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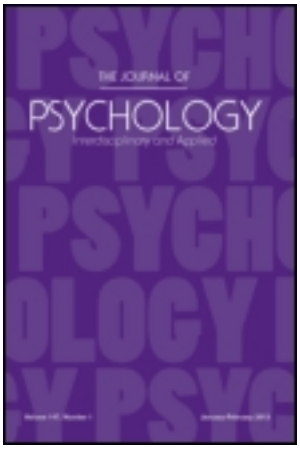

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A Cross-Cultural Investigation into the Relationships Among Parental Support for Basic Psychological Needs, Sense of Uniqueness, and Happiness

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A Cross-Cultural Investigation into the Relationships Among Parental Support for Basic Psychological Needs, Sense of Uniqueness, and Happiness

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ABSTRACT. A significant number of empirical studies have reported that parental support for basic psychological needs is a robust correlate of adolescent happiness. Yet, less is known about the mechanisms responsible for this link. The present study proposed a model suggesting that personal sense of uniqueness explains why satisfaction of basic psychological needs in parent-child relationships is related to happiness. This mediational model was tested among late adolescents in Turkey and the United States. Analyses relying on structural equation modeling and bootstrapping supported the model in both cultures. Implications of the findings for theory and cross-cultural research are discussed. Directions for future research that could improve our understanding of the dynamic interplay between basic needs, sense of uniqueness and well-being are provided.

Keywords: basic psychological needs, culture, happiness, self-determination theory, sense of uniqueness

AS THE HUMANISTIC APPROACH UNDERLINED the importance of the individuals' power to make and take responsibility for choices, many scholars have laid emphasis on individual differences concerning authentic ways of living (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1961). Self-Determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000) is perhaps the most influential framework for understanding the basic characteristics of autonomous individuals who are able to determine their own way of living without being alienated from the community. Autonomy, in this respect, refers to an internal locus of causality

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and is conceptualized as an intrinsic motivation to satisfy one's innate psychological needs (e.g., autonomy, competence, and relatedness). Although the basic psychological needs are innate, an individual's attainment of autonomy is not an automatic process. As Deci and Ryan (2000) stated, just as plants need water to flourish, children need an environment which provides support for their basic psychological needs in order to experience self-actualization. Consistent with this reasoning, several studies revealed that parental support for basic psychological needs was positively related to the adjustment and mental health of children and adolescents (Chirkov & Ryan, 2001; Grolnick, Price, Beiswenger, & Sauck, 2007; Joussemet, Koestner, Lekes & Landry, 2005; Roth, Assor, Niemiec, Ryan & Deci, 2009; Soenens et al., 2007).

Recently, SDT researchers (Deci & Ryan, 2008) have become interested in the association between the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and happiness. Happiness as a hedonic conceptualization of well-being has been defined as experiencing higher levels of positive affect and lower levels of negative affect (Diener, 1984; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Deci & Ryan (2008) advocates that SDT as a eudaimonic conceptualization acknowledges well-being in terms of self-flourishing and actualization of one's potential, which automatically results in happiness and hedonic enjoyment. Parental support for basic psychological needs, in this respect, contributes positively to the happiness of individuals because it fosters an autonomous personality, and thus motivates individuals to choose options concordant with their organismic needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A direct test of this hypothesis was conducted by Niemiec et al. (2006, Study 1) and the findings showed that perceived parental support was positively related to happiness.

Although the link between parental support for basic psychological needs and happiness has been well-established, the mediatory processes in this association have not been adequately researched. One exception, to the best of our knowledge, is the research by Niemiec et al. (2006, Study 2), showing that autonomous self-regulation mediated the association of perceived need support from parents with both well-being (operationalized by vitality and life satisfaction) and ill being (operationalized by depression and externalizing problems). The present research argues that the support for basic psychological needs contributes to adolescents' happiness because it fosters a kind of unconditional self-worth, that is, a sense of uniqueness (SoU). In other words, it is proposed that SoU mediates the associations between parents' support for basic psychological needs and happiness. A recent study testing this model, which also included adolescents' satisfaction of basic psychological needs as an additional mediator in an American sample, showed that SoU explained why parental support for basic needs was related to happiness (Şimşek & Demir, in press). Past research, however, indicates that the cultural context could be a crucial factor in the relationships among the variables as indicated in the following sections. Moreover, theoretical arguments and research suggest that confidence in a model obtained with American participants could be established

by conducting cross-cultural studies. Accordingly, the aim of the current investigation was to test the proposed model among late adolescents in Turkey and the United States, cultures considered collectivistic and individualistic, respectively (Hofstede, 2001). Specifically, in Hofstede's 53-nation study, the United States received the highest score (91) and was ranked the 1st in individualism, while Turkey received a score of 37 (ranked 28th) on the individualism-collectivism continuum (lower scores indicate collectivism). Turkey was chosen as a country of comparison because it is a collectivistic culture that provides a good point of comparison to United States due to the unique sociocultural context she has. For instance, Turkey is a democratic nation with a predominant Muslim population.

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Uniqueness as a Mediator Between Basic Psychological Needs Support and Happiness

Although the concept of uniqueness has been one of the basic issues in humanistic psychology, past empirical approaches to uniqueness acknowledge it in a somehow negative framework. The concept of "need for uniqueness" (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977; 1980), for example, refers to one's desire to be different from others. Although it has been considered a positive characteristic (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977), some research findings show that it negatively contributes to mental health (Lynn & Harris, 1997; Morrison & Bearden, 2007; Tepper, 1996). Adolescent uniqueness (Lapsley & Rice, 1988), similarly, refers to adolescents' negative feelings, such as loneliness and alienation, and has been found to be detrimental for adolescent adjustment and mental health (Goossens, Beyers, Emmen, & van Aken, 2002; Lapsley, FitzGerald, Rice, & Jackson, 1989). Both the need for uniqueness and adolescent uniqueness focus on uniqueness on the basis of similarity: differentiation continuum. That is, a feeling of uniqueness is thought to be due to one's perception of being different from others in the community. A similar view is common also in cultural contexts and the conceptualization of uniqueness has been based on this continuum (Kim & Drolet, 2003; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

However, the perception of being unique might not be equal, or reducible to, simply being different from others. Taking the humanistic approach to uniqueness as a base, Şimşek and Yalınçetin (2010) introduced the SoU concept, which refers to one's perception of being a unique individual among others, with the feeling of worthiness. In contrast with the concepts of 'need for uniqueness' or 'adolescent uniqueness', this construct stresses a personal consideration of one's unique existence, rather than focusing only on the individuals' inclination to feel different from others. Consequently, the higher the levels of SoU, the more one experiences feelings of being a valuable individual just because of who one is.

