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## The Effect of Choral Participation on Middle School Students' Life Satisfaction

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**Abstract:** Chorus education, which is being practiced within the framework of music education's branch of voice training, has significant impacts on an individual's philosophy of life, self-confidence level and socialization. An individual assesses his own life satisfaction level cognitively in terms of many aspects. Chorus education can be seen as the most prominent and contributing aspect as it helps people feel satisfied and happy and moreover, it makes their life more meaningful in various ways. The study aims to interpret the effect of choral participations of middle school students on their life satisfaction. Accordingly, in this research, 'satisfaction with life scale' developed by Diener, Emmons, Laresen and Griffin - later translated in Turkish by Koker - has been used. To that end, middle school students' satisfaction with life has been investigated through comparisons done within the context of factors such as; gender, age, grade, previous musical instrument experiences as well as choral participation. As a result of the research, it has been identified that the life satisfaction does not vary significantly according to gender, age, grade or previous musical instrument experiences; yet it has been found that there is a positive effect of choral participation on students' life with satisfaction.

**Keywords:** *Chorus education, middle school students, satisfaction with life.*

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### Introduction

Since ancient times, it's widely known that from psychological, sociological and cultural perspectives, music has significant impacts on individuals' development in a positive manner. From the psychological perspective, music which signifies feelings when individuals are happy, sad, angry, peaceful or calm is a subsidiary in developing the ability of self-expression, socialization and gaining a place within the society through musical events. On the other hand, from the cultural perspective, it plays a role in sharing, protecting and transferring various cultural elements and traditional motives in sociological settings through generations (Kilic, 2009; E. F. Turkmen, 2016).

In this context, music is known to be an efficient factor in ensuring behavioral change and hence, it is used in the field of education in Turkey. As a teaching and learning field, music education, which is the process of acquiring specific music behaviors aimed at the individual through his or her own experience and changing, transforming, developing and empowering these behaviors, is designed in advance to accomplish three main targets, namely; general, volunteer and vocational (Bayraktar, Ucan & Yildiz, 1999; Ece & Bilgin, 2007).

Music education, which has the aim of imposing a general music culture, is being carried out at all steps of formal training institutions in Turkey (Ucan, 2001). Implementing this process efficiently enables students achieve cognitive, affective and kinesthetic intelligence learning outcomes and be musically equipped (Akarsu, 2017; Ozal Goncu, 2016).

Music education, which is organized as task-based by an understanding and content with the aim of ensuring the individuals grow up in a balanced, consistent and healthy way with different methods and techniques, is for everybody to gain common musical culture (Ucan, 2005).

In Turkey, music lessons which are performed within the framework of general musical education, aims to guide students through listening, singing, playing and producing music to achieve musical acculturation, creating and developing the musical taste and tendencies (Tez & Aydiner-Uygun, 2016). In line with these objectives; vocal training, which is one of the most basic dimensions of music education, is being performed within this scope. The social functionality of music is being realized through students who collectively practice music. For this purpose, chorus

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education is carried out through in-class practices and extracurricular activities. In this process, the student is aimed to gain the ability to use the voice correctly, effectively and efficiently, to establish the tradition of collective singing, to acquire general music culture accumulation and to develop interpretation skills (Cevik, 2013; Senturk, 2001; E. F. Turkmen, 2016).

By singing together, along with the community-based chorus training processes, the individual acquires the habit of building bonds, learns to be an effective person, knows how to respect the rules of etiquette and the rights of other, sharing and being patient; reaching the whole through individual differences, contributing to the misrepresentation of others, and the necessity of democratic values in society. Moreover, this process contributes to the improvement of the world view in the national and international communication of the individual, the increase of self-reliance and socialization (Apaydin, 2001; Sokezoğlu Atilgan & Ordekci, 2015).

