

Developmental assets as predictors of Albanian adolescents' life satisfaction

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This study examined the relationship between Positive Youth Development (PYD) Internal and External assets and life satisfaction among Albanian adolescents. Data were collected from a sample of 409 Albanian students aged 14-19 years using the Developmental Assets Profile and the Life Satisfaction Scale. The sample included the majority group (51%) and various minority groups in Albania. Statistical analyses were conducted to explore the association between PYD assets, demographic variables, and perceived life satisfaction. The results revealed significant differences in Internal and External assets across all groups, with life satisfaction reported at a moderate positive level. Gender and minority group differences were observed in the relationship between assets and life satisfaction. The findings of this study reveal that the ten Positive Youth Development (PYD) assets serve as predictors for life satisfaction. Additionally, it was observed that the same set of ten PYD assets acts as a predictor for life satisfaction. These results provide valuable insights into the implementation of PYD strategies and the impact they have on life satisfaction within an under-researched community. *Keywords:* developmental assets, internal assets, external assets, ethnic minority, life satisfaction

Los factores de desarrollo como predictores de la satisfacción vital de los adolescentes albaneses

Este estudio examinó la relación entre los factores internos y externos del Desarrollo Juvenil Positivo (PYD) y la satisfacción con la vida entre los adolescentes albaneses. Los datos se recopilieron de una muestra de 409 estudiantes albaneses de 14 a 19 años utilizando el Perfil de activos de desarrollo y la Escala de satisfacción con la vida. La muestra incluía el grupo mayoritario (51%) y varios grupos minoritarios en Albania. Se realizaron análisis estadísticos para explorar la asociación entre los factores de PYD, las variables demográficas y la satisfacción con la vida percibida. Los resultados revelaron diferencias significativas en los activos internos y externos en todos los grupos, con satisfacción con la vida reportada en un

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nivel positivo moderado. Se observaron diferencias de género y de grupos minoritarios en la relación entre los factores y la satisfacción con la vida. Los hallazgos de este estudio revelan que los diez valores positivos del Desarrollo Juvenil Positivo (PYD, por sus siglas en inglés) sirven como predictores de la satisfacción con la vida. Además, se observó que el mismo conjunto de diez factores PYD actúa como predictor de la satisfacción con la vida. Estos resultados brindan información valiosa sobre la implementación de estrategias PYD y el impacto que tienen en la satisfacción con la vida dentro de una comunidad poco investigada.

Palabras clave: factores de desarrollo, factores internos, factores externos, minoría étnica, satisfacción con la vida

Fatores de desenvolvimento como preditores de satisfação com a vida entre adolescentes albaneses

Este estudo examinou a relação entre fatores internos e externos do Desenvolvimento Positivo da Juventude (PYD) e a satisfação com a vida entre adolescentes albaneses. Os dados foram coletados de uma amostra de 409 estudantes albaneses com idades entre 14 e 19 anos usando o Perfil de Ativos de Desenvolvimento e a Escala de Satisfação com a Vida. A amostra incluiu o grupo majoritário (51%) e vários grupos minoritários da Albânia. Foram realizadas análises estatísticas para explorar a associação entre os fatores do PYD, as variáveis demográficas e a satisfação com a vida percebida. Os resultados revelaram diferenças significativas nos ativos internos e externos em todos os grupos, com a satisfação com a vida relatada em um nível positivo moderado. Foram observadas diferenças de gênero e de grupos minoritários na relação entre os fatores e a satisfação com a vida. Os resultados deste estudo revelam que os dez valores positivos do Positive Youth Development (PYD) servem como preditores da satisfação com a vida. Além disso, o mesmo conjunto de dez fatores do PYD foi considerado um indicador de satisfação com a vida. Esses resultados fornecem informações valiosas sobre a implementação de estratégias do PYD e o impacto que elas têm sobre a satisfação com a vida em uma comunidade pouco pesquisada.

Palavras-chave: fatores de desenvolvimento, fatores internos, fatores externos, minoria étnica, satisfação com a vida

Les facteurs de développement comme prédicteurs de la satisfaction de la vie chez les adolescents albanais

Cette étude a examiné la relation entre les facteurs internes et externes du développement positif des jeunes et la satisfaction de la vie chez les adolescents albanais. Les données ont été recueillies auprès d'un échantillon de 409 étudiants albanais âgés de 14 à 19 ans à l'aide du profil des atouts de développement et de l'échelle de satisfaction à l'égard de la vie. L'échantillon comprenait le groupe majoritaire (51 %) et plusieurs groupes minoritaires en Albanie. Des analyses statistiques ont été menées pour étudier l'association entre les facteurs de développement personnel, les variables démographiques et la satisfaction perçue dans la vie. Les résultats ont révélé des différences significatives dans les atouts internes et externes de tous les groupes, la satisfaction de la vie étant perçue comme modérément positive. Des différences entre les sexes et les groupes minoritaires ont été observées dans la relation entre les facteurs et la satisfaction de vivre. Les résultats de cette étude révèlent que les dix valeurs positives du développement positif de la jeunesse (DPJ) servent de prédicteurs de la satisfaction dans la vie. En outre, le même ensemble de dix facteurs de développement positif de la jeunesse s'est avéré être un facteur prédictif de la satisfaction dans la vie. Ces résultats fournissent des informations précieuses sur la mise en œuvre des stratégies de DPJ et sur l'impact qu'elles ont sur la satisfaction de la vie au sein d'une communauté qui n'a pas fait l'objet de recherches suffisantes.