It is reasonable to suggest that when providing support for basic psychological needs, parents also foster the SoU of their offspring. SDT indicates that support for autonomy, competence, as well as relatedness fosters an autonomous personality. However, to have a supportive attitude towards autonomy requires parents to trust in the child's unique potential and innate drive for self-flourishing. The research

by Landry et al. (2008) showed that autonomy supportive attitudes of parents are closely related to the trust in the child's potential to achieve personal growth and self-actualization, namely, the trust in organismic development. As Maslow (1954) argued, "The love of a person implies, not the possession of that person, but the affirmation of that person. It means granting him, gladly, the full right to his unique manhood" (p. 195). Such a support, thus, would promote the child's SoU, which is a kind of non-contingent self-worth.

It seems that parents who provide support for their children's basic needs also transmit the message "All that matters is your unique existence, all other things are trivial". Such a message would promote a child's sense of self-worth by emphasizing his or her uniqueness. Basic psychological needs are known to have an association with non-contingent self-esteem, which refers to an unconditional or secure self-worth (Deci & Ryan, 1995). SDT proposes that an important indicator of a non-contingent or an autonomous type of self-esteem is the possession of a sense of self-worth based on simply being who one is (Deci & Ryan, 1995; Hodgins, Brown, & Carver, 2007). Approving children's existence in their own right would support the inclination to comply with their own organismic needs toward self-actualization when acting or planning, since they become less sensitive to the difference between their own choices and the approvals of others. Roth et al., (2009) indeed found that parental conditional regard results in greater internal compulsion, which, in turn, promotes the suppressive regulation of negative emotions, while parental support for autonomy predicts the internal regulation of negative emotions via a sense of choice. The finding that a SoU has been uncorrelated with agreeableness, while strongly and positively correlated with openness to experience (Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010) could be considered a support for the idea that SoU as a non-contingent sense of self-worth is based on internal locus of causality, and provides individuals with a greater freedom to choose their own ways of living, rather than being dependent on others as reference points. As Maslow (1954) indicated, having satisfied the basic needs, such as love and warmth, children can develop their unique ways to self-actualization and growth. Consistent with this view, SoU was found to be strongly and positively correlated with basic psychological needs by Şimşek and Yalınçetin (2010) who also showed that uniqueness accounted for the greater proportion of unique variance in the satisfaction of autonomy, even after all personality factors were controlled statistically.

The possession of an unconditional or non-contingent self-worth, in turn, is expected to contribute to happiness. Given that self-worth is highly related with happiness (Diener, 1984), it is easy to predict that an unconditional self-worth would contribute to the happiness of adolescents. Research findings (Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010), indeed, showed that SoU was strongly correlated with happiness. Moreover, the findings indicated that the SoU levels of individuals accounted for considerable amount of additional variance in happiness, above and beyond all personality dimensions. Şimşek and Yalınçetin additionally found that the

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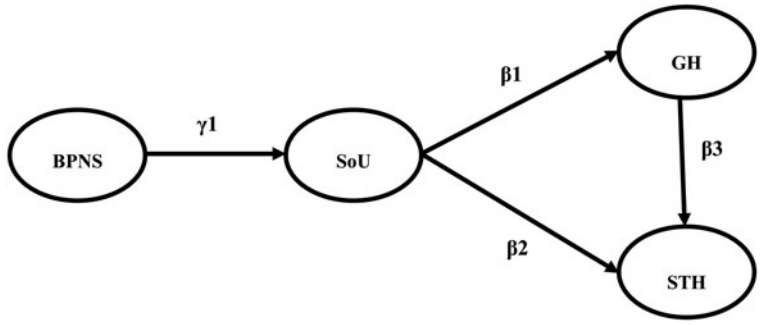

FIGURE 1. The proposed model: SoU mediates the relationship between BPNS and happiness. BPNS = Basic psychological need support; SoU = Sense of Uniqueness; GH = General happiness; STH = Short-term happiness.

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SoU was strongly associated with extraversion, found to be the most important personality factor in happiness (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003).

In the light of the literature mentioned, it was expected in this study that parental support for adolescents' basic psychological needs would positively contribute to their SoU, which, in turn contributes to both general and short-term happiness (Figure 1). We defined happiness both in general and short-term; the former refers to a general tendency to experience higher levels of positive affect and lower levels of negative affect, while the latter, to this same tendency over short-term period. Given that happiness has both trait-like and state-like properties, it is a prerequisite to assume that general happiness would have an effect on short-time happiness (Stones, Hadjistavropoulos, Tuuko, & Kozma, 1995), which is indicated by a direct path from general happiness to short-time happiness. At this point, it is essential to provide information on happiness among Turkish and U.S. adolescents. Studies on Turkish adolescents showed that the happiness measures had not only similar structures but were also correlated with a wide range of variables (e.g., parenting styles) similarly when compared to findings obtained with American adolescents (e.g., Cenkseven-Önder, 2012; Eryilmaz, 2010). Yet, cross-cultural studies revealed that Turkish adolescents report lower levels of happiness (e.g., lower levels of affect balance) compared to their peers in the U.S. (Demir, Doğan, & Procsal, 2013; Kuppens, Realo & Diener, 2008).

