



Examining University Students' Positive Perceptions, Altruism, and Happiness Levels

Besra TAŞ BOLAT¹, M. Furkan TUNÇ²

¹ Faculty of Education, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Istanbul, Türkiye



0000-0001-5568-724X

² Faculty of Education, Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Istanbul, Türkiye



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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the mediating role of altruism in the effect of university students' positive perception levels on happiness. The study was designed based on a correlational survey model. The sample of the study consisted of 464 undergraduate students studying at various universities in Türkiye during the spring semester of the 2024-2025 academic year. Data were collected through an online survey administered to voluntary participants. The Positive Perception Scale, Altruism Scale, and Oxford Happiness Scale short form were used in the data collection process. The obtained data were analyzed using correlation analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM). The results showed a significant positive relationship between positive perception and happiness. Additionally, altruism was found to play a partial mediating role in the relationship between positive perception and happiness. These findings, when evaluated within the framework of positive psychology theory, indicate that developing positive perceptions and encouraging altruistic behaviors are important in increasing university students' levels of happiness.

Keywords:

Positive perception, altruism, happiness, university students, positive psychology, mediator variable

1. Introduction

Identifying psychological factors that support university students' mental well-being is crucial for both individual development and social solidarity. Within the framework of positive psychology, constructs such as positive perception and altruism are considered key variables contributing to life satisfaction. Positive perception, defined as a cognitive framework encompassing an individual's positive evaluations of themselves and their environment (Ingrand et al., 2018), is a fundamental element that directly supports psychological well-being.

Research has shown that positive perception is strongly related to happiness, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being (Enns et al., 2016; Ickson & Pines, 2013). A study conducted by Lambert, Passmore, and Joshanloo (2018) found that university students' positive perceptions increased after undergoing a positive psychology intervention program and that this increased both hedonic (pleasure-based) and eudaimonic (meaning-based) happiness. The same study also observed a decrease in students' belief that "happiness is fragile," indicating that a positive outlook provides lasting emotional benefits (Lambert et al., 2018). Positive perceptions were found to be related not only to emotional states but also to levels of academic and social engagement (Gillen et al., 2011). Durón-Ramos and Vázquez (2018) stated that university students' "orientation toward happiness" has a direct and significant effect on academic participation. These orientations are closely related to students' tendency to approach life events with positive perceptions (Durón-Ramos and Vázquez, 2018). Similarly, Wu et al. (2009) stated in their research that positive perceptions (such as optimism, self-efficacy, and self-

¹ Corresponding author's address: Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Istanbul, Türkiye

e-mail: besra.tas@izu.edu.tr

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development) directly increase life satisfaction, and that this relationship also operates through mediators such as self-esteem and value perception.

Happiness is a subjective indicator of well-being defined by an individual's satisfaction with life and frequent experience of positive emotions (Steptoe, 2019). Studies in the field of positive psychology reveal that happiness is a multifaceted construct with not only individual but also social, emotional, and cognitive dimensions (Carr, 2013; Compton & Hoffman, 2019; Kristjánsson, 2010). Research conducted specifically on university students shows that happiness is significantly related to psychosocial variables such as altruism and positive perception (Gökler et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2015; Silva & Figueiredo-Braga, 2018; Yoo & Kim, 2019). Indeed, studies have revealed that altruistic behaviors are positively related to happiness. For example, Meyzari Ali & Bozorgi (2016) stated in their study that values such as altruism, empathy, and social responsibility significantly predict university students' happiness levels. Similarly, it has been stated that the level of altruism, especially its sub-dimensions such as "helping others" and "providing emotional support," is positively related to subjective happiness (Azazzy, 2022). Individuals with a positive outlook interpret events more optimistically and cope more effectively with adversity (Bonnet et al., 2015). Wea and Hamu (2023) stated that altruistic behaviors, along with empathy and positive social relationships, increase happiness levels and that this relationship is strengthened through a positive outlook. It has been found that students' perceived social support (especially family and friend support) positively affects their altruism levels, which in turn has an indirect effect on happiness (Cebeci & Şingir, 2022).

