

Current Effect of Mother-Child Memory Talk on Emotion Regulation, Self-Esteem, and Memory

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: Oct. 24, 2023

Accepted: Feb. 23, 2024

Keywords:

Autobiographical memory,
Childhood,
Emotions,
Gender,
Self-esteem.

Abstract: Children talking to their parents more frequently about past experiences tend to have higher emotion regulation skills and self-esteem in their future lives, which may lead to higher volume and richer emotional content in future memories. Previous research also indicated that self-esteem has a strong bond with emotion regulation skills. This study's aim is to measure the mediator roles of emotion regulation difficulty and self-esteem on the relationship between childhood maternal reminiscing frequency and the volume and emotional content of the current memory experienced with the mother. Additionally, mediator roles of self-esteem in the connection between past maternal reminiscing and emotion regulation difficulty, and emotion regulation difficulty in the relationship between self-esteem and the current memory variables (i.e., total words, total emotion and unique emotion words) are examined. Participants (N=124, the age range was 22-39) filled out Rosenberg Self-Esteem, Emotion Regulation Difficulty, and Family Reminiscence Scales and wrote down one negatively-charged recent memory about their mothers. Path analysis revealed significant positive associations between past maternal reminiscing and self-esteem, emotion regulation difficulty, and total and unique emotion words in recent memory, and negative association between self-esteem and emotion regulation difficulty, supporting half of the mediation hypotheses. Results supported the notion that the frequency of parent-child reminiscing conversations in childhood is a parameter of child development since it can show its prospective effect via improving self-esteem and emotional functioning. Gender differences were not evident for current memory variables but more research on this issue is needed to reach more precise conclusions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mothers engage in conversations about shared or unshared past events with their children. It is well-established that such discussions are helpful for children in many ways related to cognitive, social, and emotional development (Laible, 2011). Some parental characteristics may improve or deteriorate child outcomes in the reminiscing context. To illustrate, when the mothers succeed in providing more elaborative, voluminous, and emotionally rich content during these discussions, the narrative skills, autobiographical memory, and self-concept development of the child are affected positively (Fivush, 2007; Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Peterson et al., 2007; Reese et al., 1993; Wang et al., 2010). Hence, the existing literature on maternal reminiscing has been based on the quality of the reminiscing conversations provided by the mothers rather than its frequency during childhood. In fact, some studies examined the

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frequency of emotion-related words or total words used in a memory talk between mother-child dyads (e.g., Fivush, 2007; Fivush & Nelson, 2006) but they did not measure the overall frequency of memory talks in the daily lives of mother-child pairs. How frequently mothers offer an opportunity to discuss shared past events with their children may also affect child development substantially. In addition, the parent-child reminiscing literature did not present much information about written memories shared with the mother. Thus, this study focused on written memories of the young adults recently experienced with their mothers. Moreover, although the positive effects of mother-child reminiscing on the child's emotion management and self-esteem have been shown in separate studies (Goodvin & Romdall, 2013; Harris et al., 2017), the direct and indirect associations between maternal reminiscing, emotion regulation skills, and self-esteem have not been examined together extensively. What's more, the existing maternal reminiscing literature is mainly composed of studies examining child outcomes prospectively. To our knowledge, the number of studies dealing with parent-child reminiscing and related outcomes retrospectively with adults is scarce (Öner & Gülgöz, 2022). Hence, retrospective research demonstrating the underlying mechanisms of maternal reminiscing is needed to draw more precise conclusions. For all these reasons, the current study tried to answer the questions regarding the effect of the frequency of memory talks between mothers and children about shared past events on adults' recent self-esteem, emotion regulation skills, and volume and emotional content of written memories recently experienced with the mothers.

Former studies also suggest that other than parent characteristics, including the volume and emotional atmosphere of the reminiscing conversations, the child's gender may be an influential factor in child outcomes (Aznar & Tenenbaum, 2015; Buckner & Fivush, 2000; Fivush et al., 2003). In several studies, female children were found to have an advantage over boys regarding the total word usage and the intensity of emotional expression in the reminiscing context due to the differential socialization process imposed by their parents. However, some studies failed to indicate such gender differences, as well (e.g., Svane et al., 2022). Therefore, gender differences in the reminiscing context should be further investigated to clarify this issue. The present study tried to close the gap in the previous literature by delving into the gender effect on the written current memories experienced with mothers.

1.1. Theoretical Background

At first, parent-child reminiscing conversations or memory talks can be perceived as solely an associate of autobiographical memory development. Although its huge effect on autobiographical memory cannot be denied, child development can benefit from such conversations about past events in various ways. Under parental guidance, children try to learn how to combine the outside world with their inner worlds and differentiate themselves as separate individuals from others (Fivush, 2020). This can be attributed to the theory of mind, which refers to being able to make inferences about others' mental states, including thoughts, feelings, desires, etc. (Premack, & Woodruff, 1978). Parent-child conversations about shared past events are likely to include referents to both the child's and others' mental states. For instance, a mother may discuss their last conflict with her child about something at home. This mother would probably try to explain her perspective by mentioning her feelings and thoughts on this issue. Then, she will likely encourage her child to speak up about his unique and subjective perspective by addressing his feelings and thoughts. This may explain why parent-child memory talk may fasten the theory of mind development in children (Pavarini et al., 2013; De Rosnay & Hughes, 2006).

Since the theory of mind is about self-knowledge and emotional awareness, frequently having a past-themed conversation with the child by accepting, verbalizing, and valuing the child's perspective would motivate the child to rely on and confidently express his subjective experiences and feelings. In time, such children will become adults with high self-esteem who can regulate their emotions efficiently. Indeed, empirical evidence supported the relevancy of

parent-child past referenced talk with child's improved self-esteem and better emotion regulation skills in many previous studies (e.g., Bohanek et al., 2008; Ellis et al., 2014; Laible et al., 2013; Marshall & Reese, 2022).

