-being and life satisfaction while providing practical implications for the development of interventions aimed at promoting students' mental health and overall well-being.

Keywords: Mental Well-Being, Psychological Well-Being, Life Satisfaction, University Student

1. INTRODUCTION

Spanning ages 18-29 and bridging the gap between late adolescence and adulthood, young adulthood, is a phase in human life when individuals experience profound environmental and psychosocial changes. During this period, individuals often tend to leave their family home for motivations such as education, career development, personal growth, or romantic relationships. Since dependence on family decreases and the search for autonomy accelerates, establishing new social connections and expanding one's circle of friends becomes a primary need. The new personal and professional relationships that young adults form during this period not only meet immediate social needs but also lay the foundation for psychological resilience and well-being needed later in life, creating a robust support system. (Pei & Zaki, 2025: 126-127).

Nevertheless, it is observed that young adults worldwide are increasingly struggling with mental health problems. This period, once described as the most exuberant and happy phase of life, has now given way to significant psychological distress, which makes it important to examine college students' mental well-being levels. Similarly, according to 2023 data from the US National Association for College Health, nearly half of the college students report they suffer from significant loneliness, which corresponds to a 4.7% increase compared to 2019. In spite of physically crowded campus environments and advanced instant messaging technologies, young generation in the modern age lack the deep connections that support their mental well-being and report increasing feelings of depression (Pei & Zaki, 2025: 126).

Mental well-being and life satisfaction are two fundamental, complementary concepts in explaining an individual's overall well-being. In modern psychology, an individual's health status is defined not only by the absence of mental pathologies or clinical symptoms, but also by positive indicators such as the establishment of psychological balance, the search for meaning, and the construction of a fulfilling life. Accordingly, the concepts of "mental (psychological) well-being" and "life satisfaction" constitute two fundamental pillars used to explain an individual's overall well-being and subjective world (Diener et al., 1999).

Based on their conceptual origins, mental well-being refers to a functional process involving an individual's realization of their potential, the acquisition of an existential purpose, and the establishment of quality relationships with the environment (Ryff, 1989). On the other hand, life satisfaction is a holistic and cognitive assessment that an individual makes of how satisfied they consider their entire life based on self-defined criteria (Diener, 1984). The relevant literature demonstrates that, rather than being alternatives to each other; these two phenomena have a network of relationships that mutually nourish and structure each other in a dynamic interaction (Seow, et al., 2015). Although they appear close from a literary and theoretical perspective, there is a substantial difference in focus between the two concepts:

- **Mental Well-Being:** It relates to an individual achieving complete balance in emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions, developing psychological resilience, and functioning. Essentially, it seeks answers to the questions, "How do I feel, how do I think, and how do I function?"
- **Life Satisfaction:** It relies on a situational and holistic assessment rather than a process-based one. It is a cognitive and judgmental response an individual gives to the question, "Overall, how satisfied am I with my current life?"

Considering these psychosocial dynamics, university students can be considered to offer the ideal research universe. Universities are not only centres where academic knowledge is transferred, but they are canter of intense social interaction as well. Students embarking on campus life still have uncertain social statuses, and individuals need to find their own social niches and develop new networks. For most students, university years are a phase of discovery where new social interactions are experienced within multifaceted group dynamics (Harris et al., 2017). On the other hand, it is also argued that the identity students will build during their university life and the satisfaction they will derive from this process are largely determined by their existing personality traits at the time they begin higher education (Lounsbury et al., 2005). In light of this theoretical background, the present study proposes a structure in which subjective attitudes such as mental well-being and life satisfaction play a critical role in the adjustment processes of young adults. The main objective of this study is to examine the effect of mental well-being levels of associate degree students on their life satisfaction and to determine whether these variables differ based on gender, class level, and field of study.

The unique value of this study lies in its examination of the relationship between mental well-being and life satisfaction within the context of associate degree students studying at a vocational school, unlike general university student samples. Associate degree students constitute a student group that can differ from undergraduate students in terms of university adjustment, career orientation, employment expectations,

academic experience, and social environment. Hence, in addition to providing contextual evidence regarding the relationship between mental well-being and life satisfaction, the research also evaluates whether these two variables differ according to students' gender, class level, and field of study, within the same sample.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Mental Well-Being

Mental health is a fundamental component of overall well-being and has a serious impact on individuals' ability to manage stress, perform effectively, and contribute to society (Zheng et al., 2025). Mental health is essential for well-being and effective functioning for both an individual and a society. Positive psychology, which is an approach that seeks to answer the questions "What is a good life?" and "Who is a mentally healthy person?", has put forward views about what the characteristics of a healthy individual should be (Keldal, 2015: 104).

"Mental well-being" and "mental health," are often used interchangeably, however, they do not exactly mean the same thing. The difference between the concepts can be clearly seen in their definitions. "Mental health" has a broader meaning, and refers to a state of mental health in which an individual recognizes their potential, can cope with normal life stresses, works productively, and contributes to their community, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2004). It encompasses various elements ranging from coping with stress and social functioning to emotional balance and the healthy functioning of cognitive functions such as sound decision-making.

