



# The relationship between revenge behavior and life satisfaction of students at a state university in Turkey

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## Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between revenge behavior and life satisfaction among students at a state university in Turkey, and to determine whether the revenge behavior and life satisfaction levels differed according to some variables such as gender and grade. A total number of 300 students; 178 female and 122 male, at the Faculty of Education participated in the study voluntarily. The participant students were selected randomly in the equal number of 75 from the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grades. The data collection tools administered were the Vengeance Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. For the data analysis, Pearson's correlation coefficient, t-test, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were utilized. The results of the study revealed that there was a low negative correlation ( $r = -.24$ ) between the revenge behavior and the life satisfaction levels of the participants. In addition, the revenge and life satisfaction levels differed by gender variable; there was no significant difference between the grade levels and life satisfaction, and there was a significant difference among the grade levels regarding the revenge variable. It was also found out that the life satisfaction level of female students was significantly higher than male students while the revenge behavior levels of male students were significantly higher than those of female students. Among all participants in all grade levels the revenge behavior level of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students was found to be the highest.

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**Keywords:** Revenge behavior, life satisfaction, university student, gender and grade variables, male and female students

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## 1.Introduction

The university years cover a period when young people change and grow up rapidly in terms of psycho-social aspects and prepare for their future roles. In this period, which has also come to be known as "emerging adulthood" in the literature in recent years, the high level of life satisfaction of young people contributes to their ability to successfully resolve their developmental crises and fulfill their developmental tasks. Life satisfaction, which is regarded as the cognitive component of subjective well-being, is individuals' assessment of their life according to criteria they have chosen (Dorahy et al., 2000; Schimmack, Radhakrishnan, Oishi, et al., 2002; Tuzgöl-Dost, 2007; Çivitçi, 2012). A person's perceptions about the extent to which they achieved their goals and ideals show their level of life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 1993; Bradley & Crown, 2004). The level of satisfaction with life is affected by variables such as happiness in daily life, meaning attributed to life, compliance with achieving goals, positive individual identity, personality traits, level of informed awareness, physical well-being of the individual, economic security, social relationships, and professional and current state policy (Schmitter, 2003; Kashdan & Steger, 2007; Appleton & Song, 2008; Wang & Kong, 2014). Low levels of life satisfaction in university students may lead to a decrease in their academic success (Tuzgöl Dost, 2007), dropping out of school, high levels of state anxiety (Deniz, Dilmaç & Arıca, 2009), low levels of motivation and expectation (Gündoğar et al., 2007), experiencing physical and mental problems, deterioration of the quality of their social relationships (Chechen, 2007; Damasio, Melo & Silva, 2013), and high levels of stress (Paschali & Tsitsas, 2010). In studies on life satisfaction among university students in Turkey, higher life satisfaction was determined among students staying at home than those staying in dormitories (Özgür, Babacan-Gümüş & Durdu, 2010), among students who have good economic status than students with poor economic status (Sam, 2001), among female students than male students (Şahin, Zade & Direk, 2009; Uz Baş, 2011; Kuyumcu, 2012), and among students with high positive religious coping skills than those who have low positive religious coping skills (Batan & Ayten, 2015). In studies conducted on the subject abroad, a distinction was made between female and male students (Al-Attiah & Nasser, 2013), those who have a high social support system and those who do not (Mahanda & Aggarwal, 2013), those who have a high level of autonomy and those who do not (Damasio, Melo & Silva, 2013), and those who have a high motivation of entertainment and those who do not (Wang, 2006), the former ones having a high level of life satisfaction.

Life satisfaction is critical in the emergence of important behavioral outcomes (Rigby & Huebner, 2005). People with high life satisfaction have more positive experiences in their interpersonal relationships (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger & Vohs, 2003). When these people have negative experiences in interpersonal relationships, they can exchange the negative emotions they feel towards the person with the positive emotions and focus on other positive emotions such as empathy (Hui & Cahau, 2009), and they can reduce their negative emotions and regulate their physical and mental health (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999). According to the results of Gilman and Huebner's (2006) study, young people with high life satisfaction establish more positive relationships with their peers and parents and exhibit more positive attitudes towards school and teachers. Some individuals with low adaptability and coping skills can develop revenge-seeking behaviors against those who they think have reduced their life satisfaction. Vengeance can be defined as an individual's desire to punish a person in return for a wrong or retaliate with similar negative behavior (Nayır, 2016). Some individuals who are rejected, betrayed, and have deep wounds in their relationships feel a strong urge to respond to pain. The main purpose of revenge-seeking behavior is to get some sort of feedback, to become equal with the person who caused the problem, and to make sure that the guilty person receives the punishment he deserves (Yılmaz, 2014). Nayır (2016), in a study on university students who were prospective teachers in Turkey, reported that prospective teachers would somewhat make a person who had harmed them regret doing it. Also, the students in this study were reported to be saying, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