Another theoretical rationale for parent-child memory talks and child development might be attachment theory (Bowlby, 1979) since such conversations might strengthen the attachment bond between the child and parent (Bost et al., 2006). If parents form a secure attachment with their children, they will be guaranteed to have resilient children (Darling Rasmussen et al., 2019). One of the resilience factors associated with attachment security would be emotional management. Securely attached children are capable of cultivating efficient emotion regulation strategies for themselves (Brumariu, 2015). Furthermore, according to several studies, attachment security may be regarded as one of the variables responsible for adulthood self-esteem (Pinquart, 2023). Thereby, parent-child past-referenced daily talks can show favorable child outcomes that are empowered self-esteem and emotion management via raising attachment security. Overall, the present study bases its expectations regarding the study hypotheses on the theory of mind and attachment theory. Hence, the study's results will enlighten the theoretical implications in this sense.

1.2. Effect of Mother – Child Reminiscing on Child's Self-esteem

Mothers are the primary figures in the lives of children who determine the child's sense of self or self-concept via their daily talks about shared or unshared past events (Bird & Reese, 2006; Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Song & Wang, 2020; Welch-Ross et al., 1999). Hence, it is highly likely that child's self-esteem will be affected by such conversations between the mother and the child. For instance, the study of Marshall and Reese (2022) indicated that being exposed to an elaborative maternal reminiscing style during early childhood was positively associated with self-esteem in emerging adulthood. Furthermore, the child's future self-esteem seems to depend on the emotional content of mother-child reminiscing (Bohanek et al., 2008). Conversing more emotionally with the child as a mother regarding past events might boost the bond between the mother and the child, which, in turn, is inclined to promote the child's self-esteem. In the longitudinal study conducted by Harris et al. (2017), how mother-child reminiscing may influence a child's future self-esteem was investigated with a sample of mothers and their 6-14 aged children. Mother-child pairs were given a reminiscing task in which they were supposed to reminisce about a past adverse event. For the reminiscing task, the researchers coded both the participants' emotion-related words and behaviors. Sixteen months later, it was evident that the self-esteem levels of the children whose mothers provided more detailed explanations for the emotions were higher due to the increases in their secure attachment levels. In a nutshell, it can be considered that mother-child reminiscing talk is crucial in shaping the child's self-development concerning self-esteem (Reese et al., 2007). Although the existing literature is insufficient to indicate the association between the frequency of the mother-child reminiscing conversations as compared to the content of these conversations, it can be expected that when the children engage in a higher rate of such conversations with their mothers in daily life, their self-esteem development still can be influenced in a favorable way. Therefore, one of the hypotheses of the present study was that those with more frequent childhood reminiscing conversations with their mothers are believed to reap more self-esteem in their adulthood.

1.3. Mother-child Reminiscing and Emotion Regulation Skills

Emotionally more elaborative maternal reminiscing style may determine not only the child's self-concept and, more specifically, self-esteem development but also how the child will learn to manage or regulate their emotions. More elaborate mothers create opportunities for the discussion of self and emotions by helping their children be aware of their own and others' mental states including feelings (Fivush, 2020). Hence, it is unsurprising to observe that more elaborate mothers would have children with higher self-esteem and better emotion regulation skills. For example, Goodvin and Romdall (2013) examined the effect of mother-child

reminiscing on the children's self-concept and emotion management. As expected, it was indicated that when the children were encouraged to talk more about the negative affect in the reminiscing task, they perceived themselves as having a less negative affect, which in turn was thought to be linked to better self-representations of the children regarding the management and regulation of negative affect. When mother-child conversations about past events are detailed in terms of emotional content, the emotion regulation skills of the child will likely be boosted (Ellis et al., 2014; Laible et al., 2013; Sales & Fivush, 2005). This is especially true for the memory talk for negatively charged memories since children can learn how to express themselves and their negative emotions via such conversations (Fivush et al., 2000). It may be because parents may refer to emotion-related words more when talking to their child about negatively charged past events compared to when a positively charged event is to be discussed (Lagattuta & Wellman, 2002). In light of the existing literature, we predicted that those being exposed to more frequent childhood reminiscing conversations with their mothers would have better emotion regulation skills in their adulthood.

1.4. The Direct Link between Past Maternal Reminiscing and Recent Memory with the Mother

When children are grown up with their mothers who are highly elaborate in daily reminiscing talks, they have a better memory for remembering and narrating the past events they experienced (Noel et al., 2019; Salmon & Reese, 2016; Wareham & Salmon, 2006; Waters et al., 2019; Valentino et al., 2014), and this effect can be prolonged until adulthood. Therefore, the characteristics of mother-child reminiscing are likely to be related to children's memory and narrative skills in their future lives. Moreover, referring emotions during memory talks is known to promote child's emotional development including emotional understanding (Laible et al., 2013; Leyva et al., 2021). Therefore, it would make sense to expect that if parents expose their children to reminiscing conversations about important past events frequently, their children will be more likely to use more words and emotion referents in their memories when they become adults.

1.5. Mediator Role of Emotion Regulation and Self-esteem on Past Maternal Reminiscing and Recent Written Memory Variables

Expressing positive and negative emotions rather than suppressing them generally indicates mental and physical health (Berry & Pennebaker, 1993). Although it may be perceived that negative emotional expression is not beneficial, it may not be the case; it has been known that suppression of negative affect is an essential characteristic of individuals with anxiety and mood disorders (Campbell-Sills et al., 2006; Fernandes et al., 2022). Furthermore, negative emotional expression is crucial for social life since it is a basis for initiating intimacy with others (Graham et al., 2008). Since maternal reminiscing was found to be associated with higher child well-being (Fivush et al., 2009), its higher frequency in childhood would likely end up with more emotional expression in adulthood, which is associated with better mental health. Therefore, it is probable that when the children had mothers who used to talk a lot about shared past events in their childhood, they are going to be more skilled in regulating their emotions and experience less emotion regulation difficulty, which in turn is likely to be associated with the richer volume and emotional content of the current memories shared with their mothers.

