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ARAŞTIRMA

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Investigation the Mediator Role of Sense of Coherence in the Relationship Between Self-Differentiation and Alexithymia in University Students

Üniversite Öğrencilerinde Benlik Farklılaşması ile Aleksitimi Arasındaki İlişkide Bütünlük Duygusunun Aracı Rolünün İncelenmesi

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ABSTRACT

This study is aimed to examine the mediating role of sense of coherence in the relationship between self-differentiation and alexithymia. The study group of this research was consisted of 303 university students 184 women (60.7%) and 119 men (39.3%). The mean age of the participants was 19.96 (Sd=1.87). All measurement tools used in the research were applied anonymously. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and mediation analysis were used in the study. The findings obtained from the study revealed that self-differentiation is positively associated with sense of coherence and that both self-differentiation and sense of coherence are negatively correlated with alexithymia. According to the mediation analysis, the mediator role of sense of coherence in the relationship between self-differentiation and alexithymia was found to be statistically significant.

Article Information

Keywords

Self-Differentiation
Sense of Coherence
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Mediation

Anahtar Kelimeler

Benlik Farklılaşması
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ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, benlik farklılaşması ile aleksitimi arasındaki ilişkide bütünlük duygusunun aracı rolünü incelemektir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu, 184 kadın (%60.7) 119 erkek (%39.3) toplam 303 üniversite öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Araştırmaya katılanların yaş ortalaması 19.96 ve Ss= 1.87'dir. Araştırmada kullanılan tüm ölçme araçları isimsiz olarak uygulanmıştır. Araştırmada, betimsel istatistikler, Pearson Momentler Çarpımı Korelasyon Katsayı ve aracılık analizleri kullanılmıştır. Araştırmadan elde edile bulgular, benlik farklılaşması ile bütünlük duygusu arasında pozitif yönde ve benlik farklılaşması ve bütünlük duygusunun aleksitimi ile negatif yönde ilişki olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Aracılık analizi sonucuna göre, benlik farklılaşması ile aleksitimi arasındaki ilişkide bütünlük duygusunun aracılığı istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bulunmuştur.

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INTRODUCTION

Alexithymia is conceptualized as lack of words for emotions, difficulty in identifying and recognizing emotions, difficulty in distinguishing them from physiological sensations and communicating verbally, lack of symbolic thinking, and lack of emotional self-awareness (Nemiah & Sifneos, 1970; Sifneos, 1973). It is generally described as a global disruption in the processing of emotions (Lane et al., 1996). Although it is a feature of the clinical population, it can also be seen in the normal population, and it offers a lack of emotional skills (Krystal, 1982).

Individuals with high alexithymia tend to focus more on external concrete details and they are open to external feedback sources (Sifneos, 1975). Theoretically, alexithymia involves low levels of introspection, externally prone active cognitive style and limited imagination (Taylor, Bagby, & Parker, 1997). It is also assumed that alexithymia contributes to or exacerbates anxiety, depression, fragility and somatization by causing poor emotional regulation (Bagby, Parker, & Taylor, 1994; Kani et al., 2019; Yalug et al., 2010). Sifneos (1975) argues that alexithymic individuals have limited creativity with the difficulty of imagination, fantasy and dream recall. In addition that, this individuals experience disconnection in emotional experiences with the difficulty of distinguishing between physical sensations and emotions and putting emotions into words (Krystal & Krystal, 1988; Sifneos, 1987). Alexithymic individuals are able to cope with stress at a low level (Taylor & Bagby, 2000; Terock et al., 2019) and have limited self-relaxation ability (Krystal, 1982; McDougall, 1989).

As can be seen in alexithymia (Sifneos 1973), individuals who have difficulties in understanding, processing and defining their own emotions can not develop empathy with others also (Jonason & Krause, 2013; MacDonald & Price, 2017). The difficulties associated with one's understanding of emotional experience specific to alexithymia have negative impact on the ability to accurately describe and act on these experiences and to accept and adopt other's perspectives (MacDonald et al., 2017). Therefore, it can be said that alexithymic individuals experience problems in the intrapsychic and interpersonal levels (Bowen, 1978). It is at the center of recent psychopathology models which individuals with alexithymia have difficulty in making sense of their feelings by thinking that these feelings are incomprehensible or overwhelming and avoiding them (Kring & Sloan, 2010).