Culture and Uniqueness

The literature on the cultural construction of self underlines uniqueness as a basic component of individualism (Kim & Drolet, 2003; Kim & Markus, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) or the independent construal of the self (Singelis,

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1994). In these conceptualizations, uniqueness is defined as referring to the concept of a 'need for uniqueness' or a need to be distinct from the group. Such a conceptualization stresses on the contrast between individual and the community, a contrast which is considered to be the basic component of individualistic cultures, and to be incompatible with collectivist cultures (Brewer, 1991; Markus & Kitayama). All these theories presuppose the distinction between the individual and the 'others' as the only meaningful reference points in the definition of unique personal identities.

However, focusing on one level (others, "I am not . . . ") at the expense of the other (individual, "I am . . . ") would lead us to reach unwarranted conclusions concerning the unique identities of individuals in different cultural contexts. A SoU is not solely dependent upon comparison with others, as this is not the only way an individual develops a personal feeling of uniqueness. Indeed, recent conceptualizations on the distinctiveness principle (Vignoles, 2000; Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell, 2002; Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell, 2004) indicate that the need to be unique may not be incompatible with any culture. According to Vignoles (2000), current conceptualizations of uniqueness in a cross-cultural context are based on the assumptions that distinctiveness is a social value and an aspect of self-enhancement. The author provides many research findings concordant with the conclusion that SoU is a fundamental human need and a basic component for the construal of self in all cultures. Personal SoU, in a very similar way, refers in this research to an organismic need and, thus, could not be reducible to a simple similarity-difference polarity. As Rogers (1961) indicated clearly that having a respect for one's own unique existence is an innate propensity towards self-actualization and growth, which implies that SoU could be an important marker of self-worth for all cultures. As Kernis (2003) pointed out, it is likely that a non-contingent or secure self-worth is the natural result of one's satisfaction of basic psychological needs, regardless of culture.

Vignoles (2000) also stated that a SoU could be fostered in different ways in different cultures and does not necessarily require distinctiveness. The author indicated, for example, that a SoU in a collectivist culture could result from one's place within a social context. Markus and Kitayama (1991) similarly stated that individuals in collectivist cultures could develop a SoU through employing idiosyncratic, individualized ways of adjusting to the cultural milieu. It is plausible to argue, in this respect, that a SoU could be fostered by parents, both in individualistic and collectivist cultures in different ways. For instance, in the individualistic cultural context of the United States, where emphasis is on self-reliance and individual goals (Triandis, Chen, & Chan, 1998), adolescents might perceive parents' support as promoting their goals and a sense of independence, and develop a sense of uniqueness in this way. In the collectivistic cultural context of Turkey, relationships with the immediate and extended family are emphasized (e.g., Kağıtçıbaşı, 1997). In this context the adolescent might have to maintain harmony in multiple relationships and display commitment to the group goals and needs. This requires

a number of skills (e.g., respecting the elderly, solving the problems in an effective way that promotes the group needs). Accordingly, parental support might be perceived as the recognition of one's special features and contribute to the development of uniqueness. Yet, regardless of the means, the ultimate importance of this kind of self-worth is expected to be similar in both cultures.

Consequently, we argue in this research that SoU as an organismic need is crucial both for Western and Eastern cultures, just as basic psychological needs are important in all cultures (Chirkov, Ryan, & Sheldon, 2011; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Although it is evident that the Western cultures have an inclination to approve distinctiveness within individuals, a respect for idiosyncratic behavior in children, regardless of cultural background, would promote a SoU: a sense of acceptance of children for being who they are with no reservation. Thus, we assumed that basic psychological need support from parents would contribute to adolescents' SoU both in Turkey and the United States, which, in turn, results in happiness.

Method

Participants

The Turkish sample consisted of 411 university students (310 women, 96 men, 5 no response) attending a university in southwest Turkey. The mean age of the sample was 19.48 ($SD = 1.78$). The American sample consisted of 370 (288 women, 79 men, 3 no response) college students attending a Southwestern university in the United States with a mean age of 19.04 ($SD = 2.80$). The ethnic distribution of the sample was as follows: 71% Caucasian ($n = 263$), 16% Hispanic ($n = 60$), 4% Black ($n = 14$), and 8.5% other ($n = 32$). One participant did not provide information on ethnicity.

Procedure

The data for this study were gathered online from undergraduates taking psychology classes. First, the study was announced via the department's online research participation system. Second, after agreeing to participate in the study students were provided with a link to the survey. Respondents remained anonymous. Participants had to agree to an informed consent prior to completing the questionnaires. The order of the questionnaires was counterbalanced in both groups. Completion of the survey lasted for about thirty minutes and participants in both groups received extra credit for their psychology classes.

Measures

Parental Support for Basic Psychological Needs: The Need Satisfaction Scale (NSS; La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000) was used to measure presence of supports for the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in participant's relationships with their mothers and fathers. The NSS consists of 9 items and measure each individual need with three items. The items

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are rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all true, 7 = very true). Participants completed the scale twice for different relationships targets (mother and father).

For example, participants rated that when they are with their mother they feel "free to be who I am" (autonomy), "like a competent person" (competence), and "a lot of closeness and intimacy" (relatedness). Three of the 9 items are negatively worded and were reversed scored before creating composite scores for each relationship figure. Composite Mother and Father Needs Satisfaction scores (MNS and FNS) were created by summing the mean of all respective items. Higher scores indicate higher levels of needs satisfaction.