Positive psychology is an approach that focuses on the individual's strengths and positive emotions (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Within this approach, prosocial behaviors such as altruism create positive effects for both the individual and their environment. Research has shown that altruistic behaviors among university students are positively related to their levels of happiness (Ali & Bozorgi, 2016; Azazzy, 2022). In particular, altruistic behaviors such as helping others have been found to support happiness levels by increasing feelings of meaning and life satisfaction in individuals (Feigin et al., 2014; Kurzban et al., 2015). Altruism is defined as the behavior of helping others without personal gain and has become an important research topic in positive psychology, social psychology, and developmental psychology (Post, 2014). Examining this behavior in the context of university students is noteworthy in terms of both individual and societal benefits. There is strong evidence that altruistic behaviors support an individual's psychological well-being and increase life satisfaction. For example, a study conducted on university students revealed that altruistic behaviors, empathy, and a sense of social responsibility are significantly related to happiness (Ali & Bozorgi, 2016). Specifically, a study conducted with university students studying special education found a positive correlation between altruism level and subjective happiness (Azazzy, 2022). This study also suggests that there may be differences between the different components of altruism (helping, prioritizing, emotional support) based on gender and cultural factors. These findings suggest that altruism is not only an individual tendency but is also shaped through social learning and cultural interactions. A more recent study conducted from a sociological perspective revealed that university students generally perceive the concept of altruism as "normative and virtuous behavior." According to the research results, even if students do not define themselves as altruistic, they exhibit behaviors such as helping others, supporting the elderly, and participating in social responsibility projects in their daily lives (Antonova, 2024). These results show that altruism can be shaped by social norms rather than individual values.

The Positive Psychology Theory has been used as a basis to explain the relationships between variables. This theory argues that positive emotions, virtuous behaviors (such as altruism), strong social relationships, and meaningful life goals are the key determinants in developing an individual's subjective well-being (happiness, life satisfaction, etc.) (Seligman, 2011). Altruism is defined within the positive psychology approach as internally motivated behaviors directed more toward the well-being of others than oneself, and it supports an individual's subjective well-being through internal rewards (e.g., belonging, meaning, happiness) (Swank et al., 2013). Overall, findings in the literature show that university students' levels of happiness are significantly related to social values (altruism) and cognitive appraisals (positive perception) as well as individual factors (Aknin & Whillans, 2021; Ricard, 2017; Weiss-Sidi & Riemer, 2023). Considering these variables together may contribute to the development of holistic approaches that support students' psychological well-being. Unlike previous studies that examined altruism as an outcome of happiness, this study conceptualizes altruism as a mediator linking positive perception to happiness.

In conclusion, positive perception appears to be a critical variable affecting university students' happiness levels, altruism tendencies, and psychological resilience. However, it is noteworthy that studies examining the relationships between positive perception, altruism, and happiness within a single comprehensive model and using mediation analysis are limited in the Turkish context. Existing studies generally address the bilateral relationships between these variables and do not sufficiently test the social-motivational mechanisms (e.g., altruism) that explain the effect of positive perception on happiness. This deficiency creates a theoretical and practical knowledge gap regarding how psychological well-being can be enhanced among university youth. The aim of this study is to examine the mediating role of altruism in the effect of positive perception on happiness among university students, thus both filling the missing link in positive psychology literature and providing scientific support for psycho-educational programs aimed at increasing student well-being in the university environment.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Model

This study examined the relationship between altruism levels and the correlation between university students' positive perceptions and happiness levels using the correlational survey method. The correlational survey model refers to a survey approach that aims to determine the existence of co-variation between two or more variables. In the correlational survey model, it is attempted to determine whether the variables co-vary and, if so, how they do so (Karasar, 2011).

2.2. Research Sample

Using convenience sampling, 8 forms were excluded from the dataset because their Z-scores were outliers ($|Z| > 3.29$) among the responses of 472 university students who answered the online survey forms. The 464 forms deemed suitable for analysis in the study were included in the dataset. This method selects cases that are easily accessible and inexpensive (Benoot et al., 2016). It is the most commonly used sampling strategy. It is used in both qualitative and quantitative studies (Suri, 2011).

