



"Free Spirit, Happy Individual": The Moderating Role of Perceived Freedom in Leisure on the Relationship Between Resilience and Happiness

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Conflicts of Interest: The author(s) has no conflict of interest to declare.

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Ethical Statement: It is declared that scientific and ethical principles have been followed while carrying out and writing this study and that all the sources used have been properly cited.

(Date Of Received): 13.09.2024 (Date of Acceptance): 08.07.2025 (Date of Publication): 31.08.2025

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Abstract

Although it is known that perceived freedom in leisure has various psychological benefits, there are very limited studies that present the relationships between these benefits as a theoretical model and examine them in depth. In this context, the aim of the study is to investigate the moderating role of perceived freedom in leisure on the relationship between resilience and happiness. The study group of the correlational survey model research consisted of 674 university students, 345 female and 329 male, selected by simple convenience sampling method (Meanage=21,50±1.86). "Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale (PFLS)", "Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)" and "Oxford Happiness Scale - Short Form (OHQ-SF)" were used to collect data in the study. After testing the basic assumptions of parametric tests, Pearson correlation analysis and confirmatory factor analysis with SPSS AMOS 24 for the reliability and validity of the measurements were performed and it was found that the measurement model fit statistics were within acceptable limits ($\chi^2 = 1530.55$, $df = 319$, $\chi^2/df = 4.79$; GFI = 90, NFI = 90; CFI = 91 and RMSEA = 0.075). In order to test the hypotheses created within the scope of the study, a structural equation model was created and analyses were performed using the SPSS Process Macro extension (Model 1). The moderating role of perceived freedom in leisure on the effect of resilience on happiness level was found to be significant ($\beta = 0,13$, $p < 0,01$, $t = 2,25$, [CI = 0,01, 0,25]). When the perceived freedom in leisure is high, the effect of resilience on happiness level is higher ($\beta = 0,45$, $p < 0,01$, $t = 8,85$, [CI = 0,35, 0,55]). A high level of perceived freedom in leisure revealed that the effect of resilience on the level of happiness would be higher. Increasing the level of perceived freedom in leisure in young people has led to the idea that it can make significant contributions to their psychological health.

Keywords: Perceived Freedom in Leisure, Resilience, Happiness, Moderating Role, Psychological Health

Özet

“Özgür Ruh, Mutlu Birey”: Psikolojik Sağlık ve Mutluluk İlişkisinde Serbest Zamanda Algılanan Özgürlüğün Düzenleyici Rolü

Serbest zamanda algılanan özgürlüğün spesifik psikolojik faydalarının olduğu bilinse de bu faydalar arasındaki ilişkileri kuramsal bir model olarak ortaya koyup derinlemesine inceleyen çalışmaların varlığı oldukça sınırlıdır. Bu bağlamda araştırmanın amacı, psikolojik sağlık ve mutluluk arasındaki ilişkide serbest zamanda algılanan özgürlüğün düzenleyici rolünün araştırılmasıdır. İlişkisel tarama modelindeki araştırmanın çalışma grubunu kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilen 345 kadın ve 329 erkek olmak üzere toplam 674 (Ortaş=21,50±1.86) üniversite öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada veri toplamak amacıyla “Serbest Zamanda Algılanan Özgürlük Ölçeği (SZAÖ)”, “Kısa Psikolojik Sağlık Ölçeği (KPSÖ)” ve “Oxford Mutluluk Ölçeği – Kısa Formu (OMÖ-K)” kullanılmıştır. Parametrik testlerin temel varsayımlarının test edilmesinden sonra, Pearson korelasyon analizi ve ölçümlerin güvenilirliği ve geçerliliği için SPSS AMOS 24 ile doğrulayıcı faktör analizi yapılmış ve ölçüm modeli uyum istatistiklerinin kabul edilebilir sınırlar içinde olduğu tespit edilmiştir ($\chi^2 = 1530,55$, $df = 319$, $\chi^2/df = 4,79$; GFI = 90, NFI = 90; CFI = 91 ve RMSEA = 0.075). Çalışma kapsamında oluşturulan hipotezleri test etmek amacıyla yapısal eşitlik modeli oluşturulmuş ve SPSS Process Makro uzantısında (Model 1) kullanılarak analizler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Psikolojik sağlamlığın, mutluluk düzeyi üzerindeki etkisinde serbest zamanda algılanan özgürlüğün düzenleyici rolünün anlamlı olduğu saptanmıştır ($\beta = 0,13$, $p < 0,01$, $t = 2,25$, [CI = 0,01, 0,25]). Serbest zamanda algılanan özgürlüğün yüksek olması durumunda, psikolojik sağlamlığın mutluluk düzeyine etkisi daha fazla olmaktadır ($\beta = 0,45$, $p < 0,01$, $t = 8,85$, [CI = 0,35, 0,55]). Serbest zamanda algılanan özgürlüğün yüksek düzeyde olması psikolojik sağlamlığın mutluluk düzeyine etkisinin daha fazla olacağını ortaya koymuştur. Gençlerde serbest zamanda algılanan özgürlük düzeylerini artırmak, psikolojik sağlıklarına önemli katkılar yapabileceği fikrini doğurmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Serbest Zamanda Algılanan Özgürlük, Psikolojik Sağlık, Mutluluk, Düzenleyici Rol, Psikolojik Sağlık