With such an aspect, chorus educational achievements seem to be very important in terms of level of life satisfaction, which is the main element that is necessary for the individual to be happy and to get meaning of life. Life satisfaction, which is one of the most fundamental quests of man, is a whole of the processes related to an individual's life patterns and standards and is a judicial process that the person cognitively evaluates according to the criteria he / she chooses (Avsaroglu, Deniz, & Kahraman, 2005; Aysan & Bozkurt, 2004; Kapikiran & Yagci, 2012). The life satisfaction of an individual can be influenced by many things such as happiness in daily life, meaning to life, harmony in reaching goals, positive individual identity (Dagli & Baysal, 2016). In this context, daily life of the individual affects his or her life satisfaction. One of the most important contributing factors can be considered as an individual's educational life. Education supports the physical, mental and social development of a person; contributes to the happiness and harmony of the society in their lives; it affects the artistic, social and cultural development of the person positively (U. Turkmen, 2010). This process supports the development of an individual in music education; and has positive effects on his/her of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor behaviors (Ucan, 2005). Chorus education, which has a community-based structure, affects an individual's life satisfaction by providing great contributions to the people's socialization, self-reliance, positive personality development.

When the relevant literature has been analyzed, it has been observed that there are studies which examine the factors that affect primary and middle school students' satisfaction with life level.

Civitci (2009) has studied the possible relationship between life satisfaction of secondary school students and some of their personal and family-related features. He has figured out that; there is an effect of ego, school, peer relations and living environment of the secondary school students, who are in an early stage of puberty, on their life satisfaction. Moreover, he has determined that some personal and family-related features of the students affect the satisfaction with family the most.

Arici, Artan, Cicek, Ozbek and Ozucelik (2017) have done research on the effects of creative drama on school exhaustion and student life satisfaction; in doing so, they have observed that the group of students who attend to creative drama classes on a regular basis have an increasing pace in their level of life satisfaction.

Kapikiran and Yagci (2012), in their research which questions the role of participating in musical communities and instrument trainings on teenagers' life satisfaction and sense of loneliness; they figure out that there is a diversifying relationship in between the aforementioned parameters.

Bennett and Maas (1988) in their study which analyzes the effects of a music based life on elder people's life satisfaction and ego integrity; after 6 weeks of various applications to 26 elder women living in nursing homes and shared houses; they have figured out that a music based life has positive influence on old people's life satisfaction and personal compatibility.

Rife, Shnek, Lauby and Lapidus (2001) have investigated the impacts of private music lessons on children's sense of satisfaction; they have applied a music lesson satisfaction scales to a sample group of 568 children at the ages between 9 to 12. The results of the study reveal that there are positive impulses of age, gender and musical instruments on the children's level of satisfaction.

This study aims to evaluate the effect of choral participation on middle school students' life satisfaction. Moreover, in addition to choral participation, some certain factors have also been investigated to determine their effect on the students' life satisfaction.

Therefore, the current study sets out to seek answers for the questions below.

1. Does the middle school students' life satisfaction level vary according to gender?
2. Does the middle school students' life satisfaction level vary according to age?
3. Does the middle school students' life satisfaction level vary according to grade?
4. Does the middle school students' life satisfaction level vary according to the presence of previous musical instrument training experiences?
5. Does the middle school students' life satisfaction level vary according to taking chorus lessons?

## Methodology

### Research Model

This research uses the correlational model. Correlational model aims to determine the existence of a covariation between variables and the degree of this variation (Karasar, 2005). In this research, the relationship between middle school students' life satisfaction scale scores have been investigated in terms of gender, age, grade, whether the students take an instrument lesson and whether they participate into chorus lessons.

### Population and Sample

The population of this research consists of 2017-2018 academic year middle school students studying at Bursa's central districts. Convenient sampling has been employed and 162 students from 4 middle schools have been chosen for the study. Thirty-three of them are 5<sup>th</sup> graders, 41 of them are 6<sup>th</sup> graders, 41 of them are 7<sup>th</sup> graders, 47 of them are 8<sup>th</sup> graders. Seventy of the students are female and 91 of them are male, however, one of them did not answer the question about gender. The mean age of the participants is 12.58 ( $SD = 1.25$ ). Fifty-seven students participate in chorus courses and 105 of them do not. Seventy-one students have declared that they have never taken instrument courses while 91 of them said that they have participated in an instrument course.