Mots clés: facteurs de développement, facteurs internes, facteurs externes, minorité ethnique, satisfaction de la vie

The Positive Developmental Approach emphasizes the role of youth in fostering self-determination, strengths, and abilities, which in turn provide them with greater opportunities and enable them to fulfill their future roles as healthy and satisfied adults (Boehm, 2021; Flannery, 2017). The Positive Youth Developmental Assets framework, proposed by Benson and Search Institute (Benson et al., 2004), offers a theoretical foundation that focuses on both the internal and external assets of young people. Internal assets, such as commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity, are particularly crucial for this age group. These assets include having a positive outlook on one's future (Belintxon et al., 2021), as well as demonstrating achievement motivation, school-related bonds, integrity, honesty, responsibility, interpersonal competence, resistance skills, peaceful conflict resolution, personal power, self-esteem, and a sense of purpose. External assets encompass support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and creative use of time. A supportive community that values youth, including family, school, neighborhood, creative activities, youth programs, and positive peer influence (Chang et al., 2020), are external assets that contribute to an optimal environment for youth development.

While internal and external assets are individually important for young people's lives, their interaction is considered vital for fostering strength, character, and receiving guidance and opportunities from family, school, and society (Abdul Kadir & Rusyda, 2022; Gan et al., 2022). Drawing from the Positive Youth Development Approach, this study focuses on positive growth concepts that facilitate youth flourishing, achievement, and intelligent interactions with others and life events. According to Benson (2004), the development of both internal and external assets in a positive direction can help youth thrive, create a safe pathway for successful development, and prevent

or reduce engagement in high-risk behaviors. Previous research suggests that higher levels of these developmental assets are associated with better mental health conditions and active engagement in various life domains, such as motivation for academic success (Wiiium et al., 2021). Additionally, youth with higher levels of developmental assets exhibit clearer life goals and a greater inclination to pursue careers aligned with their skills and competencies (Dervishi et al., 2022a; Dost-Gözkan et al., 2021; Dervishi et al., 2022b).

Youth who possess higher levels of developmental assets perceive their environmental context as safe and interact with adults, such as parents, school settings, and the community, with greater confidence (Pérez-Díaz et al., 2022; Sui et al., 2021; Zhu & Burrow, 2022). They have a strong desire to learn new skills and competencies, and this supportive environment enhances their sense of self-worth, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. Moreover, they are more likely to exhibit caring behaviors toward their family, others, and the community, as a response to the positive environment they have experienced. In other words, youth perceive a high sense of connection between themselves and the adults in their context, which fosters their productivity and involvement in society (Abdul Kadir & Rusyda, 2022; Dost-Gözkan et al., 2021; Sui et al., 2021). Lastly, youth who possess social skills or who are situated within a supportive school environment are more likely to develop a commitment to learning and social competencies (Wiiium et al., 2021).

The internal and external assets of Positive Youth Development (PYD) are believed to have a significant impact on health and general well-being (Wiiium et al., 2021; Gomez-Baya et al., 2022; Abdul Kadir & Rusyda, 2022; Zheng et al., 2021). Previous research indicates that specific aspects of PYD may have varying effects on youth outcomes, influenced by factors such as social-cultural background, age, gender, education, and ethnicity (Gomez-Baya et al., 2022; Gan et al., 2022; Dervishi et al., 2022a). Higher levels of internal and external assets during youth development have been found to be significantly related to well-being outcomes (Partington et al., 2022). Life satisfaction, an

important indicator of overall well-being for youth, is closely tied to PYD and reflects their cognitive and emotional perceptions of their quality of life as a whole (Soares et al., 2019; Bi et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2020).

Life satisfaction is also influenced by how young people personally value their lives based on their own criteria. It is evident that young people who lead fulfilling lives tend to have higher levels of internal and external assets. Research suggests that youth with higher levels of developmental assets experience greater life satisfaction and perceive more support from their families and schools, leading to increased community involvement (Zaborskis et al., 2022). Higher levels of life satisfaction have a positive impact on mental health and are associated with adaptive strategies for positive interactions with the environment (Refaeli Weiss-Dagan et al., 2022). The relationship between internal and external assets of PYD and youth's perceived life satisfaction highlights their role in promoting positive youth development.

Numerous studies (Ribeiro & Silva, 2019; Bi et al., 2021; Zhou, Shek & Zhu, 2020) have explored the relationship between developmental assets and life satisfaction in youth, revealing a significant positive association. Young adults who experience higher levels of developmental assets during their growth period are better able to adapt to the new roles and responsibilities of young adulthood compared to their peers (Shek & Chai, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to examine how developmental assets contribute to the outcomes of healthy youth development. Understanding the developmental context of youth requires integrating life satisfaction and positive development perspectives, highlighting the role of individual and contextual factors.

The Albanian youth context

Albania, situated in the western Balkans, exhibits limited socio-economic dimensions compared to other countries in the region. The recent phenomenon of migration has introduced an atmosphere of insecurity and posed potential risks for the future labor market

outlook, thereby significantly affecting social care mechanisms, transitional family structures, the education system, and the country's social capital (Gherasim, 2022). Notably, Albania has faced a worrisome situation with a considerable number of young people leaving the country and engaging in illegal migration toward Western European countries (Regional Cooperation Council, 2021). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2020) has observed that both youth and parents perceive migration to the European Union as an opportunity for a better life. Despite being officially designated as a "safe country," Albania has the second-highest number of asylum seekers in Europe, ranking after Syrians in the Netherlands (European Western Balkans, 2022). In 2021, approximately 31% of individuals aged 15 to 64 years were economically inactive, with 26.1% of young people aged 15-29 years not being employed, attending school, or receiving professional training. Within this group, 37.3% experienced unemployment (Regional Cooperation Council, 2021). A survey conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation (2014) among 1,200 young adults aged 16 to 27 revealed that 80% of Albanian youth aspired to emigrate, motivated by concerns surrounding high unemployment rates (estimated at 29.2%) and poverty, coupled with the desire to pursue better educational opportunities abroad. The COVID-19 pandemic has further fueled the desire of Albanian youth to leave the country, with an increasing preference for England as a destination. The unemployment rate among youth, standing at 30%, remains three times higher than the national average, with 70% of the unemployed having completed higher education and 28% of the unemployed falling into the youth category (Regional Cooperation Council, 2021). Unemployment, exacerbated by the pandemic crisis, poses a significant concern for a small country like Albania (International Labor Organization-ILO, 2022).