INTRODUCTION

The mental health of young people around the world has been deteriorating. In particular, 39% of young people between the ages of 18 and 24 are known to experience severe depression, stress and anxiety. Also, emotional well-being is deteriorating (32). Furthermore, the World Happiness Report (51) indicated that young people are becoming increasingly unhappy due to the conditions brought about by living conditions. From this perspective, leisure activities assume a significant value in overcoming increasing psychological health problems and negative emotions (44). Indeed, leisure activities play a pivotal role in the maintenance of psychological health (4,43).

Leisure is the individual's orientation of preferences in freedom without physical environment and cultural constraints. In this way, individuals create a personally and intuitively valuable belief base (19). Perceived freedom has an important place in creating this foundation (7,27). The concept of perceived freedom, which is widely acknowledged as a crucial element influencing the leisure experience, has been defined as the perceived state that emerges because of one's own choice (34). In this context, individuals who experience perceived freedom in leisure activities exhibit disparate behavioral patterns (1). Those who experience high levels of perceived freedom in leisure activities tend to view themselves as competent and in control during participation in leisure activities. In contrast, those with lower levels of perceived freedom tend to feel a sense of helplessness and rely on others for opportunities in leisure participation (15, 16). From these perspectives, it is suggested that perceived freedom in leisure has an important effect on the development of resilience (2) as well as positive emotional gains (6, 41, 40).

One of the major areas of positive psychology is resilience, which has been addressed from different perspectives in the literature (17). In general, resilience is the ability of individuals to recover from distressing situations and to adapt and react to stressful situations (31). From the perspective of positive psychology, it has been observed that individuals with high resilience have greater capacity to experience positive emotions, maintain an optimistic outlook, and receive social support (24). Furthermore, it has been suggested that

individuals with high resilience can view the activities they engage in as positive experiences, developing a strong and constructive identity, establishing close relationships with others, and developing social skills (38). Upon review of the literature, it has been observed that leisure activities have a significant impact on the achievement of these positive emotional gains and the development of individuals' resilience (9). In this context, the study conducted by Avcı Taşkıran and Gürbüz (2) on university staff revealed that increased perceived freedom in leisure increased resilience. This information is consistent with previous studies that have demonstrated a significant relationship between resilience and leisure (10, 45). It can be argued that to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this relationship, it is necessary to consider the concept of happiness, which is a fundamental component of resilience (29, 39).

The concept of happiness is examined in two basic components, hedonic and eudaimonic. While hedonic happiness is the acquisition of pleasure and avoidance of pain, eudaimonic happiness deals with feelings of meaning, purpose, and self-actualization from a deeper philosophy (37). Currently, the concept of happiness has been defined as a person's emotional and cognitive evaluations within the life they are living. A review of the literature reveals that happiness is related to many concepts (11, 12). Among these concepts, leisure is certainly one of the most essential. The relationship between leisure and happiness has a long history and is increasingly being studied (33, 48). Many studies have found that perceived freedom in leisure increases happiness levels and provides many psychological benefits to individuals (6, 47). In the study conducted by Serdar and Harmandar Demirel (40), a significant relationship was found between perceived freedom in leisure and happiness, and it was found that as perceived freedom in leisure increased, so did happiness levels. One of the other significant areas that happiness has been linked to is resilience (36, 39). When reviewing the studies in the literature, there are studies that report that individuals with high resilience also have high levels of happiness (5, 30). In their study on fear of COVID-19, Peker and Cengiz (36) found that resilience and coping with perceived stress reduced the effect of fear of COVID-19 on happiness and stress.