Self-Differentiation and Alexithymia

According to Bowen (1978) family systems theory, healthy adaptation, which contributes to emotion regulation, is provided by the "differentiation of self", which is defined as maintaining balance between autonomy and proximity in the context of family relations. Intrapsychic level of self-differentiation; It includes the full awareness of emotions and the ability to logically reason or participate in emotional experience in the face of situational demands. Interpersonal self-differentiation includes the ability to remain autonomous while maintaining contact with other important individuals, especially person's family (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Based on Bowen's (1978) theory, Skowron and Friedlander (1998) conceptualize self-differentiation in four sub-dimensions. Taking I position; It is seen in highly differentiated individuals who have a strong sense of self and the ability to establish and maintain relationship boundaries, and who can adhere to their beliefs even if they are under pressure. Individuals who experience emotional cut off feel threatened by intimacy and use behavioral defenses due to fear of loss in interpersonal relationships. In fusion with others, excessive dependence is seen on the acceptance and approval of others. Emotionally reactive

individuals are guided by their emotionality and tend to react to the environment with emotional variability and hypersensitivity (Skowron et al., 1998). While high level of differentiated individuals has the ability to balance feelings and thoughts, establish close relationships, protect self-awareness and allow others to protect their rights, low-differentiated individuals with a poor self-consistency can tolerate strong emotional experience in interpersonal conflicts less, depend on the approval of others, or force them to obey themselves, or they isolate themselves from others and, cannot distinguish thoughts from emotions (Bowen, 1976; Miller, Anderson, & Keals, 2004; Murdock & Gore, 2004).

Individuals who are alexithymic in interpersonal relationships tend to easily lose self-confidence, as they rely on external sources of feedback for self-regulation. Consequently, these individuals may be more susceptible to separation and loss (Finell, 1997). They also tend to avoid close relationships (Sifneos, 1996) and they are inability to differentiation between me and others (Blaustein & Tuber, 1998; Taylor et al., 1997). Individuals with high alexithymia more tend to be distant and lack of self-confident in interpersonal relationships than those with low alexithymia. Even if these people attempt to establish close relationships with other people, these relationships remain superficial as they tend to position themselves as dependent, dominant, or somewhere in between (Vanheule, Desmet, Meganck, & Bogaerts, 2007). Therefore, individuals with low level of self-differentiation may report higher alexithymia and, self-differentiation can be seen as an important factor in predicting alexithymic features (Teixeira & Pereira, 2015).

Poorly differentiated individuals are less flexible and compatible under stress due to the inability to regulate emotional arousal caused by psychological pressure (Skowron, Wester, & Azen, 2004). Consequently, these individuals are emotionally reactive in intense anxiety and stress situations, and/or experience fusion or emotional cut off in their relationships (Nichols & Schwartz, 2000). However, these problems seen in individuals with low self-differentiation are also common in alexithymic individuals (Blaustein et al., 1998). Alexithymic individuals suffer extreme hardship in expressing their emotions, which may endanger their's personality (Kets de Vries, 2001), and low self-differentiation and alexithymia show similar inadequacies in dealing with emotional problems such as stress and anxiety.

The Mediating Role of Sense of Coherence

Sense of coherence as a global trend that is effective on dealing with stress successfully and being good is a structure that allows one to see the world and its individual environment more or less understandable, manageable and meaningful (Antonovsky, 1979; 1987) and, it may be considered to be a concept that individuals who experience high alexithymia and low level of self-differentiation is related to their vulnerability to stress and anxiety and low emotion regulation skills. Solutogenesis, which is included in sense of coherence model provides a global and dynamic perceptive that shows how individuals have managed to experience keeping healthy and well-being, although there is a lot of stress in their lives (Sharabi, Levi, & Margalit, 2012). Thus, sense of coherence plays a health-protecting role when individuals face difficulties and stressful life events.

