

## AN INVESTIGATION ON THE LEVEL OF BURNOUT AND LIFE SATISFACTION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to investigate the level of burnout and life satisfaction among university students was conducted with the participation of 353 students attending the Departments of Health Administration and Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation at Kirikkale University, Faculty of Health Sciences. In the study, the “Burnout Measure – Short Version” developed by Pines (2005) and adapted into Turkish by Tümkaya et al. (2009), and the “Satisfaction with Life Scale” developed by Diener et al. (1985) and adapted into Turkish by Köker (1991) and Yetim (1993) were used as the data collection instruments. The study results revealed significant differences in the level of Burnout and Life Satisfaction with respect to gender, monthly household income, parental education and engagement in leisure time activities ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, there was no statistically significant difference in the Life Satisfaction and Burnout scores with respect to age group, year at university, number of siblings, weekly course hours and the existence of a special girl/boyfriend.*

**Keywords:** Burnout, Life satisfaction, University student

### INTRODUCTION

Mental and emotional stress and its extreme form “burnout” due to scientific, technological and social changes in life have become a prevalent subject of research since the 1970s (Tümkaya, Çam and Çavuşoğlu, 2009). Burnout is a product of contemporary social life and a result of our efforts to add meaning to our lives. Numerous female and male counselees in need of help say that their lives have become meaningless and they have lost the desire to live. They feel distant from their families and friends even when they are together. Their jobs and avocations that used to have meaning for them now feel boring and offers no reward (Ören and Türkoğlu, 2006).

In burnout, the balance of the student’s competency and desires with the expectations of the family, friends and teachers, as well as, the support and guidance of those close to the student are important factors. If these factors function properly and healthily, burnout can be inhibited or real change can be affected (Tansel, 2015). At this point, life satisfaction, also covered by the present study, should be mentioned.

Life satisfaction is generally one of the most significant determinants of well-being. It measures how individuals evaluate their lives by comparing self-determined criteria with what they actually have. Life satisfaction is as essential for university students as any other age group. Life satisfaction encompasses one’s whole life and is influenced by various factors such as age, gender, health, work life, financial status, education, marriage, social support and environmental conditions (Ertekin Pınar et al., 2015). Research shows that healthcare students experience burnout, which negatively impacts their life satisfaction (De Oliva Costa et al., 2012; Dyrbye et al., 2008; Sevensan et al., 2011).

Although there are studies conducted on burnout and life satisfaction among university students both in Turkey (Bekir, Şahin and Şanlı, 2012; Eker, 2007; Kutsal, 2009; Ören and

Türkoğlu, 2006; Tümkaya and Çavuşoğlu, 2010; Yılmaz, 2009) and abroad (Pines, 2005), they are limited in number. This study aimed to fill the gap in the literature by investigating life satisfaction, the most frequently researched concept in association with well-being, among university students, and comparing the factors related to life satisfaction and the level of burnout among university students with the results of other studies on life satisfaction and burnout. Therefore, this study was planned to determine the level of burnout and life satisfaction in university students.

## METHODS

The population of the study aimed to investigate life satisfaction and the level of burnout among university students comprised the students attending the Departments of Health Administration and Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation at Kırıkkale University, Faculty of Health Sciences. The study employed systematic sampling, a probability sampling method, due to time and cost restrictions. The sample group comprised 353 students.

### Data Collection

In the study, the questionnaire technique was used as the data collection method. The questionnaire made use of two scales; the “Burnout Measure – Short Version” developed by Pines (2005) and adapted into Turkish by Tümkaya et al. (2009), and the “Satisfaction with Life Scale” developed by Diener et al. (1985) and adapted into Turkish by Köker (1991) and Yetim (1993).

**Burnout Measure - Short Version (BMS):** The Burnout Measure – Short Version comprises 10 items with reply options ranging between 1 (Never) and 7 (Always). Factor analysis revealed that the items loaded on three factors that explained 94.8% of the variance. The respondents who scored higher in the scale reported greater complaints such as chronic fatigue, headache and back pain.

**Satisfaction with Life Scale:** The scale comprises 5 seven-point Likert-type items (1: Strongly disagree – 7: Strongly agree). The highest and lowest scores that can be obtained from the Satisfaction with Life Scale are 35 and 5, respectively, with a low score regarded to be indicative of low life satisfaction.

The life satisfaction and burnout mean scores of the respondents were  $22.07 \pm 6.81$  and  $29.43 \pm 9.85$ , respectively (Table 1).

