

## Self-Discipline in the Life of University Students: A Qualitative Research\*

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### Abstract

Self-discipline directly or indirectly affects certain aspects of human life such as daily routines, academic achievement, career development, financial independence, health behavior, addictions, social consequences, and psychological adjustment. In this respect, self-discipline is a valuable trait that many people want to obtain or want to develop within their psychological state. The purpose of this study is to reveal self-discipline in the life of university students and to examine how it affects their lives. In the research, 2 steps were followed. In the first step, the self-discipline score of 885 university students was measured. Then, 16 students with the highest self-discipline score (8 people) and the lowest (8 people) were interviewed. As a result of the analysis of qualitative data obtained through content analysis, the following themes emerged: Life goals, ways to achieving life goals, peaceful and happy life perception, ways of reaching to a peaceful and happy life, effects of self-discipline in life, the role of self-discipline in daily life, feelings of to be self-disciplined. Research results indicate that self-discipline has made a positive contribution to students' lives in many aspects. The study sheds light on the role of self-discipline in the experience of university students' lives.

### Key Words

Self-discipline • Self-control • University students' perceptions • Qualitative study

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Human beings come to the world with both impulses and skills that can be resisted. Self-discipline is an inner power that distinguishes human from other creatures and differentiates people from each other (McGonigal, 2012). Self-discipline is a capacity that serves human adaptations (Uziel & Baumeister, 2017). When we look at the literature, there is a dissent about how to name self-discipline, how to define it and how to measure its structure (Duckworth & Kern, 2011). As a matter of fact, the concepts of self-control, willpower, self-regulation, conscientiousness and self-discipline are used interchangeably from time to time (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Jung, Zhou, & Lee, 2017; Muraven, Baumeister, & Tice, 1999; Muraven, Tice, & Baumeister, 1998; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2014). Although there are minor differences between these concepts, we used self-discipline (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005) as the equivalent of self-control and willpower in this article.

Self-discipline is an ability to resist one's desires, regulate emotions, control thoughts and adjust their behavior according to their long-term goals (Baumeister et al., 2007; de Ridder, Lensvelt-Mulders, Finkenauer, Stock, & Baumeister, 2012; Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). Most of the definitions in the literature emphasize that self-discipline is the ability to perform purposeful behaviors (Hagger, 2013), and progress towards the goals is centrally located as benefit of self-discipline (Tangney et al., 2004). In order to emerge self-discipline behavior, the goals determined by the person have a significant importance and achieving the goals, first of all, the person must connect to the target strictly and then pour all effort of striving to achieve the target (Duckworth, Grant, Loew, Oettingen, & Gollwitzer, 2011).

One of the main life goals of human beings is wellbeing (Lopez & Snyder, 2003) and linking to this, self-discipline is the main component that contributes directly or indirectly to well-being (de Ridder & Gillebaart, 2017; Gillebaart & de Ridder, 2015). Studies in the literature have shown that self-discipline is associated with positive psychological variables such as life satisfaction (Hofmann, Luhmann, Fischer, Vohs, & Baumeister, 2013), subjective well-being (Ronen, Hamama, Rosenbaum, & Mishely-Yarlap, 2016), happiness (Cheung, Gillebaart, Kroese, & de Ridder, 2014), psychological well-being (Joshanloo, Jovanović, & Park, 2020), the meaning of life (Stavrova, Pronk, & Kokkoris, 2020) and positive emotional reactivity (Finley & Schmeichel, 2019). Besides, self-discipline is negatively related to stress (Nielsen, Bauer, & Hofmann, 2020) and psychopathology (Tangney et al., 2004).

Self-discipline is a trait that contributes functioning effectively both socially and individually throughout a person's life (de Ridder et al., 2012). According to the prominent literature, there are several areas of life that self-discipline could be examined as a major role such as in daily life (Kannangara et al., 2018), academic achievement (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; Gorbunovs, Kapenieks, & Cakula, 2016; Hagger & Hamilton, 2019; Tangney et al., 2004; Zhao & Kuo, 2015; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2014), social life (DeBono, Shmueli, & Muraven, 2011; Uziel & Baumeister, 2017) and occupational/professional life (Diestel & Schmidt, 2009; Sintemaartensdijk & Righetti, 2019). In this regard, most people desire to have self-discipline and develop these skills to enhance their inner power.