Of the 464 university students who participated in the study, 73.5% (341) were female and 26.5% (123) were male. When examining the age distribution, 53.0% (246) of the participants were aged 18-20, 37.3% (173) were aged 21-23, 5.0% (23) were aged 24-26, and 4.7% (22) were aged 27 and above. In terms of grade level distribution, 46.1% (214) are first-year students, 23.1% (107) are second-year students, 15.5% (72) are third-year students, and 15.3% (71) are fourth-year students. 73.1% (339) of participants study at a public university, while 26.9% (125) study at a private university. In terms of parental marital status, the vast majority of students, 93.1% (432), stated that their parents were married, while 6.9% (32) stated that their parents were divorced or separated. When asked who they lived with, 62.9% (292) stated that they lived with their family, 22.2% (103) lived with friends, 5.8% (27) lived alone, 4.3% (20) lived in dormitories, 3.0% (14) lived with relatives, 1.3% (6) lived with a spouse or partner, and 0.4% (2) selected other options.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

Happiness Scale: The scale was developed by Demirci and Ekşi (2018) and consists of a single-dimensional structure with six items designed to determine individuals' levels of happiness. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) revealed that the scale's eigenvalue was 3.248, accounting for 54.129% of the overall variance; item factor loadings varied from .59 to .78. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed on two separate samples, and in both analyses, the scale's fit indices were found to be acceptable (e.g., CFI = .99, RMSEA = .061). In terms of criterion-related validity, the Happiness Scale was found to show significant positive and negative correlations with the PERMA model. The Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was calculated as .83, and the test-retest reliability was .73. The corrected item-total score correlations ranged from .45 to .65. There were no reverse items in the scale.

Altruism Scale: In the study, the Altruism Scale developed by Ümmet et al. (2013) was used to determine individuals' levels of altruism. The scale has a multidimensional structure aimed at measuring individuals' tendencies to help in different contexts. This scale, consisting of a total of 38 items, comprises seven subdimensions: Participation in Voluntary Activities, Financial Assistance, Assistance in Traumatic Situations, Assistance to the Elderly/Sick, Assistance Based on Physical Strength, Assistance in the Education Process,

and Assistance Arising from Feelings of Closeness. Each sub-dimension is represented by specific items (e.g., the Financial Assistance sub-dimension is measured by items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 21). The scale has no reverse items, and a higher altruism level is indicated by a higher score.

Positive Perception Scale: The confirmatory factor analysis of the scale developed by Icekson and Pines (2013) and adapted into Turkish by Akin and Kaya (2015) found that the model consisting of 8 items and three subdimensions (positive perception of the past, positive perception of human nature, and positive perception of the self) fits well. ($\chi^2 = 24.28$, $df = 16$, $RMSEA = .045$, $IFI = .99$, $CFI = .99$, $GFI = .98$, $SRMR = .032$). The scale's internal consistency reliability coefficients were determined to be .80 for the positive perception of the past sub-dimension, .71 for the positive perception of human nature sub-dimension, and .75 for the positive perception of self sub-dimension. The scale's corrected item-total correlations fell between .55 and .65. These findings support the notion that the Turkish scale is a legitimate and trustworthy assessment instrument.

2.4. Data Analysis

The personal information form, Positive Perception Scale, Altruism Scale, and Happiness Scale prepared for use in the study were converted into an online form by the researcher and presented to participants via Google Forms. The link to the form containing the data collection tools was distributed to university students, particularly undergraduate students from different faculties, via various social media applications, along with an explanatory message containing brief information about the purpose of the research, after the research received ethical committee approval. Participants voluntarily completed the forms; only valid data was included in the analysis after checking for missing or incorrect data. The responses obtained were transferred to the SPSS 26 program, and statistical analyses were performed.

The analysis covered a total of 464 university students. The software programs SPSS 26 and AMOS 24 were used to conduct the statistical analyses in this study, with a significance level of .05. The analyses were carried out sequentially. To determine whether the data distribution was normal, descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis values were analyzed in the first stage. Additionally, analyses were performed to investigate the relationships between variables and to assess potential multicollinearity issues, including Pearson correlation and VIF and tolerance values.

In the second stage, the relationships between positive perception (independent variable), altruism (mediator), and happiness (dependent variable) were analyzed using the path analysis approach proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). The structural model was evaluated to test the assumed mediating effect.

