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ARAŞTIRMA

RESEARCH

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Guilt and School Satisfaction among Turkish Adolescents: The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem

Türk Ergenlerde Suçluluk ve Okul Doyumu: Öz-Saygının Aracılık Rolü

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Öz. Bu araştırmada ergenlerde öz-saygının suçluluk ile okul doyumu ilişkisindeki aracılık rolünün yapısal eşitlik modellemesiyle incelenesi amaçlanmıştır. Üç yüz yirmi dokuz (%51.1 kız, %49.9 erkek; *Ort* _{yaş} = 13.64 yıl., *SS* _{yaş} = 1.47) ergenin katılımıyla gerçekleşen bu çalışmada veri aracı olarak Çocuklar için Kapsamlı Okul Doyumu Ölçeği ve Çok Boyutlu Ergen Değerlendirme Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Sonuçlar suçluluğun öz-saygı ve okul doyumu ile negatif ilişkisine işaret etmektedir. Yapısal eşitlik modellemesi sonuçlarına göre öz-saygı suçluluk ile okul doyumu ilişkisinde aracılık yapmaktadır. Sonuçlar bootstrapping tekniği ile de desteklenmiştir. Araştırma sonucu ergenlerde düşük suçluluk hissi öz-saygılarını güçlendirebileceklerine ve okul doyumlarını artırabileceklerini önermektedir. Dolayısıyla müdahale programları suçluluk duygusunu düşürmeyi hedef alırsa öz-saygı aracılığıyla okul doyumunu artırmada etkili olunabilir. Gelecek çalışmalar yönelik doğurgular ve bu çalışmanın sınırlıkları tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler. Suçluluk; Okul doyumu; Öz-saygı; Yapısal eşitlik modellemesi; Ergenlik.

Abstract. In this research, structural equation modeling was performed to investigate the mediating role of self-esteem in the relationships between guilt and school satisfaction in adolescents. Three hundred twenty-nine adolescents (51.1% girls, 49.9% boys; $M_{age} = 13.64$ yr., $SD_{age} = 1.47$) were recruited as participants from middle and high schools in Turkey. Data were collected via the Children's Overall Satisfaction with Schooling Scale and the Multidimensional Adolescent Assessment Scale. Findings indicated that guilt was negatively associated with self-esteem and school satisfaction. Structural equation modelling revealed that self-esteem has a mediator role between guilt and school satisfaction. The results also confirmed that guilt predicted school satisfaction mediated by self-esteem via bootstrapping procedure. The results of the research suggest that self-esteem, among adolescents with a lower feeling of guilt, may help to increase school satisfaction. Therefore, interventions targeting reducing feeling of guilt may be effective to increase school satisfaction through self-esteem in adolescents. Implications for future direction and limitations of the current research are also offered. **Keywords:** Guilt; School satisfaction; Self-esteem; Structural equation modelling; Adolescent.

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Satıcı, Göçet-Tekin, Deniz

Schools potentially play a crucial role in developing one's cognitive and social skills during childhood and adolescence. Therefore, it is very crucial to understand adolescents' perceptions of their school life since their experiences in school, affect their quality of life and their overall wellbeing. One way of evaluating students' perceived school experiences is by school satisfaction, which can also be described as a student's overall well-being at school (Huebner et al., 2001).

School satisfaction will be best understood within a broad conceptual framework of well-being. Global Life Satisfaction, a commonly used component of wellbeing and one of the strong indicators of happiness, has been defined as a person's appraisal of the overall quality of his or her life (Diener & Diener, 1995). In childhood and adolescence, global life satisfaction is generally characterized by a child or adolescents' level of satisfaction with life factors such as family and peer relationships, self, school, and living environment (Huebner et al., 2000; Huebner et al., 2005). Diener (1984) suggested that school satisfaction is a significant subjective indicator of well-being in youth. School satisfaction is also defined as 'the cognitive-affective evaluation of overall satisfaction with one's school experience' (Huebner et al., 2001, p. 168).