Self-discipline is often needed when reached to the point where is faced with the dilemma to choose between two different behavioral tendencies need to be resolved. A typical example of such a dilemma occurs when a person with a long-term goal of staying slim and healthy resists eating an attractive looking chips in front of the television (Gillebaart & de Ridder, 2015). People with low self-discipline level cannot resist attractants and tend

to act impulsively (Tangney et al., 2004). When we look at the literature, low self-discipline is associated with a large number of negative behaviors such as substance use (Dvorak, Simons, & Wray, 2011; Wills, Walker, Mendoza, AINETTE, 2006), risky health behaviors such as impulsive eating, and exercise avoidance (de Ridder et al., 2012; Hagger, Gucciardi, Turrell, & Hamilton, 2019; Sirikulchayanonta, Ratanopas, Temcharoen, & Srisorrachatr, 2011; Wills, Isasi, Mendoza, & AINETTE, 2007), internet addiction (Özdemir, Kuzucu, & Ak, 2014), impulsive buying (Vohs & Faber, 2007), antisocial behavior and criminal behavior (Cauffman, Steinberg, & Piquero, 2005; Schoepfer & Piquero, 2006).

### **The current study**

As aforementioned, self-discipline affects human life in numerous aspects (Baumeister et al., 2007). Therefore, the development of self-discipline is frequently encouraged (Uziel & Baumeister, 2017). Governments, schools and parents strive for citizens, students and children to acquire self-discipline skills (Bear & Duquette, 2008; Chong, Rahim, & Tong, 2014; Duckworth & Kern, 2011; Milyavskaya & Inzlicht, 2017). One of the life periods in which self-discipline becomes important is young adulthood. As a matter of fact, young adulthood is an important milestone where individuals make important decisions regarding professional and private life (Akbağ & Ümmet, 2017), and begin to take responsibility for their lives. A large population of young adults in Turkey has participated in higher education (Turkey Statistical Institute [TUIK], 2019). Unlike primary school and high school educational environments, college education has a structure where there is no parental control and the curriculum is much more flexible. Therefore, low self-control in the college students can lead to negative consequences (Stephenson, Heckert, & Yerger, 2020). In this respect, it is important to examine the role of self-discipline in the life of university students. Within the scope of this research, we aimed to make an in-depth examination and comparison of the role of self-discipline in the life of college students with high and low self-discipline score. In this context, the following questions were examined with given answers of participants:

- What are the life goals of university students and what is the contribution of self-discipline in achieving these goals?
- What is the perception of a peaceful and happy life of university students and how does self-discipline contribute to a peaceful and happy life?
- What is the role of self-discipline in the daily life of university students?
- How does self-discipline affect the life of university students in academic, health, social, psychological and moral aspects?
- How does it feel to be self-disciplined?

### **Method**

Qualitative research method has been used in the research to directly penetrate the experiences and opinions of the participants (Patton, 2014). Fundamentally, the main purpose of qualitative research is to understand how participants interpret and build a sense of understanding to their experiences (Merriam, 2013). Qualitative research provides a holistic and flexible approach to the study of human behavior (Patton, 2014; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

### Recruitment and selection of participants

The present study conducted following two steps:

In the first step of the research, to carry out the study, the permission of deans is received for surveys. After receiving permission from the university deans, data started to be collected. Then, self-discipline scale was applied to 900 students studying in various departments of the two major state universities in Turkey. Due to missing extreme inputs and information, 15 of the survey has been removed from the data set. Students' mean scores of self-discipline were 49.09 (SD: 6.67). Overall gender rates among the participants are respectively 62.4% female (552) and 37.6% (333) male. Additionally, the age range of the participants is between 17 and 54 with the mean age 20.75 (SD: 3.16). Students were requested to attach their phone numbers into the survey if they voluntarily participate in the second step (interviews) of the research. In order to fulfill the second stage, 284 participants out of 900 agreed to interview and wrote down their phone number with their consent. Following this, 8 students with the highest and lowest points from these participants were called for appointments and the interviews were arranged by informing the research process. Gender distribution of the second stage participant is 5 males and 11 females of the university in the interview, and the average age is 19.5. Students study in various departments and class levels (Table 1).