Pursuing revenge can cause individuals to decrease their life satisfaction even more and to develop problematic behaviors (Ysseldyk, et al., 2007; Moreno et al., 2009). Although it is thought that individuals taking revenge will be relieved, the results show the opposite. The intention to take revenge and the pursuit of revenge may cause the individual to focus on the negativities and in this case, the individual may not save himself from thinking negatively (Güllü & Şahin, 2016). On the other hand, the desire to take revenge is also the motive for many aggressive behaviors in interpersonal relationships (Mongeau, Hale & Alles, 1994; Richard, Bond, & Stokes-Zoota, 2003). Many studies reveal the positive results of having a tendency for forgiveness rather than nurturing the desire to take revenge in terms of physical health and subjective well-being levels (Worthington, et al., 2007).

Increased life satisfaction of university students may contribute to successfully fulfilling their developmental duties, developing successful identities, promoting their academic and general life motivations, recognizing and using opportunities that are available around for their development, and establishing positive social relationships. Students' ability to develop coping skills against problems they encounter in interpersonal relationships and to boost their positive prosocial behaviors is also an important factor in improving their subjective well-being and life satisfaction. Guidance and psychological counseling efforts for improving students' life satisfaction and developing healthy coping skills instead of negative behaviors such as pursuing revenge for negative interpersonal relationships will ensure the physically and mentally healthy development of young people who will be the future of society. Determining the life satisfaction level of university students and identifying students who make up a risk group in terms of revenge-seeking behaviors is important in terms of planning preventive, developing, and improving studies in higher education. The present study is thought to contribute to these specified topics.

In this study, the relationship between life satisfaction and revenge behaviors of students at a state university in Turkey was investigated. The study tried to determine whether the level of life satisfaction and revenge behaviors of students differed significantly in terms of some variables such as gender and grades. Accordingly, the study aimed at contributing the quality of guidance and psychological counseling services offered to university students in Turkey. For this purpose, the answers to the following questions were sought:

- 1- Is there a significant relation between the life satisfaction and revenge behavior scores of the participants?
- 2- Is there a significant difference in the life satisfaction and revenge scores of the participants in terms of their gender?
- 3- Is there a significant difference in the life satisfaction and revenge scores of the participants in terms of their grade levels?

## **1. Method**

This study employed the relational screening model. The relational screening model can be defined as research models aiming to determine the presence and/or degree of co-change between two and more variables (Karasar, 2007).

### *1.1 Study Group*

The study group was composed of 300 students from the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grades in the Faculty of Education of a state university in Turkey. Out of these 300 students, 178 were female and 122 male who were randomly selected in the equal number of 75 from each grade.

### *1.2 Data Collection Tools*

#### *1.2.1 The Vengeance Scale*

The scale developed by Stuckless and Goranson (1992) consists of 20 descriptive items and one dimension. The range of possible scores on the scale varies between 20 and 140. The high scores obtained from the scale show that the revenge levels of the individual are high. The internal consistency reliability coefficient of the scale is 0.92, and the test-retest reliability coefficient obtained at the four-week interval is 0.90. In the criterion-based validity study of the scale, the feeling of revenge was found to be negatively correlated with empathy ( $r = -0.38$ ) and positively correlated with anger ( $r = 0.56$ ) (Stuckless & Goranson, 1992). The adaptation study of the scale into Turkish was conducted by Satici, Can, and Akın (2015), and Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient was determined as 0.91 and the test-retest correlation coefficient as 0.87. In the reliability analysis conducted in this study, Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was found as 0.89.

#### *1.2.2 The Satisfaction with Life Scale*

The Turkish adaptation of the Satisfaction with Life Scale, which was developed for young age groups by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985), was conducted by Köker (1991). The scale consists of five items designed in a 7-point Likert type. The arithmetic mean of the group is used to identify individuals with high and low life satisfaction. Individuals with a score greater than the arithmetic mean are considered as having high life satisfaction and those whose score is less than the arithmetic mean are regarded as having low life satisfaction. The test-retest consistency coefficient of the scale implemented at three-week intervals was determined as 0.85 (Köker, 1991). Reliability analysis was also conducted for the scale in the present study and Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was found as .83.