A review of the literature revealed that there is a significant relationship between perceived freedom in leisure and resilience (2), perceived freedom in leisure and happiness (6, 40; 47), resilience and happiness (5, 30, 36). In exploring the relationship between these three concepts, we found that there is a limited number of studies investigating the moderating role of perceived freedom in leisure in the effect of resilience on happiness levels. In this context, we suggest that exploring the effects of perceived freedom in leisure on these two positive psychology concepts in terms of a low, moderate and high-level moderating role may positively contribute to the deteriorating mental health and happiness levels of young people, thus increasing the importance of the research and filling this gap in the literature. Considering this information, the aim of the study is to investigate the moderating role of perceived freedom in leisure on the relationship between resilience and happiness. In parallel with the purpose of the research, the following hypotheses are sought to be answered;

1. H1: Resilience has a positive effect on levels of happiness.
2. H2: Perceived freedom in leisure has a positive effect on happiness.
3. H3: Perceived freedom in leisure has a moderating role in the effect of resilience on happiness. In other words, when perceived freedom in leisure is high, the effect of resilience on the level of happiness will be higher.

METHOD

Research Model

This research is quantitative research based on numerical data to test the hypotheses (35). Within the scope of the research, the correlational survey method, which is frequently used in quantitative research methods, was preferred. Correlational surveys are studies that try to reveal the relationship between two or more variables (20). Furthermore, a research model was created within the scope of the study. Structural equation model was used to determine the cause-and-effect relationships of the model. The structural equation model is a multivariate statistical method that combines both regression and factor analysis (8, 23). The model includes x) resilience (independent variable) w) perceived freedom in leisure (moderator variable) y)

happiness (dependent variable) variables. According to this information, the theoretical structure of the research is presented in Figure 1.

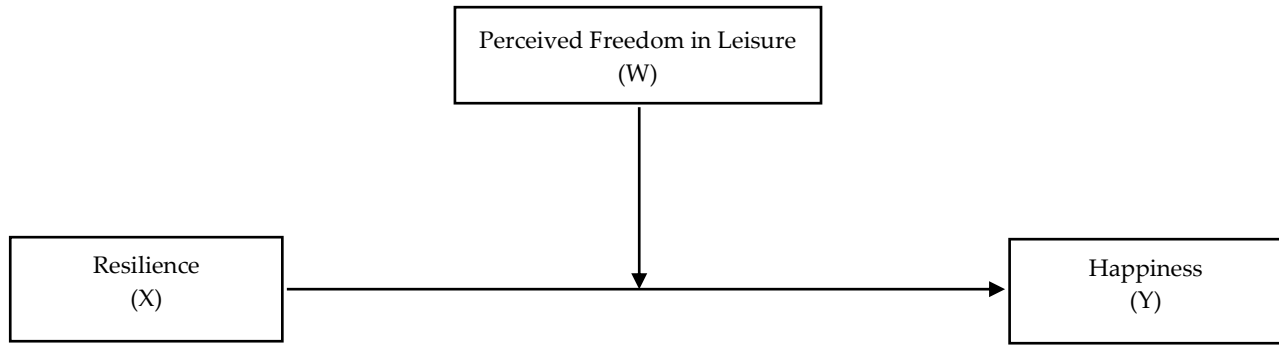


Figure 1. Research Model

Participants

The study group of this research consisted of a total of 674 university students, 345 females (51.2%) and 329 males (48.8%), selected using simple random sampling method (Meanage=21,50.06±1.86). Simple convenience sampling method refers to collecting data in the most convenient and accessible way until the sample size required for the research is reached (35). However, the income status of the participants was generally moderate (n=365, 54.2%). Most of the sample were active in their leisure (n=589, 87.4%), with the majority reporting occasional participation in physical activity (n=337, 50%).

Measures

Personal Information Form

The 'personal information form' designed by the researchers in line with the information obtained from the literature review consisted of independent variables such as age, gender, income status, participation in physical activity and preference for participation in leisure activities.

Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale (PFLS)

To measure the perceived freedom in leisure of individuals participating in the study, the Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale (PFLS) was used. The scale was developed by Witt and Ellis (50) and adapted into Turkish by Yerlisu Lapa and Kaas (26). The scale consists of 25 items and one factor. The items in the scale are ranked as (1) "Strongly Disagree" and (5) "Strongly Agree". The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated on the data collected within the scope of this research was found to be 0.95.

