SOCIAL SCIENCE DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL
SSDjournal
Open Access Refereed E-Journal & Refereed & Indexed
http://www.ssdjournal.org / journalssd@gmail.com

Article Arrival Date: 22.10.2025 Published Date: 15.11.2025
Doi Number : 10.5281/zenodo.17629047
Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article
Vol 10 / Issue 53 / pp: 45-50

INVESTIGATION OF SUBJECTIVE VITALITY AND RELATED VARIABLES IN TEACHERS

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Abstract
Subjective vitality is a multidimensional concept reflecting an individual's sense of being physically and psychologically alive, energetic, and vibrant. Grounded in subjective happiness, it enhances awareness of one's environment and promotes engagement, alertness, and effectiveness in daily activities. Individuals with higher levels of subjective vitality demonstrate greater satisfaction, productivity, and well-being in professional, social, and personal contexts. This concept arises from intrinsic energy and encompasses positive emotional enthusiasm that occurs without coercion or external pressure. Vitality encompasses not only physical fitness and health but also mental and cognitive well-being. Individuals experiencing high vitality manage stress more effectively, perform tasks more efficiently, and report higher life satisfaction. As a state arising from intrinsic motivation, subjective vitality supports both physical and psychological health independently of external conditions. Maintaining vitality is therefore considered a continuous process of awareness and self-regulation essential for preserving quality of life and promoting healthy living. Research indicates that demographic variables such as age, gender, and marital status do not significantly affect subjective vitality. However, differences in professional roles can influence vitality levels. Specifically, physical education and sports teachers exhibit higher subjective vitality compared to teachers from other disciplines, likely due to differences in workload and greater experience with physical activity. Subjective vitality is largely dependent on internal factors, and behavioral tendencies are shaped by intrinsic motivation. Personality traits, motivation levels, life satisfaction, and psychological resilience play a crucial role in enhancing and sustaining subjective vitality. By supporting internal energy, emotional enthusiasm, and mental alertness, vitality contributes to performance, motivation, and productivity in both individual and social life.

Assessing and supporting teachers' subjective vitality is therefore critical for both workplace effectiveness and overall life quality.
Keywords: Subjective Vitality, Psychological Well-Being, Teachers, Intrinsic Motivation

Introduction

The concept of subjective vitality is grounded in the notion of subjective happiness. A positive relationship exists between subjective vitality and subjective happiness, with vitality serving as both a mediator and predictor of happiness (Akın & Akın, 2015; Köse, Uzun, Özlü, Çelik, & Erbaş, 2019). The term "wellness" in international literature parallels vitality; in Chinese culture, "chi" represents life energy, while in Japanese culture, "ki" signifies the force and energy supporting physical and mental health (Bostic, Rubio, & Hood, 2000; Ryan & Frederick, 1997, cited in Akın & Akın, 2015). In Turkish literature, vitality is associated with physical fitness, well-being, and wellness, defined in the Turkish Language Association dictionary as vigor, liveliness, and robustness. Subjective vitality, based on self-determination theory, refers to being cheerful, alert, energetic, and lively, reflecting a multidimensional and continuous state of awareness that allows individuals to make optimal choices (Uzunbacak & Akçakanat, 2018).Individuals with high subjective vitality demonstrate increased sensitivity toward work, peers, and themselves, and exhibit greater enthusiasm and alertness in daily tasks. In positive psychology, subjective vitality is considered a foundational element of subjective happiness and well-being, reflecting both physical and psychological vigor (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Research shows that subjective vitality positively affects job satisfaction and performance (Uysal, Sarıçam, & Akın, 2014). It has negative associations with depressive symptoms, addictions, and physical complaints, while positively correlating with emotional, social, and psychological well-being (Ekşi, Erök Özkapu, & Ümmet, 2019). Subjective vitality can be defined as a positive emotional experience arising naturally without external pressure, characterized by high energy and vibrancy (Ryan & Frederick, 1997; Bostic et al., 2000; Fini, Kavousian, Beigny, & Emami, 2010). It is considered a component of physical health and overall well-being (Salama-Younes, 2011). Individuals with high vitality report greater energy and alertness, cope with stress more effectively, and perceive themselves as mentally healthier (Ryan & Frederick, 1997; Vali & Mousa, 2011). As an internal source of energy, subjective vitality promotes positive emotional development and a dynamic, enthusiastic, and prepared state (Fini et al., 2010; Ryan & Frederick, 1997). It is an intrinsic state independent of external influences and daily life, positively affecting both physical and psychological conditions (Nix, Ryan, Manly, & Deci, 1999). Vitality represents a maintained quality of life rather than a goal itself, helping individuals remain balanced, prevent health problems, and delay aging (Ryan & Frederick, 1997; Pilzer, 2007). Healthy lifestyle behaviors, such as avoiding smoking, practicing hygiene, maintaining balanced nutrition, establishing positive social relationships, managing stress, and engaging in sufficient physical activity, support overall health and vitality (Söyleyici & Salici, 2020).