World Health Organization defines mental well-being as "an individual's awareness of their own abilities, their abilities to overcome stress in their life, to be productive and useful in their work life and to contribute to their society in accordance with their abilities" (WHO, 2005). It is a concept that has developed within the field of positive psychology. It goes beyond the state of mental health.

Researchers such as Ryff (1989) and Seligman (2011) define mental well-being with dimensions such as positive relationships, personal growth, autonomy, environmental mastery, and life purpose. Ryff's (1989) model of psychological well-being argues that an individual's well-being can be explained not only by happiness but also by multidimensional elements such as self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose, and personal growth. According to this model, the basis of well-being is the individual's living a life in harmony with their own values, pursuing their goals, and feeling inner satisfaction.

The positive psychology approach (Seligman, 2011) defines well-being not merely as the absence of illness, but as the presence of strengths, meaning, and positive emotions. Within this framework, mental well-being is seen as closely related to an individual's overall happiness and life satisfaction. It's not just about "not being sick," but also about deeper psychological aspects such as self-actualization, finding meaning in life, and utilizing one's potential. This means that every mental well-being encompasses mental health. However, mental health may not always reach the level of mental well-being. That is, a person may be mentally balanced but still feel a lack of meaning or satisfaction in their life. Self-sufficient mental well-being manifests itself in an individual's ability to cope with life's challenges without excessive external support or intervention, maintain fulfilling relationships, work productively, make informed decisions, and experience a sense of purpose and satisfaction. More importantly, it represents a state of positive psychological resilience and growth, going beyond the absence of mental illness (cited in WHO, 2014, by Upasen et al., 2025).

In summary, mental well-being or psychological well-being is a state in which an individual is balanced mentally, emotionally, and socially; and feels meaning, satisfaction, and happiness in their life. It means not only the absence of mental illness, but also the maintenance of a positive mental state.

2.2. Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction is the cognitive component of subjective well-being. Diener (1984) defined life satisfaction as the level of contentment an individual reaches by making a general assessment of their own life. This assessment results from comparing the individual's personal values, goals, and expectations with their living conditions.

Life satisfaction and life contentment have generally been considered within the same category. Life contentment only began to be discussed as a subject of survey research in the 1960s and shortly thereafter. During that period, various debates continued regarding whether life satisfaction could be measured. Doubts were raised about the reliability of surveys (Veenhoven, 1996). Life satisfaction, previously only attempted to

be determined through surveys, was first measured by Neugarten et al. (1961) in their study titled "Measurement of Life Satisfaction." Initially, they developed an index to theoretically test both activity and dissociation theories. They intended to develop a shorter and easier-to-apply measurement tool compared to other studies. They focused on two perspectives in the measurement: one adopted an open approach, using social items such as achievement and competence; the other evaluated the individual based on their level of social participation through their internal state. The variables were the individual's self-assessments, satisfactions, and happiness regarding their current and previous lives (Guldin, 1976: 1-15).

According to Veenhoven (1996: 3), one of the significant indicators of quality of life is life contentment. Contentment means being mentally happy and content. High life contentment signifies positive development both mentally and physically. While it can vary over time, it requires a holistic assessment of an individual's life and means enjoying and taking pleasure in the life they live. Life contentment is a measure that shows how content individuals are with their overall lives, including their families, work lives, education, health, etc. This measure of contentment considers their past lives together with their current and future expectations. The alignment between goals and achievements is crucial in life contentment, which is closely related to quality of life (Toros et al., 2023).

There are words like happiness and subjective well-being that are used similarly to life satisfaction. However, while happiness, which symbolizes subjective well-being, describes current emotions and specific local positive feelings, the concept of life satisfaction involves a general evaluation throughout life. That is, the entirety of life is evaluated, including how the individual feels and to what extent their expectations are met (Veenhoven, 1996: 6). A study carried out on married women showed that individuals with high levels of self-esteem also have high levels of life satisfaction. Individuals with high self-esteem feel more confident through the strategies they develop, and this affects their life satisfaction. The study also found that those who are successful in their interpersonal relationships and achieve a certain level of quality increase their life satisfaction positively. It was revealed that individuals who improve their communication skills in family, friend, and relative relationships, both through their own skills and the social support they receive, experience increased life satisfaction (Poorbaferani et al., 2018). Participation in social sports activities by older adults who are aware of their age, and which are done consciously and as a complement to their lives, contributes to their psychological well-being, improves their quality of life, and consequently increases their life satisfaction (Cho & Cheon, 2023).

The answer to the question "How does one become more satisfied or happier?" depends on both the individual's circumstances and more stable factors such as their temperament (Diener, Scollon, et al., 2003). Life satisfaction constitutes the cognitive component of subjective well-being; it is a judgment based on one's life situation, not an emotion (Diener, Oishi, et al., 2003). Two main theoretical approaches have been proposed to explain individual differences in life satisfaction: top-down (i.e., personality-based) and bottom-up (i.e., situation-based). In a study examining the relative value of these two approaches and the psychological processes underlying top-down models, consistent with the top-down approach, meta-analytic findings show that neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are associated with both various domain satisfactions and life satisfaction. However, consistent with the bottom-up approach, domain satisfactions were found to be strongly linked to life satisfaction (Heller et al., 2004).

