

Life satisfaction of adolescents, in relation to assertive behavior and coping strategies

Giorgos Tsouvelas & Vassilis Pavlopoulos

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. Greece

Introduction

Life satisfaction refers to the subjective evaluation of the positive aspects of a person's life, both overall and in specific domains such as health, safety, social and family connections, material wealth or wellbeing, and work (or other forms of productive activity) (Cummins, 1996), although the relative contribution of these domains in the theoretical algorithm of life satisfaction remains under investigation (Rojas, 2006). According to Diener, Suh, Lucas and Smith (1999), life satisfaction is one of the three components of subjective well-being, along with positive emotion and negative emotion. It is expected that assertive behavior and coping strategies would be predictors of adolescents' life satisfaction (Cakić et al., 2006; Shengquan, 2008). Furthermore, it is expected that these factors are mainly related to domains of satisfaction that include social interactions, such as satisfaction from family, friends and school. Both assertive behavior and active coping strategies (such as seeking family support or seeking assistance) are related with skills of interpersonal communication, therefore they may contribute to aspects of life satisfaction involving interpersonal contact, although this has not received sufficient empirical documentation. Moreover, it is expected that adolescents' life satisfaction will be positively associated with problem-focused strategies and negatively with emotion-focused strategies (Grossman & Rowat, 1995; Şahin & Durak, 1996; Shengquan, 2008).

Method

The sample consisted of 433 students who were enrolled in grade 6 of Primary School (N=145, $M_{age}=10.3$ years), grade 2 of Junior High School (N=145, $M_{age}=12.2$ years) and grade 1 of Lyceum (N=143, $M_{age}=14.2$ years) in the Arsakeia private schools of Ekali. Psychikon. and Patras, Greece. Participants were administered the Children's Assertive Behavior Scale (CABS; Michelson & Wood, 1982), the Multi-dimensional Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 2001), the Athens Coping Scale (ACOPS; Besevegis, 2001), and a demographic questionnaire. The research questions were explored by implementing both variable-focused as well as person-focused techniques.

Results

Table 1. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses (method: stepwise) for the prediction of life satisfaction from gender, age, assertive behavior (CABS) and coping strategies (ACOPS)

Variable-focused analyses

A series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses (using stepwise method) were performed in order to investigate whether assertiveness and coping strategies would predict life satisfaction and its domains.

In these analyses, block 1 included gender and age in order to partial out the effect of these demographic factors, and block 2 included seven coping strategies and assertiveness (see Table 1).

	Life satisfaction											
	Family		Friends		School		Environment		Self		Total	
	Step (ΔR^2)	β final	Step (ΔR^2)	β final	Step (ΔR^2)	β final	Step (ΔR^2)	β final	Step (ΔR^2)	β final	Βήμα (ΔR^2)	β final
Gender	--	--	1 (0.02)	0.15**	2 (0.04)	0.13**	--	--	--	--	2 (0.02)	0.09*
Age	1 (0.14)	-0.19***	2 (0.01)	-0.05	1 (0.15)	-0.26***	1 (0.07)	-0.18***	1 (0.04)	-0.11*	1 (0.17)	-0.24***
Assertiveness	3 (0.02)	0.15***	--	--	6 (0.01)	0.12*	3 (0.02)	0.15**	--	--	4 (0.03)	0.12**
Family Support	2 (0.21)	0.43***	--	--	3 (0.06)	0.16***	2 (0.05)	0.20***	--	--	3 (0.11)	0.22***
Revision	--	--	--	--	7 (0.01)	0.09*	--	--	2 (0.07)	0.26***	6 (0.01)	0.09*
Problem Solving	5 (0.01)	0.10*	--	--	5 (0.02)	0.09*	--	--	--	--	8 (0.01)	0.10*
Giving up	--	--	5 (0.01)	-0.13**	4 (0.03)	-0.15***	--	--	--	--	5 (0.02)	-0.12**
Isolation	--	--	3 (0.05)	-0.20***	--	--	--	--	3 (0.02)	-0.14**	7 (0.01)	-0.13***
Assistance seeking	4 (0.01)	-0.12**	4 (0.03)	0.19***	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Avoidance	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total R ²		0.38***		0.13***		0.32***		0.15***		0.13***		0.37***

Note. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Person-focused analyses

A series of cluster analyses (using Ward's method) was implemented in order to identify groups of adolescents in terms of life satisfaction, assertive behavior and coping strategies.