Sense of coherence consists of three components, theoretically. Comprehensibility; it is based on the belief that individuals can understand and predict most of the events that will occur in their lives. Manageability includes the belief that individuals have sufficient ability to cope with life difficulties, or that they can manage majority of the events under their control. Finally, meaningfulness; it expresses the ability to satisfaction and to achieve goals from activities, participation and individual investments (Antonovsky, 1993). Antonovsky (1979) argues that effective coping with psychosocial stress sources is

based on the mobilization of generalized sources of resistance (such as ego identity, coping strategy, social support and commitment), and the ability to use these resources. These resources reinforce sense of coherence and are potentially available, but it is the individual's responsibility to seek and use them to deal with stress. Individuals with a high sense of coherence are more eager to explore the resources (Strümpfer, 1990), and it is seen that they appear to be able to better manage stressful situations and emotions in life (Amirkhan & Greaves, 2003; Antonovsky, 1993; Eriksson & Lindström, 2006).

Sense of coherence and alexithymia are included in the relevant literature as the concepts that cause positive and negative results in relation to psychological well-being and health, respectively, in the treatment of physiological and psychological disorders such as fibromyalgia syndrome, spinal cord transection, and attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (Allah-Gholilo, Abolghasemi, Dehghan & Imani, 2015; Banni, 2015; O'Carroll, Ayling, O'Reilly & North, 2003). Accordingly, alexithymia worsens healthy compliance and pain management, while sense of coherence points to a more positive view of general health (Antonovsky, 1993). Sense of coherence is positively related to psychological well-being (Nilsson, Leppert, Simonsson, & Starrin, 2010), life satisfaction and quality (Mowad, 2004; von Humboldt, Leal & Pimenta, 2014), and is negatively related to burnout (Randler, Luffer, & Müller, 2015), depression (Eriksson, Lindström, & Lilja, 2007) and anxiety (Moksnes, Espnes, & Haugan, 2014). In contrast, alexithymia is associated with negative health indicators such as low level of physical functionality, emotional problems, low level of energy, low level of emotional well-being, low level of social functionality (Mattila et al., 2009). Besides, Allah-Gholilo et al. (2015) reveals that sense of coherence and alexithymia are negatively related concepts in predicting life satisfaction.

Self-differentiation and sense of coherence are considered as factors that mediate stress and distress, and it is suggested that individuals who experience high level of self-differentiation and sense of coherence exhibit low level of physical, psychological and relational problems related to perceived stress (Rogers, 2010). In addition, Rogers (2010) mentions that there is a high level of positive and significance relationship between self-differentiation and sense of coherence. Bowen's theory (1978) is based on the hypothesis that self-differentiation mediates the link between stress and psychological dysfunction. Furthermore, Kerr et al. (1988) suggest that individuals at any point in the self-differentiation scale can develop psychological symptoms if there is enough stress.

Like Bowen, Antonovsky (1987) believes that how individuals manage stress depends on how they see life difficulties and how they interact with them. The problem with stress is not about the stressor itself, but whether we are effectively using the resources (i.e., the dimensions of the sense of coherence) to cope with it. Individuals with low self-differentiation who experience high levels of stress report significantly more psychological dysfunctions (Murdock et al., 2004). Similar to Bowen's theory, sense of coherence in Antonovsky's salutogenic model defines a global trend that goes with a dynamic sense of confidence that the inner and outer environment of the person is predictable and that things will result as reasonably expected (Vastamaki, Moser, & Paul, 2009). Thus, it is expected that as sense of coherence increases, it will be managed the stress with lower physical and psychological complaints and as the level of self-differentiation increases, the level of sense of coherence can be high (Vaziri, Jomehri, & Farrokhi, 2014). Therefore, self-differentiation predicts sense of coherence and considering that both variables are mainly related to optimism, functionalism and ability to adapt to change (Rogers, 2010), it can be hypothesized that having high levels in these variables will predict alexithymia negatively.