To evaluate model fit, fit indices such as RMSEA, SRMR, CFI, NFI, IFI, and TLI were computed. Additionally, the significance of the indirect effect of the mediator variable (altruism) was evaluated using bootstrap analysis with 5000 resamples and a 95% confidence interval (CI). The results supported the partial mediation model, indicating that altruism partially explained the effect of positive perception on happiness.

Descriptive statistical results about altruism, positive perception, and happiness ratings derived from the study's data collection instruments are presented in this section. It also examines whether these scores show a significant difference according to the gender and education levels of the university students participating in the study. The findings are presented and interpreted based on intergroup comparisons.

The descriptive statistical results for the scores obtained from the data collection tools used in the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive findings from data obtained using data collection tools

| Variables | N | M | SD | Skewness | Kurtosis | Tolerance | VIF | α | Items |
|---------------------|-----|------|-------|----------|----------|-----------|-------|----------|-------|
| Altruism | 464 | 3.76 | .690 | -.243 | -.268 | .807 | 1.239 | .95 | 38 |
| Positive Perception | 464 | 4.96 | 1.067 | -.055 | -.421 | .807 | 1.239 | .86 | 6 |
| Happiness | 464 | 3.93 | .741 | -.222 | -.747 | – | – | .85 | 8 |

Below are descriptive statistics for the main variables that were part of the study. For the altruism variable, based on data obtained from 464 participants, the mean was calculated as 3.76 and the standard deviation as 0.690. The skewness value of the distribution was found to be -0.243, and the kurtosis value was -0.268, indicating that altruism scores are close to a normal distribution.

The scores obtained for the positive perception variable were calculated as an average of 4.96 and a standard deviation of 1.067. The skewness value is -0.055, and the kurtosis value is -0.421. These findings indicate that the positive perception distribution is symmetric and close to normal.

The scores for the happiness variable range from 2 to 5, with a mean of 3.93 and a standard deviation of 0.741. The skewness value for this variable is -0.222, and the kurtosis value is -0.747. The obtained skewness and kurtosis values support that the distribution for all variables is quite close to a normal distribution and that parametric tests are applicable, and it can be said that these values are normally distributed (Hair et al., 2013). Since the scores are normally distributed, the obtained data was analyzed using parametric tests.

When examining the descriptive statistics for the variables used in the study, it is seen that the mean values of all variables are at a moderate level, while the standard deviations show a low to moderate distribution. Since the skewness and kurtosis values are within the ± 1 range, it can be said that the distribution of the variables is close to a normal distribution.

Furthermore, in the analysis conducted to assess the risk of multicollinearity among the research variables, the tolerance value was determined to be 0.807 and the VIF value was 1.239 for both variables. These values are within acceptable limits in terms of multicollinearity (tolerance > 0.10, VIF < 5). Therefore, it can be said that there is no multicollinearity problem between the variables in the model.

The analysis revealed that all scales exhibited high levels of internal consistency. In particular, the $\alpha = .95$ value for the altruism scale indicates a very high level of reliability. The $\alpha = .86$ and $\alpha = .85$ values obtained for the positive perception and happiness scales are also well above the .70 threshold commonly accepted in psychological measurement tools, confirming the reliability of the scales. These results support the consistency and reliability of the measurement tools used in data analysis. Model fit was evaluated using CFI (>.90), TLI (>.90), RMSEA (>.08), and SRMR (>.08).

2.5. Ethical

With decision number 2024/09, the Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University Ethics Committee granted ethical permission for this study.

3. Findings

Table 2 presents the t-test results regarding gender differences in altruism, positive perception, and happiness.

Table 2. Gender Differences in Happiness and Altruism

| Variables | Groups | N | M | SD | Sh \bar{x} | t | df | p |
|---------------------|--------|-----|------|-------|--------------|--------|-----|--------|
| Altruism | Male | 123 | 3.63 | .713 | .064 | -2.427 | 462 | .881 |
| | Female | 341 | 3.81 | .677 | .037 | | | |
| Positive Perception | Male | 123 | 5.05 | 1.080 | .097 | 1.111 | 462 | .692 |
| | Female | 341 | 4.93 | 1.063 | .058 | | | |
| Happiness | Male | 123 | 3.86 | .818 | .074 | -1.230 | 462 | .027** |
| | Female | 341 | 3.96 | .711 | .038 | | | |

Altruism levels do not differ significantly by gender ($p > 0.05$). This result indicates that the altruism levels of female and male students are statistically similar. Positive perception levels do not show a significant difference according to gender ($p > 0.05$). This result shows that the positive perception levels of female and male students are statistically similar. Happiness levels show a statistically significant difference according to gender ($p < 0.05$). This result shows that the positive perception levels of female and male students are statistically similar. The following correlations between the studied variables were found by Pearson correlation analysis.

