Original Article

Examining the Relationship between Health Perception, Life Satisfaction, and Healthy Lifestyle Behaviours among University Students

Buse Mete

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of this study is to investigate the correlation among university students between healthy lifestyle habits, life satisfaction, and health perception.

Methods: Participants in the research included 360 students majoring in health. The research employed several instruments to collect data, such as a questionnaire on sociodemographic traits, the Health Perception Scale, the Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors scale and the Life Satisfaction Scale.

Results: According to the study's descriptive results, participants' life satisfaction levels were moderate (15.11 \pm 4.21), while their perceptions of their health (47.72 \pm 8.38) and healthy lifestyle behaviour (128.15 \pm 20.12) were slightly above average. Research indicates that there is a statistically significant (p<0.001) effect of 0.745 on healthy lifestyle behaviours from health perception.

Conclusion: The study's findings indicate that students will have higher levels of life satisfaction if they adopt healthier habits and have a more positive perception of their health.

For this reason, subjects like health promotion, protection, living a healthy lifestyle, etc. should be included in the health curriculum for higher education.

Keywords: University students, Health perception, Healthy life behaviors, Life satisfaction

Introduction

According to literature, an individual's condition of physical, mental, and social wellbeing is referred to as their health (Larsen, 2022). The primary responsibility for preserving and advancing health lies with people (Obidovna & Sulaymonovich, 2022). The efforts and behaviors of individuals to maintain their health are related mainly to their perceived health status (Leite et al., 2019). Health perception encompasses an individual's subjective assessment of their health status. Individuals with a high perception of health have a high awareness of identifying risk factors that may affect their health status (Nie et al., 2023). It is thought that individuals who evaluate their health

correctly in this way will encounter fewer problems in their social lives.

The process of improving health and people's perceptions of their own health are closely linked to the adoption and upkeep of healthy lifestyle practices (Citak Tunc et al., 2021). The term "healthy lifestyle behaviors" (HLB) refers to all of the actions that a person takes to maintain their health and fend off illness (Byrne et al., 2016). HLB is presented as a combination of healthy eating practices, selfactualization, health responsibility, exercise and social support, routines, stress management (Loef & Walach, 2012). At this point, it's critical to adopt healthy lifestyle practices and identify the variables influencing these practices (Kilani ID et al., 2020). Studies have shown that there is a strong correlation between the development of health perception in adults and young people and the acquisition of HLB (Ardic & Esin, 2016). Students have a modest level of health perception and HLB according to studies done on university students (Acıkgoz Cepni, S., & Kitis, Y. 2017; de-Mateo-Silleras et al., 2019; Bozkurt et al., 2021). It has also been determined that individuals with high health perception are more likely to exhibit positive health behaviors and stay away from risky behaviors. Positive health perception is also an important predictor of high physical activity levels and healthy behavior patterns (Al-Amari & Al-Khamees, 2015).

When people do not have a positive perception of their health and do not acquire appropriate abilities in healthy behavior choices, they tend to practice unhealthy lifestyle behaviors (Steptoe et al., 2015). In the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) report, it has been reported that individuals' life expectancies will be extended if they exhibit one or more healthful lifestyle behaviours. (Bailey et al., 2019). HLB, which has a very important effect on the life span of individuals, is also in life satisfaction (Kvintova et al., 2016; Mehr et al., 2019).

Life satisfaction is the situations or results that emerge after the individual's expectations are compared with the actual events. The less the inconsistency between the expectations, perceptions and results of the individual, the higher the life satisfaction will be. It has been revealed in many scientific studies that the level of life satisfaction of individuals in a society is basically related to development indicators such as welfare level, health outcomes and education in that society (Khodabakhsh, 2002; Bidzan-Bluma et al., 2020). Increasing life satisfaction, which has a very important place in the welfare of society, is also a current issue in the targeted health policies. In this context, factors that can affect life satisfaction are emphasized. When the literature is examined, it is seen that health perception and HLB have an important effect on life satisfaction. Health perception is an important predictor of life satisfaction. In particular, it is stated that life satisfaction is in