Brief Resilience Scale (BRS)

The Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), which was developed to measure the resilience levels of the individuals participating in the study, was developed by Smith et al. (42) and a Turkish validity and reliability study was conducted by Doğan (14). The scale consists of 6 items and one factor. The scale consists of 5-point Likert type, ranging from (1) "Not at all appropriate" to (5) "Completely appropriate". Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated on the data collected within the scope of this research was determined as 0.70.

Oxford Happiness Questionnaire – Short Form (OHQ-SF)

The Oxford Happiness Scale - Short Form (OHQ-SF) developed by Hills and Argyle (25) to determine the happiness levels of individuals was validated in Turkish by Doğan and Akıncı Çötök (13). The scale consists of 7 items and one factor. The scale is scored as (1) "Strongly Disagree" and (5) "Strongly Agree". The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient calculated on the data collected within the scope of this study was 0.72.

Ethical Approval and Institutional Permission

Prior to the collection of data within the framework of the study, the Ethics Committee of Kütahya Dumlupınar University (Decision numbered: 29/02/2024-275534) granted its approval. The necessary permissions for the use of the measurement tools used in the study were obtained by contacting the corresponding author. Volunteerism was considered as the basis for the individuals participating in the study.

Common Method Bias

As far as self-reported measures are concerned, we used Harman's one-factor test to check whether common method bias is a problem in our study by using SPSS factor analysis to determine the first eigenvalue from the data matrix. If the first eigenvalue explains most of the variance, then common method bias is a problem. The results show that the first eigenvalue explains 28.95% of the total variance (Critical threshold: 50%). Based on these results, it provides evidence that common method bias is unlikely to bias the results (22).

Data Analysis

The data collected within the scope of the research were analyzed using SPSS 23 software. In the analyses, firstly, skewness and kurtosis values were examined regarding the normality distribution of the data, and the range of +3 and -3 was taken as reference (28). After testing the basic assumptions of parametric tests, Pearson correlation analysis method was performed to determine the relationship between 'PFLS', 'BRS' and 'OHQ-SF' of the participants (35). In addition, confirmatory factor analysis was performed with SPSS AMOS 24 for the reliability and validity of the measurements, and it was determined that the measurement model fit statistics were within acceptable limits ($\chi^2 = 1530,55$, $df = 319$, $\chi^2/df = 4,79$; GFI = 90, NFI = 90; CFI = 91 and RMSEA = 0.075) (49). Furthermore, Cronbach's alphas internal consistency coefficients of the measurement tools used in the study were determined and found to vary between 0.72 and 0.95. These values are above acceptable levels (21). After all conditions regarding our research model were met, SPSS Process macro (Model 1) was used to test the moderating role of perceived freedom in leisure in the effect of resilience on happiness level. 5000 Bootstrap samples and confidence interval (CI) 95% were determined. As a result of the bootstrap analysis, the lower and upper confidence interval (CI) values do not include the value of 0 (zero), indicating that the moderating effect is significant. While operationalizing low, moderate and high levels of change seeking, 16th, 50th and 84th percentiles of the distribution were used (23).

FINDINGS

Table 1. Distribution of the Scale Scores (N=674)

Scale	Item	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	α
PFLS	25	674	1	5	3,81	0,63	-0,72	1,58	0,95
BRS	6	674	1	5	3,67	0,62	-0,62	1,76	0,70
OHQ-SF	7	674	1	5	3,49	0,71	-0,29	-0,19	0,72

Note: Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale (PFLS), Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), Oxford Happiness Questionnaire – Short Form (OHQ-SF).

When the data in Table 1 were examined, it was determined that the mean scores of the scales showed a normal distribution in the range of ± 3 (28). However, the mean score obtained from PFLS (mean = 3,81), the mean score obtained from BRS (mean = 3,67) and finally, the mean of the total scores obtained from OHQ-SF (mean = 3,49) were determined.

Table 2. Findings Related to Correlation Analysis

Scale	PFLS	BRS	OHQ-SF
PFLS	1		
BRS	0,142**	1	
OHQ-SF	0,260**	0,365**	1

Note: * = $p < 0,05$; ** = $p < 0,01$ Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale (PFLS), Brief Resilience Scale (BRS), Oxford Happiness Questionnaire – Short Form (OHQ-SF).