The Current Study

Although alexithymia is a concept that is frequently studied in the clinical population, it is seen in the normal population at a considerable level and leaves the individual vulnerable to psychological problems such as stress and anxiety, which are frequently experienced in daily life. In modern societies of our age, in parallel with rapid technological developments, it has been observed that there has been an increase in alexithymic properties in recent years with the increase of their complex and insatiable relations (Kocak, 2002). However, it is important to be aware of our emotions, to make sense of them and to express them appropriately in order to establish healthy and balanced relationships in our daily life and to be in contact with our inner world.

When the relevant literature is analyzed, it is seen that there are studies on normal and clinical populations in which alexithymia is dealt with in relation to psychological and physiological disorders (Allah-Gholilo et al., 2015; Banni, 2015; Izci, 2016; Kocak, 2016; Sevindi & Kumcagiz, 2017). The common result obtained from these studies is that alexithymia is associated with physiological and psychological symptoms and the deterioration of close relationships. Among the most important reasons for this situation are alexithymic individuals' emotion regulation difficulties, having ineffective coping strategies with stress and, failure to relieve themselves, having inappropriate reactions in close relationships, having difficulty in perceiving their inner feelings, and lack of differentiating between I and others as well as their feelings and thoughts. It is also seen that alexithymia is based on family dynamics and close relationships with attachment figures. It is believed that Bowen's (1978) self-differentiation derived from Family Systems Theory and sense of coherence derived from Antonovsky's (1987) salutonegic model are important factors affecting one's emotional regulation processes and stress coping and well-being. Therefore, it can be said that self- differentiation and sense of coherence are significant variables in predicting alexithymic features.

To the author's knowlegde, there are limited number of studies abroad that examine the relationship between self-differentiation and sense of coherence (Rogers, 2010; Vaziri et al., 2014) and, the relationship between self- differentiation and alexithymia (Karami, 2014; Teixeira et al., 2015). Moreover, there are studies dealing with sense of coherence and alexithymia as independent variables (Allah-Gholilo et al., 2015; Banni, 2015; O'Carroll et al., 2003). However, in Turkey has not seen a study that examined combination of self-differentiation, sense of coherence and alexithymia. In addition, considering that self-differentiation and sense of coherence are related to the ability to regulate and manage emotions appropriately in the dimension of personal and interpersonal relationships in relation to family dynamics (Rogers, 2010), it is important to consider their relationship with alexithymia. Therefore, it is thought that this study will fill the gap in the literature and contribute to the mental health field. The aim of this study is to examine the mediating role of sense of coherence in the relationship between self-differentiation and alexithymia.

METHOD

Research Model

In this study, a correlational research design was used. The relationships among self differentiaton (predictor variable), sense of coherence (mediator) and alexithymia (outcome variable) were examined through mediation analysis.

Study Group

The study group of this research consisted of 184 women (60.7%) and 119 men (39.3) totally 303 university students who are enrolled in a teacher training program at a state university in the south of Turkey. The mean age of the participants was 19.96 (Sd=1.87).

Ethical Statement

In the present study, application permission and ethics approval was granted by the author's university ethics committee (Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (REF: 88431307-050.01.04-E.6337)).

Data Collection Tools

Differentiation of Self Inventory-Revised (DSI-R). DSI was developed by Skowron and Friedlander (1998), revised by Skowron and Schmitt (2003) as DSI-R and adapted to Turkish by Isik and Bulduk (2013). The Turkish form of the scale was found to be sufficiently valid ($\chi^2/df = 1.51$, GFI = .93, AGFI = .90, CFI = .93 and RMSEA = .046). The DSI-R includes four-subdimension (emotional reactivity, 'I position', fusion with others and emotional cutoff), 20 items and six-point likert. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the original form for the total scale was calculated to be .81, and respectively, .78, .75, .77, .74 for the subscales. Turkish form's Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was calculated to be .80, and respectively, .75, .74, .67, .83 for the subscales. In the current study, it was calculated and determined to be .75 for the whole scale.

Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC-S). The SOC-S was developed by Antonovsky (1987) and adapted to Turkish by Scherler and Lajunen (1997). The Turkish form of the scale was SOC-S includes 13 items and three sub-dimensions (comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness) and 7-point Likert. All fit indices of Turkish form indicated that the scale have sufficient fit values. The Cronbach's alpha of the original form of the scale was calculated as .82 (Antonovsky, 1993) and for the Turkish form of the scale was calculated as .69, and for the subscales were calculated respectively as .57, .54 and .62. In the current study, it was calculated and determined to be .69 for the overall scale.

The Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS). TAS was developed by Taylor, Ryan and Bagby (1985), was first applied by Dereboy (1990) on the clinical population sample in Turkey. Then the validity study of the scale on the normal population was done by Varol (1998). All fit indices of Turkish form indicated that the scale have sufficient fit values. TAS is a 5-point Likert-type scale consisting of 26 items and four sub-dimensions (the ability to identify one's feelings, and to distinguish them from bodily sensations, daydreaming and external thinking). The internal consistency reliability coefficient of the original form of TAS was calculated as .77 (Taylor et al., 1985) and for the Turkish form was found to be .72 for the normal population (Varol, 1998). In this study, it was calculated and determined to be .77 for the whole scale.

Procedure

The volunteering of the students was taken as a basis during the application of the research and the measurement tools took approximately 30 minutes to be applied. Mahalanobis distance values (χ^2) have been calculated in order to determine whether the data are extreme values that harm the "linearity" and "normality" assumptions and no contradictory values have been found. To determine whether the data have normal distribution, kurtosis and skewness values were examined and these values were found to

have normal distribution. In addition, correlation values of the variables were found to be less than .90. Therefore, it was seen that there was no multiple connection problem in the data set. In the study, the statistical significance of the mediation effects of the tested model was realized by executing "Multiple Mediation Model 4" through PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2017). In the research, the level of significance was taken as .01. In analyzing the data, IBM SPSS 22.0 program was used.

RESULTS

Pearson Moments Product Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between the variables of the study. Descriptive statistics about self-differentiation, sense of coherence and alexithymia and values related to skewness and kurtosis coefficients and correlation findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive and correlation statistics

Correlation	1	2	3
1. Self-differentiation	---		
2. Sense of coherence	.29**	---	
3. Alexithymia	-.44**	-.32**	---
Descriptive			
Mean	3.71	3.94	2.60
Sd	.58	.75	.43
Skewness	-.23	-.40	-.24
Kurtosis	-.13	.22	-.50

Note. N=303, ** $p < .01$

When the values in Table 1 are examined, there is a moderately significant positive relationship between self-differentiation and sense of coherence ($r = .29, p < .01$) while there is a moderately significant negative relationship between self-differentiation and alexithymia ($r = -.44, p < .01$). There is also a moderately significant negative relationship between sense of coherence and alexithymia ($r = -.32, p < .01$).

Mediation Model Analysis

In the relationship between self-differentiation and alexithymia, findings regarding the model, which is thought to have a mediating role of sense of coherence, are presented in Figure 1.

As seen in Figure 1, the total effect of self-differentiation on alexithymia ($c = -.32, SH = .04, t = -8.54, p < .001$) is statistically significant (Step 1). The direct effect of self-differentiation on sense of coherence (the mediating variable) is statistically significant ($B = .37, SH = .07, t = 5.26, p < .001$) (Step 2). The direct effect of sense of coherence on alexithymia ($B = -.12, SE = .03, t = -3.96, p < .01$) is statistically significant (Step 3). When self-differentiation and sense of coherence (mediating variable) were entered simultaneously into the model (Step 4), the relationship between self-differentiation and alexithymia decreased in terms of direct effect, but the significance value was preserved ($c' = -.28, SE = .03, t = -3.96, p < .001$). These results support the mediational hypothesis. In addition, in the first model, it is seen that self-differentiation predicts sense of coherence significantly and positively ($F = 27.7621, R^2 = .08, p < .0001$) and self-differentiation explains .08% of the variance in sense of coherence. In the second model, it is seen that self-differentiation and sense of coherence predicted alexithymia significantly and negatively ($F = 46.0750, R^2 = .24, p < .0001$) and self-differentiation and sense of coherence explained 24% of the variance in alexithymia. In the third model, it is seen that self-differentiation predicts alexithymia directly, significantly and negatively ($F = 72.9033, R^2 = .20, p < .0001$) and self-differentiation explains 20% of total variance in alexithymia. Whether the indirect effect is significant or not has been examined with the

bootstrap method and the values related to the effects between the variables of the tested model are presented in Table 2.