a stronger relationship with the perception of health rather than objective health measures (Kim et al., 2021). Research shows that poor health perception is significantly associated with decreased life satisfaction for adults (Abolhasani & Bastani, 2019; Pierannuzio et al., 2022). However, it is acknowledged that there are relationships between alterations in lifestyle (such as food, exercise, smoking, and drinking alcohol), health-related behaviors, psychological elements like and life satisfaction (Ramos Salazar, 2021). In a study conducted with young individuals, it was found that young people who participated in physical exercise, abstained from smoking, avoided fatty foods, and particularly ate healthily had far better life satisfaction than others (Pengpid & Peltzer, 2019).

While research has been done on the association between health perceptions, health-related behaviour, and life satisfaction levels among university students studying health sciences, no study has been discovered that looks at the impact on life satisfaction all at once.. However, no studies examining the relationship between health beliefs, HLB, and life satisfaction among Turkish students and evaluating were identified. In this direction, the aim of examining the relationship between health perception, life satisfaction, and healthy lifestyle behaviours among university students.

Based on the aforementioned explanations and the objectives of the study, the hypotheses and research model shown in Figure 1 were established. H_1 : There is a statistically significant effect of health perception level on the HLB of health science students.

 H_2 : The level of HLB has a statistically significant effect on the life satisfaction of health science students.

H₃: Health science students' life satisfaction is statistically correlated with their degree of health perception..

H₄: The impact of health perception levels on life satisfaction among health science students is mediated by HLB.



Figure 1. Research Model

Materials and Methods

Type of research: This cross-sectional research was carried out to identify the connection between health perception, HLB, and life satisfaction levels and to estimate their effect levels among health science students.

Population and sample of the research: The study's sample consisted of 360 students studying at a university located in the western region of Turkey (N=644). It was determined that in determining the sample size, a total of 241 students should be reached with alpha = .05, 95% confidence level (Yazicioglu & Erdogan, 2004). However, factors such as incomplete questionnaire filling, loss of questionnaire, and dead questionnaire were taken into consideration and the study was completed with 360 students.

Place and time of research: The research was collected between April and June 2022 by applying a face-to-face questionnaire to students.

Study inclusion criteria.

• Participating in the research as a volunteer

• Being studying in the same faculty's health program.

•Speaking and understanding Turkish.

Study exclusion criteria.

- Not volunteering to take part in the study.
- Not speaking and understanding Turkish.

Data collection tools

The data of the research were used in the "Socio-Demographic Information Form", "Health Perception Scale", "Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors Scale" and Life Satisfaction Scale, which were prepared by the researchers in the light of literature information.

Socio-demographic information form: The researchers used the relevant literature and studies to generate the 11 questions on this form, which asks about people's sociodemographic characteristics of individuals.

Health Perception Scale: The scale, which was devised by Diamond et al., (2007), is scored using the 5-point Likert type and comprises 15 items and 4 sub-dimensions. Scale dimensions are control center (5 items), self-awareness (3 items), certainty (4 items) and importance of health (3 items) (Diamond et al., 2007). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the original scale was 0.88 and also the Turkish adaptation, validity and reliability of the scale were made by Kadioglu and Yildiz (2012), and the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.77 (Kadioglu & Yildiz, 2012). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient in our study was found to be 0.92.

Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors Scale: The HLB II scale, created by Walker and Hill-Polerecky (1996), has 52 items and six

components. The lowest overall score is 52, while the highest is 208 (Walker & Hill-Polerecky, 1996). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the original scale was 0.94. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the related scale, which was translated into Turkish by Bahar et al. (2008), is 0.92. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient in our study was 0.75 (Bahar et al., 2008).