Research suggests that students with high school satisfaction have better adjustment in various factors, containing academic and psychological well-being. Empirical research has suggested that low degrees of school satisfaction is related with poor school achievement, academic competence (Danielsen, Breivik, & Wold, 2011), perceived violence (Ozdemir & Sezgin, 2011), and health-risk behaviors (Takakura, Wake, & Kobayashi, 2010). However, high levels of school satisfaction are related to positive life outcomes, such as academic abilities (Baker, 1998; Huebner & Gilman, 2006; Zullig, Huebner, & Patton, 2011), high self-esteem (Huebner & McCullough, 2000; Weon, Lim, & Son, 2015), positive academic climate (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002), intrinsic motivation (Ratelle et al., 2007), and internal locus of control (Huebner, Ash, & Laughlin, 2001).

The emotional and social experiences of students at school are correlated strongly with their school satisfaction (Huebner et al., 2001). Perceived support from families and schools is of great importance in students' general well-being (Hui & Sun, 2010). Students undergo several physiological, social, and cognitive changes between childhood and adolescence through which they require

perceptions of encouragement behaviors from individuals in their social network, which helps them function effectively and avoid adverse outcomes. Empirical research has emphasized the importance of social support associated with students' school satisfaction. It also revealed a positive relation between social support and school satisfaction (Baker, 1999; Danielsen et al., 2009; Rosenfeld et al., 2000).

Adolescence is a time when young people explore who they are and experience rapid physical and cognitive growth and reach puberty by leaving the relatively secure environment of childhood to meet a new set of social and other life challenges. During adolescence, individuals tend to experience the feelings of guilt more often since they are more likely to open to make mistakes while dealing with relatively new life challenges. When an individual perceives his/her behavior as violating a moral or social conduct regarded as personally important, he/she often experiences feelings of guilt (Gausel & Leech, 2011). Dryden (2009) defined guilt as self-blame in regret associated with a specific action or event. Likewise, Gilbert (2001) defined guilt as a strong emotion due to one's own negative judgment of his/her behavior and actions. According to the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), excessive guilt is one of the symptoms of depression. Experiences of guilt often lead to a low self-worth and dissatisfaction with crucial characteristics of the self (Amodio, Devine, & Harmon-Jones, 2007).

Mastery of significant developmental tasks such as separation-individuation might be adversely affected by feelings of intense guilt early in development (Zahn-Waxler, & Kochanska, 1990). Parents' over expectations about child obedience and their prohibitions against thinking about transgressions have also been linked with exaggerated guilt (Potter-Efron, 1989). Contemporary research suggested that high levels of guilt is related with psychopathology (Luyten, Fontaine, & Corveleyn, 2002). Gausel & Leech (2011) found that guilt is associated with anger and self-hatred.

Self-Esteem as a Mediator

Self-esteem is considered to be one of the most widely studied traits which is generally defined as one's ability to cope with struggles in daily life and his /her beliefs about their worthiness to be happy (Brandon, 1994). Also, Brandon defined self-esteem as a basic human need, which is associated with positive

emotions such as altruism, love and compassion, and resilience. Conversely, selfesteem is related with higher psychological distress (Duchesne et al., 2017), antisocial behavior and aggression (Donnellan et al., 2005).

Previous literature on the association between guilt and self-esteem has reported negative associations between guilt tendency and self-esteem (e.g., Strelan 2007; Tilghman-Osborne et al., 2010). Now that guilt, experience unpleasant feeling, when an individual fails to fulfill internalized moral standards, it explicitly leads to negative self-appraisal (Cohen et al., 2011). Besides, guilt is defined as an emotional reaction to an action or failure, which was perceived as injurious, and/or a violation of an internal ethical guide (Lewis, 1971). Similarly, guilt involves feelings of tension, remorse, anxiety, and regret due to the self's negative assessment of a certain behavior (e.g., Strelan, 2007; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). Based on these theoretical aspects and findings, it is suggested that guilt would be negatively associated with self-esteem.

Past research has revealed positive linear relations between adolescents' selfesteem and general satisfaction (e.g., Chen et al., 2016; Chui & Wong, 2016; Kapikiran, 2013; Luo & Zhu, 2016). Hui and Sun (2010) found positive relations between self-esteem and school satisfaction. Moreover, Karatzias and colleagues (2002), school self-esteem was indicated to be related with school satisfaction. In addition, when we consider the mediating effect of self-esteem, Harter (1987) revelaed a model in which the relation between social support and children's characteristic moods was mediated by global self-worth. It is noteworthy that similar findings have been reached in other studies (e.g., Rosenberg et al., 1995; Yarcheski et al., 2001). Tian, Liu, Huang, and Huebner (2013) also reported the mediating role of self-esteem and school satisfaction among early and middle adolescents. Literature review has indicated that the main concern of the previous studies was to investigate the mediating role of self-esteem on the relationship between general social support and well-being, with little or no attention on other sources of social support, which influence school satisfaction.