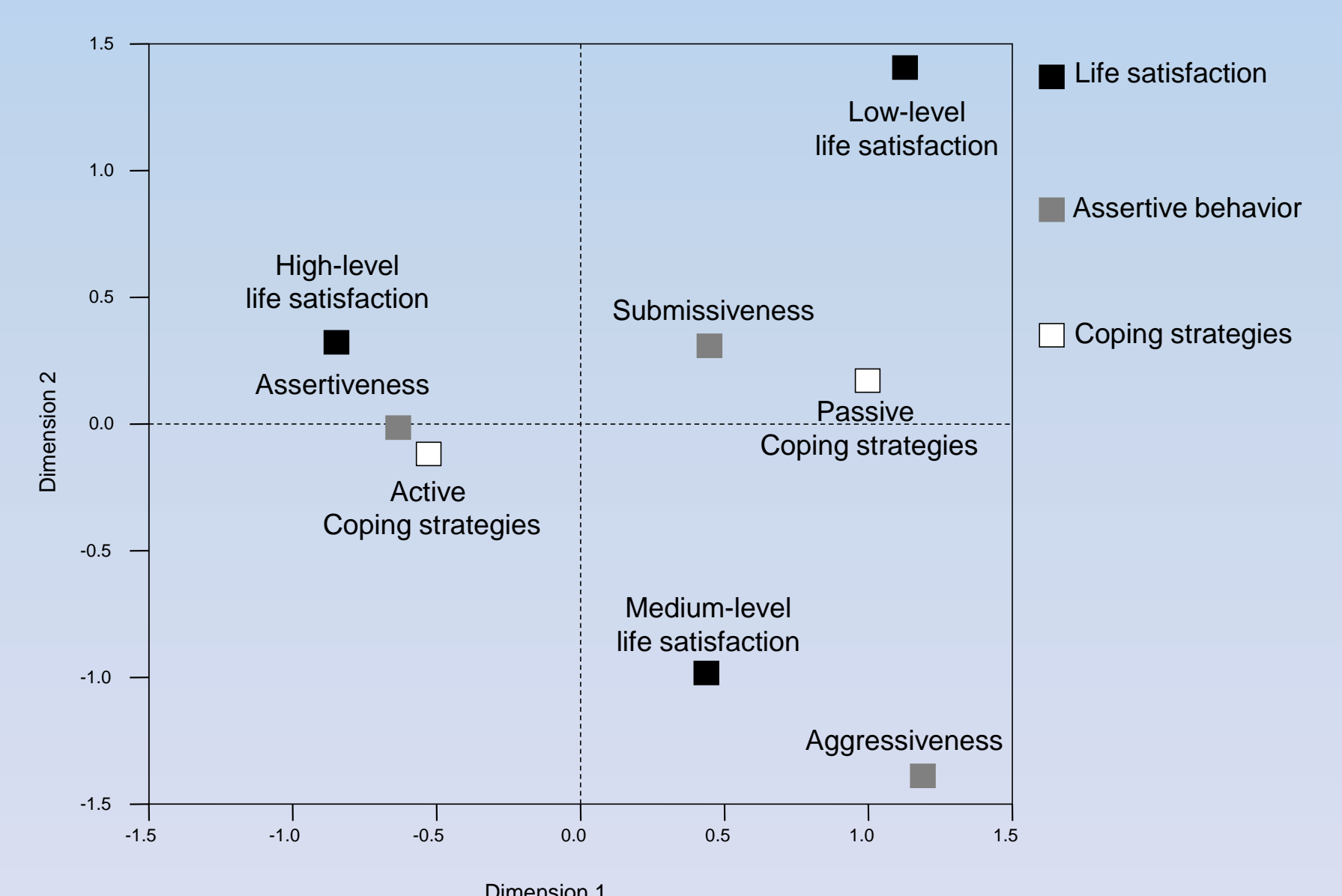
Three clusters of life satisfaction were extracted: high level (N=184, 42.5%), medium level (N=173, 40%), and low level life satisfaction (N=76, 17.6%).