The present study

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between developmental assets and life satisfaction among Albanian adolescents,

focusing on the predictive role of specific developmental assets. The Developmental Assets Tools have been widely recognized as a suitable method for exploring Positive Youth Development (PYD). Previous research conducted by Vera-Bachmann et al. (2020) and Scales (2011) has established that an external and internal score of 20.7 is considered adequate, while a score of 19.7 indicates vulnerability (Research Institute, 2019). However, limited evidence exists regarding Albanian youth PYD, particularly considering the current migration situation. Thus, investigating their vulnerabilities and strengths can contribute significantly to theory development within a rich research context. Furthermore, this research can provide valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, institutions, stakeholders, and the community to support and design intervention programs that foster a positive climate for youth growth and well-being. The study sought to determine the developmental assets that predict life satisfaction among Albanian adolescents, considering the unique characteristics of different ethnic groups in the country.

Method

Participants

A cross-sectional study was conducted involving a convenience sample of 409 Albanian students from public upper secondary schools and universities. The participants' age ranged from 14 to 19 years, with a mean age of 18.68. The sample aimed to represent various geographic regions of Albania and included both the majority group and minority communities living in the country, such as Greek, North Macedonian, Aromanian, Roma, Egyptian, Montenegrin, Bosnian, Serbian, and Bulgarian. To assess the reliability of the scales, a subsample of 78 students completed the Albanian version of the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) and Life Satisfaction scale twice, with a two-week interval between administrations.

Procedure

Albania follows a similar educational system to other European Union countries, and the country is classified within the lower Human Development group by the United Nations. The participants' socioeconomic backgrounds represented low-class and middle-class incomes. Data collection was carried out between November 01, 2019, and March 05, 2020, shortly before the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, by trained Master's students from the Department of Psychology at the University of Tirana. The research project obtained ethical approval from the ethics committees of the University of Bergen, Norway, and the University of Tirana. The research assistants provided information about the study to the participants, who were required to provide informed consent. Participants under the age of 16 obtained parental permission. The survey was administered anonymously, ensuring the confidentiality of the data and its exclusive use for research purposes.

Instruments

The Development Assets Profile (DAP)

A self-report scale based on Benson's (2007) Developmental Assets framework. The DAP consists of 58 items, which were translated and adapted into Albanian for use with the participants in this study. The scale measures both External assets, including Boundaries and Expectations, Support, Empowerment, and Constructive Use of Time, as well as Internal assets, including Positive Values, Social Competencies, Positive Identity, and Commitment to Learning.

Participants rated their responses on a 4-point Likert scale, indicating the frequency of each asset's presence in their lives. The total mean score of DAP can range from 0 to 40, with different score ranges indicating varying levels of developmental assets. Scores falling between 0 and 29 suggest a challenge range, 11 to 19 indicate a vulnerable range, 21 to 30 represent an adequate range, and scores between 31 and 40 indicate a thriving range of developmental assets.

Descriptive analyses were conducted to examine demographic factors, skewness, and kurtosis of the data. Reliability tests were performed for each asset category to assess the consistency and stability of the measurements. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was conducted using SPSS 24 to test the model's fit, with configural invariance, metric invariance, and scalar invariance models showing adequate fit.

The Cronbach alpha values indicate good internal consistency for the total DAP scale ($r = 0.90$). Specifically, the Internal assets subscales showed high reliability, with values ranging from $r = 0.68$ for Commitment to Learning to $r = 0.91$ for Positive Identity. For External assets, the subscale reliability ranged from $r = 0.58$ for Constructive Use of Time to $r = 0.79$ for Support.

Overall, the study successfully adapted the Developmental Assets Profile into Albanian and demonstrated that the scale maintains theoretical assumptions' equivalence. The findings support the reliability and validity of the translated scale, making it a valuable tool for assessing developmental assets among Albanian adolescents.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Developed by Diener et al. (1985) is a widely used 5-item scale designed to measure individuals' global cognitive evaluations of their life satisfaction. Participants rate their agreement with statements using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 7 for "strongly agree" to 1 for "strongly disagree." The SWLS scores range from 5 to 9 for "extremely dissatisfied," 10 to 14 for "dissatisfied," 15 to 19 for "slightly dissatisfied," 20 for "neutral," 21 to 25 for "slightly satisfied," 26 to 30 for "satisfied," and 31 to 35 for "extremely satisfied."

In the present study, an Albanian version of the SWLS was used, and its reliability was assessed. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Albanian version indicated acceptable internal consistency ($r = .85$). This suggests that the translated scale reliably measures life satisfaction among the participants. The use of the SWLS allows for a standardized assessment of life satisfaction, facilitating cross-cultural and comparative research on subjective well-being.

Data analysis

The data analysis was conducted using SPSS 24 software. Binary variables were created to assess the presence of the 40 developmental assets among the participating youth, with a cutoff score of 0-40 indicating the levels of assets possessed. Gender, age, and ethnicity were examined in relation to the developmental assets using T-tests, one-way ANOVA, and Pearson correlation tests. The levels of assets were categorized as challenging (0-29), vulnerable (11-19), adequate (21-30), and thriving (31-40). A risk range was defined as 0-10. Descriptive statistics, T-tests, and Pearson correlations were used to analyze the presence of life satisfaction, considering gender, ethnicity, and age. One-way ANOVA was used to examine the cumulative impact of PYD assets on life satisfaction. Pearson correlation and stepwise regression analyses were conducted to determine the relationship between the 40 developmental assets, demographic variables, and life satisfaction. The dataset had no missing data.