### *1.3 Data Collection and Analysis*

The study was carried out face-to-face, and the participants were informed about data collection tools, the purpose of the research, how data would be used, and the meaning of voluntary participation. Responding to data collection tools were observed to take an average of 10 minutes. Before the analysis, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was carried out to test whether the data showed a normal distribution, and the test result was found to be  $p > 0.05$  for the variables. In the evaluation of the data determined to show normal distribution, Pearson's Moments Multiplication Correlation Coefficient was employed to determine the relationship between satisfaction with life and revenge behavior. On the other hand, the independent samples t-test was used to find out whether there was a difference between life satisfaction and revenge behavior scores by gender. Besides, the one-way analysis of variance was used to determine whether the mean scores differed according to grade levels. The significance level was accepted as 0.05 in comparisons.

## 2. Results

The results of Pearson's correlation coefficient, which was conducted to determine the relationship between students' satisfaction with life and revenge behavior scores, are given in table 1.

Table 1. Results of Pearson correlation coefficient according to university students' life satisfaction and revenge behavior scores

		Revenge Behavior
Life Satisfaction	Pearson C.C.	-,44
	P	0,00
	N	300

As seen in Table 1, a moderate negative correlation was found between students' life satisfaction and revenge behavior scores ( $r = -.44$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). As life satisfaction increases, revenge behaviors decreases.

Table 2 presents the t-test results conducted to determine whether students' life satisfaction scores varied by gender variable.

Table 2. T-test results of students' life satisfaction scores by gender variable

Life Satisfaction	N	$\bar{X}$	S	Sd	t	p
Male	122	20.52	5.79	298	4.08	0.00
Female	178	23.71	7.16			

As seen in Table 2, the arithmetic means of the life satisfaction scores of male and female students were determined as ( $\bar{x}$ ) 20.52 and ( $\bar{x}$ ) 23.71, respectively. There was a significant difference between the total satisfaction scores of students by gender in favor of female students [ $t_{(298)} = -4.08$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. This result showed that life satisfaction among female students was higher than those of male students.

Table 3 presents the results of the t-test conducted to determine whether the revenge behavior scores of the students varied by the gender variable.

Table 3. The results of the t-test for revenge behavior scores of the university students by the gender variable

Revenge	N	$\bar{X}$	S	Sd	t	p
Male	122	77.99	26.43	298	- 4.76	0.00
Female	178	64.44	22.52			

According to Table 3, the arithmetic means of the revenge behavior scores of male and female students were determined as ( $\bar{x}$ ) 77.99 and ( $\bar{x}$ ) 64.44, respectively. There was a significant difference between the students' total revenge scores by their gender against male students [ $t_{(298)} = -4.76$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. This result showed that revenge behavior was higher in male students than female students.

Table 4. ANOVA test results for university students' life satisfaction scores by the grade level variable

	Source of the variance	Sum of squares	Sd	Mean of squares	F	p	Significant Difference
Life Satisfaction	Inter-group	717.527	3	239.176	6.096	0.000	1-4
	Intra-group	11614.139	296	39.237			2-4
	Total	12331.667	299				3-4

As seen in Table 4, there was a significant difference between life satisfaction and grade level mean scores ( $F_{(3-296)} = 6.096$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). There was also a significant difference between 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>-grade levels. The life satisfaction level of the 4<sup>th</sup>-grade students was significantly higher than that of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade students.

Table 5. ANOVA test results for university students' revenge scores by the grade level variable

	Source of the variance	Sum of squares	Sd	Mean of squares	F	p	Significant Difference
Revenge	Inter-group	9552.241	3	3117.414	5.175	0.002	1-3
	Intra-group	178306.195	296	602.386			2-3
	Total	187658.437	299				3-4

As seen in Table 5, there was a significant difference between revenge and grade level mean scores ( $F_{(3-296)} = 5.175$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Also, a significant difference was found between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>-grade levels. The revenge level of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade students was significantly higher than that of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and 4<sup>th</sup>-grade students.