Qualitative research has been carried out on small samples that are purposefully selected to facilitate in-depth understanding and analysis of a phenomenon (Patton, 2014). Extreme or deviant case sampling method, which is one of the purposeful sampling types, was used in the research. This sampling type is commonly used in situations due to extreme or outlier cases can provide richer data than normal situations and help to comprehend the problem in multiple dimensions and in depth (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2014; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

Table 1

#### *Information about Participants and Self-Discipline Scores*

Participants	Gender	Age	Department	Self-discipline Score	Highest/Lowest Point
P1	Male	18	Turkish Education	62	Highest
P2	Male	20	Turkish Education	62	Highest
P3	Female	19	Counseling Psychology	64	Highest
P4	Female	18	Counseling Psychology	63	Highest
P5	Female	20	Counseling Psychology	61	Highest
P6	Female	19	Counseling Psychology	61	Highest
P7	Female	19	Counseling Psychology	62	Highest
P8	Female	22	History of Art	61	Highest
P9	Female	20	Nursing	36	Lowest
P10	Female	22	Engineering	33	Lowest
P11	Female	19	Counseling Psychology	35	Lowest
P12	Female	19	Turkish Education	22	Lowest
P13	Female	19	Counseling Psychology	36	Lowest
P14	Male	20	Counseling Psychology	27	Lowest
P15	Female	19	Turkish Education	33	Lowest
P16	Male	19	Veterinary	22	Lowest

### **Data Collection**

In the first step of the research, we used the *Self-Discipline Scale (SDS)* developed by [Simsir \(2020\)](#) to assist the level of self-discipline of college students. SDS consisted of 13-items and two dimensions as self-control and responsibility. The results of exploratory factor analysis indicated that a two factor model with 13 items explained 46.57% of the total variance. Also, the factor loadings of SDS ranged from .38 to .77. All items are rated on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores on this scale indicate higher levels of self-discipline. In the current study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients calculated as .80 for total scale. The maximum score that can be obtained from the scale is 65, and the minimum score is 13.

In the second step of the research, a semi-structured interview form which involves examining individual opinions of every single participants with their own words and consisting of the closed and open-ended questions developed by the researcher was used ([Merriam, 2013](#); [Büyüköztürk et al., 2014](#)). The interview form has been prepared considering the relevant literature. Later, interview form has submitted to be examined by five academicians working in the Department of Educational Sciences who have extensive knowledge and experience in qualitative research studies. Following the feedback provided by expert academicians, the final arrangements were made. Resulting plot interviews participation with 3 students, the final version of interview form was framed.

After preparation of the final form, the interviews were arranged according to the appointments received from the participants to be held face to face. At the beginning of the interviews, the purpose of the interview was explained to the students and they were encouraged to share thoughts freely in a comfortable environment. Participants were given the guarantee that their identity would be hidden. The interviews were recorded with the content of the participants and lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes for each.

### **Data Analysis**

Data obtained through interviews were analyzed by using content analysis method. In content analysis, similar data is categorized in certain themes and concepts and interpreted to be demystified for readers ([Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013](#)). Qualitative research is based on exploration and as a part of it inductive analysis which is the process of building an overall pattern from specific to general ([Patton, 2014](#)).

A series of steps were followed during the analysis of the data. In the first step of our data analysis, voice recordings of interviewees were transcribed. In order to control the data, the researcher wrote down all the data and proceeded to analysis without interruption. NVivo 11 software was used to analyze the data. This software facilitated the coding of data and the creation of themes and categories. Qualitative data analysis was carried out through the cycle of description, classification and interpretation of data. Creating codes or categories in this cycle is at the center of qualitative data analysis. In this process, detailed definitions were created, themes and categories were developed interpretations were made from the perspective of the researcher or in the light of the information in the literature. Coding is a process that includes gathering texts or visual materials into small categories of information, looking for evidence for code from various databases used in the study and labeling these codes ([Creswell, 2013](#)).

To ensure validity and reliability in the research, data diversification was made. From the preparation of the interview questions to the analysis phase and within this aspect each phase are consulted by an expert opinion. After analyzes the participants were asked to make evaluations by making short interviews with ¼ of the participants. In addition, with the help of another researcher, re-coding was carried out to demonstrate the consistency between the coders. Following re-coding, these two encoding results were calculated with the formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), and coefficient of concordance between encoders was calculated as 90%.