Life Satisfaction Scale: The "Satisfaction with Life Scale" established by Diener et al., (1985) has one dimension and five items. Each item on the original scale is scored using a 7-point system (1: Strongly Disagree - 7: Totally Agree). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the scale was 0.82 (Diener et al., 1985). The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale, as analyzed by Dagli and Baysal (2016) using the 5-point Likert approach, is 0.88. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for our study was 0.83 (Dagli & Baysal, 2016).

Ethical consideration: The research was conducted with the assistance of the following: institutional permission from the university where the study was conducted, Ethics Committee Permission (2022, 18/1) from a state university, and documented consent from the participants. The regulations outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki were adhered to throughout the research. The individuals who agreed to take part in the study gave verbal permission.

Analysis of data: The data obtained in the research were evaluated with the SPSS 22.0 package program. Number, percentage, mean and standard deviation from descriptive statistics were used for socio-demographic information of health science students. Pearson's correlation analysis was performed to determine the relationships between health perception, healthy lifestyle behaviors and life satisfaction. In addition, in order to test the research hypotheses, model 4 test analysis was performed with the Process Macro software, which was carried out over the Spss program. Findings related to the analyzes made in this context are given below. The significance level was accepted as 0.05.

Results

According to the findings obtained within the scope of the study, the descriptive information regarding the socio-demographic characteristics and health status of the participants is as follows (Table 1).

The average scores of the students participating in the study regarding the general scale and its sub-dimensions are presented in Table 2. Accordingly, it was determined that the participants' health perception (47.72 ± 8.38) and HLB scale (128.15 ± 20.12) levels were slightly above average and their life satisfaction was moderate (15.11 ± 4.21) .

Table 3 presents the results of the correlation analysis that was done to ascertain the link between the dependent, independent, and mediator variables as well as their subdimensions within the parameters of the study. The associations observed here between life satisfaction, health perception, and HLPV are statistically significant (p<0.05).

Table 4 shows the regression analysis results for the hypotheses developed within the scope of the investigation. The correlation between health perception and healthy lifestyle behaviours is 0.745 and statistically significant (p < 0.001). Therefore, the H1 hypothesis was adopted. The effect of health perception on life satisfaction was 0.150, while the effect of HLB on life satisfaction was 0.089 (p<0.001). In this setting, hypotheses H2 and H3 were likewise accepted.

The findings of the Process Macro model 4 analysis, which was carried out in the study to determine the effect of HLB on health perception and life satisfaction, are given in Table 5. As a result, it has been discovered that HLB has a 0.066 mediating effect in explaining the overall 0.216 effect of health perception on life satisfaction, which is statistically significant. Therefore, the H4 hypothesis was also accepted.

| | n | mean | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-------------|--|--|--|
| Age | 360 | 20.01±1.333 | | | |
| Gender | n | % | | | |
| Female | 217 | 60.3 | | | |
| Male | 143 | 39.7 | | | |
| Department | | | | | |
| Health Management | 93 | 25.8 | | | |
| Physical therapy and rehabilitation | 83 | 23.1 | | | |
| Nursing | 75 | 20.8 | | | |
| Physiotherapy | 18 | 5.0 | | | |
| First and Emergency Aid | 28 | 7.8 | | | |
| Medical Laboratory | 23 | 6.4 | | | |
| Management of Health Institutions | 28 | 7.8 | | | |
| Health Tourism Management | 12 | 3.3 | | | |
| Class | | | | | |
| First Class | 205 | 56.9 | | | |
| Second Class | 155 | 43.1 | | | |
| Income status | | | | | |
| Income Less than Expenses | 129 | 35.8 | | | |
| Income Equal to Expense | 172 | 47.8 | | | |
| Income Higher than Expenses | 59 | 16.4 | | | |
| Smoking Status | | | | | |
| I don't use | 214 | 59.4 | | | |
| Sometimes | 74 | 20.6 | | | |
| I Use Often | 72 | 20.0 | | | |
| Alcohol Use Status | | | | | |