One of the factors that positively contributes to life satisfaction is mindfulness. It was revealed that there is a positive relationship between mindfulness and life satisfaction. Therefore, individuals should be provided with academic-level seminars, courses, etc., on mindfulness, which positively contributes to life satisfaction (Şahin, 2019: 170). Another factor affecting life satisfaction is activities that bring them fulfilment. For instance, it has been observed that internally displaced people living in China generally have low levels of well-being and struggle with problems such as depression and anxiety about the future. Yet, studies have shown that individuals' participation in social life positively affects both their social lives and self-efficacy. Thus, it has been found that sports activities such as watching live matches and physical exercise increase life satisfaction (Kan & Xie, 2024: 5). Similarly, some research results (Toros et al., 2023) have shown that elderly people who engage in activities such as dancing, walking, and swimming experience improvements in their psychological state, gain self-esteem, increase self-efficacy, and consequently, increase their life satisfaction. Cho & Cheon (2023) conducted a study to measure the life satisfaction of older adults and found that their life satisfaction increased as a result of their participation in physical activities or exercise.

A study conducted by Poorbaferani et al. (2018) showed that individuals with high self-esteem, self-efficacy, and communication skills have higher levels of life satisfaction. Zammitti et al. (2023) found that students' self-efficacy positively influenced their life satisfaction. According to Eren et al. (2023), academic self-

confidence is related to self-acceptance, self-respect, and self-efficacy, and a positive correlation was found between academic self-confidence and family life satisfaction. Furthermore, it was found that academic self-confidence and family life satisfaction levels did not vary according to gender or field of study.

There is strong proof that individuals feel happier when they create a bond and interaction with other members of society. Social bonding with others is vital to the well-being of young adults: Social bonding protects people from the harmful impacts of stress and substantially increases subjective well-being during young adulthood. Early social bonding in young adulthood has long-term effects: For college students, establishing friendships in the first few weeks of college can increase the possibility of success and diminish the possibility of developing depressive symptoms in later years. Higher life satisfaction has been observed in countries where young adults generally report higher levels of social connection and social support. On average, young people who have higher levels of social connection, both quantitatively and qualitatively, report that they feel more satisfied with their lives. Individuals who report having at least one person they are close to are 16% more satisfied compared to individuals who do not have close contact (Pei & Zaki, 2025: 136). Social relationships are significant determinants of well-being, particularly in longitudinal analyses of young individuals. In a study, researchers followed 393 US students throughout their four years of college education in terms of various social factors and life satisfaction. More extroverted students reported higher life satisfaction four years later because they formed stronger social connections at university (Harris et al., 2017).

Studies have found a significant positive correlation between life satisfaction and student happiness. In other words, students with high levels of life satisfaction are also happier at school. It has also shown a positive relationship between academic self-efficacy and happiness. Therefore, students with high academic self-efficacy and life satisfaction are happier and this positively impacts their academic success (Döş, 2023).

The research results showed that the life satisfaction of academic staff did not differ according to their gender, age, marital status, years of service, or career. However, a positive relationship was found between their professional satisfaction and their life satisfaction. In other words, an increase in individuals' professional satisfaction also increases their life satisfaction levels. Therefore, improving the working conditions of the staff through factors such as financial gain, physical environment, and scientific incentives can increase their professional satisfaction and indirectly improve their life satisfaction (Recepoğlu & Ülker Tümlü, 2015). However, this situation may manifest differently in different student groups.

For example, Küçükceran et al. (2024) found that students who had higher life satisfaction during their student years experienced a decrease in life satisfaction once they began practicing their clinical profession. This was attributed to two significant factors: career choice outcomes and the cities they had to live in. The long duration of education increases early fatigue and hopelessness among students, negatively impacting their life satisfaction. Studies show that life satisfaction is linked to a healthy and high-quality life. Therefore, it has been observed that increased levels of stress, anxiety, and hopelessness in medical students are associated with decreased life satisfaction.

2.3. Literature Review: The Relationship between Mental (Psychological) Well-being and Life Satisfaction

Numerous studies have shown that sub-dimensions of Ryff's (1989; 1995) model of mental well-being, such as "self-acceptance, environmental mastery, personal growth, and sense of purpose," have significant relationships with cognitive evaluations such as life satisfaction (van Dierendonck & Lam, 2023; Blasco-Belled & Alsinet, 2022).

A study in the field of positive psychology extensively evaluated the structure and measurement of subjective well-being (life satisfaction and mood) and revealed that (Diener et al., 1999): Individuals with high sub-dimensions of mental well-being (self-acceptance, positive relationships, personal growth, life purpose) also have significantly higher levels of life satisfaction. Yet, while life satisfaction is sometimes more influenced by external conditions (income, health, social status, etc.), mental well-being is more related to internal balance. In their study, Rathore et al. (2015) found a significant positive correlation between life satisfaction and mental well-being in a group of doctors. Another study revealed that even in clinical samples with mood disorders, positive mental health directly and positively affects individuals' life satisfaction and overall functioning levels (Seow, et al., 2016).