Table 3. Relationships Among Positive Perception, Altruism, and Happiness

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---------------------|--------|--------|---|
| Altruism | 1 | | |
| Positive Perception | .440** | 1 | |
| Happiness | .417** | .599** | 1 |

**The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Altruism and positive perception were shown to be positively and significantly correlated ($r = .440$, moderate effect, $p < .01$). This finding indicates that individuals with high positive perception also exhibit increased altruistic tendencies. Happiness and Positive Perception were found to be positively and significantly correlated ($r = .599$, strong impact, $p < .01$). This suggests that more altruistic individuals may also have higher levels of happiness. A positive, strong, and significant relationship was observed between Positive Perception and Happiness ($r = 0.599$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indicates that individuals' positive evaluations of their environment and life events can significantly increase their happiness. All relationships are statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). These results reveal strong positive relationships between the variables examined in the study and provide a suitable basis for constructing structural models. The results of the mediation role analysis of the altruism variable in the effect of positive perception levels on happiness levels in the single mediation model, which is the main hypothesis of the study, using the Bootstrap method are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *The Mediating Role of Altruism Between Positive Perception and Happiness*

| Relationship Between Variables | B | S.E. | p | %95 Confidence Interval | | R ² |
|--------------------------------------|--------|------|-----|-------------------------|-------|----------------|
| | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| Total Impact (c) | .416** | .028 | .00 | .361 | .471 | .39 |
| Positive Perception → Altruism (a) | .284** | .027 | .00 | .229 | .338 | .19 |
| Positive Perception → Happiness (c') | .357** | .028 | .00 | .302 | .402 | .39 |
| Altruism → Happiness (b) | .205** | .043 | .00 | .117 | .296 | .39 |

B: Unstandardized Regression Coefficient, S.E.: Standard Error, ** $p < .001$, $n = 464$, $k = 5000$ Bootstrap Samples, R²: Variance Value

As shown in Table 4, the total effect (c path) of the independent variable, positive perception, on happiness was found to be significant and positive ($B = .416$, $S.E. = .028$, 95% CI [.297, .416], $p < .001$). This result indicates that individuals with higher levels of positive perception tend to report greater happiness. In addition, the effect of positive perception on the mediator variable, altruism (a path), was also significant ($B = .284$, $S.E. = .027$, 95% CI [.229, .338], $p < .001$). This finding suggests that individuals with higher positive perception engage in more altruistic behaviors.

Regarding the effect of the mediator variable on the dependent variable, altruism was found to significantly predict happiness (b path) ($B = .205$, $S.E. = .043$, 95% CI [.117, .296], $p < .001$). Furthermore, after including the mediator in the model, the mediation analysis showed that altruism partially mediated the relationship between positive perception and happiness. While the direct effect remained significant ($B = .357$, $p < .001$), the indirect effect was also significant ($B = .059$, 95% CI [.032, .084], $p < .001$). These results suggest that the association between happiness and positive perception is partially mediated by compassion. In total, 39% of the variance in happiness was explained by the model ($R^2 = .39$). Figure 1 presents the model with both the direct effect of positive perception on happiness and the indirect effect through altruism, along with the unstandardized regression coefficients. In conclusion, the model shows that positive perception explains the effect on happiness both directly and indirectly through altruism in a meaningful way, and the variables in the structural model explain 39% of the variance in happiness levels. Figure 1 shows the model and unstandardized regression coefficients for the direct effect of positive perception on happiness and the indirect effect of altruism as a mediator in the relationship between positive perception and happiness.