The aim of this study is to examine the subjective vitality levels of physical education and sports teachers compared to teachers in other disciplines.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey design, enabling the identification of the current status and relationships between variables (Karasar, 2015). Survey research allows application to larger sample groups and assesses opinions, interests, skills, and attitudes (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2017).

Participants

The population consisted of preschool, primary school, physical education, and subject-specific teachers working in the center of Şanlıurfa Metropolitan Municipality during the 2024–2025 academic year. The sample included 498 voluntary teachers: 278 females and 220 males.

Data Collection Tools

Necessary permissions were obtained before applying the scales. The instrument comprised three sections: a Personal Information Form and the Subjective Vitality Scale.

Subjective Vitality Scale

The Subjective Vitality Scale (Ryan & Frederick, 1997), adapted to Turkish by Akın, Satici, Arslan, Akın, & Kayış (2012), uses a 7-point Likert format (1 = not at all true, 7 = completely true) and contains seven items, one of which is reverse-scored. Scores range from 7 to 49, with higher scores indicating higher subjective vitality. The scale's Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient is 0.84.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS 25. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were calculated. Skewness and kurtosis tests confirmed normality (+1.0 to -1.0), allowing the use of parametric tests. Independent t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation were used. Tukey's post-hoc test was applied for multiple comparisons when significant differences were found (Kayri, 2009). Regression analysis was conducted to identify predictors of subjective vitality (Öztürk, 2020). Descriptive and inferential statistics revealed no significant differences in subjective vitality based on marital status, gender, or age. ANOVA results indicated significant differences among teacher groups. Physical education and sports teachers scored higher in subjective vitality compared to preschool and other subject teachers ($p < 0.05$).

Results

In this section, the physical activity levels and subjective vitality scores of teachers are presented in tables.

Table 1. T-Test Results for Subjective Vitality Scores by Marital Status

Subjective Vitality	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Married	164	32.57	8.748	496	0.521	0.6
Single	334	32.16	7.95			

As shown in Table 1, there is no significant difference in subjective vitality scores based on marital status.

Table 2. T-Test Results for Subjective Vitality Scores by Gender

Subjective Vitality	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Male	220	33.04	7.958	496	1.78	0.07
Female	278	31.72	8.381			

Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference in subjective vitality scores between male and female participants.

Table 3. ANOVA Results for Subjective Vitality Scores by Age

Subjective Vitality	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Sig. Difference
Between Groups	328.452	2	164.226	2.448	0.08	–
Within Groups	33,207.967	495	67.087			

Table 3 indicates that there is no significant difference in subjective vitality scores according to age.

Table 4. ANOVA Results for Subjective Vitality Scores by Teacher Branch

Subjective Vitality	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Sig. Difference*
Within Groups	935.561	3	311.854	4.726	0.00	1>2, 1>4
Between Groups	32,600.858	494	65.994			

*Significant Difference: 1 = Physical Education & Sports, 2 = Primary School, 3 = Preschool, 4 = Other Branches

Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference in subjective vitality scores between physical education and sports teachers and primary school teachers, as well as between physical education and sports teachers and other branch teachers ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion

This study involved 498 voluntary teachers aged 20–55 from preschool, primary, physical education, and subject-specific teaching groups. Contemporary research views health as encompassing both physical and psychological well-being (Şimşekoğlu & Mayda, 2016). Physical activity and regular sports participation contribute positively to subjective well-being, emotional health, and energy levels (Uzunbacak & Akçakanat, 2018; Şahin, Baş, & Çelik, 2019; Sarışık, Akça, vd. 2023). İlkokullarda Uygulanan Beden Eğitimi ve Oyun Dersinin Sınıf Öğretmenlerinin Görüşlerine Göre İncelenmesi. Göbeklitepe Eğitim ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi, 2(2), 82-96.).

Exercise enhances psychological resilience and positive affect through physiological mechanisms, including endorphin activation. Research demonstrates that increased exercise frequency correlates with higher psychological resilience (Öner, 2019; Demir & Çifçi, 2020).

Subjective vitality influences physical, psychological, and cognitive domains, making it a central indicator of well-being (Akın & Akın, 2015). In line with previous studies, demographic variables did not affect vitality scores, while participation in physical activity positively influenced subjective vitality (Köse, Uzun, Özlü, Çelik, & Erbaş, 2019).

Higher subjective vitality among physical education teachers may reflect lower cognitive workload, greater experience with physical activity, or differences in teaching schedules. Monitoring athletes' vitality alongside training load provides insights into physiological and psychological status (Aka, Akarçeşme, Altundağ, & Soylu, 2020; Mann et al., 2016; McGuigan, 2017). The findings suggest that subjective vitality is primarily influenced by intrinsic factors, including personality traits and motivation, rather than external conditions (Savcı & Aysan, 2016; Çelik & Topçuoğlu, 2017; Yıldız et al., 2017).

During the pandemic, it is essential that future research incorporates psychometric assessments of motivation, life satisfaction, life skills, quality of life, and subjective happiness, ideally supported by qualitative studies.

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