This research investigated the interrelations among guilt, self-esteem, and school satisfaction among adolescents from Turkey. We formulated three hypotheses: (*a*) guilt will be significantly associated with self-esteem; (*b*) self-esteem will be significantly associated with school satisfaction; (*c*) self-esteem will mediate the relation between guilt and adolescents' school satisfaction

Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi - 2019

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Three hundred forty-five adolescents were initially recruited and fulfilled the scales in their classrooms in a lesson time via paper-and-pencil based format. We removed the 15 participants from the analysis due to non-signed informed consent and missing data. Therefore, the final sample consists 329 adolescents (aged 11 to 17, M = 13.71, SD = 1.55) from two city in the west of Turkey. Girls were 51.1% of the sample with a mean age of 13.77 (SD = 1.63) and boys were 49.9% of the sample with a mean age of 13.64 (SD = 1.47). At the time of the survey, 25.5% of the adolescents were in sixth grade (n = 84), 24.6% were in seventh grade (n = 81), 8.8% were in eight grade (n = 29), 25.2% were in ninth grade (n = 83), and 15.8% of the students were in tenth (n = 52). One hundred sixty-six adolescents have been identified as middle school student and 163 adolescents have been identified as high school student in the Turkish school system. The grade point average (GPA) level of participants was 75.43 (SD = 12.06) in the range of 45–98.

The participants were aware that their attendance was voluntary. The survey ensures that the participation is entirely voluntary, confidentiality would be maintained, and the subject can withdraw from the research at any time. The questionnaires were counterbalanced to control for sequential effect. The researchers did not give the students any incentive to complete the questionnaires.

Measures

School Satisfaction. School satisfaction was measured using the Children's Overall Satisfaction with Schooling Scale (COSSS; Randolph, Kangas, & Ruokamo, 2009), which includes six-items (e.g., "I like to go to school"). All the items are based on a 5-point Likert scale from "1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree)". COSSS a theoretical score ranging from 6 to 30, with lower scores indicating poorer school satisfaction level. COSSS was translated into Turkish by Telef (2014). Telef reported acceptable fit indices (RMSEA = 0.06, RMR = 0.01, GFI = 0.98, NFI = 0.99, RFI = 0.98, CFI= 0.99 and IFI= 0.99) and adequate reliability values (Cronbach alpha .89 and test-retest = .92). In our study, the internal consistency coefficient was found to be .85.

Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi - 2019

Satıcı, Göçet-Tekin, Deniz

Guilt. Subscale from the Multidimensional Adolescent Assessment Scale (Hudson, 1996) was used to assess feeling of quilt. The quilt subscale includes 10 items (e.g., "I have this nagging feeling that I have done something wrong"). All the items are based on a 7-point Likert scale from "1 (None of the time) to 7 (All of the time)". The quilt subscale a theoretical score ranging from 10 to 70, with lower scores indicating poorer feeling of guilt level. The quilt subscale was translated into Turkish by Ozmete and Kogar (2015). Ozmete and Kogar reported acceptable fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 4.12$, RMSEA = 0.06, CFI = 0.91, NFI = 0.90, and NNFI = 0.90) and adequate reliability value (Cronbach alpha .81). In our study, the internal consistency coefficient was found to be .83.

Self-esteem. Subscale from the Multidimensional Adolescent Assessment Scale (Hudson, 1996) was used to assess self-esteem. The self-esteem subscale includes 12 items (e.g., "I feel very self-conscious when I am with strangers"). All the items are based on a 7-point Likert scale from "1 (None of the time) to 7 (All of the time)". The self-esteem subscale a theoretical score ranging from 12 to 84, with lower scores indicating poorer self-esteem level. The self-esteem subscale was translated into Turkish by Ozmete and Kogar (2015). Ozmete and Kogar reported acceptable fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 3.77$, RMSEA = 0.05, CFI = 0.92, NFI = 0.93, and NNFI = 0.92) and adequate reliability value (Cronbach alpha .75). In our study, the internal consistency coefficient was found to be .71.