In a study examining the effects of university students' leisure attitudes on "life satisfaction" and "mental well-being", it was concluded that positive leisure attitudes exert a significant positive influence on both outcomes. Specifically, a favourable attitude toward participation in leisure activities enhances students' levels of life

satisfaction as well as their mental well-being (Ertaş, 2021). In another study, the relationship between cognitive flexibility, mental well-being, and life satisfaction among university students was investigated. The findings revealed that students with higher levels of cognitive flexibility reported significantly greater mental well-being and life satisfaction. Furthermore, cognitive flexibility was identified as a significant and positive predictor of both mental well-being and life satisfaction (Parvizi & Özabacı, 2022). The relationship between quality of life, mental well-being, and life satisfaction was examined among pre-service teachers and university students. The findings indicated that quality of life, life satisfaction, and mental well-being differed significantly according to participants' level of satisfaction with their academic department. Moreover, positive moderate correlations were identified between quality of life and life satisfaction, quality of life and mental well-being, and life satisfaction and mental well-being. Both life satisfaction and mental well-being demonstrated significant associations with quality of life, jointly accounting for 41% of the variance in quality of life scores. Accordingly, mental well-being emerged as a strong predictor of both quality of life and life satisfaction (Demir et al., 2021). Another study investigated the relationship between psychological resilience and life satisfaction, with self-efficacy serving as a mediating variable. The findings showed that psychological resilience influences life satisfaction both directly and indirectly through self-efficacy (Durak, 2021). In a study conducted among student dormitory employees, the relationships among life satisfaction, mental well-being, and work engagement were examined. The results demonstrated that mental well-being serves as a significant mediator in the relationship between life satisfaction and work engagement (Şimşek et al., 2024).

Taken together, these findings suggest that mental well-being constitutes a crucial internal resource that enhances life satisfaction. Individuals who demonstrate greater self-acceptance, experience a stronger sense of meaning and purpose in life, establish positive interpersonal relationships, and develop a greater sense of environmental mastery are more likely to report higher levels of overall life satisfaction. Accordingly, interventions designed to promote mental well-being—such as mindfulness-based practices, self-compassion interventions, and psychological resilience training—may also contribute substantially to improving individuals' life satisfaction.

Table 1: Mental Well-Being and Life Satisfaction

	Mental Well-Being	Life Satisfaction
Focus	Mental balance, meaning, psychological functioning	Overall Life Contentment
Type	Process-oriented, dynamic	Results-oriented, evaluation-based
Relationship	Mental well-being → increases life satisfaction	High life satisfaction → reinforces well-being

In summary, mental well-being forms the basis of life satisfaction. A good mental and emotional balance facilitates a positive evaluation of life in general.

The hypotheses formulated in this study from the studies in the literature are as follows:

H₁: Students' levels of mental well-being positively affect their life satisfaction.

H₂: Students' levels of mental well-being differ according to gender.

H₃: Students' levels of mental well-being differ according to class level.

H₄: Students' levels of mental well-being differ according to their field of study.

H₅: Students' levels of life satisfaction differ according to gender.

H₆: Students' levels of life satisfaction differ according to class level.

H₇: Students' levels of life satisfaction differ according to their field of study.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology employed in the study, including the research design, population and sample, measurement instruments, and the procedures used for data analysis.

3.1. Research Model

The research model of the present study is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Research Model



3.2. Universe and Sample

The target universe of the study consisted of students enrolled at the Osmaniye Vocational School of Osmaniye Korkut Ata University. The study sample comprised 320 students selected using a non-probability convenience sampling method. Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Osmaniye Korkut Ata University (Approval No. E.249011, 14.08.2025).

3.3. Measurement Tools

The demographic information collected from the participants included gender (male–female), year of study (first year–second year), and field of study (social sciences–science/technical disciplines).

Mental Well-Being Scale: The Mental Well-Being Scale, originally developed by Tennant et al. (2007) and adapted into Turkish by Keldal (2015), was used to assess participants' levels of mental well-being. The scale consists of a single dimension comprising 14 items. Sample items include: “I have been feeling optimistic about the future” and “I have been feeling useful.” The scale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .89.

Life Satisfaction Scale: The Life Satisfaction Scale, originally developed by Diener et al. (1985) and adapted into Turkish by Bekmezci and Mert (2018), was employed to measure participants' life satisfaction. The scale comprises a single dimension with five items. Sample items include: “In most ways my life is close to my ideal” and “I am satisfied with my life.” The scale demonstrated a Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of 0.876.

4. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings obtained from the study.

Table 2: Data on Participants

Variables (N= 320)	f (%)	Life Satisfaction			Mental Well-Being		
Gender		Average	Standard Error	t-test p	Average	Standard Error	t-test p
Male	144 (%45)	3,050	0,075	0,154	3,438	0,073	0,001
Female	176 (%55)	2,914	0,060		3,716	0,043	
Class level							
1 st year	176 (%55)	3,127	0,059	0,000	3,654	0,058	0,086
2 nd year	144 (%45)	2,789	0,073		3,514	0,057	
Field of Study							
Social sciences	172 (%53,8)	2,847	0,062	0,003	3,402	0,061	0,000
Science/ Technical fields	148 (%46,2)	3,124	0,070		3,811	0,048	

Among the participants, 45% were male and 55% were female. In terms of year of study, 55% were first-year students and 45% were second-year students. Regarding their field of study, 53.8% were enrolled in social science disciplines, whereas 46.2% were studying in science/technical disciplines.