### Data Collection Tools

In this research, 'satisfaction with life scale' developed by Diener, Emmons, Laresen and Griffin (1985) - later translated in Turkish by Koker (1991) - has been used. The scale consists of five items that measure one's life satisfaction. Each of these 5 items use a 7-point scale that ranges from 1; strongly disagree to 7; strongly agree. In the study by Koker (1991), item-total correlations are between 0.71 and 0.80, and test-retest reliability coefficient is 0.85. For the current study, Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient has been calculated as 0.85.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Data has been collected through surveys applied to middle school students at the schools determined by the researcher. Analysis of the data has been realized by using SPSS 23.0 package program. For data analysis t-test and ANOVA have been employed.

## Findings / Results

In order to identify the effect of choral participation on middle school students' level of life satisfaction; this chapter of the study presents the findings deduced by the statistical implications retrieved through the tools of data collection.

Table 1 presents the satisfaction with life scores according to gender difference.

Table 1. Satisfaction with Life Scoring According to Gender

Gender	N	M	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Female	70	23.586	6.996	0.911	159	0.364	0.145
Male	91	22.560	7.148				

As seen in Table 1, satisfaction with life scores do not change significantly according to gender  $t(159) = 0.911, p = .364$ .

Table 2 presents the satisfaction with life scores according to the age of students.

Table 2. Satisfaction with Life Scores According to Age

Age	N	M	SD	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\omega^2$
10-11	40	24.150	7.513	330.370	3	110.123	2.264	0.083	0.023
12	34	24.029	7.661						
13	45	23.444	5.774						
14-15	43	20.674	7.040						

While analyzing the results; 4 of the students at the age group of 10 were merged with the 11-year olds, and 7 of the students at the age of 15 were merged with 14-year olds. In Table 2, ANOVA results show that there is no significant difference among age groups in terms of life satisfaction,  $F(3, 158) = 2.264, p = 0.083$ . Yet; although statistically not significant, it has been figured out that the students at the age group of 14-15 have lower scores than other age groups.

Table 3 presents the satisfaction with life scores according to grade

Table 3. Satisfaction with Life Scores According to Grade

Grade	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\omega^2$
5	33	23.939	7.310	359.724	3	119.908	2.474	0.064	0.027
6	41	24.268	7.668						
7	41	23.634	5.834						
8	47	20.702	6.969						

As also seen on table 3, a significant interaction between the grades of the students and their satisfaction with life scores could not be observed. However, it has been investigated that the satisfaction with life scores of 8th graders are lower. This situation is thought to be caused by the students being in their adolescence period and their examination anxiety.

Table 4 presents the satisfaction with life scores according to the existence of students' earlier musical instrument experiences.

Table 4. Satisfaction with Life Scores According to the Instrument Experiences

Instrument	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Not taking lessons	71	21.986	6.519	-1.634	160	0.104	-0.259
Taking lessons	91	23.802	7.387				

A significant difference could not be observed between the life satisfaction level of children who take lessons for playing an instrument,  $M = 23.80$ , and those who do not,  $M = 21.99$ ,  $t(160) = -1.634$ ,  $p = .104$ .

Table 5 presents the t-test scores concerning the change in satisfaction with life scores according to the students' status of taking chorus lessons.

Table 5. Satisfaction with Life Scores According to Taking Chorus Lessons

Chorus	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Not taking lessons	57	20.439	7.238	-3.532	160	<.001	-0.581
Taking lessons	105	24.400	6.580				

As seen in Table 5, the difference between the satisfaction with life scores of students who take chorus lessons ( $M=24.40$ ) and students who do not take chorus lessons ( $M=20.44$ ) is statistically significant;  $t(160) = -3.532$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = -0.581$ . When the effect size is considered, it could easily be articulated that students taking chorus lessons have 0.581 standard scores higher than other students.