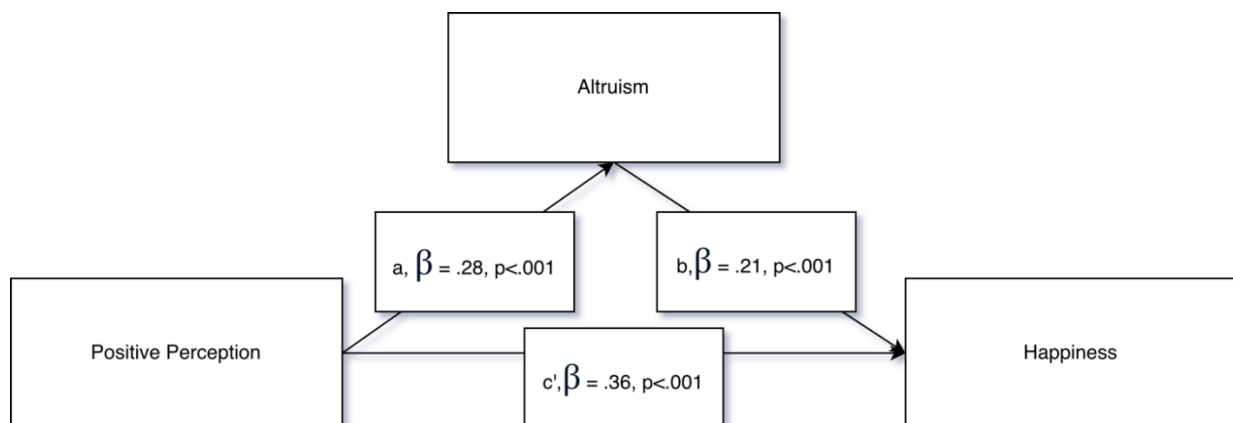


Figure 1. *Structural Equation Model Showing the Mediating Role of Altruism between Positive Perception and Happiness among University Students.*

The research model in Figure 1 illustrates that positive perception has a significant indirect effect ($a \times b$) on happiness through altruism, indicating that altruism serves as a partial mediator in this relationship. Examining the paths in the model, the predictive effect of positive perception on altruism (a path) was significant ($B = .284$; $p < .001$), and the effect of altruism on happiness (b path) was also significant ($B = .205$; $p < .001$). The product of these two paths yielded a significant indirect effect, demonstrating that positive perception influences happiness through altruism.

In addition, the direct effect of positive perception on happiness (c' path) was also found to be statistically significant ($B = .058$; $p < .001$). These results indicate that altruism functions as a partial mediator in the relationship between positive perception and happiness. The indirect effect value in the model suggests that an individual with one unit higher positive perception is likely to have a happiness level approximately .058 units higher, as their altruism also increases. In other words, individuals with higher positive perception are more likely to enhance their happiness by engaging in altruistic behaviors. This highlights how positive cognitive evaluations can contribute to subjective well-being through prosocial behaviors.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The study has revealed a positive, strong, and meaningful relationship between positive perception and happiness. This finding shows that individuals' positive assessments of their environment and life events can significantly increase their happiness. Similar studies in this field support this study and reveal that positive perception is strongly related to happiness, life satisfaction, and subjective well-being (Enns et al., 2016; Icekson and Pines, 2013). Another study found that positive perception is related not only to emotional states but also to levels of academic and social participation (Gillen et al., 2011). Durón-Ramos and Vázquez (2018), who examined the domain of happiness, showed that university students' "orientation toward happiness" directly and significantly affected academic participation. These orientations were found to be closely related to students' tendencies to approach life events with positive perceptions (Durón-Ramos and Vázquez, 2018). In a similar study, Wu, Tsai, and Chen (2009) found that positive perceptions (such as optimism, self-efficacy, and self-development) directly increased life satisfaction and that this relationship also operated through mediators such as self-esteem and perceived value.

Altruism and positive perception were shown to have a positive, moderate, and substantial association when university students' degrees of positive perception and altruism were examined. This finding shows that individuals with high positive perception also exhibit increased altruistic tendencies.