Personal Information Form. The participant demographic questionnaire captured individual and educational characteristics such as gender, age, grade level and GPA.

Data Analysis

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to explore the process by which feeling of guilt influences school satisfaction via self-esteem. Model fit was examined in terms of the goodness of-fit indices—Chi-square/degree of freedom ratio, CFI, GFI, and TLI. The indices are to be > 0.90 (Kline, 2015). Furthermore, when RMSEA and SRMR are lower than 0.08 (Kline, 2015), the model has an acceptable goodness of fit. AIC and ECVI values were calculated for the selection of the best model. The model having the smallest AIC and ECVI values, is preferred as the best model.

Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi - 2019

The significance of the indirect role of guilt on school satisfaction through selfesteem was examined by conducting mediation handling bootstrapping techniques (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). 10,000 resampling was used and confidence intervals were established. We can conclude that there is a significant mediation if confidence intervals do not include zero. We added age and gender in the structural models as control variables.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis

Table 1 presents means, SD, and inter-correlations for all variables. Adolescents' reports of their school satisfaction were relatively high. On a scale ranging from 6 to 30, the mean was 20.87 (SD = 5.16). The results indicate that the average self-esteem score of the adolescents was 59.51 (SD = 10.45), on a scale ranging from 12 to 84. The average guilt score of the adolescents was 26.49 (SD = 11.45, Min-Max = 10-63). With respect to the guidelines of severe non-normality (i.e., skewness > 2; kurtosis > 7) recommended by Finney and DiStefano (2006), the normality assumption for all the variables was met (skewness ranged from -0.31 to 0.66, and kurtosis from -0.63 to 0.16).

Correlation among the variables are also given in Table 1, suggesting that they were significantly associated and valid for SEM. School satisfaction was positively associated with self-esteem ($r_{(329)} = 25$, p < .01) and negatively associated with guilt ($r_{(329)} = -22$, p < .01). Self-esteem was negatively associated with guilt ($r_{(329)} = -35$, p < .01).

		Correlations					
Variable	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	1	2	3
1. School satisfaction	20.87	5.16	31	16	_		
2. Guilt	26.49	11.45	.66	.16	22**	_	
3. Self-esteem	59.51	10.45	09	63	25**	35**	_
Note $^{**} h \leq 01$							

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables

Note. ** p < .01

Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi - 2019

Structural Equation Modeling

Goodness-of-fit. Firstly, the measurement model was examined via CFAs, in which two parcels for school satisfaction and guilt and three parcels for selfesteem were used. Results from the CFAs confirmed that standardized coefficients ranged from .64 to .93, which were significant. The results showed fit to the data: $\chi^2_{(11, N = 329)} = 19.69$, p < 0.001; $\chi^2/df = 1.79$; CFI = 0.99; TLI = 0.98; NFI = 0.98; GFI = 0.98; SRMR = 0.028; RMSEA = 0.049, which suggest that the measurement model were acceptable.

Structural Model. After we confirmed that the observed variables significantly measured the latent variables, the structural model was examined to determine how guilt and self-esteem affected school satisfaction. Age and gender were kept as covariates to be controlled for in the subsequent structural models. In the first stage, we tested a fully mediated model which included the direct path from the independent variable (guilt) to the mediator (self-esteem) and the direct path from mediator to dependent variable (school satisfaction) in the absence of the direct path from independent to dependent variable. The indices of Model Fully show the following results: $\chi^2_{(25, N = 329)} = 54.04$, p < 0.001; $\chi^2/df = 2.16$; CFI = 0.96; TLI = 0.95; NFI = 0.94; GFI = 0.96; SRMR = 0.059; RMSEA = 0.060. In the second stage, partially mediated model, which added the direct path from independent to dependent variable, was tested. Fit indices of the Model Partially were also satisfactory; $\chi^2_{(24, N=329)} = 45.627$, p < 0.001; $\chi^2/df = 1.90$; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.96; NFI = 0.95; GFI = 0.97; SRMR = 0.052; RMSEA = 0.052. In terms of goodness-of-fit indices, based on the χ^2 difference test ($\Delta \chi^2 = 8.41$, df = 1, p < 0.05), and AIC and ECVI values, Model _{Partially} showed as a better model over Model Fully (see Table 2).