Table 1. Information on the socio-demographical characteristics of the participating students (n=360)

| I don't use | 264 | 73.3 | | | |
|----------------------------------------|-----|------|--|--|--|
| Sometimes | 73 | 20.3 | | | |
| I Use Often | 23 | 6.4 | | | |
| Who Lives With | | | | | |
| Alone | 36 | 10.0 | | | |
| With friends | 129 | 35.8 | | | |
| With family | 195 | 54.2 | | | |
| Information on Students' Health Status | | | | | |
| Physical Disease Status | | | | | |
| Yes | 10 | 2.8 | | | |
| No | 350 | 97.2 | | | |
| Chronic Disease Status | | | | | |
| Yes | 28 | 7.8 | | | |
| No | 332 | 92.2 | | | |
| Continuous Medication Use | | | | | |
| Yes | 31 | 8.6 | | | |
| No | 329 | 91.4 | | | |
| Total | 360 | 100 | | | |

Table 2. Mean scores on research scales and sub-dimensions given by students

| Scales and sub- dimensions | Lower and Upper Values That Can Be Taken in the Original Scale | Lower and Upper Values Taken in This Study | Scale Means and Standard Deviations in This Study | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Health Perception | alth Perception 15-75 | | 47.72±8.38 | |
| control center 5-25 | | 5-24 | 15.43±4.19 | |
| certainty | ertainty 4-20 | | 11.94±3.39 | |
| Importance of Health | 3-15 | 3-15 | 10.47±2.69 | |

| self-awareness | 3-15 | 3-15 | 10.62±2.11 | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------|--------------|--|
| HLB II | HLB II 52-208 83- | | 128.15±20.12 | |
| Health Responsibility | 9-36 | 10-33 | 21.01±5.07 | |
| Physical Activity | 8-32 | 8-29 | 18.58±4.62 | |
| Nutrition | 9-36 | 11-31 | 20.31±4.31 | |
| Spiritual Development | 10-40 | 13-35 | 24.32±4.28 | |
| Interpersonal Relations | 9-36 | 16-34 | 24.17±3.93 | |
| Stress Management | 8-32 | 11-29 | 19.76±4.17 | |
| Life Satisfaction | 5-25 | 5-25 | 15.11±4.21 | |

Table 3. Findings related to correlation analysis between health perception, hlb, satisfaction with life and sub-dimensions

| | Health Perception | Control Center | Certainty | Importance of Health | Awareness | Life Satisfaction |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| HLB II | 0.310** | 0.273** | 0.012 | 0.285** | 0.307** | 0.518** |
| Health Responsibility | 0.264** | 0.214** | 0.022 | 0.245** | 0.275** | 0.498** |
| Physical Activity | 0.354** | 0.344** | 0.127* | 0.216** | 0.242** | 0.349** |
| Nutrition | 0.321** | 0.202** | 0.164** | 0.223** | 0.322** | 0.490** |
| Spiritual Development | 0.161** | 0.158** | 0.102 | 0.253** | 0.165** | 0.322** |
| Interpersonal Relations | 0.059*** | 0.093*** | 0.182** | 0.125* | 0.184** | 0.225** |
| Stress Management | 0.232** | 0.219** | 0.005*** | 0.231** | 0.202** | 0.458** |
| Life Satisfaction | 0.430** | 0.308** | 0.102 | 0.422** | 0.396** | 1 |
| *p<0.05 **p<0.001 ***p>0.05 | | | | | | |

| | Main Effects | | | Model Summary | | |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------|----------------|--------|-------|
| | β | Standard error | р | R ² | F | р |
| Health Perception→ HLB | 0.745 | 0.121 | 0.001 | 0.096 | 38.132 | 0.001 |
| Health Perception→ Life Satisfaction | 0.15 | 0.023 | 0.001 | 0.349 | 95.601 | 0.001 |
| HLB → Life Satiscaction | 0.089 | 0.009 | 0.001 | | | |