The NSS has been commonly used to assess the satisfaction of basic needs in a variety of different relationships. For instance, past research relied on this instrument to assess individual and overall needs satisfaction in parent-child relationships (Ryan, La Guardia, Solky-Butzel, Chirkov & Kim, 2005; Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006; Zuckerman & Tsai, 2005), romantic relationships (Patrick, Knee, Canevello, & Lonsbary, 2007; Slotter & Finkel, 2009), and friendships (Demir & Özdemir, 2010). These studies documented that the individual subscales and the total scale (regardless of the relationships targeted) have excellent internal consistencies. As for validity, past research has shown that satisfaction of basic psychological needs in relationships was positively associated with attachment security, emotion regulation, relationship satisfaction, and happiness, whereas it was negatively related to depression, loneliness, and conflict. The scale was translated into Turkish by Özen, Sümer, and Demir (2009), who reported excellent score reliability and showed that it was positively associated with relationship quality and happiness. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha reliabilities of the scores on MNS and FNS scales were .92 each in the American sample and .87 and .90 in the Turkish sample, respectively.

Sense of Uniqueness

Participants' feelings of uniqueness were assessed with the Personal Sense of Uniqueness Scale (PSU, Şimşek & Yalinçetin, 2010). PSU consists of five items ("As people get to know me more, they begin to recognize my special features." "I feel unique," "I cannot think of many special characteristics that distinguish me from others," "I think that the characteristics that make me up are different from others," and "I feel that some of my characteristics are completely unique to me") rated on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Şimşek and Yalinçetin, across five studies, provided evidence that the scale had acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .81$). The authors also reported that the scale scores was positively associated with life-satisfaction and negatively related to anxiety and depression. Importantly, the authors reported that the scale was strongly correlated (r = .65) with Rosenberg's self-esteem scale. The PSU was translated into English by four bilinguals in addition to the first author of the present article. In the present study, the Cronbach's alpha of the scores on this scale was .83 in the American sample and .74 in the Turkish sample, respectively.

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Happiness

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) was used to assess happiness. The PANAS consists of 10 mood states for positive affect (PA) (e.g., enthusiastic) and 10 for negative affect (NA) (e.g., nervous). Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they feel each mood in general on a 5-point scale (very slightly or not all [1] to extremely [5]). PA and NA composite scores were computed by summing the items of the PA and NA scales, respectively. As happiness is defined as the predominance of PA over NA (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999), and to control for extremity biases (Schimmack & Diener, 1997), a General Happiness (GH) score was computed by subtracting the NA composite score from the PA composite score. Higher scores indicate higher levels of GH.

PANAS is a well-known and commonly used instrument to assess happiness with good internal consistency (e.g., Demir & Özdemir, 2010; Sheldon, Kasser, Houser-Marko, Jones, & Turban, 2005). The positive and negative affect scales are related to other scales measuring happiness and different aspects of well-being (e.g., depression) in the expected directions (see McDowell, 2006, pp. 227–228). For instance, Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) reported that PA was positively and NA negatively associated with a scale assessing subjective happiness.) The scale was adapted into Turkish by Gençöz (2000), who reported Cronbach's alphas above .82 for the scale scores and showed their association with indices of negative well-being (depression and anxiety) in the expected directions. The internal consistencies of the PA and NA scores were .91 and .89 in the American sample and .82 and .81 in the Turkish sample.

Short-Term Happiness

The Affect Balance Scale (ABS, Bradburn, 1969) was used to assess the short-term happiness of the participants. ABS consists of 10-items containing five statements each reflecting positive and negative feelings and assesses the balance of positive and negative affect experienced in the last few weeks. Participants are asked to indicate a positive (yes) or negative (no) response to the items, each of which uses the stem, "During the past few weeks, did you ever feel . . . " Sample items include " . . . proud because someone complimented you on something you had done?" and " . . . depressed or very unhappy?" Positive and Negative Affect scores were computed by summing the responses to the five respective questions. A Short-term Happiness (STH) score is then created by subtracting the negative affect scores (NAS) from the positive affect scores (PAS). Higher scores indicate higher levels of STH.

ABS is a measure that has been commonly used in psychological research to assess affect balance. It has also been considered to be a good indicator of an individual's current level happiness. As for reliability, although Bradburn (1969) reported acceptable internal consistencies for the ABS later research (Larsen, Diener, & Emmons, 1985) found low reliability estimates for the ABS (alpha = .48

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for NAS, and .66 or PAS). Given that the answers are given using a dichotomous scale with "yes" and "no" options, such low reliability estimates should not be considered surprising. As for validity, ABS has been shown to be positively and moderately related to other self-report and non-self-reports measures of happiness (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999; Sandvik, Diener, & Seidlitz, 1993). Past research has also shown that ABS was related to the theoretical correlates of happiness in the expected directions (Baker, Cesa, Gatz, & Mellins, 1992; Helmes, Goffin, & Chrisjohn, 2010; McDowell, 2010; Moriwaki, 1974; Sandvik et al., 1993). For instance, ABS is positively associated with social participation and extroversion, and negatively related to neuroticism and BDI. The scale was adapted into Turkish in a large scale cross-cultural study (Macintosh, 1998). The Cronbach's alphas of the scores on PAS and NAS were $\alpha = .65$ and $\alpha = .51$ in the American sample and .49 and .63 in the Turkish sample, respectively.

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Strategy of Analysis

As the aim of the present research was to obtain preliminary support that the proposed model would fit the data in both cultures, the structural equation modeling approach was used in all analyses. It is known that using latent variables in model testing eliminates extreme and acquiescence response styles in cross-cultural research (Cheung & Rensvold, 2000). Before model testing, some preliminary analyses were conducted to test the equivalence of measurement model for each country. In regard to this aim, first, a confirmatory factor analysis was tested for each country. After providing the support for the validity of factor structure for these groups, second, mean differences were calculated using means and covariance structures (MACS) analysis (Kline, 2005; Little, 1997).

Then, the structural model was tested for both country and a bootstrap method was used for testing mediation effects in the models for each country. Bootstrapping procedure (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Shrout & Bolger, 2002) was used to test the indirect pathways in the final model. The bootstrapping procedure tested whether or not these indirect pathways were significantly different from zero. Bootstrap resampling from the original sample was produced to estimate the standard errors for the resulting sampling distribution. These standard errors were used to calculate 95% confidence intervals for each indirect effect. Significant mediation is indicated when the upper and lower limits of the 95% confidence interval (CI) do not include zero.