We compared our hypothesis with two different models. First model established school satisfaction as an independent variable, guilt as a mediator, and self-esteem as a dependent variable. The model revealed this results: $\chi^2_{(25, N = 329)} = 81.08, p < 0.001; \chi^2/df = 3.24; CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.90; NFI = 0.91; GFI = 0.95; SRMR = 0.085; RMSEA = 0.083. Another model with self-esteem as an independent variable, school satisfaction as a mediator, and guilt as a dependent variable was examined, and its model fit indices: <math>\chi^2_{(25, N = 329)} = 112.14, p < 0.001; \chi^2/df = 4.49; CFI = 0.90; TLI = 0.86; NFI = 0.88; GFI = 0.93; SRMR = 0.112; RMSEA = 0.103. When our hypothesis model is compared with other models,$

Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi - 2019

it is seen that the hypothesis model is better. When all values (see Table 2) are taken into consideration, Model _{Partially} was chosen as better model. Figure 1 depicts the Model _{Partially}.

Model	χ²/df	$\Delta \chi^2(df)$	CFI	TLI	NFI	GFI	SRMR	RMSEA	AIC	ECVI
								(90%CI)		
Fully	2.16	-	.96	.95	.94	.96	.059	.060 (.038, .081)	94.04	.287
Partially ^c	1.90	8.41(1)**	.98	.96	.95	.97	.052	.052 (.028, .075)	87.63	.267
Alternative1	3.24	-	.93	.90	.91	.95	.085	.083 (.063, .103)	121.08	.369
Alternative2	4.49	-	.90	.86	.88	.93	.112	.103 (.084, .123)	152.14	.464

Note. ** p < .01, ' preferred model

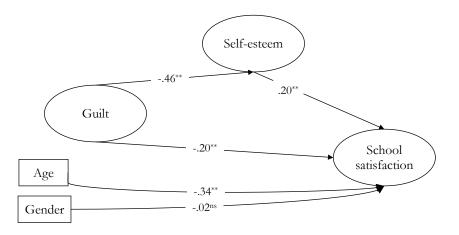


Figure 1. Standardized factor loading for the partially mediated structural model *Note.* N = 329; ** p < .01

Bootstrapping

We conducted bootstrapping techniques to confirm the significance of the mediating effect of self-esteem on guilt and school satisfaction. As it is seen in the Table 3, guilt was revealed to have an indirect role on school satisfaction via self-esteem, with a bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect (-.19, -.02). Since the confidence interval does not contain zero, this path can be said to be significant. Consistent with our hypothesis, results indicated that the relation between guilt and school satisfaction is partially mediated by adolescents' self-esteem.

Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi - 2019

Satıcı, Göçet-Tekin, Deniz	ekin, Deniz
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Model pathways	Bootstrap est	Bias corrected 95 % CI		
	Estimated	SE	Lower	Upper
Direct effect				
Guilt \rightarrow Self-esteem	46	.07	58	32
Guilt \rightarrow School satisfaction	20	.08	36	03
Self-esteem \rightarrow School satisfaction	.20	.08	.04	.36
Indirect effect				
Guilt \rightarrow Self-esteem \rightarrow School satisfaction	09	.04	19	02

DISCUSSION

The present study was designed to explore the mediating role of self-esteem on guilt and school satisfaction among Turkish adolescents. Most of the sample comprised of young students (average age was 13.71 years). The findings in our study suggest a negative relationship between self-esteem and guilt. Given that self-esteem is seen as a combination of perceived and ideal self and guilt is considered as a self-administered punishment (Reber, 1985), it would be reasonable to assume that one's feelings of failure or incompetence in some domains of his/her life may lead to maladaptive appraisals feelings of regret, anxiety and depression which in return decreases their self-esteem (Doron, Kyrios, & Moulding, 2007; Strelan, 2007; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). The results also suggested a negative association between school satisfaction and guilt, indicating that the higher the levels of guilt, the lower the school satisfaction.