The direct link between self-esteem and emotional expression was evident in a bunch of studies. Low self-esteem was found to be an associate of emotional suppression. In one study, it was found that increased anxiety was associated with decreased self-esteem, which in turn was found to be related to the suppression of emotions as an emotional regulation strategy (Fernandes et al., 2022). Some of the previous research (Brown & Marshall, 2001; Lightsey et al., 2006) indicated negative associations between self-esteem and negative emotions, but such studies only measured individuals' emotions by using Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) (Watson et al., 1988). The current literature has not provided any evidence for how

self-esteem might be related to emotional expression in written memories experienced with mothers. Although feeling negative emotions can be linked to low self-esteem, this may not be true when it comes to expressing negative emotions in a written memory. In fact, writing about negative experiences to express negative affect would be functional for mental health by enhancing emotional regulation. For instance, Ahmadi et al. (2010) found that when depressive individuals are encouraged to write down their negative experiences for emotional expression, their depressive symptoms decrease. The researchers explained this finding by claiming that writing about negative experiences might help reappraise these experiences and regulate negative emotions by having individuals face with challenges of life more efficiently and protecting their psychological well-being. Therefore, young adults with higher self-esteem are likely to write down their memories in a more detailed manner and to express their negative emotions more intensely when asked to write down their negatively charged memories with their mothers.

Former research also suggested that emotional regulation difficulty and self-esteem are negatively associated (Gomez et al., 2018; Mouatsou & Koutra, 2023; Surzykiewicz et al., 2022) since when the individuals have high self-esteem, they are likely to be good at regulating their emotions and have higher emotional intelligence (Rey et al., 2011). People with high self-esteem can express themselves without setting boundaries for their emotions and being overwhelmed by their negative emotions since they have the required emotion regulation skills. As a result, such confidence in themselves might result in experiencing negative affect differently than individuals with low self-esteem. Differential functioning of some cognitive processes for people with low and high self-esteem may be responsible here (Rimes et al., 2023). To illustrate, the study of Smith and Petty (1995) stated that individuals with high self-esteem tend to have different cognitions, such as recalling and thinking of less negative and more positive information, even when manipulated to deduce negative affect. Individuals with low self-esteem, on the other hand, had more negative thoughts when manipulated to induce negative affect. As explained before, numerous studies indicated that maternal reminiscing was related to child's self-development including self-esteem (e.g., Bohanek et al., 2008) Although past maternal reminiscing frequency can be directly linked to recent memory experienced with the mother, they can also be indirectly related to each other via the mediator role of improved self-esteem.

Final mediation hypothesis of the present study was about the indirect effect of self-esteem on recent memory experienced with the mother. When the connection between self-esteem and emotion regulation skills is considered (Gomez et al., 2018; Mouatsou & Koutra, 2023), it would be expected that emotion regulation difficulty would act as a mediator for the relationship between past reminiscing conversations between the mother-child dyad and variables of recent memory related to the mother.

1.6. Child's Gender and Its Effect on Mother-Child Reminiscing

When mothers engage in daily conversations with their children, they may consciously or unconsciously consider the child's gender and talk accordingly, which creates gender differences in mother-child reminiscing literature. When the child's gender is female, the parents may show a tendency to converse in a more voluminous and emotionally intense way as compared to when the child is male (Fivush et al., 2003; Kuebli & Fivush, 1992; Morawska, 2020; Pohárnok & Láng, 2021; Reese et al., 1996). As a result of this parental differences based on a child's gender, gender differences can be observed in child outcomes, too; girls tend to use more total words and emotion words in memory conversations (Aznar & Tenenbaum, 2015; Buckner & Fivush, 2000; Fivush et al., 2003; Reese et al., 1996). Yet, some studies did not claim gender differences in mother-child reminiscing. For instance, Svane et al. (2022) explored the gender differences in emotional memory conversations, and they did not find significant results neither for the parent's gender nor for the child's gender. However, the gender ideology

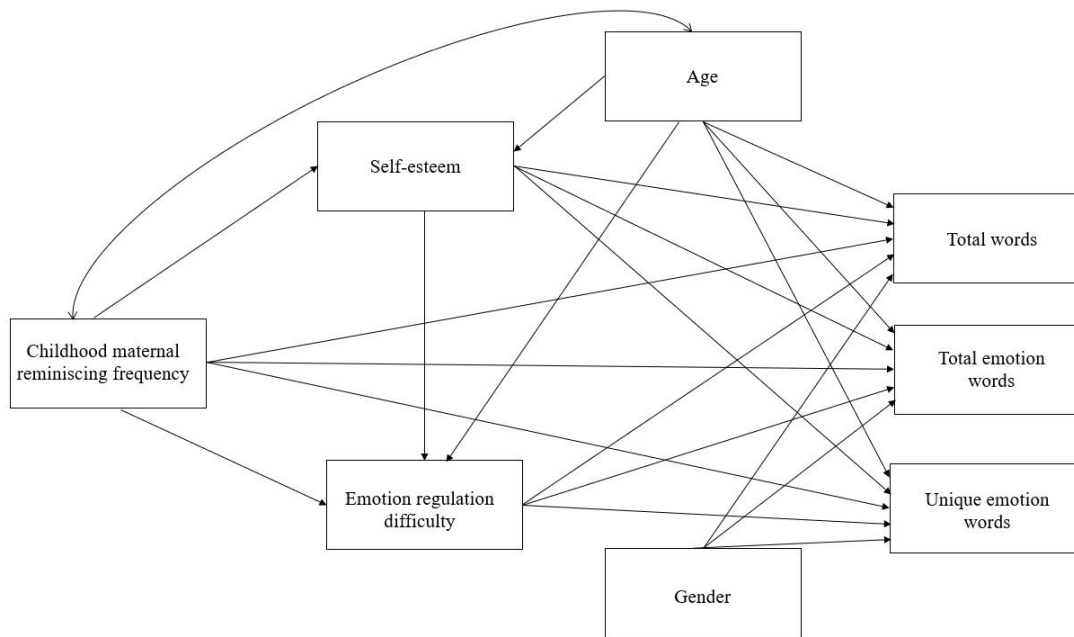
of the parents and the cultural context may have mattered in finding nonsignificant results since they conducted the study with a sample of Danish citizens of a mainly egalitarian culture. In a cultural context like Turkey, gender differences in mother-child reminiscing are probable to be observed since Turkey's cultural context is still under the influence of traditional gender ideology in many areas of life, including social, working, and within the family (Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu & Bernhardt, 2018). Considering the previous research, the expectation in the present study was that female participants would report more voluminous and emotionally intense written memories they recently experienced with their mothers.