Finally, a multi-group SEM analyses were done to confirm that the model was valid for both countries. Four separate analyses were done to test the equivalence of path coefficients across countries, in which one of the four paths in Figure 1 was constrained. The chi-square difference test was calculated to understand the effect of each constrained to the fit of the model. We reported several commonly used fit indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2005; Loelhin, 2004; Schumacker &

Lomax, 2004; Steiger, 2007; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Thompson, 2000): the goodness of fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), standardized root-mean square residual (SRMR), and root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). It is generally accepted that values of 0.90 or greater for the GFI and CFI indices indicate good fit of the model. As for RMSEA and SRMR, values of 0.080 or less indicate good fit (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008)

Results

Invariance of the Measurement Model

The measurement model posits the relations of the observed variables to their underlying constructs, which were allowed to intercorrelate freely. All latent variables were constructed a priori by taking the earlier literature into account. Parental support was constructed using composite scores on the support from mother and father scales. The items of the SoU Scale were used as indicators of the SoU construct given that using the five items rather than the overall scale score as the only observed variable would provide more reliable estimates concerning the measurement error. The discrepancy between the scores of positive and negative factors of the PANAS and the ABS were used as the only indicators of the general happiness (GH) and short-term happiness (STH), respectively. Since only one indicator was used for each, the formula proposed by Jöreskog and Sörbom (1993) was used to calculate error variances of these constructs. The authors argue that such a procedure produces more reliable parameter estimates, as well as standard errors. Accordingly, error variances of the measures were multiplied by the square of the measure's standard deviation in each group and used as error terms through all analyses.

Before invariance tests, the proposed measurement model was tested for each country to examine the fit of the data to the model. The test of the model in the Turkish sample resulted in acceptable goodness of fit statistics: $\chi^2(23, N = 411) = 40.33$, $p = .001$; $\chi^2/\text{df} = 1.75$; GFI = 0.98; CFI = 0.99; SRMR = 0.031; RMSEA = 0.043 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.019–0.064). Similarly, the results of the U.S. sample produced acceptable goodness of fit statistics: $\chi^2(23, N = 370) = 46.82$, $p = .002$; $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.04$; GFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.99; SRMR = 0.037; RMSEA = 0.053 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.031–0.075).

Measurement invariance between the groups was tested using a set of nested models with different constraints on the measured parameters. In the first model, all parameters were constrained to be equal in both groups. The results indicated that the model did not fit the data well: $\chi^2(68, N = 781) = 462.43$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/\text{df} = 6.80$; GFI = 0.90; CFI = 0.86; SRMR = 0.12; RMSEA = 0.12 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.11–0.13). An inspection of the modification indices suggested that only the factor loadings of the 3th and 4th items of the SoU Scale, rather than all factor loadings, should be free in both groups. The constraints

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for these two parameters were dropped and analyses were done accordingly. Chi-square difference test (7.75, 3: $p > .05$) showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the model in which only these two parameters were free [$\chi^2(66, N = 781) = 389.58$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 5.90$; GFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.88; SRMR = 0.11; RMSEA = 0.11 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.10–0.12)] and the model in which all factor loadings were estimated freely in both groups [$\chi^2(63, N = 781) = 381.83$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 6.06$; GFI = 0.91; CFI = 0.89; SRMR = 0.099; RMSEA = 0.11 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.10–0.12)]. Consequently, the former was considered to be better as it was more parsimonious.

It was clear, however, that the model suffered from other constraints on the parameter estimates. Thus the error variances in the groups were considered to be different to achieve a better fit. This model indeed resulted in a better model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 229.22$, 7: $p < .01$) with the following goodness of fit statistics: $\chi^2(61, N = 781) = 160.36$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 2.62$; GFI = 0.96; CFI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.067; RMSEA = 0.066 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.054–0.079).

All these results showed that the main difference between the groups were due to error variances of the measured variables. When it comes to the factor loadings, only two items of the SoU scale were found to be different between groups, which indicated a partial invariance situation (Kline, 2005). As Kline indicated, "Given reasonable evidence for at least partial measurement invariance, the mean structure will be added to the CFA model in the second step" (p. 299).

Means and Covariance Structures (MACS) Analysis

The MACS analyses were computed with the constraints in the measurement invariance model presented in the previous section. Thus, all error variances and two factor loadings of the SoU items were freely estimated in each group. The results of the MACS analysis with these constraints produced an acceptable fit to the data: $\chi^2(62, N = 781) = 222.91$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 3.59$; GFI = 0.93; CFI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.095; RMSEA = 0.081 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.070–0.093). This model was better than both the invariance model in which all parameters were considered to be equal across cultures [$\chi^2(73, N = 781) = 348.10$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 4.76$; GFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.92; SRMR = 0.10; RMSEA = 0.098 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.088–0.11)] and the model in which all factor loadings were freely estimated in both groups $\chi^2(68, N = 781) = 334.11$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 4.91$; GFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.10 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.089–0.11).

Table 1 presents the standardized solution for measurement model with mean and covariance structures. As a partial invariance model was found to be supported, factor loadings of the third ("I cannot think of many special characteristics that distinguish me from others") and the fourth ("I feel that the characteristics that make me up are different from others' ") items of the SoU are represented for both

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TABLE 1. Estimated Latent Constructs' Means for the USA and Turkish Sample

	Mean		
Latent Construct	United States	Turkey	Means Difference Test
PSNS	0.0	1.28	$t = 3.08$ ($p < .05$)
SoU	0.0	0.00	$t = 0.00$ ($p > .05$)
GH	0.0	−8.44	$t = 8.24$ ($p < .01$)
STH	0.0	−1.09	$t = 7.78$ ($p < .01$)

Notes. $N = 370$ (USA) and 411 (Turkey); PSNS = Parental support for need satisfaction; SoU = Sense of uniqueness; GH = General happiness; STH = Short-term happiness.

countries. It is clear that the former is a stronger indicator in the U.S. sample, and the latter in the Turkish sample.