### Findings

In this section, themes, categories, and statements of students' views are given. The result of the content analysis was that seven general themes emerged: Life goals, ways to achieving life goals, peaceful and happy life perception, ways of reaching to a peaceful and happy life, effects of self-discipline in life, the role of self-discipline in daily life, feelings of to be self-disciplined. The statements of participants are given as P1, P2,...P16.

#### Self-discipline in achieving life goals

Table 2

*Categories Formed Under the Themes of Life Goals and Ways to Achieving Life Goals*

Theme	Categories with the opinions of students with high self-discipline score	Categories with the opinions of students with low self-discipline score
<b>1. Life goals</b>	A good profession I can love (5)	A good profession I can love (4)
	A high standard of living (2)	Happy life with the family (2)
	Raising good generations (1)	Carefree happy life (2)
	Doing everything well I do (1)	Travel (1)
	Happy life with the family (1)	To improve education (1)
<b>2. Ways to achieving life goals</b>	Work to college lessons (6)	Economic independence (1)
	To acquire professional skills (4)	Reading / Researching (3)
	Reading / Researching (4)	To acquire professional skills (2)
	Learning foreign language (2)	To make financial savings (2)
	Constantly set new goals (1)	Know oneself (1)
		Participating in activities (1)
		To reduce stress and anxiety (1)
	Learning foreign language (1)	

*Note:* The numbers in parentheses (n) indicate frequencies.

In order to reveal the role of self-discipline in achieving life goals of university students, the answers given to the questions of “What are their life ideals “and “How they can achieve them” and “What they do to achieve them” were categorized and compared. When we look at the answers of the students, most of them have an ideal job that they do well and love. For example,

I have a dream of establishing a company on energy field. I dream of starting a company on energy and software. I am hoping for this dream to make it true. (P10)

Both groups of students with high and low self-discipline score, they see in their future to live together with families as one of their goal of life. For example,

... Apart from that, a happy life is a life with my wife and children. My parents are the same. It is such a large family. I guess having such a big family like this much. (P4)

While However, the students with high self-discipline have the other life goals such as, good profession, high standard of living, raising good generations, doing everything well, happy life with family; on the other hand, the other life ideals of students with low self-discipline are listed as a good profession, happy life with the family, carefree happy life, travel, to improve education, economic independence. For example,

...I want a good life, rather a life above the standards. I mean. I want it to live in a house, not an apartment. Basically, I think more of a place where my child can play in the garden intertwined with nature. (P2)

...I dream of a life without stress and anxiety, healthy, happy, without troubles. (P14)

When the life goals of both groups are compared, it is seen that students with high self-discipline level have more work-oriented ideals and the ideals of which they actively work while students with low self-discipline idealize a life where they can feel more comfortable. Considering the issue what students need to do to achieve their life goals, there is not such a big difference in the views of both groups. In order to reach their ideal lives, students respond the conditions as working to college lessons, acquiring the professional skills, reading/researching, learning foreign language, saving money, knowing themselves better, reducing stress and anxiety, constantly setting the new goals. For example,

Firstly, both academically and socially... For example, I both try to study lessons and a continue to my social life even a little... (P7)

... Namely, I plan to attend an English course abroad during this summer or another summer holidays. Because I can't speak English. (P11)

### Self-discipline in reaching a peaceful and happy life

Table 3

*The Categories Formed Under the Themes of Peaceful and Happy Life Perception and Ways of Reaching Peaceful and Happy Life*

Theme	Categories of the opinions of students with high self-discipline score	Categories of the opinions of students with low self-discipline score
<b>3. Peaceful and happy life perception</b>	To be with family and loved ones (3)	To be with family and loved ones (5)
	Achieving life goals (3)	Working in the job you love (2)
	Fulfill the requirements of the faith (1)	Overcoming problems in life (1)
	Be free (1)	Make Money (1)
	High quality interpersonal relationships (1)	Having goals in life (1)
	Dealing with nature (1)	A healthy life (1)
	Waking up to a new day (1)	Be free (1)

	Working and striving (5)	Making the family and other people happy (4)
<b>4. Ways of reaching to a peaceful and happy life</b>	Making the family and other people happy (2)	Make money (4)
	Positive attitude to life (2)	Working and striving (2)
	Know oneself (2)	Expanding the social environment (1)
	Finding the ideal partner (1)	
	Dream (1)	
	Expanding the social environment (1)	