Pearson correlation analysis results are presented in Table 3. According to the results of the analyses, a statistically significant relationship was found between PFLS, BRS and OHS-S ($p < 0.01$). Firstly, PFLS and BRS had a significant positive relationship ($r = 0,142$, $p < 0,01$). Secondly, there was a significant positive correlation

between PFLS and OHQ-SF ($r=0,260$, $p<0,01$). Finally, there was a significant positive correlation between BRS and OHQ-SF ($r=0,365$, $p<0,01$).

Table 3. Regression Analysis Results Demonstrating the Moderating Effect					
Variable	β	SE	t	C.I.	p
Constant	3.483	.025	138.8	[3.434, 3.532]	0.00
BRS (X)	.3644	.047	8.964	[.2846, .4442]	0.00
PFLS (W)	.2565	.040	6.341	[.1771, .3359]	0.00
X.W	.1388	.061	2.258	[.0181, .2595]	0.02

R=.42	R ² =.18
F(3, 670)= 50.25	p=0,000

Note: Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale (PFLS), Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) , Standard Error (SE), Confidence Interval (CI)

According to the data in Table 3, it was observed that all predictor variables included in the regression analysis explained approximately 18% ($R^2=.18$) of the change in happiness level. It was found that resilience ($\beta = 0,36$, $p < 0,01$, $t = 8,96$, $[CI = 0,28, 0,44]$) and perceived freedom in leisure ($\beta = 0,25$, $p < 0,01$, $t = 6,34$, $[CI = 0,17, 0,33]$) had positive and significant effects on happiness level. Furthermore, the moderating role of perceived freedom in leisure in the effect of resilience on happiness level was found to be significant ($\beta = 0,13$, $p < 0,01$, $t = 2,25$, $[CI = 0,01, 0,25]$).

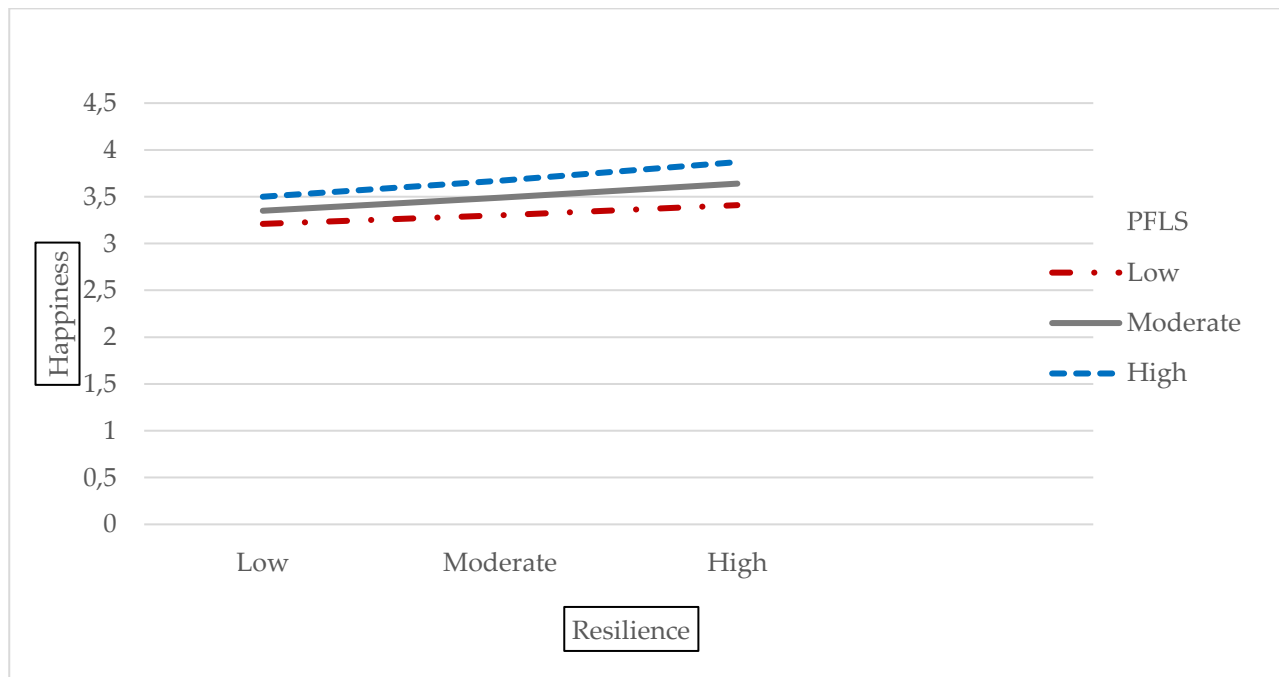


Figure 2. The Graphical Illustration of the Moderating Effect of Perceived Freedom in Leisure

