

## An Investigation of Social and Emotional Loneliness in Young Adults in terms of Difficulties in Emotion Regulation

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### Abstract

In this research, it was attempted to explain the predictive effect of difficulties in emotion regulation on social and emotional loneliness. It was especially aimed to investigate the effect on loneliness of difficulties in using the appropriate emotion regulation strategies in understanding, accepting and controlling the emotions and behaving accordingly. In this study where the correlational survey model was used, data was collected from 552 young adults studying in different faculties and departments of a private university located in the city of Istanbul. 354 participants (64.1%) were female and 198 participants (35.9%) were male young adults aged between 19-25. Measurement tools were Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale and the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale. Analysis results demonstrated that social and emotional loneliness exhibited a significant difference between genders while the difficulties in emotion regulation did not exhibit a significant difference between genders. Significant correlations were found between social and emotional loneliness and difficulties in emotion regulation and its subscales. The results of stepwise multiple regression analysis showed that difficulties in using the appropriate emotion regulation strategies, understanding the emotional reactions and awareness of emotional reactions were a predictor of social and emotional loneliness. Findings were discussed in accordance with the literature. Suggestions for researchers and field practitioners were listed.

Emotional loneliness • Difficulties in emotion regulation • Social loneliness

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As social relationships are the essence of human life, loneliness is a major difficulty in human life that has always been investigated (Russell, Peplau & Cutrona, 1980). Establishing and maintaining lasting, positive and significant interpersonal relationships is an important impulse for people. Fulfilment of this impulse depends on pleasant interactions with other people and the permanence of these interactions (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The direction of people's behaviors –being close to or detached from other people– is shaped in line with the interactions with other people and the feedback received. Individuals who feel accepted and loved by other people will be aware of the presence and support even when they are alone. However, if they feel not accepted, not only the direction of their behaviors but also the quality of their behaviors will change, they will feel estranged, lonely and hopeless (Horney, 2013).

Throughout history, people had a tendency to live in crowded groups for shelter and help purposes. Thus, being disconnected and isolated from other people poses a vital danger. Loneliness is a signal driving the individual to modify his or her behaviors in order to avoid getting hurt. Therefore, loneliness serves as a signal that encourages individuals to restore the connections they need for survival and improvement. When remain unresolved, loneliness not only negatively affects social relationships but also increases the physical symptoms and causes individuals to feel worn-out (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009). People always make efforts to avoid loneliness which is a painful and scary feeling (Geçtan, 1999). Individual differences such as sociodemographic factors, social roles, quality and quantity of social contact, humor are significant factors that are determinant in explaining of loneliness (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009).

Studies on loneliness have brought along different definitions of loneliness. Basically, it is defined as an unbearable, upsetting feeling that can be experienced by every individual during certain periods (Perlman & Peplau, 1981; Sadler, 1978). De Jong-Gierveld (1998) defines loneliness as an unpleasant or inadmissible lack of quality of certain social relationships and states that loneliness encapsulates the perceptions, experiences and evaluations of individuals. Sadler (1978) points out that people live in a world where they always get separated from the people they love or leave them behind. Sadler emphasizes that individuals experience painful changes caused by significant attachment losses and that loneliness is a major problem for many people. It is reported that loneliness which is described as the deprivation perceived by an individual in relationships with his or her social circle can be both quantitative and qualitative (Russell, Cutrona, Rose & Yurko, 1984). Social relationships protect individuals from loneliness and qualities such as the intimacy and frequency of interaction may vary throughout a person's lifetime (Nicolaisen & Thorsen, 2017). Young adulthood is a period in which individuals build intimate relationships and unite their identity with that of other person(s). In this period when trust and mutual satisfaction is built, feeling anxious about being with someone may cause individuals to avoid establishing intimate relationships. This avoidance may lead the person to feel lonely. Loneliness may be felt instead of building intimate relationships that must be achieved in this period (Öztürk & Uluşahin, 2014). In a review of studies conducted with loneliness, many studies indicated loneliness was studied in terms of variables such as social support (Şahin, 2019; Erdeğer, 2001), life satisfaction (Kaya & Gokler, 2017; Özkaya, 2017), psychological resilience (Kılıç & Alver, 2017) and hopelessness (Özkaya, 2017).