Note: The numbers in parentheses (n) indicate frequencies

The answers of the given questions are categorized in order to examine the perceptions of students who are with high and low self-discipline scores about a peaceful and happy life and the role of self-discipline in terms of a peaceful/happy life. Examples of students' views on how to achieve peace and happiness are as follows:

...To be with people I love. This is peace for me, for example ... For some people it is money, for others it is prestige. This is not the case for me. I care about people especially those I love. There are may be disappointments at the end of this, but peace for me is the goodness and happiness of them, and being with them. (P15)

When you achieve your goals, you will be peaceful and happy. , I would be happy if I make my goals true without any trouble... (P3)

While the self-disciplined students emphasized to reach a peaceful and happy life is predominantly working and striving, however, the other group most emphasized answers are to build a family and make other people happy. One of the topics that students who score low are the most emphasized is earning money. When we look at the examples from the opinions of the students:

For example, I like studying. To be honest, I feel happy when I learn something by studying. Because I add something to myself. Because I look at it not as a lesson but as I have learned something for the life ... I think this makes me feel happy. (P7)

... As I said right now, after earning money, saving money and going to Iran or Azerbaijan. That's why I'm saving money right now. (P16)

#### The effects of having self-discipline in life

Table 4

*Categories Formed Under the Theme of the Effects of Self-Discipline in Life*

Theme	Categories with the opinions of students with high self-discipline score	Categories with the opinions of students with low self-discipline score
	<b>Academically</b>	<b>Academically</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success of individual / group studies (6)</li> <li>• Guiding work (2)</li> <li>• Achieving the goal more easily (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being successful (6)</li> <li>• Being course-oriented constantly (1)</li> <li>• Living like a robot (1)</li> </ul>

<b>5. Effects of self-discipline in life</b>	<b>In terms of health</b>	<b>In terms of health</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical health (6)</li> <li>• Mental health (3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical health (8)</li> <li>• Mental health (2)</li> </ul>
	<b>In terms of social life</b>	<b>In terms of social life</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping one's word and appointment (5)</li> <li>• Gaining dignity (2)</li> <li>• To gain the appreciation of people (1)</li> <li>• Having to do the hardest jobs (1)</li> <li>• Fulfilling social responsibilities (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication problems (5)</li> <li>• Gaining dignity (2)</li> <li>• Be late for the appointment (2)</li> <li>• Give confidence/trust to people (1)</li> </ul>
	<b>Psychologically</b>	<b>Psychologically</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling peaceful and happy (4)</li> <li>• Get bored (2)</li> <li>• Feeling beneficial to the community (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get bored (2)</li> <li>• Feeling peaceful and happy (2)</li> <li>• Being self-sufficient (1)</li> <li>• Personal satisfaction (1)</li> <li>• Increased self-esteem (1)</li> </ul>
	<b>In terms of addictions</b>	<b>In terms of addictions</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of problematic technology use (5)</li> <li>• Awareness of cigarette / alcohol addiction (5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problematic technology use (7)</li> <li>• Smoking, alcohol dependence (4)</li> </ul>
	<b>Morally</b>	<b>Morally</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social values (3)</li> <li>• To protect the rights of the people (2)</li> <li>• Ideal human profile (2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To protect the rights of the people and keeping one's word (3)</li> <li>• Religious values (1)</li> </ul>

*Note:* The numbers in parentheses (n) indicate frequencies

In this part of the research, it has been examined how self-discipline is effective on social, academic, health, addictions, moral and psychological aspects in their lives accordingly to the opinions of students with high and low self-discipline score.

When we look at the opinions of the participants on how self-discipline affects academic activities, the examples as below:

...So I set a goal and I have to work constantly to achieve that goal. It is necessary to have willpower. You set yourself a goal until you're done. I should do this much, I should study this much. So it guides you. It leads our lessons. (P5)

... Those who are already in academic world are generally self-disciplined people. I think so. But in general it feels like a robot that does everything punctually. Academicians, for example always telling the same thing like a robot. Being a robot ... You exist today, won't be here tomorrow, why such an effort? (P16)

Looking at the answers given in terms of health, students drew attention to their positive aspects with regards to physical and mental health. For example,