Self-esteem is one of the most important variables for explaining school satisfaction. Previous studies revealed that increased self-esteem are related with adaptive school life outcome (Cvencek, Fryberg, Covarrubias, & Meltzoff, 2018; Virtanen, Kiuru, Lerkkanen, Poikkeus, & Kuorelahti, 2016). Strengthen selfesteem may lead one to believe that he/she deserves to succeed and drive one to generate ways to achieve their goals. The result between self-esteem and school satisfaction is similar to previous studies. (Hui and Sun, 2010; Karatzias et al., 2002).

Our findings suggest that self-esteem partially mediates the association between guilt and school satisfaction. In other words, our study suggests that higher levels

Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi - 2019

of guilt will make an individual more vulnerable to negative emotions and thoughts, lowering self-esteem, and the low self-esteem causes the individual to feel less satisfied with school. This finding of our study supports the hypothesis that cognitive variables (e.g., self-esteem, self-worth) mediate the association between environmental experiences (Lent et al. 2005). Similarly, Hui and Sun (2010). Tian and colleagues (2013) reported the mediating role of self-esteem and school satisfaction among early and middle adolescents.

Practical Implication

The results of our research yield several practical implications worthy for school guidance and counseling. First, our findings revealed that high levels of guilt is related to low levels of self-esteem and school satisfaction. Therefore, school counselors should value psycho-education programs intended to reduce the feelings of guilt. Besides, Guidance services in the school may offer guidance/seminars to parents of adolescents on strategies and activities that will help their children to extend and reinforce self-esteem and to reduce the feelings of guilt. Furthermore, school administration can change their school environment in order to promote students' well-being and prevent negative feelings such as guilt. In a broader sense, governments might make necessary changes in education system to promote students' psychological well-being which in turn would facilitate school satisfaction of students.

Limitations

We also need to note several limitations of this study. First, drawing any causal relationship among the variables becomes difficult because of the cross-sectional study. In the future, longitudinal or experimental research can be conducted in order to establish the direction of causality. Second, all data were gathered with self-report questionnaires. Future studies may use multiple assessment methods to improve the validity. Moreover, this research participant is consisted of middle and high school students in Turkey. Future research may be repeated with young people from different age groups.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this research was to investigate possible links among guilt, self-esteem, and school satisfaction among adolescents from Turkey.

Satıcı, Göçet-Tekin, Deniz

Findings revealed that guilt is correlated with decresead self-esteem; suggesting that high levels of guilt is related to low levels of self-esteem. In addition, results uncovered that school satisfaction was positively associated with self-esteem, indicating that as self-esteem increases, school satisfaction correspondingly increases and vice versa. Further analysis also revealed a negative correlation between school satisfaction and guilt; outlining that the higher the levels of guilt, the lower the school satisfaction. Consistent with our hypothesis, results indicated that the relationship between guilt and school satisfaction is partially mediated by adolescents' self-esteem. The results of this research may contribute to literature related to educational and counselling psychology and may provide useful information for school counsellors and teachers to enhance students' quality of school life.

Yazarlar Hakkında / About Authors

Begüm SATICI, Dr., Artvin Çoruh Üniversitesi Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık anabilim dalında doktor öğretim üyesi olarak çalışmaktadır. İlgi alanlarında ilişki doyumu, sosyal medya bağımlılığı, okul-temelli danışma ve öz-saygı, iyi oluş, mizah vb. pozitif psikoloji kavramları yer almaktadır.

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Emine GÖÇET-TEKİN, Dr., Sakarya Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Bölümünde öğretim görevlisi olarak çalışmaktadır. İlgi alanlarında suçluluk, utangaçlık, yalnızlık ve pozitif psikoloji kavramları yer almaktadır.

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Yazar Katkıları / Author Contributions

BS; Fikir ve tasarım, verilerin analizi, bulguların yorumlanması ve makalenin raporlaştırılması,

Idea and design, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and writing of the manuscript.

EGT; Tasarım, veri toplama, makalenin raporlaştırılması,

Design, data collection, and writing of the manuscript.

MED; Veri toplama, süpervizyon ve makalenin raporlaştırılması,

Data collection, supervision, and writing of the manuscript.

Tüm yazarlar araştırmaya kritik dönütler vermiş ve araştırmanın şekillenmesine yardım etmişlerdir.

All authors provided critical feedback and helped shape the research.

Çıkar Çatışması/ Conflict of Interest

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All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi - 2019

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