With respect to gender, female students demonstrated significantly higher levels of mental well-being than male students (3.716 ± 0.043 vs. 3.438 ± 0.073 , respectively; independent samples t-test, $p = 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 2. However, no statistically significant gender difference was observed in life satisfaction ($p = 0.154$); therefore, Hypothesis 5 was rejected.

Regarding year of study, first-year students reported significantly higher levels of life satisfaction than second-year students (3.127 ± 0.059 vs. 2.789 ± 0.073 , respectively; independent samples t-test, $p < 0.001$), supporting Hypothesis 6. In contrast, no statistically significant difference in mental well-being was found according to year of study ($p = 0.086$); thus, Hypothesis 3 was rejected.

With regard to field of study, students enrolled in science/technical disciplines reported significantly higher levels of life satisfaction than those studying in social science disciplines (3.124 ± 0.070 vs. 2.847 ± 0.062 , respectively; independent samples t-test, $p = 0.003$), supporting Hypothesis 7. Similarly, students in

science/technical disciplines exhibited significantly higher levels of mental well-being than their counterparts in social science disciplines (3.811 ± 0.048 vs. 3.402 ± 0.061 , respectively; independent samples t-test, $p < 0.001$), hence, Hypothesis 4 was accepted.

Before proceeding with the analysis of the research model, the validity and reliability of the measurement model were evaluated. Specifically, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were assessed separately. Internal consistency reliability was examined by calculating Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) coefficients. Convergent validity was evaluated using standardized factor loadings and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. Discriminant validity was assessed based on the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT).

For internal consistency reliability, both Cronbach's alpha and CR coefficients are expected to be equal to or greater than 0.70. Standardized factor loadings should ideally be 0.70 or above; however, when loadings fall between 0.40 and 0.70, the corresponding AVE values should be examined before deciding whether to retain the items. Furthermore, the AVE value is expected to be at least 0.50 to demonstrate adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2021; Doğan, 2019). Table 3 presents the results of the internal consistency reliability and convergent validity analyses for the study variables.

Table 3: Measurement Results of the Research Model

Latent Variables	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach Alfa Coefficient	CR Coefficient	AVE Values
Mental Well-Being	mio1	0.845	0,892	0,903	0,527
	mio10	0.613			
	mio14	0.760			
	mio2	0.669			
	mio3	0.954			
	mio6	0.573			
	mio8	0.582			
Life Satisfaction	Ydo1	0.713	0,827	0,836	0,547
	Ydo2	0.627			
	Ydo3	0.838			
	Ydo4	0.765			

Table 3 presents the measurement results of the research model. As shown in the table, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.827 to 0.892, while the Composite Reliability (CR) coefficients ranged from 0.836 to 0.903, indicating satisfactory internal consistency reliability. The standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.573 to 0.954, whereas the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.527 to 0.547. According to Hair et al. (2021), when standardized factor loadings fall between 0.40 and 0.70, the corresponding AVE and CR values should be examined, and items should only be removed if these values fail to meet the recommended threshold. Accordingly, the items MIO4, MIO5, MIO7, MIO9, MIO11, MIO12, and MIO13 from the Mental Well-Being Scale and YDO5 from the Life Satisfaction Scale were excluded from the model to achieve acceptable AVE and CR values, thereby establishing convergent validity. The discriminant validity of the measurement model was subsequently assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) proposed by Henseler et al. (2015). The results of the discriminant validity analyses are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity Results Based on the Fornell–Larcker Criterion

	Mental Well-Being	Life Satisfaction
Mental Well-Being	0.726	
Life Satisfaction	0.710**	

**p<0,01

Table 4 presents the results of the discriminant validity analysis for the measurement model. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is established when the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each latent construct exceeds its correlations with all other latent constructs. As shown in Table 3, the diagonal elements of the correlation matrix represent the square roots of the AVE values, all of which are greater than the corresponding inter-construct correlation coefficients. Therefore, the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory discriminant validity. Furthermore, the results indicate a significant and positive relationship between students' mental well-being and life satisfaction ($r = 0.710$, $p < 0.01$).