**Table 1. Satisfaction with Life Scale and Burnout Measure mean scores**

	<i>n</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Life Satisfaction</i>	353	5.00	34.00	22.07	6.81
<i>Burnout</i>	353	10.00	70.00	29.43	9.85

## DATA ANALYSIS

The study data were analyzed with the SPSS 21.0 software. An analysis of normality was carried out for the selection of the appropriate test to be used in the analyses. The analysis results showed that the scale scores did not have a normal distribution. Therefore, non-parametric tests were used in the analyses. The Mann-Whitney U Test was employed in the comparison of the variables with two groups with respect to the scale scores, and the Kruskal-Wallis H Test was used in the comparison of the variables with three or more groups.

## RESULTS

The results concerning the individual characteristics of the students participating in the study are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Distribution of individual characteristics of the participants**

		n	%	
<i>Age</i>		18	54	15.3
		19	45	12.7
		20	90	25.5
		21	67	19.0
		22	55	15.6
		23	27	7.6
		24	15	4.2
<i>Gender</i>	Female	278	78.8	
	Male	75	21.2	
<i>Department</i>	Health Administration	162	45.9	
	Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation	191	54.1	
<i>Year</i>	1	105	29.7	
	2	101	28.6	
	3	81	22.9	
	4 and over	66	18.7	
<i>Monthly household income</i>	Minimum wage and under	48	13.6	
	950-1500 TL	89	25.2	
	1501-2000 TL	94	26.6	
	2001-2500 TL	64	18.1	
	2501 TL and over	58	16.4	
<i>Number of siblings</i>	0	23	6.5	
	1	108	30.6	
	2	104	29.5	
	3	50	14.2	
	4	34	9.6	
	5	34	9.6	
<i>Mother's education</i>	Elementary school and lower	159	45.0	
	Middle school	76	21.5	
	High school	82	23.2	
	Associate, undergraduate or	36	10.2	
	Elementary school and lower	102	28.9	
<i>Father's education</i>	Middle school	79	22.4	
	High school	98	27.8	
	Associate, undergraduate or	74	21.0	
	1-15 hours	18	5.1	
<i>Weekly course hours</i>	16-20 hours	43	12.2	
	21-30 hours	193	54.7	
	31 hours and over	99	28.0	
<i>Do you have a special girl/boyfriend?</i>	Yes	162	45.9	
	No	191	54.1	
<i>Do you have in any leisure time activities?</i>	Yes	259	74.2	
	No	90	25.8	

The results showed that the majority were 20 years old or younger (25.5%), female (78.8%), attended the Department of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation (54.1%), attended their first year (29.7%), had a monthly household income of 1501-2000 TL (26.6%), had one sibling (30.6%), and had parents who were elementary school graduates / illiterate (mother: 45.0%, father: 28.9%).

The majority of the participants had 21-30 weekly course hours (54.7%), followed by those who had 31 hours and over (28.0%), 16-20 hours (12.2%) and 1-15 hours (5.1%), respectively. 54.1% of the students said they did not have a special girl/boyfriend. 74.2% of the university students engaged in leisure activities. The most popular leisure activities were reading (29.0%), going to the cinema (27.0%), listening to music (13.9%) and sports / working out (12.0%).

The results revealed no significant difference in the Life Satisfaction and Burnout scores with respect to age group, year at university, number of siblings, weekly course hours and the existence of a special girl/boyfriend ( $p>0.05$ ).

Table 3 shows the comparison of various individual characteristics of the students participating in the study with respect to the scale scores. According to the results, there was a statistically significant difference between groups with different monthly household incomes with respect to Life Satisfaction ( $p<0.05$ ). The mean rank scores of the students with monthly household incomes of minimum wage and under, 950-1500 TL, 1501-2000 TL, 2001-2500 TL and 2501 TL and over were 135.84, 152.97, 172.80, 218.84 and 208.58, respectively. Those with a monthly household income of 1950-2449 TL had the highest mean rank score.

There was a statistically significant difference between groups with different monthly household incomes with respect to Burnout ( $p<0.05$ ). The mean rank scores of the students with monthly household incomes of minimum wage and under, 950-1500 TL, 1501-2000 TL, 2001-2500 TL and 2501 TL and over were 193.45, 191.03, 188.84, 160.97 and 140.37, respectively. Those with a monthly household income of minimum wage and under had the highest mean rank score. Burnout decreased with increasing household income.

There was a statistically significant difference between groups with different maternal education levels with respect to Life Satisfaction ( $p<0.05$ ). The mean rank scores of the students whose mothers were elementary school graduates / illiterate, middle school graduates, high school graduates and university graduates and higher were 159.65, 161.36, 197.35 and 240.29, respectively. The students whose mothers had a university or higher degree had the greatest mean rank score. Life Satisfaction increased with mother's educational attainment.