In the meta-analytic review of Aznar and Tenenbaum (2020), 34 studies in the mother-child reminiscing literature were selected and examined regarding how frequent the emotional talk was between the mother-daughter and the mother-son dyads. They could not find significant results about such gender differences regarding the frequency of the mother-child emotion talk. Yet, although they considered the child's age a potential moderator variable, they did not consider or control the effect of emotion talk context. They included not only studies in which emotion talks in the context of reminiscing were investigated but also included studies in which emotion talks in different contexts such as free play or storytelling. Besides, they only looked at the frequency of such talks but not the content or level of elaboration. Overall, it can be concluded that gender differences in the mother-child reminiscing context are worth investigating with a Turkish sample.

1.7. Aims of the Study

This study tried to find out the connections between past maternal reminiscing frequency in childhood, current self-esteem, emotion regulation difficulty, and the emotional content and volume of negatively charged memory related to mother. To our knowledge, this study is one of the relatively rare studies in the literature in this sense. Considering the existing literature, it was hypothesized that individuals' past maternal reminiscing frequency and their recent self-esteem levels would be positively associated with the volume and emotional intensity of the written negative memories about their mothers. Moreover, past maternal reminiscing was expected to be negatively linked to emotion regulation difficulty, while it was thought to be positively related to self-esteem. Emotion regulation difficulty was predicted to be negatively associated with variables of current negative memory about the mother and self-esteem. Hence, serial and parallel mediation models, including self-esteem and emotion regulation difficulty as mediators, were proposed. Since age has been shown to be a correlate of self-esteem and emotion-related variables including emotional regulation and emotional expression in previous research (Bailey et al., 2020; Livingstone & Isaacowitz, 2021; Orth et al., 2018), its effect was decided to be controlled.

Other contributions of the present study were that the mediator roles of self-esteem and emotion regulation difficulty in the relationship between maternal reminiscing in childhood and the volume and emotional content of current negative memory experienced with the mothers were also examined with the simultaneous examination of serial and parallel mediation models. Therefore, it was proposed that emotional regulation difficulty would mediate the relationship between past maternal reminiscing frequency and current negative memory variables, and the relationship between self-esteem and current negative memory variables. It was also anticipated that self-esteem would mediate the association between past maternal reminiscing frequency and emotion regulation difficulty, and the association between past maternal reminiscing frequency and current negative memory variables. The proposed model of the study can be examined in [Figure 1](#).

Figure 1. The model of the current study.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

The data for the current study was gathered from 124 participants, which consisted of 84 females (67.7%) and 40 males (32.3%). Using convenience technique in sampling, the questionnaires were shared on social media and with METU psychology students on SONA systems in which undergraduate psychology students get bonus points from the classes in return for their participation in the studies. Eligible participants had their mothers alive and were between the ages of 22 and 40 to target individuals in early adulthood. The age range was between 22 and 39 ($M = 24.88$, $SD = 3.90$). One hundred participants (80.6%) reported a bachelor's degree. Regarding parental information, the most frequent maternal education level was a high school degree [44 mothers (35.5%)]. More than half of the participants [69 participants (55.6%)] reported that they have a single sibling, and almost half of the participants said being the first child in the family [60 (48.4%)]. Moreover, only a few participants stated that their mothers are divorced or widowed [26 (21%)].

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Rosenberg self-Esteem scale (RSES) short form

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) is a continuous scale with ten items created by Rosenberg (1965) to assess individuals' self-worth. It has a single factor, and half of the items are reverse-coded. Responses are based on the 4-Likert type scale including options from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree". An example item is "I take a positive attitude toward myself.". Psychometric characteristics of the Turkish version of RSES were evaluated by Çuhadaroğlu (1986) and found to be quite good. In our study, Cronbach's alpha value was found as .91.

2.2.2. Family reminiscence scale (FARS)

The Family Reminiscence Scale (FARS) was developed by Öner et al. (2020) to measure how frequently individuals used to engage in reminiscing talks with their parents about shared past events when they were a child. The FARS has ten five-point Likert items ranging from "never" to "very frequently". An example FARS item is "How often did your mother talk about any holiday experience that you had when you were a child?". It has a two-factor structure; one factor is "General Recurrent Events Reminiscence" (GRER), and the other one is "First-time Events Reminiscence" (FER). The Cronbach's alpha values were .86 and .75 for the GRER and

the FER, respectively, indicating good levels of internal consistency. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha value for the FER subscale was .81, while Cronbach's alpha value for the GRER subscale was .85.