Decreasing and preventing loneliness is important for an individual's health and well-being (Nicolaisen & Thorsen, 2017). The ability to build healthy and balanced relationships is significant for an individual's adaptation to life. Emotions, thoughts, behaviors and physical reactions are a whole in building such relationships and one of the most important components of this whole is emotions (Koçak, 2005). Emotions have a great number of functions that are important for human life such as enabling social interaction, behavioral responses, decision-making, sensory perception, attention to the environment and improving the memory. However, if these helpful emotions are experienced very profoundly for a long time or if they are not situationally appropriate, they may harm the individual. In order to avoid the harmful effect of emotions that shape the human behaviors, emotion regulation processes must be used (Werner & Gross, 2010).

Emotion regulation is defined as the adoption of adaptive strategies by an individual to cope with an undesirable level of intense emotions (Leahy, Tirch & Napolitano, 2011). However, emotion regulation does not only refer to putting an end to the unsettling situation. It consists of regulations that regulate the individual's functions and encourage them to adapt to both momentary and ongoing living conditions. It is related not only to decreasing the intensity or frequency of emotions, but especially to the capacity of generating and maintaining emotions to impress and communicate with people especially through coordination with others' emotions (Cole, Michel & Teti, 1994). In other words, it can be said that emotion regulation is comprised of internal and external processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating and modifying an individual's intense and temporary emotional reactions (Thompson, 1994).

Gratz and Roemer (2004) mentioned the following concepts as effective emotion regulation skills: (a) awareness and understanding of emotions, (b) acceptance of emotions, (c) ability to control impulsive behaviors and behave in accordance with the desired goal when experiencing negative emotions, (d) ability to use situationally appropriate emotion regulation strategies to modulate emotional responses as desired in order to meet individual goals and situational demands. The absence of any or all of these concepts indicates the presence of difficulties in emotion regulation. In a review of studies on the difficulties in emotion regulation, it was observed that the difficulties in emotion regulation was investigated in terms of such variables as early maladaptive schemas (Akhun, 2012; Eldoğan, 2012), social phobia (Eldoğan, 2012), addiction (Budak, 2017; Karagöz & Dağ, 2015; Süsen, 2017), attachment (Saribal, 2017), personality disorders (Salsman & Linehan, 2012; Şaşmaz, 2014), trauma (Ehring & Quack, 2010; Gürgen, 2017).

### **Rationale and Purpose of the Study**

Individuals assume diverse roles and responsibilities during this period when they go through many changes as part of their developmental process and build social relationships and intimate relationships. In addition to the changes in behaviors and thoughts as a result of social development and social interactions, emotional changes are also observed. It is a major difficulty for an individual to be in a disturbing and undesirable state of loneliness. In such cases, it is highly important for the individual to be aware of the emotion underlying the feeling of loneliness and regulate the relevant emotion(s). Awareness of internal and external demands requires being aware of the signals acquired through those emotions. It is significant in the field of emotion regulation how individuals behaviorally and

cognitively regulate their emotions, which emotion regulation strategies they use and which of the strategies used are dysfunctional in emotion regulation.

When the literature is reviewed, studies in which difficulties of emotion regulation and loneliness are studied together have shown that these variables are food addiction (Tatsi, Kamal, Turvill & Holler, 2019), drug abuse (Nikmanesh, Kazemi & Khosravi, 2015), eating disorders (Southward, Christensen, Fettich, Weissman, Berona & Chen, 2014) and experiential avoidance (Shi, Zhang, Zhang, Fu & Wang, 2016). Since studies both in Turkey and abroad investigated the emotion regulation in mood disorders (Şaşmaz, 2014; Mauss, Wilhelm & Gross, 2004; Mennin & Fresco, 2010) and studies that investigating difficulties of emotion regulation and loneliness together (Eres, Lim, Lanham, Jillard & Bates, 2021; Tatsi, Kamal, Turvill & Holler, 2019; Nikmanesh, Kazemi & Khosravi, 2015) shows that it is important to examine loneliness in terms of difficulties of emotion regulation. The main focus of the study was to examine to what extent any or more of the difficulties of emotion regulation predict loneliness, especially in the young adulthood process. As a result, within the broad framework of emotions, it is important to investigate the loneliness experienced by young adult university students in terms of effective emotion regulation components in order to ensure a healthier developmental period and a higher quality of life. It is considered that it is highly significant to conduct studies on how the difficulties in emotion regulation that may be experienced in the absence of any of the effective emotion regulation components can affect the individual's loneliness. Thus, it was aimed to examine the social and emotional loneliness experienced by young adult university students in family, intimate romantic relationships and relationships with friends in terms of the difficulties in emotion regulation. In line with this purpose, answers were sought to the following questions:

1. Do social and emotional loneliness and difficulties in emotion regulation differ significantly between genders?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the social and emotional loneliness and the difficulties in emotion regulation and its non-acceptance, goals, strategies, impulses, clarity, awareness subscales?
3. Do the difficulties in emotion regulation scale's non-acceptance, goals, strategies, impulses, clarity, awareness subscale scores significantly predict the social and emotional loneliness scores?

### **Method**

In this section, there are research design, research group, data collection instruments, data collection and data analysis chapters.

#### **Research Design**

In the present study, the correlational survey model was used to examine the dependent variable of social and emotional loneliness in young adulthood in terms of the independent variables of the difficulties in emotion regulation subscales. Correlational survey models are used to determine the correlation between two or more variables and the extent of the correlation (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2011).

### Study Group

The research group consisted of young adult university students studying in different grades of various departments of Faculty of Education, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Faculty of Health Sciences of a private university in Istanbul during the second semester of 2017-2018 academic year. 522 university students aged between 19-25 were included in the study. 354 of participants (64.1%) were female while 198 of them (35.9%) were male. The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1 to give information about the research group.

Table 1

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variables	Groups	N	%
<b>Gender</b>	Female	354	64.1
	Male	198	35.9
<b>Mother Education Level</b>	Primary School and under	160	29
	Secondary School	105	19
	High School	203	36.8
<b>Father Education Level</b>	University and over	84	15.2
	Primary School and under	98	17.8
	Secondary School	89	16.1
<b>Residence</b>	High School	211	38.2
	University and over	154	27.9
	With family	382	69.2
	Alone at home	40	7.2
	With friends at home	58	10.6
	In dormitory	72	13

### Research Instruments and Process

In this research, to measure the social and emotional loneliness levels Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale ; to measure the difficulties in emotion regulation processes The Difficulties In Emotion Regulation Scale and personal information form was used.

**Personal Information Form.** This form containing information of age, gender, mother and father education level, place to stay for participants, was prepared by the researcher with the aim of get information about the participants.

**Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale.** Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (SELSA) full version is a 37-item, 3-dimensional measurement tool developed by DiTommaso and Spinner (1993). In later years, its short version was prepared by DiTommaso, Brannen and Best (2004) who selected 15 items from the scale's original version. The 15-item short form was adapted to the Turkish culture by Çeçen (2007) and each subscale had 5 items. As part of the validity of the scale, Confirmatory factor analysis was performed. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the three-factor structure of the scale and revealed that the fit indices ( $\chi^2 = 385.92$ ,  $df = 86$ ;  $RMSEA = .02$ ,  $GFI = .91$ ,  $IFI = .92$ ,  $CFI = .92$ ) were at an acceptable level. When the scale was examined in terms of

concurrent and discriminant validity, it was found strong relationships. Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient and test-retest reliability coefficient were calculated in order to test the reliability of the scale. Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .83 for the loneliness in romantic relationships subscale, .77 for the loneliness in family relationships subscale and .74 for the loneliness in social relationships subscale. Test-retest reliability coefficient for social, family and romantic sub-dimensions were .88, .83 and .91 respectively. In this scale, emotional loneliness is measured with loneliness in romantic relationships and loneliness in family subscales, while social loneliness is measured with loneliness in social relationships subscale (Çeçen, 2007).

***The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale.*** The difficulties in emotion regulation scale developed by Gratz and Roemer (2004) was adapted to the Turkish culture by Rugancı and Gençöz (2010). There are 6 subscales in the scale which are *awareness, clarity, non-acceptance, strategies, impulse* and *goals*. The scale is rated as a 5-point Likert type, and consists of 36 items. There are reverse items in the scale. When the factor structure is examined, one item was excluded from the scale because of the low load value. When this item was removed from the scale, it was observed that the Turkish form of the scale showed a construct validity similar with the original factor structure. Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient for the whole scale was found as .94. When examined in terms of sub-dimensions of the Turkish version of the scale, alpha coefficients were found to be .82 for the clarity, .90 for the goals, .90 for the impulse, .83 for the not accepting, .89 for the strategy and .75 for the awareness subscales. Test-retest reliability coefficient of the whole scale was found as .83. Test-retest reliability coefficients of sub-dimensions of the scale were .85 for the strategy, .72 for the awareness, .69 for the clarity, .68 for the impulse, .72 for the goals and .60 for the non-acceptance (Rugancı & Gençöz, 2010).