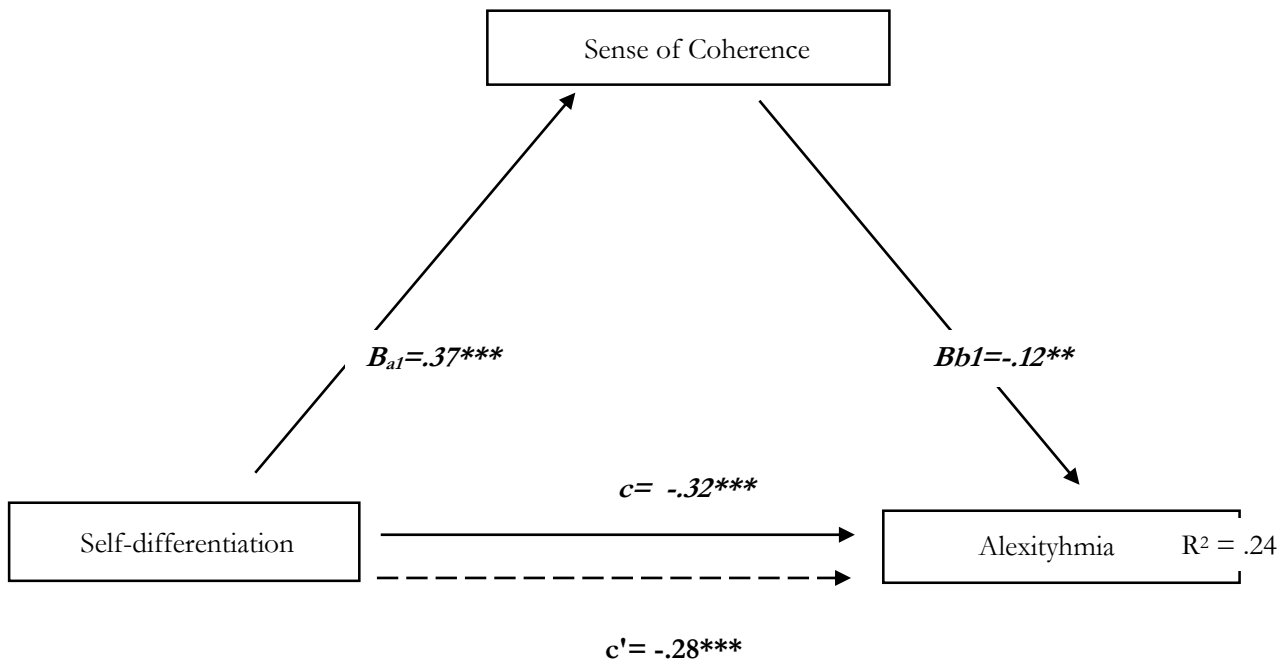


Figure 1. The mediating role of sense of coherence in the relationship between self-differentiation and alexithymia

Table 2. Analysis related to the significance of mediation effect

The relationship mediated by sense of coherence	Total effect	Direct effect	Indirect effect	BoLLCI/BoULCI
Self-differentaiton-alexithymia	-.3281	-.2830	-.0451	-.0778 /-.0176

In order to determine the significance of the intermediary effect Bootstrap confidence interval lower limit and upper limit values must be above or below zero and not include zero (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the mediation effect is significant. BootLLCI and BootULCI are within the expected range. According to the findings of the analysis, the indirect effect of self-differentiation on the alexithymia through sense of coherence is statistically significant.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

In this study, the mediating effect of sense of coherence in the relationship between self-differentiation and alexithymia was tested. Research findings revealed that self-differentiation and sense of coherence positively correlated with each other, and self-differentiation and alexithymia, and sense of coherence and alexithymia negatively correlated with each other. In the mediation analysis, the mediating role of sense of coherence between self-differentiation and alexithymia was found statistically significant.