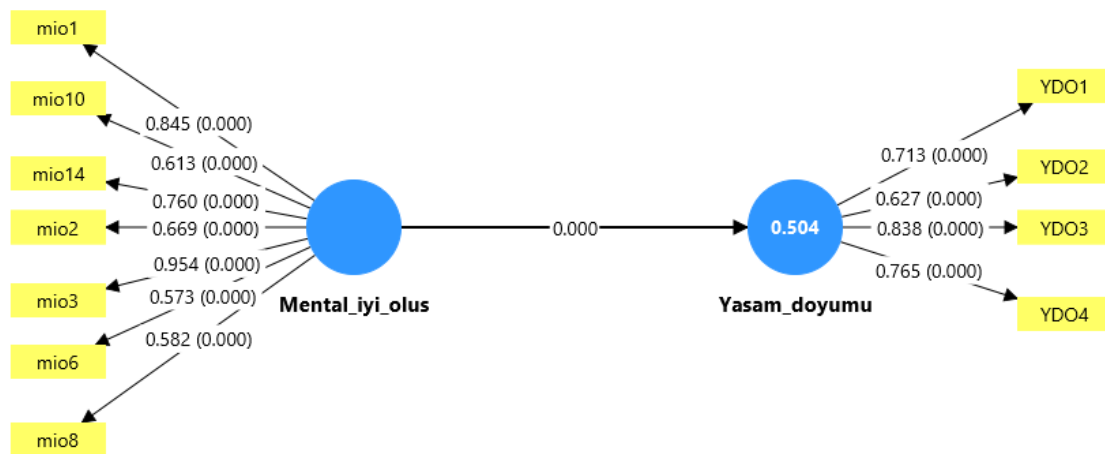
Table 5: Discriminant Validity Results Based on the HTMT Criterion

	Mental Well-Being	Life Satisfaction
Mental Well-Being		
Life Satisfaction	0.687	

According to Henseler et al. (2015), the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is calculated by dividing the average of the correlations between indicators of different constructs by the geometric mean of the average correlations between indicators of the same construct. They also report that an HTMT value below 0.85 indicates adequate discriminant validity. As shown in Table 5, all HTMT values are below the recommended threshold, confirming that the measurement model satisfies the criterion for discriminant validity.

To test the hypotheses developed in line with the objectives of the study, a variance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach was employed. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The significance of the path coefficients was evaluated using the bootstrapping resampling procedure with 5,000 bootstrap samples. The variance-based structural equation model used in the analysis is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Variance-Based SEM of the Study



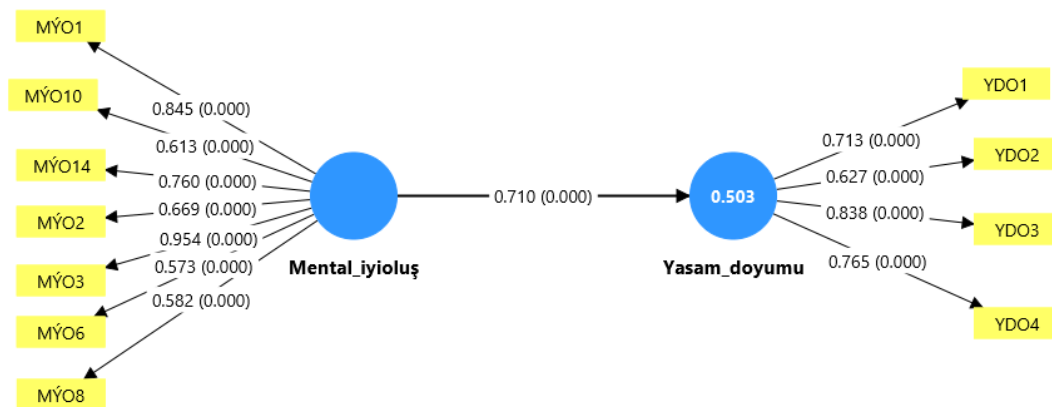


Figure 2 presents the standardized regression coefficients between the latent constructs in the research model, their statistical significance, and the t-values for the relationships between the latent variables and their observed indicators. The path coefficients of the structural model are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Path Coefficients of the Variance-Based SEM Model

Variables	Standardized β coefficient	Standard Error	t value	P value	Hypotheses
<i>Mental well – being</i> → Life Satisfaction	0,710	0,033	21,287	0,000	H1 supported

As the first step in evaluating the research model, the significance of the path coefficients was examined. As shown in Table 5, the results indicate that Hypothesis 1, which proposed that mental well-being has a positive effect on life satisfaction, was supported ($\beta = 0.710$, $p < 0.001$).

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined how students' levels of mental (psychological) well-being influence their life satisfaction.

Based on the data collected through a questionnaire administered to students enrolled at Osmaniye Vocational School of Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, the findings revealed that mental well-being has a positive effect on students' life satisfaction. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Students with higher levels of mental well-being were found to report significantly higher levels of life satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the expectations of the present study. Similarly, Erdoğan (2021) reported that students' academic achievement positively influences their life satisfaction. Eren et al. (2023) found a significant positive relationship between family life satisfaction and academic self-confidence. Likewise, Kan and Xie (2024, p. 5) demonstrated that individuals' self-efficacy enhances life satisfaction. Previous research has also shown that individuals with higher levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and communication skills tend to report greater life satisfaction (Poorbaferani et al., 2018). Şahin (2019) identified a significant positive relationship between students' mindfulness and life satisfaction and further demonstrated that mindfulness positively affects life satisfaction. Similarly, Toros et al. (2023) reported moderate positive relationships between life satisfaction and both self-esteem and self-efficacy. Zammitti et al. (2023) likewise found that students' self-efficacy positively predicts their life satisfaction. Collectively, these findings suggest that students with higher levels of academic self-efficacy and life satisfaction tend to experience greater happiness, which, in turn, contributes positively to their academic success (Döş, 2023).