There was a statistically significant difference between groups with different maternal education levels with respect to Burnout ( $p<0.05$ ). The mean rank scores of the students whose mothers were elementary school graduates / illiterate, middle school graduates, high school graduates and university graduates and higher were 191.23, 203.61, 154.02 and 110.32, respectively. The results showed that the students whose mothers were middle school graduates had the highest Burnout mean rank score.

There was a statistically significant difference between groups with different paternal education levels with respect to Life Satisfaction ( $p<0.05$ ). The mean rank scores of the students whose fathers were elementary school graduates / illiterate, middle school graduates, high school graduates and university graduates and higher were 154.29, 155.68, 193.43 and 209.30, respectively. The students whose fathers had a university or higher degree had the highest mean rank score. Life Satisfaction increased with father's educational attainment.

There was a statistically significant difference between groups with different paternal education levels with respect to Burnout ( $p < 0.05$ ). The mean rank scores of the students whose fathers were elementary school graduates / illiterate, middle school graduates, high school graduates and university graduates and higher were 194.31, 184.98, 175.28 and 146.91, respectively. The results showed that the students whose fathers had elementary school degrees or were illiterate had the highest Burnout mean rank score. Burnout decreased with increasing paternal educational attainment.

**Table 3. Comparison of various individual characteristics according to scale scores (Kruskal-Wallis H Test)**

	Monthly household income	n	Mean Rank	X <sup>2</sup>	p
Life Satisfaction	Minimum wage and under	48	135.84	29.293	0.000*
	950-1500 TL	89	152.97		
	1501-2000 TL	94	172.80		
	2001-2500 TL	64	218.84		
	2501 TL and over	58	208.58		
Burnout	Minimum wage and under	48	193.45	13.262	0.010*
	950-1500 TL	89	191.03		
	1501-2000 TL	94	188.84		
	2001-2500 TL	64	160.97		
Life Satisfaction	2501 TL and over	58	140.37	23.554	0.000*
	Mother's education	n	Mean Rank		
	Elementary school and lower	159	159.65		
	Middle school	76	161.36		
	High school	82	197.35		
Burnout	University and higher	36	240.29	27.820	0.000*
	Elementary school and lower	159	191.23		
	Middle school	76	203.61		
	High school	82	154.02		
Life Satisfaction	University and higher	36	110.32	18.505	0.000*
	Father's education	n	Mean Rank		
	Elementary school and lower	102	154.29		
	Middle school	79	155.68		
	High school	98	193.43		
Burnout	University and higher	74	209.30	9.894	0.019*
	Elementary school and lower	102	194.31		
	Middle school	79	184.98		
	High school	98	175.28		
	University and higher	74	146.91		

There was a statistically significant difference between the female and male students with respect to Life Satisfaction ( $p < 0.05$ ). The mean rank scores of the female and male students

were 163.40 and 227.40, respectively. The male students had a higher Life Satisfaction mean rank score.

There was a statistically significant difference between the female and male students with respect to Burnout ( $p < 0.05$ ). The mean rank scores of the female and male students were 196.33 and 105.35, respectively. The female students had a higher Burnout mean rank score.

There was a statistically significant difference between the students who attended the Health Administration Department and the Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Department with respect to Life satisfaction ( $p < 0.05$ ). The mean rank scores of the Health Administration students and the Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation students were 190.41 and 165.63 respectively. The Health Administration students had a higher Life Satisfaction mean rank score.

The results revealed no statistically significant difference in Burnout scores with respect to the department the students attended ( $p > 0.05$ ). There was a statistically significant difference in Life Satisfaction scores between those who engaged in leisure time activities and those who did not ( $p < 0.05$ ). The students who had hobbies had a mean rank score of 192.77 while that of the students who did not have hobbies was 123.86. The result shows that the students who engaged in leisure time activities had a higher Life Satisfaction mean rank score.

There was a statistically significant difference in Burnout scores between those who engaged in leisure time activities and those who did not ( $p < 0.05$ ). The students who had hobbies had a mean rank score of 158.48 while that of the students who did not have hobbies was 222.54. The result shows that the students who did not engage in leisure time activities had a higher Burnout mean rank score.