2.2.3. Emotion regulation difficulty scale – Short form (DERS-16)

Emotion Regulation Difficulty Scale – Short Form (DERS-16) was a 5-point-Likert type scale (from 1 point referring to almost never to 5 point referring to almost always) with 16 items (Bjureberg et al., 2016). Higher scores mean more emotion regulation difficulty. Turkish version was created by Yiğit and Guzey Yiğit (2019). It has a five-factor structure, and the factors are "Clarity", "Goals", "Impulse", "Strategies", and "Non-acceptance". For total DERS-16, internal reliability was found as .92. For the factors Clarity, Goals, Impulse, Strategies, and Nonacceptance, internal reliabilities were .84, .84, .87, .87, and .78, respectively. In the present study, reliability coefficient was .94 for total DERS-16. For subscales, coefficients were .85, .83, .89, .90, .84 for Clarity, Goals, Impulse, Strategies, and Nonacceptance, respectively.

2.2.4. Emotional coding of memories

The outcome variable, the current negatively charged memory experienced with the mother, was operationally defined as the volume and emotional coding of these memories. Coding scheme of the memories included number of total words, number of total emotion and unique emotion words. The number of total words was counted to observe the volume of each memory reported by the participants. One component of the emotional content was the number of total emotion words used by the participants, including the repetitions of the exact emotion words. The second component of the emotional content was the number of unique emotion words used by the participants, which was calculated by excluding repeated emotion words so that how diverse the emotions used in the memories could be observed. To illustrate, if the participant uses an emotion word such as 'happiness' twice, it is counted as only one unique emotion word since the repetitions are excluded when calculating unique emotion words. However, for instance, if 'happiness' is present in the text twice, it is counted as two total emotion words since total emotion words count the repetitions.

2.3. Procedure

After receiving Middle East Technical University (METU) Ethics Committee's approval (0067-ODTUIAEK-2022), participants filled out an online survey, including an Informed Consent Form, Demographic Information Form, and other scales used. Data collection time was between January and June 2022. For the written memory task, they were instructed to write down one emotionally negative memory they experienced with their mothers in the recent past, detailed as much as possible. To prevent the priming effect, the memory task was at the beginning of the survey after informed consent and demographics forms. No specific time frame for the "recent past" expression was mentioned in the instruction of the memory task. This was because rather than the occurrence time of the event, it was believed that the emotional valence of the event would matter more for participants' remembering. In addition, if we limited the time of the event to the last week or month, the participants who did not experience any specific memory with their mothers in that particular period would not have participated in the study, which would mean some data loss. Hence, we tried to extend the participant pool as much as possible for such a qualitative study, in which it is hard to access participants. Two coders coded the data for the qualitative parts of the study, which included the memory task and its coding. The author, as an experienced coder in emotional coding of reminiscing conversations, trained the second coder, who was a graduate student in the related field of research.

2.4. Data Analysis

In order to investigate the inter-rater reliabilities of the three codes including the number of total words, total emotion, and unique emotion words, intraclass coefficients were calculated

by using IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 28. Structural equation modeling was utilized to test the hypotheses of the current study via AMOS 24.0 (Arbuckle, 2013). Specifically, the path analysis with observed variables was performed. Since age was observed to correlate significantly with outcome variables in the model, it was decided to add it as a control variable. Since the three outcome variables were correlated highly significantly, their error terms were covaried in the model. Bootstrapped standard errors were utilized to test indirect effects.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Inter-Rater Reliability of Memory Coding Schemes

To check inter-rater reliabilities for the coding schemes of written memories, a second coder took part in the coding process of the data. The first coder did the emotional coding of memories of the whole sample, and the second coder did the emotional coding of memories for of 20% of the sample. The interrater reliabilities for the number of total words, emotion words, and unique emotion words were found to be as 1.00, .981, and .957 respectively, indicating high levels of reliability (see [Table 1](#)).

Table 1. Interrater reliabilities of the coding schemes.

Coding Scheme	Intraclass Correlation Coefficient
Total word	1.00
Total emotion word	.981
Unique emotion word	.957

3.2. Descriptives, Intercorrelations, and Path Analysis

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the study variables can be checked on [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#). Path analysis pointed out that the proposed model exerted a good fit to the data ($\chi^2 (N = 124, df = 4) = 6.01, TLI = .97, CFI = .99, NFI = .96, RMSEA = .06; p = .199$). The paths from childhood maternal reminiscing frequency to self-esteem ($\beta = .27, p = .001$ 95% CI [.12, .41]) was significant. The paths from emotion regulation difficulty to total emotion words ($\beta = .23, p = .036$, 95% CI [.04, .40]) and unique emotion words ($\beta = .28, p = .008$, 95% CI [.10, .45]) were also significant whereas the path from emotion regulation difficulty to total number of words was not significant. The paths from childhood maternal reminiscing frequency to emotion regulation and from childhood maternal reminiscing frequency and from self-esteem to outcome variables (i.e., total words, total emotion words, & unique emotion words) were not significant, contradicting with the mediation hypotheses of the current study. Hence, two proposed parallel mediation models were not supported for the mediator roles of self-esteem and emotion regulation difficulty on the relationships between childhood maternal reminiscing frequency and outcome variables. However, as expected, self-esteem of the individuals was negatively associated with their emotion regulation difficulties ($\beta = -.55, p < .001$, 95% CI [-.68, -.37]). Additionally, there was a serial mediation for the link between childhood maternal reminiscing frequency and total emotion words and unique emotion words by self-esteem and emotion regulation difficulty. The indirect effect of self-esteem via emotion regulation difficulty on total emotion words ($-.12, p = .011$) and unique emotion words ($-.15, p = .003$) were significant, partially conforming to our expectation since the direction of the relationships between emotion regulation difficulty and outcome variables were the opposite of what was expected. Contrary to our expectations, the indirect effect of self-esteem via emotion regulation difficulty on total number of words was not significant. In line with the expectations, the indirect effect of childhood maternal reminiscing frequency on emotion regulation via self-esteem ($-.15, p = .005$) was significant, too. Unexpectedly, there were not any significant gender differences in current memory variables of total, total emotion, and unique emotion words (see [Figure 2](#)).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the study variables (N = 124).