The latent construct comparisons of means are also presented in Table 1. The Turkish adolescents had higher scores on perceived parental support for basic psychological needs, but lower scores on both GH and STH compared to the Americans. There was no difference between the two groups on the levels of SoU experienced.

TABLE 2. Intercorrelations Among Observed Variables for the USA and Turkish Sample

	MNS	FNS	UN1	UN2	UN3	UN4	UN5	GH	STH
MNS	—	.45**	.21**	.20**	.21**	.20**	.22**	.29**	.18**
FNS	.29**	—	.13*	.12*	.21**	.09	.09	.26**	.23**
UN1	.31**	.22**	—	.37**	.23**	.38**	.29**	.31**	.13**
UN2	.35**	.28**	.59**	—	28**	.47**	.35**	.30**	.16**
UN3	.28**	.24**	.36**	.61**	—	.40**	.33**	.27**	.14**
UN4	.23**	.17**	.44**	.56**	.49**	—	.55**	.35**	.16**
UN5	.21**	.25**	.37**	.55**	.43**	.55**	—	.25**	.10*
GH	.34**	.40**	.32**	.42**	.42**	.37**	.35**	—	.58**
STH	.23**	.25**	.27**	.36**	.35**	.33**	.26**	.53**	—

Notes. Intercorrelations for American adolescents ($N = 370$) are below diagonal and for Turkish adolescents (411) are above diagonal; MNS = Mother support for needs satisfaction; FNS = Father support for needs satisfaction; UN1-UN5 = Items of the SoU Scale; GH = General happiness; STH = Short-term happiness.
*p < .05. **p < .01.

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TABLE 3. Intercorrelations Among Latent Variables for the USA and Turkish Samples

	PSNS	SoU	GH	STH
PSNS	—	.44	.41	.51
SoU	.49	—	.48	.30
GH	.69	.56	—	.72
STH	.31	.44	.60	—

Notes. Intercorrelations for American adolescents ($N = 370$) are below diagonal and for Turkish adolescents (411) are above diagonal; PSNS = Parental support for need satisfaction; SoU = Sense of uniqueness; GH = General happiness; STH = Short-term happiness.

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Intercorrelations among the observed variables are represented in Table 2. The indicators of parental support for basic psychological needs were correlated with both GH and STH in each sample. The indicators of parental support were found to be correlated with SoU in both groups of adolescents. Similarly, GH and STH were strongly associated with each other in both samples.

Each pair of covariances among the constructs was freely estimated in both groups in order to detect differences concerning the relationships among latent variables. Table 3 depicts the intercorrelations among latent constructs and Table 4

TABLE 4. Common Metric Completely Standardized Solution of Measurement Models for the USA and Turkish Samples

	Factor Loadings				Error Variance		
Indicator	PSNS	SoU	GH	STH	American	Turkish	Intercept
MNS	.61	0	0	0	.63	.63	4.30
FNS	.64	0	0	0	.76	.44	5.40
UN1	0	.65	0	0	.47	.67	0.65
UN2	0	.79	0	0	.18	.56	0.80
UN3	0	.70(.56)	0	0	.41	.64	0.70
UN4	0	.70(.90)	0	0	.38	.32	0.71
UN5	0	.69	0	0	.50	.54	0.69
GH	0	0	.98	0	.06	.04	13.76
STH	0	0	0	.83	.27	.34	1.65

Notes. MNS = Mother need support; FNS = Father need support; UN1-UN5 = Items of the SoU Scale; GH = General Happiness; STH = Short term happiness; Factor loadings of UN3 and UN4 for Turkish sample are represented in parentheses.

provides invariant estimated factor loadings, intercepts, and error variances. Only three parameters contributed to the model's fit significantly: the covariance between parental support and GH [$\chi^2(61, N = 781) = 211.12$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 3.46$; GFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.081; RMSEA = 0.079 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.068–0.091)], the covariance between parental support and STH $\chi^2(61, N = 781) = 215.17$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 3.52$; GFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.080 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.069–0.092), and the covariance between SoU and STH [$\chi^2(61, N = 781) = 218.72$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 3.58$; GFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0. 090; RMSEA = 0.081 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.070–0.093)]. These results showed that the association of parental support with GH was statistically stronger in the U.S. sample ($z = 5.73$, $p = .000$), whereas its relationship with STH was stronger in the Turkish sample ($z = -3.37$, $p = .000$). Finally, the relationship between SoU and STH was significantly stronger in the U.S. sample ($z = 2.26$, $p = .012$).

Testing the Proposed Model With Multi-Group Path Analysis

Before multi-group path analysis, the structural model in Figure 1 was tested in each sample. Results showed that the model fit the data both in the US [$\chi^2(25, N = 370) = 79.25$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 3.17$; GFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.97; RMSEA = 0.077 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.058–0.096)] and Turkish sample [$\chi^2(25, N = 370) = 59.70$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 2.39$; GFI = 0.97; CFI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.072; RMSEA = 0.058 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.039–0.077)].

The equivalence of the structural model in both cultures was accomplished by testing a set of nested models in which each of the constraints for the paths in the proposed model (Figure 1) was dropped, compared to the model in which all paths were constrained to be equal in both groups. The model in which all paths were constrained produced an acceptable fit to data with the following statistics: $\chi^2(63, N = 781) = 204.16$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 3.24$; GFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.079; RMSEA = 0.077 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.066–0.089).