Table 4. Findings related to regression analysis for research variables

Table 5: Findings Related to the Mediator Role of the SYBD

| The Total Effect of Health Perception on Life Satisfaction | | β | Standard error | LLCI | ULCI | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|--|
| | | Total Effect | 0.216 | 0.024 | 0.169 | 0.263 | |
| Direct Effect | | | 0,15 | 0,023 | 0,105 | 0,194 | |
| Mediation Effect | | | | | | | |
| Independent variable | Mediator Variable | Dependent variable | β | Standard error | LLCI | ULCI | |
| Health Perception > HLB > Life Satiscaction | | 0.066 | 0.016 | 0.039 | 0.1 | | |



Figure 2. Research Model

Discussion

We showed that the health perception of university students studying in the field of health sciences was at a moderate level with an average of 47.72 points, an average of 128.15 points in the HLB, and a good level of life satisfaction with an average of 15.11 points. In a study investigating the health perception level of young individuals, the average score of the student's health perception scale was found to be 50.57, which is consistent with the findings of our study (Ozdelikara et al., 2018). In another study, reported that the average health perception level in factory workers was 39.84 (Kolac et al., 2018). In a study conducted with health school students, it was revealed that the HLB scale score was 127.8±17.5 (Melnyk et al., 2021). Further, the HLB scale score was 125.9±17.4 among university students (Nazik & Gunes, 2019), while it was 117.5±17.1 among health personnel working in primary health care services (Alhejaili & Almugti, 2022). Moreover, it was observed in other studies using the same scale that HLB scores were lower in healthcare professionals in various countries (Blake et al., 2017)(Dayoub & Jena, 2015). The difference in the findings of our study may be associated with the

behaviours that will negatively affect health such as smoking and alcohol use, which are more common than the employees in Turkiye. On the other hand, in some studies on the life satisfaction of university students, it has been shown that the average is rather good, which consistent the findings of the current research (Gavín-Chocano et al., 2020; Rogowska et al., 2020).

Our statistical analyses have shown that the level of health perception of university students studying in the field of health sciences had a significant effect on HLB and life satisfaction. In addition, we found that HLBS has a mediating role of 0.066 in the effect of health perception on life satisfaction. In another study carried out with individuals aged 60 and over by Ayna and Gumus (2021), it was reported that there was a relationship between health perception and life satisfaction (p<0.050, r=0.335) [41]. Moreover, it was determined that individuals' perception of health was a significant predictor of their level of life satisfaction $(\beta = .185, p < .05)$ (Kim et al., 2018). It has been shown that physical and mental health perceptions have an effect on students' life satisfaction (Rogowska et al., 2020). In another study conducted in Japan, it was

reported that the healthy lifestyle behaviours of individuals aged 20 and over are associated with health perception (Tanaka et al., 2020). Further, it has been demonstrated that not complying with healthy lifestyle behaviors results from inadequate health perception in people with cardiovascular disease (Lee et al., 2019). It was observed that university students studying in the field of health science with a high health perception tend to exhibit health-promoting behaviors (Aciksoz et al., 2013). In a recent study with elderly individuals in Thailand, it was found that individuals with high HLB scale scores had higher life satisfaction (Phulkerd et al., 2021). Furthermore, it was determined that there is a positive and significant relationship between HLB and life satisfaction and job satisfaction in nurses (Sampson, 2020). Considering the results presented here and previous studies, we may suggest that health perception and HLB have essential effects on the life satisfaction of students studying health sciences.

Conclusion and Recommendations: In the current research, our data show that the life satisfaction levels of university students studying health sciences are at a reasonable level, and both health perceptions and HLB are effective in this. In addition, the mediator role of the HLB strengthens the impact of health perception on my life satisfaction. Overall, it might be ensured that students gain higher life satisfaction by improving their health perception and HLB. Moreover, courses such as health promotion, protection, and healthy life could be included in the higher education curriculum in the field of health.

Research Limitations: This study was carried out with 360 students studying in the field of health sciences. Further research with a large sample size can be performed by including students studying in different academic fields. Additionally, adding additional factors that might affect students' life satisfaction will broaden the research area.

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