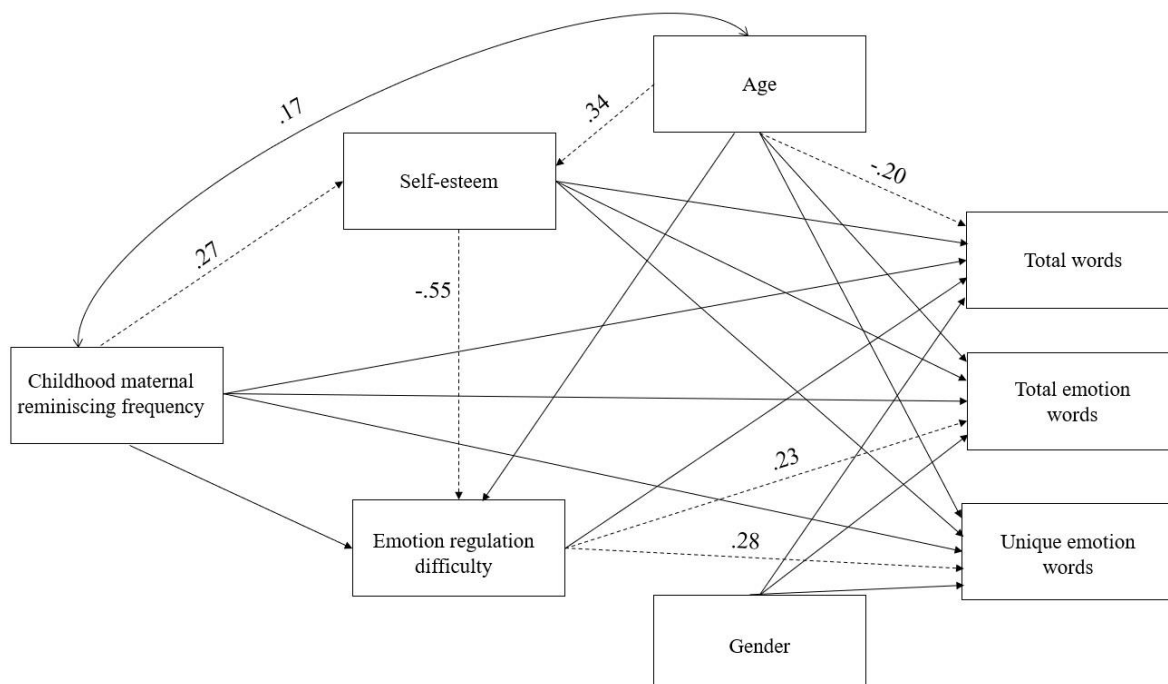
Variables	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Age	24.88	3.90	22	39
Total words	55.75	45.51	2	234
Total emotion words	4.21	3.38	0	19
Unique emotion words	3.54	2.52	0	13
Self-esteem	28.65	6.42	13	40
Maternal reminiscing frequency	29.11	8.58	10	50
Emotion regulation difficulty	44.33	14.50	20	79

Table 3. The intercorrelations and internal consistency reliabilities of the study variables (N = 124).

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	-	-.00	.18*	.31**	-.26**	-.19*	-.18*	.30**	-.17	-.30**
2. Gender		-	.12	.00	-.14	-.07	-.08	.14	-.10	-.04
3. Birth order			-	.60**	-.22*	-.08	-.11	-.00	-.21*	-.07
4. Siblings				-	-.21*	.00	-.03	-.00	-.21*	-.11
5. Total words					-	.73**	.71**	-.26**	-.01	.25**
6. Total emotion words						-	.97**	-.20*	.00	.28**
7. Unique emotion words							-	-.20*	.03	.31**
8. Self-esteem								(.92)	.21*	-.58**
9. Maternal reminiscing frequency									(.88)	-.07
10. Emotion regulation difficulty										(.94)

Notes. Numbers on the Diagonal are Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients. Gender was coded as “0” for females and “1” for males. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 2. The standardized estimations of the proposed mediational model.



Note. Only significant paths indicated by dashed lines were reported.

4. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

In the current study, how the frequency of memory conversations with the mother in childhood may predict the recent negative memory shared with the mother via self-esteem and emotion regulation difficulty were examined. As a promoter of the previous literature, it was found that the frequency of reminiscing conversations in childhood predicted individuals' self-esteem levels positively (Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Harris et al., 2017; Marshall & Reese, 2022; Reese et al., 2007; Song & Wang, 2020). Surprisingly, the direct link between the frequency of shared past event talks with the mother did not predict the variables of individuals' current negative memory shared with the mother (i.e., number of total words, total emotion words, and unique emotion words). This may be stemmed from the fact that only the frequency of shared past talks with the mother was included rather than the volume and the emotional content of the past reminiscence. In the literature, studies finding the link between mother-child reminiscing and future child outcomes generally examined the content of those conversations rather than the frequency (Cook et al., 2023; Fivush & Nelson, 2006; Koh & Wang, 2021; Noel et al., 2019; Peterson et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2010). Moreover, the measurement differences in the two variables can also account for the nonsignificant association between them. While the zoom-in technique, the frequency count of words and emotion words, was utilized for current negative memory variables, the self-report measure in which the construct is given an estimated score was used to quantify the frequency of past maternal reminiscing (Grysmann & Mansfield, 2020). Besides, although the Family Reminiscence Scale included items for both negatively and positively charged memories, the current memory shared with the mother had an emotionally negative charge. Future research can reexamine this relationship by using similar measurements for both variables.