As a result of this study, a positive, moderate, and significant relationship was found between altruism and happiness. This suggests that more altruistic individuals may have higher levels of happiness. Does positive perception meaningfully predict university students' happiness levels through altruism? According to the analysis of the effect of the independent variable on the mediating variable (path a) in Table 5, positive perception was found to positively and meaningfully predict altruism. The findings indicate that individuals with high positive perception exhibit higher levels of altruistic behavior. In the study, the analysis of the effect of the mediating variable on the dependent variable (path b) revealed that altruism positively and significantly predicts happiness. This finding shows that as individuals exhibit altruistic behavior, their happiness levels increase. It is also important to interpret these findings within the Turkish cultural context. In collectivist cultures like Türkiye, altruism and social harmony are highly valued virtues. Therefore, the link between positive perception and happiness might be strengthened by the social approval and connectedness derived from altruistic acts, distinct from individualistic Western contexts.

Furthermore, in this analysis, where the mediating variable was included in the model, the direct effect of positive self-perception on happiness (path c) was also found to be statistically significant. In this context, altruism was determined to play a partial mediating role. This partial mediation suggests that while altruistic behavior enhances happiness, additional mechanisms such as optimism, social connectedness, or gratitude may also transmit the effects of positive perception to happiness. When we examine similar studies in this field, some studies support this study. Research shows that altruistic behaviors are positively related to university students' happiness levels (Ali and Bozorgi, 2016; Azazzy, 2022). Feigin and colleagues (2014) found that altruistic behaviors, particularly helping others, increase individuals' sense of meaning and life satisfaction, thereby supporting their happiness levels. Research on university students shows that altruistic

behavior, empathy, and a sense of social responsibility are significantly related to happiness (Ali and Bozorgi, 2016).

When examining altruism, positive perception, and happiness levels by gender, no significant difference was found between genders. Azazzy (2022) found in their research that there may be differences between genders and cultural factors in different components of altruism (helping, prioritizing, and emotional support). Women were found to be more successful in “showing love and sympathy towards others,” while men were found to be higher in behaviors such as “helping others” and “altruistic participation.” The study revealed that men's subjective happiness levels were higher than women's.

There are a number of limitations to this study. First, it is difficult to infer causal correlations between happiness, benevolence, and positive perception due to the cross-sectional design. Second, there is a chance of social desirability bias because the data were gathered by self-report measures. Future studies utilizing longitudinal designs and diverse data collection methods would provide more robust evidence regarding the direction of these relationships.

5. Recommendations

This study, titled “The Mediating Role of Altruism in the Relationship Between Positive Perception and Happiness,” reveals that altruism acts as a partial mediating variable in the relationship between positive perception and happiness. The results show that individuals with high positive perception are more likely to increase their happiness levels by exhibiting altruistic behaviors. This demonstrates that positive cognitive evaluations contribute to subjective well-being through social behaviors. Similar studies show that university students' happiness levels are significantly related to social values (altruism) and cognitive evaluations (positive perception) as well as individual factors (Aknin and Whillans, 2021; Ricard, 2017; Weiss-Sidi and Riemer, 2023). This study also revealed that positive perception significantly explains the effect of happiness directly and indirectly through altruism.

Specifically, university administrations could organize regular volunteer service programs or peer-support activities. Engaging students in such structured altruistic initiatives can serve as a practical channel to enhance their psychological well-being.

To increase university students' happiness, psychoeducational programs aimed at developing positive perception (e.g., gratitude, positive reframing, hope training) should be promoted. Encouraging students' participation in altruistic behaviors (volunteering, aid activities, and social responsibility projects) can support both their individual happiness levels and social connectedness. Considering the indirect effect of altruism on happiness, group work based on social benefit can be integrated into psychological counseling processes. Promoting participation in social responsibility projects based on community service through student groups at universities can increase both students' social skills and subjective well-being. Positive perceptions and altruistic tendencies can be supported by integrating courses that support individual and social development (such as positive psychology, ethics, and volunteerism practices) into the curriculum. Since the findings of this study are based only on a sample of university students, generalizability should be increased by testing similar structures in different age groups and professional fields (e.g., healthcare workers, teachers). Different mediation models can be established according to the types of altruism (e.g., volunteering-based vs. emotionally-based helping behaviors). In future studies, the direction of causal relationships can be tested more robustly using longitudinal or experimental research designs.

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