Karami (2014) concluded that self-differentiation was negatively associated with alexithymia, and self-differentiation predicted alexithymia. In another study, Teixeira et al. (2015) revealed that self-differentiation was positively associated with alexithymia, and similarly that self-differentiation predicted alexithymia. However, Teixeira et al. (2015) pointed out that poorly differentiated individuals show higher levels of alexithymia. Considering that the scores obtained from the self-differentiation scale indicate high level of self-differentiation by reverse coding and the scores obtained from the alexithymia scale indicate

high alexithymic features, the negative relationship between self-differentiation and alexithymia supports the findings of the above study. Therefore, the findings obtained from the above two studies are in line with the current study and it can be said that self-differentiation is an important factor in determining alexithymic properties.

Sense of coherence and alexithymia are considered as protective and risk factors in the treatment of physiological and psychological disorders, respectively (Allah-Gholilo et al., 2015; Banni, 2015; O'Carroll et al., 2003). In these studies, alexithymia is regarded as a concept that causes the deterioration of health and well-being as a result of emotion regulation difficulty and ineffective coping with stress and anxiety, while sense of coherence is considered as a factor that positively affects health and well-being that strengthens psychological resilience. In addition, Allah-Gholilo et al. (2015) point out that individuals with a sense of coherence will be effective in improving their life experiences with the ability to understand and accept their emotions, and to deal with the stress and anxiety in their lives more effectively. Therefore, although it does not provide statistical data on the relationship between sense of coherence and alexithymia, it can be said that these studies indirectly support the negative relationship between sense of coherence and alexithymia, and the predictive effect of sense of coherence on alexithymia.

In the related literature, few research findings referring to the relationship between self-differentiation and sense of coherence were found (Rogers, 2010; Vaziri et al., 2014). In his study, Rogers (2010) focused on self-differentiation and sense of coherence as factors mediating the relationship between stress and distress, and found that high level of self-differentiation and sense of coherence predicted low levels of physical, psychological and relational distress associated with high level of perceived stress. In addition, both variables are considered as concepts that develop in the context of family dynamics and have a positive effect on how individuals perceive and manage stresses and stressful situations. Rogers' (2010) study supports the findings of the current study with the finding that self-differentiation was positively associated with sense of coherence. Besides, Vaziri et al. (2014) revealed that self-differentiation was positively related to sense of coherence, and self-differentiation predicted sense of coherence. In conclusion, considering the direct and indirect relations of the variables discussed in the current study based on the relevant literature, the findings obtained from the research are considered to be important.

Limitations and Suggestions

It is a limitation of the research that the participants were selected through the appropriate sampling method and restricted by the self-report scales used in this study. The effectiveness of the study can be increased with the studies to be carried out on different sample groups, by using different measurement tools or by supporting with qualitative research. Another limitation of the research is that the data are cross-sectional. In future research, experimental and longitudinal studies may be suggested to test complex causal relationships. In addition, the fact that socio-demographic factors and cultural characteristics were not examined in this study is a limitation in terms of not revealing the level of influence of the variables included in the study from socio-cultural variables. In later researches, by using socio-demographic variables and by doing intercultural studies can be support the findings of the present study.

In this study, the predictive effects of sense of coherence which is a concept from Antonovsky's (1987) salutogenic model, and self-differentiation which is a concept from Family Systems Theory of Bowen (1978) on alexithymia were investigated. In this study, the relevant variables are dealt with an individual

perspective and discussed. However, it also can be said that these variables are related to family and couple therapy. Therefore, in future studies, it may be suggested to conduct studies on different sample groups dealing with families and couples, or to conduct mixed-pattern studies in which the individual is addressed within the context of the family and its immediate environment. In addition, it can be said that the development of psycho-education programs, where self-differentiation and sense of coherence are taken as basis in reducing alexithymic features by experts working in mental health, will contribute to the field. In future studies, the effectiveness of the research can be increased by adding different variables that may be related to the variables in this research (eg perceived stress, emotion regulation, mindfulness, cognitive flexibility, etc.)

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Author Contributions

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