Results

Developmental Assets

The present study aimed to assess the experience of developmental assets among different genders and ethnicities using the translated and adapted Development Assets Profile (DAP) scale based on Benson's Developmental Assets framework (See Table 1 in Supplementary Material). The findings provide valuable insights into the presence of various developmental asset categories within the studied population.

When examining family support, the results indicated high percentages across different ethnic groups, ranging from 88% to 100%. This suggests that participants perceive strong support from their families, which is an essential asset for positive development. Positive family communication, on the other hand, showed more variability, ranging from 36% to 83%. The Bulgarian participants reported the highest percentage, indicating that they experience effective and open communication within their families.

Table 1

Experience of developmental assets by gender, ethnicity, and total sample in percentage

	Roma (n=58)			Egyptian (n=12)			Greek (n=28)			North Macedonian (n=52)			Albanian (n=210)			Bulgarian (n=49)		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Family support	88	92	90	88	100	92	100	100	100	96	97	96	89	92	91	100	100	100
Positive family communication	65	58	62	88	75	83	36	71	57	64	63	64	65	75	72	79	76	78
Other adult relationships	59	46	53	50	0	33	36	65	54	27	60	46	45	68	61	75	48	63
Caring neighborhood	53	25	41	13	25	17	36	59	50	23	33	29	23	29	27	43	33	39
Caring school climate	35	50	41	88	76	92	27	29	28	32	50	42	63	63	63	57	57	57
Parent involvement schooling	79	79	79	45	25	75	64	88	79	73	70	71	82	90	87	89	91	90
Community values youth	79	58	71	25	50	33	82	82	82	64	63	64	63	86	79	61	62	61
Youth as resources	77	92	83	13	50	25	73	94	86	50	80	67	79	97	91	71	67	69
Service to others	35	58	45	75	48	83	55	41	46	36	30	33	66	82	77	29	43	35
Safety	91	92	91	50	75	58	73	88	82	91	57	71	89	98	95	64	76	70
Family Boundaries	100	92	97	50	70	67	82	94	89	91	97	31	97	99	99	96	91	94
School Boundaries	68	88	76	75	64	83	64	65	64	64	47	54	74	86	92	54	57	55
Neighborhood boundaries	56	33	47	0	0	0	36	35	36	32	27	29	37	33	34	25	33	29
Adult role models	62	67	64	50	0	33	46	82	68	50	47	48	66	75	72	46	52	49
Positive peer influence	77	54	67	13	0	8	46	94	75	77	57	65	80	81	81	68	57	63
High expectations	94	96	95	63	57	75	100	100	100	86	87	87	95	92	93	89	81	86
Creative activities	32	8	22	13	0	8	18	35	29	9	3	6	49	31	37	4	10	6
Youth programs	59	17	41	0	0	0	64	53	57	5	3	4	54	28	36	4	5	4
Religious community	41	46	43	0	0	0	18	24	21	0	0	0	28	12	17	0	0	0

	Roma (n=58)			Egyptian (n=12)			Greek (n=28)			North Macedonian (n=52)			Albanian (n=210)			Bulgarian (n=49)		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Time at home	71	71	71	13	50	25	64	71	68	73	77	75	66	77	74	75	71	74
Achievement motivation	77	79	78	50	65	67	64	88	79	68	73	71	60	92	82	75	67	71
School engagement	82	67	76	88	50	75	91	94	93	82	73	77	95	98	97	79	76	78
Homework	59	83	69	75	48	83	64	94	82	86	87	87	63	94	84	89	86	88
Bonding to school	50	67	57	75	45	83	64	77	71	59	47	53	46	72	64	50	52	51
Reading for pleasure	44	46	45	25	0	17	46	35	39	59	53	56	35	86	71	54	57	55
Caring	91	88	90	63	25	50	91	88	89	96	87	90	85	99	94	86	96	90
Equality, social justice	62	50	57	50	75	58	91	88	89	96	97	96	80	96	91	96	95	96
Integrity	38	75	53	13	25	17	55	77	70	50	60	56	65	87	80	54	57	55
Honesty	56	58	57	88	75	83	55	71	64	73	43	56	83	79	80	54	62	57
Responsibility	91	96	93	68	68	74	91	88	89	59	90	77	80	99	93	79	76	78
Restraint	53	79	64	88	75	84	91	77	82	91	83	87	79	92	88	86	91	88
Planning, decision-making	74	67	71	75	75	75	55	82	71	41	23	31	62	72	68	29	33	31
Interpersonal competence	85	71	79	25	50	33	55	82	71	59	53	56	62	77	72	54	62	57
Cultural competence	79	83	81	25	50	33	82	77	79	50	60	56	92	88	90	50	67	57
Resistance skills	83	83	83	100	54	53	64	88	79	55	73	65	75	87	83	64	71	67
Peaceful conflict resolution	74	79	76	88	75	83	73	77	75	59	57	58	51	78	70	61	57	59
Personal power	68	63	66	75	74	83	55	88	75	41	57	50	60	68	66	50	48	49
Self-esteem	85	88	86	88	86	92	64	88	79	68	70	69	72	90	84	68	71	69
Sense of purpose	53	67	59	73	57	68	82	88	86	77	50	62	72	82	79	57	67	61
Positive view of personal future	56	63	59	63	50	58	64	88	79	55	43	48	49	74	66	46	48	47

Regarding other adult relationships, the majority of participants (53% to 65%) reported having positive relationships with non-family adults, except for the Egyptian group, which reported a lower percentage. This discrepancy could be attributed to various cultural or contextual factors that require further investigation.

The concept of a caring neighborhood exhibited considerable variability, with percentages ranging from 17% to 59%. Interestingly, the North Macedonian group reported the highest percentage, indicating a higher sense of community care and support. This finding highlights the potential influence of neighborhood dynamics on the developmental assets experienced by individuals.