In what concerns assertiveness, three clusters were also extracted: submissive style (N=186, 43.0%), assertive style (N=204, 47.1%), and aggressive style (N=43, 9.9%).

Finally, two clusters of coping strategies were extracted: active coping strategies (N=278, 64.5%) and passive coping strategies (153, 35.5%).

Multiple analysis of correspondence (SPSS Homals command) was used then in order to graphically depict patterns of relationships among the above variables (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Optimal scaling of life satisfaction, assertiveness, and coping strategies of the adolescents



Conclusions

It was found that a significant amount of variance of adolescent life satisfaction can be predicted by assertive behavior and coping strategies. This finding is in accordance to previous studies (Argyle & Lu 1990; Buhrmester et al., 1988; Cakić et al., 2006; Grossman & Rowat, 1995; Herringer, 1998; Sahin & Durak, 1996; Schimmack et al., 2004; Shengquan, 2008). Furthermore, the findings from the variable-focused analyses validated those from the person-focused approach. As expected, assertive behavior predicted significant amount of variance of family and school satisfaction. It is noteworthy that different coping strategies predict different domains of life satisfaction.

The above findings can be informative in designing mental health interventions in the school community

References

- Argyle, M., & Lu, L. (1990). Happiness and social skills. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 11(12), 1255-1261.
- Besevegis, E. (2001). Stress, stressful situations and children's and adolescents' coping strategies. In: H. Vasilaki, S. Triliva, & E. Besevegis, (Eds.), *Stress, anxiety and coping* (pp. 29-60). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.
- Buhrmester, D., Furman, W., Wittenberg, M. T., & Reis, H. T. (1988). Five domains of interpersonal competence in peer relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 55, 991-1008.
- Cakić, L., Mihaljević, S., & Perković, M. (2006, July). *Life satisfaction and certain forms of adolescents' activities*. Paper presented at the 3rd European Conference on Positive Psychology, Braga, Portugal. Retrieved January 12, 2009 from <http://www.pozitivna-psihologija.com/ppp/Cakić%20Mihaljević%20Perković.doc>
- Cummins, R. A. (1996). The domains of life satisfaction: An attempt to order chaos. *Social Indicators Research*, 38, 303-332.
- Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125, 272-302.
- Grossman, M., & Rowat, K. M. (1995). Parental relationships, coping strategies, received support, and well-being in adolescents of separated or divorced and married parents. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 18, 249-261.
- Herringer, L. G. (1998). Facets of extraversion related to life satisfaction. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 24, 731-733.
- Huebner, E. S. (2001). Manual for the Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale. Retrieved December 20, 2007 from <http://www.cas.sc.edu/psych/pdfsdocs/huebssmanual.doc>
- Michelson, L., & Wood, R. (1982). Development and psychometric properties of the Children's Assertive Behavior Scale. *Journal of Behavioral Assessment*, 4, 3-13.
- Rojas, M. (2006). Life satisfaction and satisfaction in domains of life: Is it a simple or a simplified relationship? *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7, 467-497.
- Sahin, N. H., & Durak, A. (1996). Stresle başa çıkma tarzları ölçeği: Üniversite öğrencileri için uyarlanması. *Türk Psikoloji Dergisi*, 10, 56-73.
- Schimmack, U., Oishi, S., Furr, R. M., & Funder, D. C. (2004). Personality and life satisfaction: A facet-level analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(8), 1062-1075.
- Shengquan, Y. (2008). A longitudinal study of subjective well-being among Chinese university students: The roles of personality, attribution, and coping. Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Hong Kong, PRC. Retrieved May 2, 2009 from <http://sunzi.lib.hku.hk/hkuo/view/B40987875/fi.pdf>