To test the equivalence of path coefficients across countries, four separate analyses were done for each path. First, dropping the constraint for the path from parental support to SoU produced the following goodness of fit statistics: $\chi^2(62, N = 781) = 201.22$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 3.24$; GFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.069; RMSEA = 0.078 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.066–0.090). The chi-square difference test (2.94, df = 1: $p > .05$) showed that the decrease in chi-square was not statistically significant, which means that there was no difference between countries concerning the path from parental need support to SoU.

Second, the path from SoU to GH was freely estimated in both countries to test the effect of difference across countries on the model fit. This model produced a better model fit [$\chi^2(61, N = 781) = 192.73$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 3.15$; GFI =

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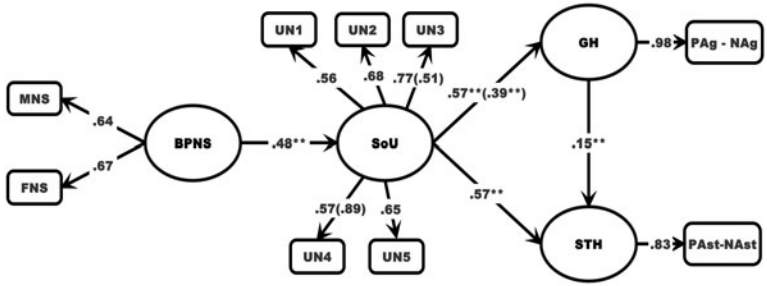

FIGURE 2. Standardized parameter estimates of the structural model for both countries. $N = 370$ for US sample and 411 for Turkish sample; BPNS = Basic psychological need support; SoU = Sense of Uniqueness; GH = General happiness; STH = Short-term happiness; PAg – NAg = Discrepancy between Positive Affect and Negative Affect scores of the PANAS Scale (General time-frame); PAst – NAst = Discrepancy between Positive Affect and Negative Affect scores of the Affect Balance Scale (Short time-frame); Equivalent paths were represented by one coefficient; For nonequivalent paths (two factor loadings of SoU and the path from SoU to GH), the coefficients for Turkish sample were represented in parentheses. All factor loadings are significant at $p = .01$. $^{**}p < .01$.

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0.95; CFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.085; RMSEA = 0.076 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.064–0.088)], which was confirmed by the chi-square difference test (8.49, df = 1: $p = .000$).

The third step was accomplished by dropping the constraint for the path from SoU to STH, which resulted in the following goodness of fit statistics: $\chi^2(60, N = 781) = 191.58$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 3.19$; GFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.083; RMSEA = 0.077 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.065–0.089). Chi-square difference test (1.15, df = 1: $p > .05$) showed that dropping the constraint failed to improve model fit.

In the last step, the path from GH to STH was freely estimated in both countries and resulted in the following goodness of fit statistics: $\chi^2(59, N = 781) = 189.66$, $p = .000$; $\chi^2/df = 3.21$; GFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.080; RMSEA = 0.077 (90% confidence interval for RMSEA = 0.064–0.088)]. Chi-square difference test (1.92, df = 1: $p > .05$) showed that there was no difference between this model and the last model.

These results showed that the only difference across the countries was on the path from SoU to GH, and the final model was accepted as that in which only this path was freely estimated for both countries. The final model with standardized parameter estimates is shown in Figure 2. According to the coefficients in Figure 2, parental support for basic psychological needs is strongly associated with SoU in

TABLE 5. Parameters and 95% Bootstrap Confidence Intervals (CIs) for the Paths of the Proposed Model Across Cultures

IV	Mediator	DV	95% CI for the Us (Lower–Upper)	95% CI for Turkey (Lower–Upper)
BPNS →	SoU →	GH	.248–.492	.117–.272
BPNS →	SoU →	STH	.222–.411	.042–.150
SoU →	GH →	STH	.139–.262	.232–.355

Notes. BPNS = Parental support for basic psychological needs; SoU = Sense of uniqueness; GH = General Happiness; STH = Short-term happiness.

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both countries. The relationship of SoU with GH was stronger in the U.S. sample, while its relationship with STH was found to be the same across cultures. Finally, the relationship of GH with STH was weak, indicating that the SoU acts as a common cause for both of these variables.

In both samples, 23% of the variance in SoU was accounted for by parental support for basic psychological needs. In the U.S. sample, 30% of the variance in GH was accounted for by SoU and 45% of the variance was accounted for by the model. In the Turkish sample, 17% of the variance was accounted for by SoU and 40% of the variance was accounted for by the model.

In order to determine the significance of indirect effects in the proposed model, standard errors produced from 1000 bootstrap samples were used to calculate 95% of confidence intervals (Table 5). Significant mediation is indicated when the upper and lower limits of the 95% confidence interval (CI) do not include zero. It is clear from the results in Table 5 that no indirect effects include zero, which was deemed to support mediation hypotheses in the proposed model across cultures (MacKinnon et al., 2004).

It is clear that these results lend support for the theoretical model in Figure 1. The relationships among the variables were found to be similar, except for the difference concerning the relationship between SoU and GH. The model, thus, strongly supports the mediating role of SoU in the relationship between parental support for basic psychological needs and happiness across both the U.S. and Turkish samples.

Discussion

Past research clearly showed that parental support for basic psychological needs has an effect on the levels of happiness (Niemiec et al., 2006). To date, however, the nature of this mediatory process has been relatively obscure. The

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study of Şimşek and Demir (in press) provided preliminary findings that SoU mediated this relationship. This study showed that the relationship between parental support for basic psychological needs satisfaction and happiness, both general and short-term, was mediated by the degree to which adolescents possess a sense of uniqueness. An important contribution of the present research was to provide supporting evidence that this mediation might also be valid in a cross-cultural context.