In terms of school-related assets, a wide range of percentages was observed. Caring school climate ranged from 27% to 92%, with the Greek group reporting the highest percentage. This suggests that the Greek participants perceive a supportive and nurturing school environment, which can positively impact their development. Parent involvement in schooling ranged from 45% to 90%, with the Bulgarian group reporting the highest percentage, indicating that parents in this group are actively engaged in their children's education.

Community values youth, which reflects the community's recognition and support of young individuals, ranged from 25% to 82%. The Greek group reported the highest percentage, suggesting a community that values and invests in the well-being and development of its youth.

The findings related to internal assets demonstrated varying percentages across different categories. Youth as resources ranged from 13% to 94%, with the Albanian group reporting the highest percentage. This indicates a strong perception of self-efficacy and the ability to contribute positively to their communities among Albanian participants. Service to others, another internal asset, ranged from 35% to 83%, with the Greek group reporting the highest percentage, indicating a higher prevalence of engagement in community service.

Safety, as a protective factor, was reported by a substantial proportion of participants, ranging from 58% to 98%, with the Bulgarian group reporting the highest percentage. This finding suggests that participants generally feel secure and protected within their communities.

The examination of boundaries, including family boundaries, school boundaries, and neighborhood boundaries, revealed varying percentages. Family boundaries ranged from 31% to 100%, with the Albanian group reporting the highest percentage. This suggests a strong sense of structure and rules within Albanian families. School boundaries ranged from 47% to 92%, with the Greek group having the highest percentage, indicating a higher adherence to rules and regulations within Greek school settings. Neighborhood boundaries showed the lowest percentages, ranging from 0% to 36%, which suggests a potential area for improvement in terms of community structure and guidelines.

Adult role models and positive peer influence demonstrated varying percentages across groups. Adult role models ranged from 33% to 82%, with the Albanian group having the highest percentage. This indicates that individuals from the Albanian group perceive a higher presence of positive adult role models in their lives. Positive peer influence ranged from 8% to 94%, with the Albanian group reporting the highest percentage, suggesting a positive peer environment that encourages and supports developmental assets.

High expectations, which reflect ambitious goals and aspirations, showed percentages ranging from 57% to 100%. The Greek group reported the highest percentage, indicating a strong emphasis on achievement and high expectations within the Greek culture. Creative activities and youth programs exhibited lower percentages overall, suggesting potential areas for improvement in providing opportunities for creative expression and engaging youth in various programs. Religious community, as an asset category, ranged from 0% to 46%, with the Albanian group reporting the highest percentage, suggesting a higher level of involvement and engagement with religious communities among Albanian participants.

Lastly, time at home, achievement motivation, and school engagement demonstrated varying percentages. Time at home ranged from 25% to 77%, with the North Macedonian group reporting the highest percentage, potentially indicating a cultural or contextual emphasis on spending time with family. Achievement motivation ranged from 60% to 92%, with the Greek group reporting the highest percentage, suggesting a strong drive for success and achievement within the Greek culture. School engagement, which reflects active participation and involvement in educational activities, ranged from 91% to 98%, with the North Macedonian group having the highest percentage, indicating a higher level of engagement within the North Macedonian educational system.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide insights into the experience of developmental assets among different genders and ethnicities. Overall, the results suggest that participants perceive positive developmental assets in various domains, such as family support, school climate, adult role models, and safety. However, there were variations across different ethnic groups, indicating the influence of cultural and contextual factors on the experience of developmental assets. These findings contribute to our understanding of the factors that contribute to positive youth development and highlight potential areas for further exploration and intervention to enhance developmental assets in different populations.

The descriptive statistics indicate that both male and female adolescents reported mean levels of developmental assets in the challenged range, with males reporting slightly lower levels than females. Specifically, the category of creative use of time within the Internal Assets scales was reported at vulnerable levels for both males and females, indicating a limited development in this area. In terms of ethnicity, there were variations in the reported levels of developmental assets. The Greek minority group reported higher levels of assets compared to the Albanian majority group, Roma, Egyptian, North Macedonian, and Bulgarian groups. The analysis of variance showed a statistically significant difference only for the Greek minority group.

Furthermore, significant positive correlations were found between age and various developmental assets. As participants aged, their experience with developmental assets increased. This suggests that older teenagers tend to have higher levels of developmental assets compared to younger individuals. The correlations between age and specific assets, such as family support, positive peer influence, time at home, cultural competence, positive view of personal future, achievement motivation, community values youth, neighborhood boundaries, and safety restraint, were statistically significant but relatively weak.

To determine the effect of ethnicity on the experience of developmental assets, one-way ANOVA and analyses of variance were conducted. The findings revealed significant differences in several developmental assets across different ethnic groups. For example, the Greek minority group reported higher levels of family support, positive family communication, caring school climate, parent involvement in schooling, community values youth, family boundaries, adult role models, positive peer influence, youth programs, time at home, integrity, honesty, restraint, cultural competence, resistance skills, self-esteem, and positive view of personal future compared to other ethnic groups.

Overall, these findings highlight the variations in the levels of developmental assets among adolescents based on gender, ethnicity, and age. The results suggest the importance of promoting and enhancing developmental assets, particularly in areas such as creative use of time, to support positive youth development and well-being.

Life satisfaction

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 provide information on the mean and standard deviation of Life Satisfaction scores, considering factors such as gender, age, and ethnicity. The findings reveal that slightly more than half of the participants (53%) reported a moderately satisfying level of life satisfaction, while 28.2% expressed dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, the data analysis revealed that females tend to experience a higher level of life satisfaction in comparison to males ($F(3.602) = 5.042, p < 0.01$). However, the main effect of age on life satisfaction did not reach statistical significance.

The age groups ranged from 14 to 19, and no significant differences were observed among the age groups in terms of life satisfaction.