For example, a person who starts a sport. I used to be like that. I started to do a sport. I continued for 5-6 months. After seeing the improvement in myself, I carried on my sport activities happily without even realizing that I didn't want to continue, because once you moved in that mood you cannot stop it. (P1)

...I sometimes had psychological difficulties in my life. There are many people who experience the same things. When you cut off your communication with others, you become very depressed. There is always action when you have self-discipline. The self-disciplined person in pursue what next he should do. His communication increases as his thinks about it. He heals his psychological problems himself as his communication increase. (P10)

From a social perspective, although the students often emphasized the positive effect of self-discipline, they have also drawn attention to their negative experiences such as being obliged to do the hardest work from time to time and assuming to have more responsibility than others. For example,

In a positive way, it gives confidence to the other person. For example, when you say I will do this and you do that, you build trust in others. It's like, if a person keeps his promise to him, he keeps his promise to me... (P11)

...The negative side of this the most disgraceful job would always left to me... (P2)

From a psychological perspective, having self-discipline has positive aspects such as feeling peaceful and happy, feeling beneficial to the society, being self-sufficient, personal satisfaction, and increasing self-esteem. However, it can lead someone to feel overwhelmed if the sense of self-discipline exists than it is supposed to be. When we look at the opinions of the students:

A self-disciplined person already has a personal satisfaction for doing what he should do. His happiness is high if he increases the well-being of other people. Hardworking person is a self-satisfied person anyway because he always fulfils his/her duty. (P10)

... On the negative side, I sometimes feel tired because of overloaded responsibilities on me. (P4)

From the perspective of addictions, it is seen that having self-discipline is closely related to the awareness of problematic technology use, awareness of cigarette/alcohol addiction. The only group who has problematic technology use and some harmful habits is the students with low self-discipline level. For example,

...I don't have any addiction, nor on the phone. I control myself after a while. I know it's harmful, I shouldn't use it anymore. I know that I should use it according to the necessary needs. (P3)

I like computer games excessively whether it is combat or car games, it doesn't matter. As there was no college during the summer holiday, I play games like crazy day and night. At one point I started to have eye redness. Because I looked at the screen all the time. The doctor gave me eye drop, but it did not help how much regularly I used it because I continued to play. (P9).

According to the opinions of the participants, the moral contribution of having self-discipline is important in the context of social values, protecting people's rights, ideal human profile, keeping the word and religious values. For example,

... Being self-disciplined is like an ideal human profile. It seems to me like that. ... (P3)

...Likewise, cheating. Maybe I would get a higher grade, but I don't cheat. it is a very heavy mis behaviour when we think of it as a guilt. Both I thought of as a rightful due. You're fooling yourself... (P11).

**Self-discipline in daily life**

Table 5

*Categories Formed Under the Theme of the Role of Self-Discipline in Daily Life*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Categories with the opinions of students with high self-discipline score</b>	<b>Categories with the opinions of students with low self-discipline score</b>
<b>6. The role of self-discipline in daily life</b>	Planned and organized life (4)	Getting up late in the morning (3)
	Maintaining useful habits (3)	Weakness of willpower (3)
	Getting up early in the morning (3)	Not following daily plans (2)
	Fulfilling responsibilities (3)	Postpone (2)
	Punctuality (1)	A monotonous life (1) Clutter (1)

*Note:* The numbers in parentheses (n) indicate frequencies

Considering the role of self-discipline in the daily life of university students, it is remarkable that there are great differences in the opinions of students with high and low self-discipline scores. Students with high scores stated that being self-disciplined contributes to them for a planned and organized life, maintaining useful habits, getting up early in the morning, fulfilling responsibilities, punctuality. For example,

I always get up early in the morning. I think that the person who gets up early in the morning will always proceed early. I experienced this myself last year. For example, I used to study lessons from 1 to 2 at night, and wake up early in the morning. I was getting calmer because I got up early. The daylight also motivates you and so on. I was working better in the early morning...(P1)

... I plan my day when I wake up in the morning without wasting time. I will do this at this time. I'll do this as the following job after that. I'm usually organized and scheduled...(P4)

The students with low self-discipline score stated that the lack of self-discipline had negative consequences on the it daily life such as getting up late in the morning, weaknesses of willpower, not following the daily plans, postpone, a monotonous life, and clutter:

I constantly postpone my duties. I think this is one of my biggest weaknesses. For example, I say what I am going to do today, it is postponed for weeks to months next time, and these create problems for me. If we think about this from an academic point of view, for example, I always promise myself that I will do this today and I will do it tomorrow or something but I constantly postpone, and it causes a lot of trouble during the exam period or simply my cleaning duty. I say I'm going to clean my room today or I'm going to clean my closet but I don't. When it is accumulated, it becomes a bigger problem. They all are accumulated together and create way bigger problems in my daily life. (P15).