With respect to gender, the findings indicated that female students exhibited significantly higher levels of mental well-being than their male counterparts. Accordingly, Hypothesis 2 was supported. In contrast, no statistically significant difference was found in students' life satisfaction according to gender; therefore, Hypothesis 5 was not supported. This finding suggests that male and female students evaluate their overall satisfaction with life at comparable levels. The present finding is consistent with previous studies reporting that life satisfaction does not differ significantly by gender. For instance, Recepoğlu and Ülker Tümlü (2015)

found that the life satisfaction levels of academic staff did not vary significantly according to gender. Similarly, Eren et al. (2023) reported no significant gender differences in family life satisfaction.

Regarding year of study, first-year students were found to have significantly higher mean life satisfaction scores than second-year students. Accordingly, Hypothesis 6 was supported. This difference may be associated with students' expectations during the initial transition to higher education, the academic and career-related uncertainties they may encounter over time, their experiences of social adjustment, and their evaluations of the opportunities provided by the university and the surrounding environment. However, given the cross-sectional nature of the study, no definitive conclusions can be drawn regarding the underlying causes of this difference. Similarly, Küçükceran et al. (2024) reported a weak negative relationship between year of study and life satisfaction, suggesting that students in the earlier years of their academic programs may experience higher levels of life satisfaction than those in later years. However, the same study also found that life satisfaction did not differ significantly across years of study. These findings suggest that the effect of year of study on life satisfaction may vary depending on contextual factors such as the field of study, academic conditions, and students' social environment. In contrast, no statistically significant difference was found in students' levels of mental well-being according to year of study. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

In relation to field of study, students enrolled in science/technical disciplines exhibited significantly higher levels of both life satisfaction and mental well-being than those studying in social science disciplines. Accordingly, Hypotheses 4 and 7 were supported. This difference may be associated with a variety of contextual factors, including students' perceptions of their future careers, employment prospects, academic experiences, and social environment. However, given the cross-sectional design of the present study, no definitive conclusions can be drawn regarding the underlying reasons for this difference. The present finding should be interpreted in light of previous research indicating that the relationship between field of study and life satisfaction may vary across different samples and contexts. For example, Şahin (2019) reported significant differences in life satisfaction according to faculty affiliation, finding that students enrolled in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences reported higher levels of life satisfaction than those studying in the Faculty of Engineering and Natural Sciences. In contrast, Eren et al. (2023) found no significant differences in family life satisfaction across students' academic departments. Taken together, these findings suggest that the influence of field of study on mental well-being and life satisfaction may depend on students' academic, social, and career-related circumstances.

This study demonstrates that students' mental well-being has a positive effect on their life satisfaction. As students' levels of mental well-being increase, their overall satisfaction with life also tends to improve. Furthermore, the findings indicate that mental well-being differs significantly according to gender and field of study, whereas life satisfaction differs significantly according to year of study and field of study. In light of these findings, educators and university administrators should prioritize initiatives aimed at promoting students' mental well-being. Implementing programs that provide psychological counselling, strengthen social support, and foster mindfulness, self-efficacy, and communication skills may contribute to enhancing students' life satisfaction. When designing such interventions, it is important to consider the differing needs of students with respect to gender, year of study, and field of study.

It is important for educators, university administrators, and students' immediate social circles to collaborate in supporting students' mental well-being as a means of enhancing their life satisfaction. In this regard, activities, counselling services, and psychoeducational programs may be developed to strengthen students' self-esteem, enhance their self-efficacy beliefs and communication skills, increase their levels of mindfulness, promote social engagement, and encourage the development of meaningful social relationships within the university environment. When designing and implementing such interventions, careful consideration should be given to the potentially differing needs of students based on their gender, year of study, and field of study.

6. DISCUSSION

Elucidating the theoretical and empirical relationship between mental (psychological) well-being and life satisfaction is of considerable importance for advancing our understanding of the mechanisms underlying individuals' adaptation and well-being, particularly during critical developmental transitions such as young adulthood. In the present study, the theoretical associations between mental well-being and life satisfaction were synthesized and discussed in light of contemporary evidence from both the national and international literature.

Considering the theoretical and empirical findings of the present study from a holistic perspective, it can be claimed that mental well-being emerges not as a singular psychological perception but as a dynamic and multidimensional construct encompassing the maintenance of emotional balance, self-acceptance, a sense of purpose in life, personal growth, positive interpersonal relationships, and environmental mastery. Overall state of well-being is shaped by the reciprocal interaction of biological factors, such as genetic predispositions, sleep quality, and nutrition; psychological processes, including self-esteem and cognitive schemas; and environmental and social influences, such as family, peer networks, and socioeconomic conditions. In this context, psychological resilience, which constitutes one of the fundamental components of psychological well-being, plays a critical role in maintaining this state of well-being (Cameron et al., 2006; Keyes et al., 2010, as cited in Kütük, 2025). Accordingly, young adults with lower levels of psychological resilience may be more vulnerable to declines in psychological well-being and may experience greater difficulties in sustaining their mental well-being over time.