### **Data Collection Process**

The necessary permission to apply the measurement tools was received from the lecturers and the tools were collected by the researchers from the classrooms on a pre-determined day and time. The participants were informed about the content and significance of the study. Participation was voluntary and the importance of writing genuine and complete answers to the questions in the measurement tools was emphasized. The researcher was present in the classroom to answer any questions asked by the participants while filling in the measurement tools.

### **Data Analysis**

The aim of this study is to explain the prediction level of social and emotional loneliness of young adults by the difficulties in emotion regulation scale and its subscales. Firstly, an independent samples t-test was done to determine whether social and emotional loneliness scores and difficulties in emotion regulation scores differed according to the gender variable. Pearson product-moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between social and emotional loneliness and difficulties in emotion regulation subscales. Then, the stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the predictive effect of the difficulties in emotion regulation subscales on social and emotional loneliness. SPSS 15.0 package program is used for the analysis of data.

The presence of data loss and extreme values in obtained data was investigated using the standard z values [-3, +3], kurtosis and skewness coefficients (+1,-1) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In addition, prior to the stepwise

multiple regression analysis, the hypotheses for normality and linearity between predictive variables and predicted variables were examined using graphs. In order to detect any multicollinearity problem among the predictive variables, VIF (Variance Inflation Factor), CI (Condition Index) and Tolerance value were checked. No multicollinearity problem was observed among predictive variables ( $VIF < 10$ ,  $CI < 30$ , Tolerance value  $> .10$ ) (Çokluk, Şekercioğlu & Büyüköztürk, 2012).

## Results

In this section, we explain the findings obtained as a result of statistical analysis conducted in line with the study problems.

Table 2 shows the results of Independent Samples t-test conducted to determine whether social and emotional loneliness scores and difficulties in emotion regulation scores of young adult university students participating in the study differed according to the gender variable.

Table 2

*Results of Independent Samples T-Test Applied to the SELS and DERS Scores for Gender*

Variables	Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	$Sh_{\bar{x}}$	T	sd	p
SELS	Female	354	41.13	15.70	.83	-2.52	550	.012
	Male	198	44.61	15.18	1.07			
DERS	Female	354	84.67	21.42	1.13	-.150	550	.881
	Male	198	84.95	20.51	1.45			

*(SELS: Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale; DERS: Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale)*

As seen in Table 2, it was detected that the social and emotional loneliness scores of young adults exhibited a significant difference for the gender variable ( $t = -2.52$ ;  $p < .05$ ) but showed no significant difference for the difficulties in emotion regulation scores ( $t = -.150$ ;  $p > .05$ ).

Table 3 presents the findings of Pearson correlation analysis conducted to determine whether there was any significant correlation between the social and emotional loneliness scores and the difficulties in emotion regulation scale's non-acceptance, goals, strategies, impulses, clarity, awareness subscale scores of young adult university students participating in the study.

Table 3

*Correlation Analysis Results for Between Social and Emotional Loneliness and Difficulties in Emotion Regulation*

The Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale Subscales	Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale Scores		
	N	r	p
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation	552	.342*	.000
Clarity	552	.255*	.000
Non-Acceptance	552	.266*	.000
Goals	552	.145*	.000
Impulse	552	.244*	.000
Awareness	552	.157*	.000
Strategies	552	.340*	.000

\* $p < .01$

As shown in Table 3, the Pearson correlation analysis results demonstrate that there is a positive, moderately significant correlation between emotion regulation scores and social and emotional loneliness scores ( $r=.342$ ;  $p<.01$ ). In terms of the difficulties in emotion regulation subscales, a positive significant correlation was detected between social and emotional loneliness and “clarity ( $r=.255$ ;  $p<.01$ )”, “non-acceptance ( $r=.266$ ;  $p<.01$ )”, “goals ( $r=.145$ ;  $p<.01$ )”, “impulse ( $r=.244$ ;  $p<.01$ )”, “awareness ( $r=.157$ ;  $p<.01$ )” and “strategies ( $r=.340$ ;  $p<.01$ )” variables.