**Table 4. Comparison of various individual characteristics according to scale scores (Mann-Whitney U Test)**

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Life Satisfaction</i>	Female	278	163.40	<b>6,645.000</b>	<b>0.000*</b>
	Male	75	227.40		
<i>Burnout</i>	Female	278	196.33	<b>5,051.000</b>	<b>0.000*</b>
	Male	75	105.35		
	<i>Department</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>		
<i>Life Satisfaction</i>	Health Administration	162	190.41	13,298.500	<b>0.023*</b>
	Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation	191	165.63		
<i>Burnout</i>	Health Administration	162	165.78	13,653.000	0.057
	Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation	191	186.52		
	<i>Do you have in any leisure time activities?</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>		
<i>Life Satisfaction</i>	Yes	259	192.77	<b>7,052.000</b>	<b>0.000*</b>
	No	90	123.86		
<b>Burnout</b>	Yes	259	158.48	<b>7,376.000</b>	<b>0.000*</b>
	No	90	222.54		

\* $p < 0.05$

## DISCUSSION

Students attending departments such as Health Administration and Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation will become professionals employed in healthcare services in the future. Healthcare professionals experience greater physical and mental problems in comparison to other career fields. Therefore, uncontrollable levels of stress can lead to burnout syndrome, adversely impacting life satisfaction (Ertekin Pınar et al., 2015).

The overall Life Satisfaction mean score of the students participating in the study was  $22.07 \pm 6.81$ . In the study conducted by Ertekin Pınar et al. (2015) to determine the levels of burnout and life satisfaction among healthcare university students, the Life Satisfaction mean score was computed as  $20.71 \pm 6.54$ . The Life Satisfaction mean scores reported by Kabasakal and Uz Baş (2013), Uz-Baş (2011), Joshonloo and Afshari (2009) and Gündoğar et al. (2007) were 22.44, 22.34, 22.20 and 21.7, respectively. The Life Satisfaction mean score of the present study is approximate to those of the other studies.

There was a statistically significant difference between groups with different monthly household incomes with respect to Life Satisfaction and Burnout ( $p < 0.05$ ). As the income status of the family improves, Life Satisfaction increases and Burnout decreases. In the study by Ertekin Pınar et al. (2015), the students who characterized their monthly income as adequate had higher life satisfaction while those who characterized it as inadequate had higher burnout scores. In the study carried out by Chow (2005) on Canadian university students, the respondents who had a higher socio-economic status expressed a higher level of satisfaction with life. Özgür et al. (2010) similarly found a lower level of life satisfaction for university students who indicated a lower economic status. This result could be explained by the higher living standards, forms of social self-perception and greater self-confidence in individuals with higher socio-economic status.

The study results showed that Life Satisfaction increased and the level of Burnout decreased as the parents' educational attainment increased. Ergin et al. (2011) reported greater life satisfaction in students with higher maternal educational attainment. A higher level of parental education can be associated with increased parental consciousness, which reflects positively on parents' interaction with their children.

There was a statistically significant difference between the female and male students with respect to Life Satisfaction ( $p < 0.05$ ). The male students had a higher Life Satisfaction than the female students. In the study carried out by Özgür, Babacan-Gümüş and Durdu (2010) to investigate life satisfaction among university students who resided at home and in dormitories, the researchers reported greater life satisfaction for the male students than the female students. This result could indicate greater extroversion in the male students and faster adaptation to university life.

There was a statistically significant difference between the female and male students with respect to Burnout ( $p < 0.05$ ). The female students experienced greater burnout than the male students. There are various studies in the literature that have reported similar findings (Çimen, 2007; Yılmaz, 2009; Weckwerth and Flynn, 2006). This result could indicate that the female students were more quickly affected by unfavorable circumstances and more prone to despair.

There was a statistically significant difference between the students who attended the Health Administration Department and the Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Department with respect to Life satisfaction ( $p < 0.05$ ). The Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation students scored lower in life satisfaction. Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation students have to undergo an internship and achieve academic success, cannot make mistakes for the well-being of their

patients, experience difficulties and communication problems with patients as well as role ambiguity, and are overtasked with too much responsibility, which could lead to decreased life satisfaction.

There was a statistically significant difference in Life Satisfaction and Burnout scores between those who had leisure time activities and those who did not ( $p < 0.05$ ). The students who engaged in leisure time activities had higher Life Satisfaction and lower Burnout mean rank scores. Ergin et al. (2011) reported higher life satisfaction in university students with social activities, while Kapıkıran and Yağcı (2011) found that life satisfaction in adolescents was directly associated with playing a musical instrument and sports. Engaging in leisure time activities significantly differentiates life satisfaction and the level of burnout (Kabasakal and Uz Baş, 2013).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Identifying the level of burnout in university students is essential to increasing their life satisfaction. Albeit the limitations of the sample, the data obtained in the present study could illuminate future research as a database for life satisfaction and burnout in university students.

In view of the study results, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations:

1. Organizing conferences conveying the importance of their professions and motivational social activities such as excursions, picnics, small rewards, etc. to increase life satisfaction and mitigate burnout in healthcare university students,
2. Developing departmental curricula conducive to student participation in social, educational and cultural activities,
3. Conducting further research on life satisfaction and burnout among university students to promote their well-being,
4. Conducting studies with larger sample groups that encompass all students attending every healthcare department.



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