...I wake up in the morning and have breakfast. In the morning, I get up according to lessons, but mostly I get up late, I can't revive, I wake up but I can't revive at once... (P12)

### Feeling of self-disciplined

Table 6

*Categories Formed Under the Theme of the Feelings of Self-Disciplined*

Theme	Categories with the opinions of students with high self-discipline score	Categories with the opinions of students with low self-discipline score
<b>7. Feelings of to be self-disciplined</b>	Self Confidence (4)	Peace and happiness (5)
	Peace and happiness (3)	Self Confidence (3)
	Being useful to people (1)	Independence (1)
	Be proud of oneself (1)	Monotonous and boring (1)

*Note:* The numbers in parentheses (n) indicate frequencies

Students stated their feelings when they are self-disciplined with such expressions self-confidence, peace and happiness, being useful to people, proud of themselves and feelings of independence. For example,

...I think it gives you more confidence. I can do this I can stand behind my decisions. It can make you more socialize in this respect. I am a really disciplined person, rather than saying that I am not taking that responsibility or withdrawing it, I assume the task that I can do it, I can succeed it. (P13)

...When I improve myself to be self-disciplined, I feel peaceful because there is a relief because I do my task or manage my duty. The stress that I feel disappears. But it bothers me when I postpone a duty or when I don't leave something that I should leave. I can't sleep because of its stress or if I am doing a something, I cannot do it properly... (P14)

### Discussion

In this study, we focused on the role of self-discipline in the lives of university students with low and high levels of self-discipline. In the research, which has conducted with a qualitative method, the following themes emerged as a result of the analysis of the data obtained through the interviews; life goals, ways to achieving life goals, peaceful and happy life perception, ways of reaching to a peaceful and happy life, effects of self-discipline in life, the role of self-discipline in daily life, feelings of to be self-disciplined.

Self-discipline is one of the sources of motivation and a skill that enables the person to delay their temptations and determine their priorities in reaching their goals in the long run (de Ridder, Van der Weiden, Gillebaart, Benjamins, & Ybema, 2019; Laran, 2020). The situation in which self-discipline most needed occurs when time of long-term goals and immediate pleasures in the short term in conflict (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Gillebaart & de Ridder, 2015). In the midst of these conflicts, the aim of self-improvement and the feeling of well-being at that moment are equally strong. For example, students especially experience self-control conflicts when they have to study texts they are not interested in for long hours to achieve academic success (Fishbach & Labroo, 2007). When we look at the opinions of students with low and high levels of self-discipline in our study regarding the goals and objectives, it can be seen that students with high levels of self-discipline tend to take

more actions to achieve their goals, such as working, learning professional skills, reading and doing research even if it is difficult and boring.

The source of happiness, which is one of the most emphasized and researched topics in the history of psychology and philosophy (Diener, 1984; Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008), is one of the questions that researchers try to find its answer (Borooah, 2006; Demirci & Ekşi, 2018; Lu & Shih, 1997). Among these pursuits of the source of happiness would be answered as self-discipline (de Ridder & Gillebaart, 2017; Lu & Shih, 1997). In the research, the most emphasized issues about a peaceful and happy life of the students are to be with the family and their loved ones, to reach their life goals, to have the profession they like. Students with high levels of self-discipline emphasized working and striving as to achieve a peaceful and happy life, while the other group emphasized making both the family and other people happy and making money. Researches in the literature indicate that self-discipline contributes to positive mood, such as happiness (Cheung et al., 2014), subjective well-being (Ronen et al., 2016) and life satisfaction (Stavrova et al., 2020).