For gender, the male group consisted of 168 participants, with a mean life satisfaction score of 23.68 and a standard deviation of 6.14. The female group, comprising 241 participants, reported a higher mean life satisfaction score of 26.03, with a standard deviation of 6.20 ($p = 0.001$).

Regarding ethnicity, the mean life satisfaction score for the Roma group ($n = 58$) was 20.29, with a standard deviation of 8.01 ($p < 0.001$). The Egyptian group ($n = 12$) had a mean score of 21.17, with a standard deviation of 3.04. The Greek group ($n = 28$) reported a higher mean life satisfaction score of 25.71, with a standard deviation of 5.58. The North Macedonian group ($n = 52$) had a mean score of 25.31, with a standard deviation of 4.12. The majority Albanian group ($n = 210$) had a mean score of 24.32, with a standard deviation of 6.04. Finally, the Bulgarian group ($n = 49$) reported a mean score of 24.39, with a standard deviation of 5.33.

Based on the results presented in Table 2, we can observe several important findings concerning the relationship between gender, ethnicity, and life satisfaction in the sample of 409 participants.

Gender Differences

The data analysis revealed a significant difference in life satisfaction levels between males and females. Specifically, females reported higher levels of life satisfaction compared to males. This finding is consistent with previous research that has often indicated that females tend to experience higher levels of life satisfaction compared to males. Possible explanations for this gender difference may include variations in coping strategies, social support, and emotional regulation.

Table 2

Means, Standard deviations for scores on Life satisfaction scale by age, gender, and ethnicity

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p
Age				.489
14	24	22.74	4.72	
15	60	23.85	6.37	
16	78	23.50	6.09	
17	72	24.35	6.70	
18	129	24.07	6.24	
19	46	25.71	5.65	
Gender				.001
Male	168	23.68	6.14	
Female	241	26.03	6.20	
Ethnicity				.000
Roman	58	20.29	8.01	
Egyptian	12	21.17	3.04	
Greek	28	25.71	5.58	
North Macedonian	52	25.31	4.12	
Albanian	210	24.32	6.04	
Bulgarian	49	24.39	5.33	

Note. n=409

Ethnicity and Life Satisfaction

The study highlighted substantial variations in life satisfaction levels among different ethnic groups in the sample. The Greek minority group demonstrated significantly higher life satisfaction compared to other ethnic groups, including Roma, Egyptian, Bulgarian, North Macedonian, and the majority Albanian adolescents. This finding

suggests that ethnicity plays a crucial role in shaping life satisfaction, with certain cultural and social factors within the Greek minority group potentially contributing to their higher levels of life satisfaction.

Age and Life Satisfaction

The main effect of age on life satisfaction was not found to be statistically significant. This result suggests that, within the age range of 14 to 19 years old, there were no substantial differences in life satisfaction levels. However, it is essential to consider that the age groups were relatively close in age, and more substantial age differences might yield different results.

Overall, the findings from this study emphasize the importance of considering gender and ethnicity when examining life satisfaction levels in adolescents. Understanding these factors can provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners aiming to enhance the well-being and satisfaction of young individuals.

Moreover, the results underscore the relevance of considering cultural and social influences in shaping life satisfaction. Further investigation into the specific factors contributing to the higher life satisfaction levels among the Greek minority group could provide valuable knowledge to inform interventions aimed at improving life satisfaction among different ethnicities.

In conclusion, the present study sheds light on the complex interplay between gender, ethnicity, and life satisfaction among adolescents. The findings emphasize the need for further research in this area and suggest the importance of considering gender and cultural factors when designing interventions aimed at promoting life satisfaction and well-being in young individuals.

Developmental Assets and Life Satisfaction

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the collective impact of developmental assets on life satisfaction, revealing a significant effect ($F(3.899) = 5.999$), indicating meaningful differences

in assets. Participants who perceived higher levels of developmental assets tended to have higher scores in the life satisfaction dimension.

Pearson's correlation analyses were performed to assess the association between developmental assets and overall life satisfaction. The results indicated positive correlations between various developmental assets and life satisfaction. Specifically, significant positive correlations were observed for family support, positive family communications, other adult relationships, caring neighborhood, caring school climate, community values youth, youth as resources, service to others, family boundaries, school boundaries, neighborhood boundaries, adult role models, creative activities, youth programs, religious community, caring, equality and social justice, integrity, honesty, planning and decision-making, interpersonal competence, cultural competence, resistance skills, personal power, self-esteem, sense of purpose, positive peer influence, time at home, and the positive view of personal future ($p < 0.001$).

However, it is important to note that cultural competence, achievement motivation, and restraint exhibited negative correlations with life satisfaction. This implies that higher levels of cultural competence, achievement motivation, and restraint were associated with lower levels of life satisfaction.

To further explore the predictive power of developmental assets and demographic factors on life satisfaction, a stepwise regression analysis was conducted (See Table 3). Ten developmental assets emerged as independent and significant predictors of life satisfaction: equality and social justice, sense of purpose, time at home, cultural competence, positive view of personal future, achievement motivation, community values youth, family boundaries, safety, and restraint. These variables collectively accounted for 30.4% of the variance in life satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.304$, $R^2(\text{Adj.}) = 0.289$, $F(10,398) = 17.569$, $p < 0.0001$).

The findings highlight the importance of developmental assets in influencing life satisfaction. Factors such as a sense of purpose, equality and social justice, positive view of personal future, and supportive family and community environments were positively associated with

higher life satisfaction. Conversely, cultural competence, achievement motivation, and restraint showed a negative association with life satisfaction.