### Discussion and Conclusion

This study examines the effects of choral participation on middle school students' satisfaction with life level. Results of the research reveal that there isn't a significant effect of the gender of the students on their life satisfaction. This finding of the research shows parallelism with the study of Telef (2011). However, the results show a slight difference with an earlier research done in 2009 by Civitci. The mentioned research propounds that female students' satisfaction level at school is higher than the male students; however, on other matters and for satisfaction with life in general, no differences between the two genders have been observed.

When the satisfaction with life scores of students have been examined according to their ages, although not statistically significant, it has been confirmed that students at the age group of 14-15 have lower scores than students at other age groups. This finding shows similarities with a study conducted by Kapikiran and Yagci in 2012. The mentioned research discloses the diversifying role of playing a musical instrument and attending a musical community on the teenagers' loneliness and life satisfaction; it has been solidly determined that the age factor has an influential role. This situation shows that the satisfaction with life level of students at their period of adolescence is lower.

When the satisfaction with life scores of students according to their grades have been analyzed, it has been observed that there is also a parallel relationship with the results of Civitci's research done in 2009. Accordingly, although statistically not significant, 8<sup>th</sup> grade students have lower satisfaction with life scores.

The research could not reveal any significant relationship between the life satisfaction level of the students and their musical instrument trainings. This indication is different than the results of an earlier study conducted by Kapikiran and Yagci in 2012. In their research, Kapikiran and Yagci identifies the positive effect of musical instrument training on satisfaction with life.

The research reveals that the satisfaction with life scores of students who take chorus classes are higher when compared with the students who do not. This shows parallelism with the results of a whole range of similar studies (Johnson, et al., 2013; Livesey, Morrison, Clift and Camic, 2012; Sole, Mercadal-Brotons, Gallego and Riera, 2010). Accordingly, it may easily be observed that taking chorus lessons has positive effects on students' life satisfaction.

As the easiest, most effective and economically advantageous education tool, chorus trainings socially, culturally and psychologically provide significant benefits for the individuals. Fundamentally being communal, chorus essentially supports the development of an individual with its educational, socializing and informative elements. It contributes in strengthening the students' social achievements, friendships, collaborations, responsibilities and communication skills (Yener, 2001). Therefore, it is thought that choral participation have positive effects on the satisfaction with life levels of middle school students who are in their first phase of adolescence. In this context, within their daily and academic lives, it is necessary to determine the factors which negatively affect life satisfaction levels of middle school students. While doing so, for the stated age group, practices that positively affect the satisfaction with life level should be carefully organized in a way in which those practices take place in their life.

Life satisfaction contains all dimensions of an individual's life and it may be defined as a degree which a person evaluates the entire quality of life and considers his life positively as a whole (Dagli & Baysal, 2016). Conducted studies show that chorus helps individuals generate various personally and socially pleasant outcomes (Adams, 2000; Bailey & Davidson, 2002; Yigit, 2001); and at the same time, it positively affects their social relations and level of participation in life. Musical education practices and correspondingly chorus studies which are performed during the very crucial period of middle school, contribute highly on a students' social, educational, cultural and economic relations and they help the students create, develop and tend towards their own taste of music (Senturk, 2001). For this reason, chorus education should definitely be provided in middle schools; execution of more efficient and influential choral participation should be ensured.

It has been observed that both in international and national areas, studies have been conducted on the relationship between individuals' personal and professional life satisfaction levels and their degree of exhaustion. However, it has been observed that these studies are mostly for identifying the factors that affect the life satisfaction of adults. However; since all of them are at the phase of shaping their future as healthy individuals, both in their personal lives and academic fields, the quality of middle school students' life satisfaction -who are in their first period of puberty- should be paid special attention to. Chorus education especially should be practiced as a training appliance for this age group due to the fact that it provides very significant learning outcomes from cultural, social and psychological aspects. For this reason, music teachers should ensure the participation of students to chorus lessons; by doing so, they would help them improve their self-sufficiency and life satisfaction level.

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