Personal feelings of uniqueness have been considered to be one of the most important indicators of a healthy personality in humanistic psychology (Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1961). More recent definitions of uniqueness, however, have frequently had negative connotations in psychology, as instantiated by the need for uniqueness (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977) and adolescent uniqueness (Lapsley & Rice, 1988). These concepts are used as referring to one's feeling of being different from others. The need for uniqueness is the desire to see oneself different from others, while adolescent uniqueness directly refers to the feelings of being different from others. Although the concept of the need for uniqueness has been generally considered to be a personal strength (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977), some research findings showed that it might not be a positive mental health variable (Lynn & Harris, 1997; Morrison & Bearden, 2007; Tepper, 1996). Adolescent uniqueness, on the other hand, has always found to be correlated with mental illness such as depression and suicidal inclinations (Goossens et al., 2002; Lapsley et al., 1989).

A general consideration of uniqueness in a cross-cultural context, similarly, has concerned the polarity between the individual and others (Kim & Drolet, 2003; Kim & Markus, 1999; Kim & Sherman, 2008). That is, the concept of "the others" has been considered a basic reference point in the location of personal uniqueness. It is clear that if uniqueness is defined as a sharp difference between an individual and all others, it is impossible that this concept could have a positive value in collectivist cultures. Research has shown that individuals from collectivist cultures do not like even a figure to be different from all others with a sharp contrast or at least implying incongruence or inharmony (Kim, & Markus, 1999; Kim & Sherman, 2008), whereas for individualistic cultures these same differences enhance the attractiveness of the figures.

Consistent with this perspective, researchers have defined uniqueness as one of the basic dimensions of individualism. Realo, Koido, Ceulemans, and Allik (2002), for example, defined uniqueness as a subfactor of individualism in their Three-Component Individualism Scale. The items of the uniqueness subscale underlines one's distinctiveness from the group, such as "I like being distinguished from the crowd," "I have always wanted to somehow differ from others." Shulruf, Hattie, and Dixon (2007), similarly, used items clearly referring to the distinction between individual and "others," such as "I enjoy being unique and different from others," and "I consider myself as a unique person separate from others."

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The present research, however, is based on the idea that personal uniqueness cannot be reducible to a simple feeling of being different from others (Vignoles et al., 2002, 2004), thus eliminating the positive elements inherent in the humanistic conceptualizations (Şimşek & Yalınçetin, 2010). SoU, in this regard, refers to a humanistic conceptualization, and was expected to have a strong association with parental support for basic psychological needs both in Turkey and the US. Once defined in this way, we hypothesized that a supportive attitude from parents that enabled adolescents to feel more autonomous, competent and related would also encourage feelings of being unique and valuable. Given that these basic needs have been found to be important in a cross-cultural context (Chirkov et al., 2011), they are more likely to contribute the SoU. The findings strengthen the argument that a parental support for basic psychological needs fosters adolescents' feeling of being unique in both the U.S. and Turkey. The correlation between parental support for basic psychological needs and SoU was found to be nearly the same in the U.S. and Turkey, $r = .49$ and $r = .44$, respectively.

The results also showed that there were no mean differences in the SoU between adolescents from US and Turkey, suggesting that adolescents living in either an individualistic or a collectivistic culture feel similar levels of personal feelings of uniqueness. Later conceptualizations of distinctiveness theory (Vignoles et al., 2002) lend support to this finding, indicating that personal SoU could be cultivated in different ways in different cultures. Although this research showed that parental support for basic psychological needs contributes to levels of SoU equally in both cultures, there may be other mechanisms through which SoU could develop in different ways in different cultures. As described earlier, adolescents might perceive the support they receive from their parents in ways consistent with their cultural expectations. In the United States, parental support might be perceived as rewarding personal goals and accomplishments. For instance, an American adolescent who is passionate about music and receives a scholarship for college might develop a SoU when she perceives her parents supporting her choices and skills by providing closeness. In Turkey, an adolescent might develop SoU when her contributions to the group goals and harmony are recognized. For example, a Turkish adolescent who respects her parents and extended family members might perceive parental support as the recognition of her special skills (e.g., maintaining harmony in multiple relationships) as an autonomous and competent person. Investigation of the ways adolescents develops SoU in parent-child interactions by employing different methods (e.g., interviews) have the potential to make significant contributions to current theory and research.

Uniqueness has been defined as a manifestation of independence in Western cultures (Kim & Sherman, 2008). This research provided preliminary findings, which emphasize the importance of the way in which uniqueness is defined. Once the definition is no longer dependent on the "individual vs. others" contrast, the concept can be considered as different from simple independence, in any cultural context. The findings of the present research showed that a sense of uniqueness

which stresses on the unique and valuable existence of individuals could both be promoted in different cultural contexts and contribute to happiness without any reference to the concept of independence.

Although the model proposed in the present research has been supported by the data, some important questions remain to be answered. Future research, first, should directly consider the different effects of each basic psychological need on mental health using experimental research design. It is indicated that a support for autonomy and competence contributes more directly to the development of autonomous personality than relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Basic psychological needs are more likely to be interdependent when measured in a general context (Richard Ryan, personal communication, November 6, 2010), and a more rigorous tests of the differential effects of each need are required using experimental design. Second limitation of the present research is its correlational nature. It is indicated that a thorough investigation of mediation and causality could better be achieved using autoregressive or random effects models on longitudinal data (Maxwell & Cole, 2007). Although sophisticated analysis techniques were used, the causal directions among the constructs are only theoretical at present, and should be subjected to further stringent testing or by using longitudinal data. Third, one unavoidable limitation of research on happiness conducted with American and Turkish samples pertains to the generalizability of the findings to other cultures. Indeed, this is a major concern in the psychological literature (e.g., Arnett 2008). We believe that it is imperative to investigate the generalizability of any given finding or theoretical model to other cross-cultural contexts in order to establish confidence in the findings obtained (e.g., Sheldon & Hoon, 2007). Finally, the study reported in the present investigation focused on the affective dimension of happiness. The empirical question that now awaits the attention of researchers is whether similar findings (e.g., uniqueness as a mediator) could be obtained when the cognitive aspect of happiness, satisfaction with life, is assessed.

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AUTHOR NOTES

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