The association between maternal past reminiscing frequency in childhood and the individuals' emotion regulation difficulty was insignificant, contradicting the anticipated results. However, self-esteem negatively predicted individuals' emotion regulation difficulties, which was congruent with the expectations. The indirect effect of past reminiscing on emotion regulation difficulty via self-esteem was also significant; the association between past reminiscing frequency and emotion regulation difficulty was fully mediated by self-esteem. The existing literature showed the link between being exposed to emotionally rich reminiscing style and having enhanced emotional knowledge and emotion regulation skills (Goodvin & Romdall, 2013; Laible et al., 2013; Leyva et al., 2021; Mitchell & Reese, 2022; Valentino et al., 2019). Previous research also indicated that when such reminiscing conversations between parents and children include a social aspect like resolving a conflict with others and necessary cognitive coping styles, children's positive self-concepts are likely to be encouraged (Goodvin & Romdall, 2013; Song & Wang, 2020). The current findings suggested that the social dimension of memory talks between parents and children may be a prerequisite for the emotional development of children. Only after parents try to teach their children how to express and control their emotions when they experience a conflict in their social relationships by discussing the adverse event in a detailed way children can have enhanced emotion management skills. One can assume that parents who engage in more frequent memory talks with their children about important life events are also attentive to reminiscing with their children about negatively charged memories from both emotional and social perspectives. Therefore, the significant indirect association between the frequency of past maternal reminiscence and emotion regulation difficulty via self-esteem might have been observed. The direct association can be evident only between the content of memory talks-rather than the frequency-and emotion regulation difficulty. In conclusion, this finding had a unique contribution to the literature in revealing that not only the emotional content but also the frequency of maternal reminiscing in childhood may be a determinant of a child's self-esteem and emotion regulation difficulty.

The emotion regulation difficulty of the individuals predicted the emotional content of the current negative memory shared with the mother. Findings demonstrated that the direction of the relationship was positive, which was in the reverse direction of what had been proposed previously. In other words, the findings implied that as the emotional regulation difficulty increases, number of total emotion words and unique emotion words in written negatively charged memory about the mother also increase. Although the expression of negative affect is thought to be functional in general as an indication of mental health (Berry & Pennebaker, 1993; Campbell-Sills et al., 2006; Chang et al., 2018; Fernandes et al., 2022; Gross & Cassidy, 2019; Roth et al., 2019) and expressive suppression was linked to psychopathology (McCullen et al., 2023; Young et al., 2019), when the frequency and diversity of negative emotions are too many, this would reflect dysfunctionality, which points out a curvilinear relationship between emotion regulation difficulty and emotional expression. As explained by Kennedy-Moore and Watson (2001), negative emotional expression may be like a two-sided medallion having pros and cons simultaneously; the use of negative emotional expression may signalize both the presence of nuisance in the individual and her effort to cope with the negative affect being experienced. Thus, although a child's and parents' mentioning diverse negative emotions and using as many words as possible during a conversation about a shared past event is beneficial for future child outcomes (Fivush & Salmon, 2023; Gross & Cassidy, 2019; Peterson et al., 2007; Reschke et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2010), this association may not still be valid when that child becomes an adult. There might be an ideal level for expressing negative affect in written narratives of adults; when it is too much or too little, it may lose functionality. These may explain why emotion regulation difficulty positively predicted the intensity of emotions in the current memory of individuals. Furthermore, emotional regulation difficulty was not a significant associate of total word usage. It was expected that emotion regulation difficulty was negatively related to number of total words used. This was because in childhood, poor language skills are associated with poor emotion management in many previous studies (Cohen & Mendez, 2009; Ren et al., 2016). Yet, we did not evaluate the participants' language skills in the present study; the number of words used may have nothing to do with adult language skills, although the number of words used by children may indicate their language skills substantially. Participants of the current study may have intentionally preferred to use fewer words for other reasons. Their language skills or proficiencies would have been assessed to see whether there is a connection between language and emotion management in adults.

Self-esteem did not directly predict the volume and emotional content of the current negative memory of the individuals they shared with their mothers, which again contradicted our predictions. The mediator role of self-esteem on the relationship between the frequency of past reminiscence with the mother and the volume and emotional content of the current negative memory shared with the mother was also not supported. However, there was a full mediation in which the indirect effects of self-esteem on total emotion words and unique emotion words were mediated by the emotion regulation difficulties of the individuals, which is in line with the previous literature. Many studies found a positive link between self-esteem and associates of emotion regulation skills such as emotional health, emotional competence, and emotional intelligence (Bibi et al., 2016; Coetzee et al., 2006; Gomez et al., 2018; Moksnes & Espnes, 2012; Mouatsou & Koutra, 2023; Surzykiewicz et al., 2022). All these findings underlined and supported the idea that parents invest in their children's future self-representations and emotional functioning by having frequent reminiscing conversations with them. In this sense, the theoretical implication of the current study would be the validation of the relationship between parental reminiscing, theory of mind, and attachment security. Frequently and regularly engaging in memory talks with the children by discussing children's and other people's internal states, including emotions, reinforces the theory of mind development, and the children can feel the bond between them and their parents and develop a secure attachment style. Thus, such children are observed to have higher self-confidence and potent emotional

management systems (Bohanek et al., 2008; Harris et al., 2017; Pavarini et al., 2013; De Rosnay & Hughes, 2006). In addition, these results suggest that when negative emotions are defined, validated, accepted, and allowed to be expressed under parental guidance during childhood, they can be processed and controlled effectively in adulthood, reducing the need to express and regulate such negative emotions. It seems that when the parents do not meet such needs in childhood, such deficiency still shows itself in their children's adulthood. Parents should know their daily interactions comprise a basis for their children's future quality of life in terms of mental and psychological well-being.