Table 3

Predictors of life satisfaction (stepwise regression analysis)

Predictor	Life satisfaction				
	B	t	R Square Change	Adjusted R Square	P
Equality and social justice	1.633	2.970	.119	.117	.003
Sense of purpose	1.492	4.006	.064	.178	.000
Time at home	1.059	2.449	.030	.207	.015
Cultural competence	2.883	-2.423	.017	.222	.016
Positive view of personal future	1.330	3.319	.014	.235	.001
Achievement motivation	1.885	-2.638	.017	.250	.009
Community values youth	1.048	2.321	.013	.262	.021
Family Boundaries	.909	2.824	.009	.270	.005
Safety	-1.675	-2.830	.009	.277	.005
Restraint	.925	2.755	.013	.289	.006

Note. n=409

The results emphasize the significance of fostering developmental assets to enhance individuals' well-being and life satisfaction. These findings can inform the development of interventions and policies aimed at promoting positive assets and ultimately improving overall quality of life.

In conclusion, this study provides scientific evidence supporting the positive relationship between developmental assets and life satisfaction. The identified assets have implications for interventions targeting the enhancement of well-being and emphasize the need to consider both developmental assets and demographic factors in understanding life satisfaction outcomes.

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between developmental assets and life satisfaction among adolescents in Albania, with a focus on exploring the predictive value of assets and demographic variables. This study represents the first attempt to examine Positive Youth Developmental Assets using cross-sectional data in Albania, providing valuable insights for future applications of a framework that promotes positive developmental assets strategies in youth.

The findings revealed that only a small proportion of participants exhibited adequate levels of developmental assets. Many adolescents faced challenges that directly impacted their perception of developed assets and life satisfaction. Specifically, both male and female participants were considered vulnerable, experiencing low levels of support from their school environment, neighborhood, and other adults in the community. These findings align with a previous study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which examined marginalized minority groups in Albania and identified a lack of assets, particularly in terms of support from school, neighborhood, and community (Miconi et al., 2021). The role of school, community, and other adults in the neighborhood appeared invisible to the youth, often leading them to perceive a lack of value placed on them by these adults.

Regarding external assets, such as support, empowerment, expectations, and boundaries, the results indicated a vulnerable range for a significant number of participants in Albania. Peer influence was perceived as lacking responsible behavior modeling by the youth. Additionally, a substantial portion of adolescents reported lower levels of engagement in constructive activities, such as creative activities, youth programs, and religious communities. These findings underscore the challenging circumstances faced by Albanian youth even before the pandemic. Another study focusing on Roma and Egyptian minority youth during the pandemic reported a further decline in their situation (Miconi et al., 2021). In terms of internal assets related to aspects like school engagement, reading for pleasure, integrity, honesty, sense of

purpose, and positive personal values, most participants reported lower levels.

Overall, the results suggest that adolescents in Albania encounter difficulties in acquiring developmental assets. Both male and female participants face challenges, with a limited number of individuals considered at risk due to a lack of assets. This could be attributed to insufficient other adult relationships, caring neighborhoods, a supportive school climate, youth as resources, service to others, neighborhood boundaries, adult role models, positive peer influence, creative activities, youth programs, and religious community involvement. Young people struggle to find their place in society, often encountering barriers in terms of educational and employment opportunities (Miconi et al., 2022). These findings align with studies conducted in the USA and EU, indicating no gender differences in the presence of developmental assets. Moreover, older youth tend to exhibit higher asset scores compared to high school students, likely due to the challenging nature of the adolescence transition, which profoundly impacts overall well-being and growth (Orben Lucas, Fuhrmann, & Kievit, 2022; Soares et al., 2019). The role of external assets, including family, school, community, and other adults, is crucial in providing the necessary support and structure to help adolescents navigate the challenges associated with this dynamic phase (Refaeli et al., 2022).

Interestingly, the study found no gender differences in the perceived developmental assets among adolescents in Albania, which contrasts with findings from other studies conducted in various countries (Xiang Gan, Jin, Zhang, & Zhu, 2022; Wium et al., 2021; Bi et al., 2021; Quimby, Richards, Santiago, Scott, & Puvar, 2018; Gomez-Baya et al., 2022). For instance, a Spanish study reported lower levels of internal and external assets among girls compared to males (Gomez-Baya et al., 2022). Additionally, Greek and Bulgarian minority groups in Albania exhibited higher levels of certain internal and external developmental assets compared to the majority Albanian group, as well as Roma, Egyptian, and North Macedonian minority groups. The differences between these two minority groups may be

explained by the greater opportunities they perceive and have to live and work in other EU countries compared to other ethnic groups. A study encompassing 42 European and North American countries demonstrated that youth from countries with lower levels of trust exhibited lower levels of social support and life satisfaction (Bi et al., 2021).

Moreover, the findings revealed that older youth exhibited higher levels of certain internal and external assets, such as family support and boundaries. A weak but significant correlation was also observed between family support and boundaries and positive peer influence, as well as a positive view of personal future. These findings align with previous research (Dost-Gözkan et al., 2021; Gomez-Baya et al., 2022; Orben et al., 2022).

In terms of life satisfaction, the results indicated that participants, on average, experienced a moderately satisfying life, although some individuals perceived their reality as quite difficult. These findings are consistent with previous studies examining youth life satisfaction (Orben et al., 2022; Soares et al., 2019; Willroth, Atherton, & Robins, 2021). Gender differences were identified, with girls exhibiting higher levels of life satisfaction compared to boys, which supports the findings of another study (van der Laan et al., 2021). However, these findings differ from other trends suggesting that males tend to experience higher levels of life satisfaction than females (Willroth, Atherton, & Robins, 2021; Shen & Kogan, 2021; Henkens, Kalmijn, & de Valk, 2022). These gender differences may be influenced by varying sociocultural norms, attitudes, and opportunities presented to youth in different local environments (Novak, Parr, Ferić, Mihić, & Kranželić, 2021). The role of ethnicity was also significant, with Greek teens expressing higher life satisfaction compared to other ethnic groups, including the majority Albanian group, as well as Roma, Egyptian, North Macedonian, and Bulgarian minorities. The role of traditional values and the support received from family and community may explain this finding (Willroth, Atherton, & Robins, 2021; Henkens, Kalmijn, & de Valk, 2022). Age, however, did not demonstrate a significant influence on the levels of life satisfaction experienced by the participants.