Self-discipline affects university students' lives directly and indirectly in terms of academic success, social life, health, addictions, moral and psychological situation. The students emphasized that self-discipline has a positive effect on their academic success. When we look at the literature, we can say that most of the studies on self-discipline are focused on academic success (Duckworth & Seligman, 2006; Durrant, 2010; Tangney et al., 2004; Zhao & Kuo, 2015; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2014). The students drew attention to the importance of self-discipline in terms of physical and mental health. There are many studies in the literature that emphasize the importance of self-discipline in maintaining a healthy life (Gerdtham, Wengström, & Östervall, 2019; Sirikulchayanonta et al., 2011). Self-discipline has a pivotal role in the implementation of social and moral rules (Baumeister & Exline, 1999; Uziel & Baumeister, 2017). The students stated that exhibiting self-discipline behavior made them moral and bring them closer to the ideal human profile in the society. From a psychological point of view, students stated that being self-disciplined has positive aspects such as feeling peaceful and happy, feeling beneficial an individual to the society, being self-sufficient, personal satisfaction, and increasing self-esteem. Research conducted by Nielsen et al. (2020) supports this finding and found negative relationships between self-control and stress. In terms of addictions, it is seen that having self-discipline is closely related with the awareness of technology abuse, smoking and alcohol addiction. Studies have found that low self-discipline is associated with substance abuse (Tibbetts & Whittimore, 2002), online gaming, internet addiction (Teng, Li, & Liu, 2014), and smartphone addiction (Kim, Min, Min, Lee, & Yoo, 2018).

The theme in which the most differentiation is observed in the responses of the participants with high and low self-discipline score is the role of self-discipline in daily life. Students with high scores stated that being self-disciplined contributes to them for more planned and organized life, beneficial habits, waking up early in the morning, fulfilling responsibilities and punctuality. Students with low scores stated that self-discipline had negative consequences such as waking up late in the morning, inability to follow with daily plans, postponing duties, monotonous life and clutter. In the study of Kannangara et al. (2018), who conducted a similar study, it was revealed that having the self-discipline makes the students who successfully graduated from the university, successful on several subjects such as time management, self-awareness, prioritizing the tasks to be done and awareness of their own weaknesses. In the study conducted by de Ridder and Gillebaart (2017), self-discipline was found to be associated with daily beneficial habits and a stronger reliance on established daily routines.

The students expressed that they feel better when they are self-disciplined, with self-confidence, peace and happiness, being beneficial to people, self-proud and independent. Studies in the literature demonstrate that self-discipline increases positive emotions (Finley & Schmeichel, 2019; King & Gaerlan, 2014). As self-discipline increases positive emotions, positive emotions and positive mood also increase self-discipline (Fishbach & Labroo, 2007; Tice, Baumeister, Shmueli, & Muraven, 2007; Tornquist & Miles, 2019). All in all, positive mood contributes to people adapting their goals and performing tasks require self-control more successfully (Fishbach & Labroo, 2007).

In conclusion, this research has revealed that self-discipline plays an important role in the life of college students and it affects most aspects of their lives. Nevertheless in the existing literature, most of the studies on self-discipline have been carried out with quantitative methods but there are a limited number of studies conducted with the qualitative research method, which allows examining the perspective of the participants. In this regard, it is thought that the research would make an important contribution to the literature. Conducting the study with the participation of the students with the highest self-discipline score and the lowest was important and necessary in terms of providing the opportunity to make extensive comparisons. However, like other research, this study also has confronted some limitations.

The research was carried out with the participation of a small number of students due to its qualitative nature. In addition, these students consist of those who voluntarily agree to participate in the second stage of the self-discipline measurements in the first stage of our research. The students participating in the study are the students studying in various departments of the two main universities in Turkey. In this regard, it would not be to generalize the whole human behaviors with this study. It would be worthwhile to carry out more studies on self-discipline with wide diverse sample groups and mixed research techniques using qualitative/quantitative methods together in the future. In addition, the future studies should substantially focus on how college students can improve their self-discipline skills. Additionally, universities should create various opportunities for students to develop their self-discipline skills. For example; psychological counseling centers of universities can develop psycho-education programs to increase the self-discipline skills of university students.

#### **Ethic Approval**

I declare that the research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standarts of the institutional and national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standarts. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. There is no conflict of interest in the research. The study was approved with the Meeting Date and Number 25.06.2020/73 by the Social and Human Sciences Ethic Committee of Necmettin Erbakan University. The author received no financial support for the authorship, research and publication of this article.

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