It is consistently indicated in the existing literature that individuals with higher levels of mental (psychological) well-being tend to report greater life satisfaction. Self-acceptance, a strong sense of meaning and purpose in life, the ability to establish positive social relationships, and effective coping with stress all contribute to enhancing individuals' overall satisfaction with life.

Studies conducted in international contexts have consistently demonstrated that mental well-being is a significant predictor of life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1999). According to Ryff's (1989) model, individuals who find meaning and purpose in life and exhibit greater self-acceptance tend to report higher levels of overall life satisfaction. Research conducted in Türkiye has yielded comparable findings. Ertaş (2021) found that university students' positive attitudes toward leisure activities were positively associated with both mental well-being and life satisfaction. Similarly, Parvizi and Özabacı (2022) demonstrated that cognitive flexibility significantly predicts both mental well-being and life satisfaction. Demir, Tanhan, and Çiçek (2021) reported that mental well-being exerts a substantial influence on quality of life and that this effect is reinforced through life satisfaction. Furthermore, Durak (2021) found that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between psychological resilience and life satisfaction. Likewise, Şimşek, Kenek, and Benk (2024) demonstrated, using a sample of employees, that mental well-being serves as a significant mediator in the relationship between life satisfaction and work engagement. Collectively, these studies suggest that mental well-being enhances individuals' life satisfaction through both direct and indirect pathways.

These studies collectively provide consistent evidence that mental (psychological) well-being is a significant predictor of, and exerts a positive influence on, life satisfaction within the Turkish context. To put it in another way, as individuals develop greater psychological equilibrium, self-acceptance, and a stronger sense of meaning and purpose in life, their overall life satisfaction tends to increase accordingly.

Life satisfaction, which represents the cognitive dimension of subjective well-being, is not merely a reflection of momentary or situational emotional fluctuations; rather, it constitutes a long-term, deliberate evaluation of one's life as a whole based on personal values, goals, and expectations. By its very nature, life satisfaction is highly subjective, multidimensional, and context-dependent. It is influenced by a wide range of factors, including personal characteristics such as self-esteem, optimism, and effective stress coping; social support mechanisms, including family relationships, peer networks, and a sense of social belonging; socioeconomic conditions, such as income level and job security; and overall physical health. The substantial overlap between these determinants and the core components of mental well-being, as well as the mechanisms underlying psychological resilience, provides strong theoretical and empirical support for the close relationship between these constructs.

In conclusion, enhancing mental well-being and life satisfaction at both the individual and societal levels depends on fostering a sense of meaning and purpose in life, encouraging individuals to pursue personal goals grounded in realistic expectations, strengthening psychological resilience, preserving high-quality social capital, and promoting self-compassion, mindfulness, and gratitude as integral components of everyday life. In addition to these protective factors, supporting healthy lifestyle behaviors and improving access to professional psychological support services when needed are also of strategic importance for promoting long-term psychological well-being and life satisfaction.

Mental well-being constitutes a fundamental basis of life satisfaction. Maintaining a healthy psychological and emotional balance facilitates a more positive evaluation of life as a whole. Accordingly, interventions designed to enhance mental well-being—such as mindfulness-based interventions, self-compassion training, and psychological resilience programs—may be effective in promoting life satisfaction. Future research should

examine this relationship across diverse age groups and cultural contexts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms linking mental well-being and life satisfaction.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design based on self-report questionnaires does not permit causal inferences regarding the relationship between mental well-being and life satisfaction. Second, all participants were community-dwelling individuals; therefore, the generalizability of the findings to institutional settings may be limited. Finally, because the data were collected from associate degree students in a single city, the findings should be generalized to students from other cities, countries, and educational levels with appropriate caution. Students enrolled at other higher education institutions may differ in their experiences and perceptions of mental well-being and life satisfaction.

IMPLICATIONS / ORIGINALITY / VALUE OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence of the positive relationship between students' mental (psychological) well-being and life satisfaction within the context of higher education. By examining these constructs simultaneously, the study enriches the growing body of research highlighting mental well-being as an important psychological resource that promotes students' overall life satisfaction. Furthermore, the findings extend previous research by demonstrating that this relationship remains significant across demographic characteristics such as gender, year of study, and field of study.

From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the importance of integrating mental well-being promotion into student support services and institutional policies. Universities may enhance students' life satisfaction by implementing evidence-based interventions, including psychological counseling services, mindfulness-based programs, self-compassion training, resilience-building initiatives, and activities designed to strengthen social connectedness and self-efficacy. Such initiatives may not only improve students' psychological well-being but also contribute to their academic adjustment, engagement, and overall educational experience.

The study also provides useful evidence for university administrators, educators, counselors, and policymakers involved in higher education. The observed differences according to gender, year of study, and field of study suggest that student support programs should be designed with these characteristics in mind rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. Tailoring interventions to the specific needs of different student groups may increase their effectiveness in promoting both mental well-being and life satisfaction.

Overall, the study highlights mental well-being as a strategic determinant of students' life satisfaction and offers both theoretical and practical insights for developing more comprehensive mental health promotion strategies within higher education institutions.

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