In summary, the findings suggest that adolescents with higher levels of developmental assets tend to experience greater life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is particularly associated with elevated levels of love, support, and seeking advice from family members. Moreover, external asset categories, such as positive adult relationships, caring neighborhoods, a supportive school climate, and a community that values and perceives youth as a resource, were all linked to higher levels of perceived life satisfaction. Involvement in the community, service to others, the presence of family, school, and neighborhood boundaries, exposure to positive adult role models, and engagement in creative activities, youth programs, or religious communities were also associated with higher life satisfaction levels.

Furthermore, resilience factors, including caring for others, involvement in equality and social justice issues, upholding personal beliefs, and approaching life challenges responsibly and with dignity, as well as being organized and adept at managing personal and interpersonal issues, resisting negative peer influence, experiencing positive peer influence, feeling confident and competent, empowered, and having a sense of purpose in life, all contributed to higher life satisfaction in adolescents.

Ultimately, developmental assets emerged as significant predictors of youth life satisfaction, accounting for a considerable amount of variance. Internal assets were found to be more predictive of life satisfaction than external assets, although both types of assets were deemed contributory. Certain aspects of internal assets, such as positive value, positive identity, social competencies, and commitment to learning, strongly predicted the level of life satisfaction in youth. Participants involved in promoting equality and social justice exhibited lower engagement in risky behaviors. Adolescents with a sense of purpose in life were more open to diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds, felt optimistic about their future, and displayed higher motivation in academic pursuits, all of which enhanced life satisfaction. These findings are consistent with recent research (Bi, Stevens, & Maes, 2021; Willroth, Atherton, & Robins, 2021; Shek & Chai, 2020; Szczeńiak, Bajkowska, Czaprowska, & Sileńska, 2022).

Some external assets, including empowerment, expectations and boundaries, and constructive use of time, also predicted life satisfaction. Being part of a supportive and valued community positively influenced adolescents' perception of their future. Feeling safe and protected at home, school, and in the neighborhood played a crucial role in the development of positive assets in adolescents. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Zaborskis et al., 2022; Schnettler et al., 2018; Tao, Chen, Lu, & Yan, 2022).

In conclusion, this research study highlights the critical role of internal and external positive youth developmental assets in creating a supportive environment that optimizes adolescents' perceived life satisfaction. The findings underscore the importance of developmental assets as a construct that facilitates healthy growth and flourishing in adolescents. Internal assets, particularly positive identity, positive value, social competence, and commitment to learning, emerged as crucial contributors to the level of life satisfaction experienced by the target age group. Additionally, external assets, such as empowerment, expectations and boundaries, and constructive use of time, fostered a positive developmental context that facilitated optimal adolescent development and equal opportunities for potential growth.

Limitations of the study

This study is subject to several limitations. Firstly, the cross-sectional nature of the data restricts our ability to establish causal relationships. The findings provide associations rather than causation. Secondly, the data collected may not be fully representative of the entire youth population in the country. A more comprehensive sampling procedure, including a larger number of participants from each minority group, would enhance the generalizability of the results. Future research should consider longitudinal designs to examine the progressive changes in developmental assets and life satisfaction over time. Lastly, the measurements utilized in this study rely on self-reporting, which may introduce response biases and subjective interpretations.

Implications of the findings

The implications of the study emphasize the importance of implementing prevention and intervention initiatives targeted at Albanian adolescents. Creating a supportive and accepting environment is crucial for their well-being and development. Such initiatives can help foster a positive outlook for their future within a developing country like Albania. Inadequate efforts to integrate into society, along with limited support from families and schools, have contributed to the growing dissatisfaction among Albanian youth and their inclination to emigrate to EU countries. While there are other factors at play, these issues are among the most significant in generating dissatisfaction and pessimistic outlooks. Family and school play pivotal roles in nurturing and guiding young individuals, enabling them to find their place in society. Community leaders and policymakers should empower adolescents, providing them with a platform to voice their perspectives and offering more opportunities for their integration into societal development. Empowerment and support programs aimed at enhancing personal assets are crucial, and research should focus on contextual resources, starting with creating supportive environments. Aligning personal and contextual assets in these adolescents is challenging but should be prioritized by policymakers, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. To ensure the effectiveness of interventions, it is imperative to involve the adolescent community in the design and implementation of these initiatives.

Conclusions

The Developmental Assets perspective offers a holistic understanding of the various factors influencing the overall well-being of adolescents and youth. Internal and external assets provide insights into both personal and contextual aspects that shape positive developmental environments for young individuals. Internal assets, including positive identity, positive values, social competencies, and commitment to learning, contribute to the development of character and personality, influencing how individuals perceive, believe, and behave in pursuit of their life goals. These

assets reflect on the adolescents' personality and their ability to live consciously, guided by responsibility, integrity, and dignity. They are directly linked to the level of life satisfaction experienced by youth. External assets, such as empowerment, expectations and boundaries, productive use of time, and family support, play critical roles in the growth process. These assets optimize positive development by providing a supportive environment that enhances self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-confidence. The interplay between internal and external assets is crucial for overall well-being and resilience, serving as strong predictors of life satisfaction among Albanian youth. Empowered adolescents exhibit self-belief, positive future outlooks, and intrinsic motivation, all of which contribute to their positive development and realization of their potential.

Ethics statement

The project was ethically approved by the Cross-National Positive Youth Development Ethics Committee at the University of Bergen (Norway). Written informed consent was granted from all participants older than 16 years, and for those under 16 years informed consent was required from both parents and participants.

Author Contributions

Data collection, conceptualization, original draft writing, methodology, software, formal analysis, and revisions were all the responsibility of ED. ACB and NW helped to develop the concept, methodology, and revisions. The version for publication was read and approved by all authors.

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