Note: Perceived Freedom in Leisure Scale (PFLS)

As a result of the slope analysis, the effects of the moderating variable were graphically presented in Figure 3. When the details of the moderating effect are examined, it was observed that the effect of resilience on happiness level increased when the perceived freedom in leisure was low ($\beta = 0,29$, $p < 0,01$, $t = 5,39$, $[CI = 0,18, 0,40]$), moderate ($\beta = 0,36$, $p < 0,01$, $t = 9,09$, $[CI = 0,28, 0,44]$) and high ($\beta = 0,45$, $p < 0,01$, $t = 8,85$, $[CI = 0,35, 0,55]$). When the graph was examined, it was observed that this relationship was even stronger when the perceived freedom in leisure was high. More specifically, when the perceived freedom in leisure was higher, the effect of resilience on the level of happiness was higher, which means that the relationship between resilience and happiness is moderated by the perceived freedom in leisure.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of the study is to investigate the moderating role of perceived freedom in leisure on the relationship between resilience and happiness. In line with expectations, resilience and perceived freedom in leisure were found to have a positive and significant effect on happiness. Moreover, perceived freedom in leisure was identified as a significant moderator in the relationship between resilience and happiness. Accordingly, when perceived freedom in leisure is high, the effect of psychological resilience on happiness becomes even stronger. In light of this, the results obtained from the research findings supported all of the hypotheses developed within the scope of the study.

Firstly, resilience had a positive effect on happiness level (H1). Previous studies regarding the effect of resilience on happiness level revealed that the relationship between these concepts has a positive effect in general (5, 18, 36). Strengthening resilience, as well as many positive contributions in terms of health, has an important effect on the acquisition of positive emotions and positive increase in well-being (46). In a study conducted by Bajaj et al. (3) on undergraduate students in India, it was found that resilience had a positive relationship with happiness and a negative relationship with stress. Furthermore, the mediating role of resilience in the relationship between mindfulness and happiness was emphasized and it was reported to have a significant effect on the level of happiness. In another study, Gao et al. (18) found that resilience had significant effects on overall well-being and mental health and found that overall well-being mediated the relationship between resilience and mental health. In this context, the importance of the decisive role of leisure in the acquisition of positive emotions such as happiness that arise with the formation of resilience has been frequently emphasized (10).

Secondly, perceived freedom in leisure had a positive effect on happiness (H2). In previous studies in the literature, it was observed that there is a positive relationship between perceived freedom in leisure and happiness, which supports our findings (6, 40). Tükel and Temel (47) reported that perceived freedom in leisure is related to life satisfaction and happiness in university students. In this context, this positive effect of leisure provides individuals with benefits such as relaxation, reenergization, and renewal, as well as very significant contributions to the personal development of individuals through opportunities for success and social interaction (52).

Finally, the effect of resilience on happiness level was found to differ depending on whether the individual perceived low, moderate or high level of perceived freedom in leisure. In other words, the higher the perceived freedom in leisure, the higher the effect of resilience on the level of happiness (H3). Therefore, perceived freedom in leisure is very crucial for the development of resilience (2). The point to be noted here is that, unlike previous studies that examined the effect of resilience on happiness (5, 18, 36) and the relationship between perceived freedom in leisure and happiness (6, 40, 47), perceived freedom in leisure not only supports our view that perceived freedom in leisure is an influential predictor of resilience and happiness, but also confirms the research model.

Considering the deterioration in the mental health of young people and the positive effects of effective use of leisure on mental health, the value of the study increases. The findings of the study indicated that perceived freedom in leisure plays a moderating role in the relationship between resilience and happiness. Therefore, a high level of perceived freedom in leisure revealed that the effect of resilience on the level of happiness would be higher. As a result, increasing the level of perceived freedom in leisure among young people has led to the idea that it can make significant contributions to their psychological health. Mixed-method studies can be supported by qualitative studies to develop an in-depth understanding by determining the mediating effects on the concepts related to future research.

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