A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the prediction level of social and emotional loneliness levels of young adult university students participating in the study by the non-acceptance, goals, strategies, impulses, clarity, awareness subscales of the difficulties in emotion regulation scale. Analysis findings are given in Table 4.

Table 4

*Findings of Multiple Regression Analysis for the Prediction of Social and Emotional Loneliness Scores*

	Predictive Variables	R	$\Delta R^2$	B	SH <sub>B</sub>	$\beta$	T	p
Difficulties in Emotion Regulation	Constant			20.466	2.691		7.606	.000
	Strategies	.340	.114	.638	.095	.293	6.705	.000
	Clarity	.026	.016	.499	.209	.102	2.384	.017
	Awareness	.008	.005	.398	.195	.096	7.606	.000
R=.374		$\Delta R^2=.135$						
F(3.548)=29.782		p=.000						

As shown in Table 4, the stepwise multiple regression analysis was completed in three stages. It was observed that the three variables were significant predictors in terms of predicting social and emotional loneliness. In the first step, the “strategies” subscale that explained 11% of social and emotional loneliness scores was analyzed. In the second step, the “clarity” subscale that contributed to the explained variance the furthest was analyzed. The Clarity subscale explains 1.6% of the variance for social and emotional loneliness scores. In the third step, the “awareness” subscale that contributed to the explained variance the most was analyzed. The awareness subscale contributes to the variance for social and emotional loneliness scores by 0.5%. Regression coefficients indicate that the correlation between strategies, clarity and awareness subscales and social and emotional loneliness is positive. Strategies, clarity and awareness variables together explain 13.5% of the total variance for social and emotional loneliness. The regression equation for the prediction of social and emotional loneliness scores according to the regression analysis results is presented below.

### Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the social and emotional loneliness levels of young adult university students in terms of the difficulties in emotion regulation. The correlation between the difficulties in emotion regulation scale and each of its subscales and the social and emotional loneliness was presented and the extent to which social and emotional loneliness was predicted by each subscale was examined. Moreover, it was investigated whether social and emotional loneliness and the difficulties in emotion regulation exhibited a significant difference according to the gender variable. The correlational survey model was used to explain the correlation



between social and emotional loneliness and difficulties in emotion regulation variables and to determine the predictive effect of emotion regulation on loneliness.

Analysis results showed that social and emotional loneliness was different between genders while the difficulties in emotion regulation was not different. A positive, significant correlation was found between the social and emotional loneliness level and the difficulties in emotion regulation scale and its subscales. It was also detected that strategies, clarity, awareness subscales of the difficulties in emotion regulation scales were major predictors of social and emotional loneliness. A review of literature studies demonstrates that loneliness exhibited a difference between genders in some studies (Borys & Perlman, 1985; Deniz, Hamarta & Ari, 2005; Demirli & Demir, 2014; Kılıç & Karakuş, 2016; Özkaya, 2017; Salimi, 2011), while no significant difference was detected between genders in some studies (Green, Richardson, Lago & Schatten-Jones, 2001; Kılıç & Alver, 2017; Oruç, 2013; Pehlivan, 2017; Şeremet, 2019). High levels of loneliness in men can be explained by the fact that men have more difficulty in opening themselves up and expressing themselves compared to women. There are also studies with supportive findings revealing that the difficulties in emotion regulation showed no difference between genders (Akhun, 2012; Süsen, 2017; Şeremet, 2019). However, some studies reveal a significant difference between genders in terms of the difficulties in emotion regulation subscales (Çalışkan, 2017; Gratz & Roemer, 2004; Gündüz, 2016; Neuman, van Lier, Gratz & Koot, 2010; Pektaş, 2015). There are no studies that clearly indicate in which subscales the difficulties in emotion regulation exhibit a significant difference between genders. Thus, considering the total scores, it can be said that the difficulties in emotion regulation scores does not differ between genders.