### 3. Discussion

In the study, a moderate negative relationship was found between the variables of life satisfaction and revenge behavior scores of the participant students. This finding is consistent with the results of several other related researches of McCullough et al. (2001), Bono, McCullough & Root (2008) and Szcześniak & Soares (2011). Revenge behavior can lead to problems that may further worsen the current situation, such as showing a tendency to violence, exposure to different types of violence in return, experiencing discipline or judicial problems, and isolation. Individuals with high levels of life satisfaction can avoid engaging in conflict to not take the risks of revenge and to maintain their current well-being. Besides, it can be predicted that these individuals with high life satisfaction avoid resorting to revenge-seeking behaviors due to some reasons such as their improved skills to substitute negative emotions with positive emotions in the face of resentment in interpersonal relationships (Hui & Cahau, 2009), the presence of social support systems (Mahanda & Aggarwal, 2013), and the availability of stimuli and activities that individuals can continue their life



without getting stuck in resentments in their environment (Çeçen-Eroğul & Dingiltepe, 2012).

The study revealed a significant difference between the total life satisfaction scores of the students in favor of female students. This result is also consistent with the findings of Tuzgöl-Dost (2007) and Uz-Baş (2011). The higher level of social skills of female students compared to male students, the fact that female students experience fewer problems in terms of accommodation than male students, and high academic success levels of females can be thought to affect this result. Also, the decrease in family control and pressure on females in traditional cultures during university years when students study in another city separate from their family, and increased freedom of students may have caused female students to have higher life satisfaction compared to male students.

The results showed that there was a significant difference between the students' total revenge scores by their gender against male students. This result shows that the tendency of male students for revenge is higher than female students, which is consistent with the results of Cota-McKinley, Woody & Bell (2001), Brown (2003), and Nayır (2016). This finding may be thought to be associated with gender roles. Traditions, roles expected from boys and girls, and role models presented through the media can push boys to revenge-seeking behaviors such as challenging and using physical force, and they can label forgiveness and tolerance as fear, flinching, and weakness. Revenge behavior can also be predicted to sometimes occur as a result of individuals' attempts to prove their identity.

As a result of the study, the life satisfaction level of 4th-grade students was significantly higher than 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade students. In the first years of university period, students spend efforts to adapt to the new conditions (moving to another city, separation from the family, dormitory environment, season, and culture, etc.), to get to know the field of study and their position in this field, to cope with stress and low motivation if they did not willingly choose this field of study or department, and to live with fewer and limited relationships. These types of factors can affect the life satisfaction of students in lower classes. On the other hand, the last year of university is the year when students' adaptation to another city, separation from the family, and the department increase. Also, their autonomy boosts compared to the first years due to the comfort of completing the program, the psychological security, and deep relationships. All these can be thought to contribute to the higher levels of life satisfaction of students compared to the first years of university life.

According to the results of the study, the revenge behavior level of 3rd grade students was significantly higher than 1st, 2nd and 4th-grade students. In the first two years, the few problems in interpersonal relations arising from a narrow social environment, students' environment and starting to getting to know their friends, and their avoidance from risks for situations which they cannot predict may cause students to be more controlled in conflict situations. Fourth-grade students, on the other hand, focus on the exams that can be effective in determining their future, such as PPSE (Public Personnel Selection Examination) exams, they cannot usually come together due to applied courses, and they have a higher life satisfaction level compared to lower classes. For these reasons, they exhibit less revenge behaviors. Third-grade in educational faculties is the year when field courses are intense, there are more studies that require group collaboration, and therefore students may experience conflicts in sharing responsibilities within the group. Due to the relatively increasing social relationships compared to the first two years, the increase in interpersonal problems that could not be solved in the past may increase the level of revenge.

#### **4. Recommendations**

In the light of the findings of the study and based on the related literature, the following recommendations can be put forward:

1. The life levels of university students can be determined based on the faculty and department they study, and factors that decrease and increase their life satisfaction levels can be identified through screening studies.
2. Intervention programs can be organized by medico-social services, starting from students whose life satisfaction levels are quite low, revenge levels are quite high, and mental health is at higher risk. These students can be informed on topics such as conflict and problem-solving skills, ethical behaviors, and stress management.
3. The numbers and qualities of culture-arts and sports activities can be increased by getting the students' opinions so that they can get to know themselves, develop their latent strengths, increase their competencies, and acquire new hobbies and interests.
4. Group work can be organized for students under headings such as getting to know themselves, setting career goals, developing coping and social skills.
5. Part-time job opportunities can be increased for students with economic difficulties within the scope of university-industry cooperation.

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