In the study, it was detected that as the scores from the difficulties in emotion regulation subscales (lack of awareness of emotional reactions, not understanding and not accepting the emotional reactions, limited access to effective perceived emotion regulation strategies, difficulty in impulse control while experiencing negative emotions and difficulty in engaging in goal-directed behavior) increased, social and emotional loneliness increased as well. When the literature examined, it is seen that the emotional awareness and clarity sub-dimensions of difficulties in emotion regulation are associated with loneliness (Eres, Lim, Lanham, Jillard & Bates, 2021; Nikmanesh, Kazemi and Khosravi, 2015). There are other supporting findings in the literature studies. Yıldız (2016) found that the loneliness levels of young individuals increased as their internal and external dysfunctional regulation levels increased. Şeremet (2019) investigated the mediating role of the difficulties in emotion regulation in the relationship between attachment and loneliness and detected a positive correlation between loneliness and each subscale of the difficulties in emotion regulation scale. This result supports the finding that individuals with high scores of difficulties in emotion regulation also have high loneliness scores. In literature studies, such results as the significant correlation between difficulties in emotion regulation and personality disorders (Akhun, 2012; Dvorak et al., 2014; Glen & Klonsky, 2009; Salsman & Linehan, 2012; Şaşmaz, 2014) and the common occurrence of emotional deprivation in personality disorders (Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2009) support the correlation between difficulties in emotion regulation and loneliness. Qualter, Quinton, Wagner and Brown (2009) demonstrated a direct correlation between difficulty in identifying emotions and loneliness. They reported that difficulty in identifying emotions and talking about emotions was a process parallel with and caused by loneliness. They explained this finding by stating

that feeling lonely in a social circle and family prevented individuals from implementing and improving their emotional skills. These findings support the correlation between loneliness and difficulties in emotion regulation.

It was observed that difficulties in using appropriate emotion regulation strategies (strategies), understanding the emotional reactions (clarity) and awareness of emotional reactions (awareness) predicted the social and emotional loneliness. In a review of studies, it was seen that very few studies directly addressed the difficulties in emotion regulation and loneliness. In a study by Şeremet (2019) with university students, it was found that the strategies, non-acceptance and awareness subscales of the difficulties in emotion regulation scale predicted the loneliness. This finding is a supportive result in terms of strategies and awareness subscales and can be interpreted for each subscale. In the strategies subscale, inability to use the appropriate emotion regulation strategy will affect how individuals cognitively evaluate the circumstances that makes them feel bad and the direction of their behavioral preference between avoiding or fighting the experience. In the awareness subscale, not being aware of their emotional reactions will cause them to disregard or ignore their feelings about experiences or not live their emotions sufficiently. In a review of indirectly related studies, Nikmanesh, Kazemi and Khosravi (2012) revealed that the difficulties in emotion regulation predicted the personality disorder and depression. They reported that individuals with difficulties in emotion regulation had a tendency to take risky decisions and have difficulty in controlling maladaptive behaviors. Studies indicating that loneliness had a mediating effect on the correlation between the difficulties in emotion regulation and eating disorders (Southward et al., 2014) and the difficulties in emotion regulation had a mediating effect on loneliness level (Yıldız, 2016) also support the study finding. Therefore, study findings demonstrate that the difficulties experienced by individuals in emotion regulation explain the loneliness.

Our study has a number of limitations. The first limitation was that only the young adults studying in university were included in the study. An individual's experiences, emotional processes, potential difficulties in expressing and organizing the emotions are influenced by the family environment, social structure and social environment. Thus, it is thought that broadening and diversifying the sample by taking into consideration the potential effects of different sociodemographic variables will provide more explanatory and significant findings on the scope of and correlation between loneliness and difficulties in emotion regulation. In addition, it is considered that the incorporation of variables such as the interpersonal relationship dimensions of emotional support, social support and emotional awareness into the process will be valuable for the findings of difficulties in emotion regulation. It can also be said that supporting the quantitative studies with qualitative study findings will provide more in-depth results and increase the explanatory power of the study. Practitioners, on the other hand, can organize workshops focused on emotion regulation for individuals experiencing social and emotional loneliness. Group work sessions focused on skill acquisition can be organized for each subscale of the difficulties in emotion regulation in order to prevent and reduce loneliness. Study findings regarding loneliness and difficulties in emotion regulation can be evaluated in educational institutions as part of prevention and intervention programs. Psychoeducation studies on emotion regulation skills and difficulties in emotion regulation can be conducted especially in the psychological counseling departments of universities.

**Ethic**

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and ethical standards.

**Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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