As the final purpose of the present study, gender differences in recent memory variables were tested, and no significant results were evident. One explanation for this finding would be about the sample characteristics in terms of gender ideology. During the interactions with their children, parents tend to exert behaviors mirroring their gender ideology (Gowda & Rodriguez, 2019; Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016; Perales et al., 2021; Schroeder et al., 2019). For instance, it was found by Bulanda (2004) that fathers with more gender-egalitarian viewpoints devote more time with their children in terms of playing, engaging in leisure time activities, and having conversations as compared to fathers with more traditional views. Since the sample was composed of METU students who may have had familial backgrounds in which gender egalitarian values and beliefs might be more internalized, which might have prevented gender differences. Even if their familial backgrounds were more traditional regarding gender ideology, being a university student at METU, which provides a liberal context for the students, may have eliminated gender differences (Yüksek, 2022). As a limitation of the study, METU students may not represent Turkey's population.

A final important note about the nonsignificant gender effect would be the unequal group sizes; since the numbers of male and female participants were unequal, this discrepancy across the two groups may have affected the results. Therefore, this nonsignificant result should be taken cautiously. It was observed that male participants were less eager to participate in a study involving writing down a personal memory shared with their mothers. In fact, such a difference between males and females regarding shyness or self-disclosure can imply potential gender differences in the reminiscing context (Li et al., 2022). Hence, future studies should proceed to investigate gender differences in memory research further by including at least closer numbers of male and female participants. Since the data was composed of a qualitative part, which is demanding and time-consuming, the sample size was relatively low in the current study, which was another study limitation. Other limitations of this study included being a retrospective study based on the participants' self-reports, which means the participants' memory decreased accuracy for past reminiscence may have affected the results. Another limitation would be not having information about the emotional content and frequency of emotional content of past reminiscing talks with the mother in childhood. Therefore, future research may focus on developing a more specific scale measuring both the emotional content and the frequency of mother-child reminiscing. Alternatively, individuals can be asked to talk about or write down the childhood memories they shared with their mothers, and similar studies can be replicated to ensure the results. Similar studies can be designed to include a more representative sample to test potential gender differences in volume and emotional intensity of the current negative memory shared with the mother. Future research may also focus on the possible curvilinear relationship between emotion regulation skills and the expression of negative affect to examine whether there might be an ideal and healthy level of negative emotional expression associated with better emotion regulation skills.

This study was one of the few studies examining the direct and indirect relations between maternal reminiscing frequency in childhood, recent self-esteem and emotional regulation difficulty, and the content of recent written negative memory experienced with the mother. The findings underlined the worth of reminiscing conversations of the mother-child dyads for the

child's future self-esteem, emotion regulation skills, and emotional expression in recent memory. To some parents, simple daily conversations about past events might look trivial at first sight. Still, these results posit that the context of reminiscing conversations serves as a fundamental key for parents to raise a mentally and emotionally healthy individual. Therefore, social policies should target families and educators to train them on the importance of reminiscing conversations for child development. Parents should allocate their time to reminiscence with their children on a regular basis frequently. Apart from the frequency, the content of reminiscing conversations matters, too. Having an elaborate reminiscing style, including open-ended questions such as “wh questions,” letting the child express his inner world with his emotions, and accepting and naming the child's positive and negative emotions should be parts of such conversations (Fivush et al., 2009; Marshall & Reese, 2022). Such content information should also be explained to the parents and educators. Preschool and primary school-aged children's families and educators in preschools and primary schools should compose the target populations.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests and Ethics

The author declares no conflict of interest. This research study complies with research publishing ethics. The scientific and legal responsibility for manuscripts published in IJATE belongs to the author. **Ethics Committee Number:** Middle East Technical University, Applied Ethics Research Center, 0067-ODTUIAEK-2022.

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APPENDICES

6.1. Demographic Information Form

Yaşınız: _____

Cinsiyetiniz: _____

Kardeşleriniz varsa cinsiyetleri neler ve siz kaçınıcı çocuksunuz: _____

Annenezin ulaştığı en yüksek eğitim seviyesi nedir ? _____

Babanızın ulaştığı en yüksek eğitim seviyesi nedir ? _____

Ebeveynlerinizin medeni durumu nedir ? _____

6.2. Negatively Charged Memory About the Mother

1. Yakın zamanda **annenizle** yaşadığınız ve duygusal olarak **OLUMSUZ** bir anınızı düşünmenizi istiyoruz. Lütfen bu anıyı mümkün olan en ayrıntılı biçimde tarif ediniz. _____

6.3. Family Reminiscence Scale

1. Annenez birinci doğum gününüzü size ne sıklıkta anlatmıştır?

Hiç	Çok az	Biraz	Oldukça	Çok

2. Annenez çocukken nasıl bir evde yaşadığınızı size ne sıklıkta anlatmıştır?

Hiç	Çok az	Biraz	Oldukça	Çok

3. Annenez çocukken yaptığınız yaramazlıkları size ne sıklıkta anlatmıştır?

Hiç	Çok az	Biraz	Oldukça	Çok

4. Annenez çocukken geçirdiğiniz hastalık veya yaralanmaları size ne sıklıkta anlatmıştır?

Hiç	Çok az	Biraz	Oldukça	Çok

5. Annenez çocukken gittiğiniz bir tatili size ne sıklıkta anlatmıştır?

Hiç	Çok az	Biraz	Oldukça	Çok

6. Annenez çocukluğunuzdaki oyuncaklarınızı size ne sıklıkta anlatmıştır?

Hiç	Çok az	Biraz	Oldukça	Çok

7. Anneniz çocukken sizi ağlatan bir olayı size ne sıklıkta anlatmıştır?

Hiç	Çok az	Biraz	Oldukça	Çok

8. Anneniz size çocukluğunuza ilişkin fotoğraf veya videolar göstererek çocukluğunuz üzerine ne sıklıkta konuşmuşlardır?

Hiç	Çok az	Biraz	Oldukça	Çok

9. Anneniz konuşmaya başladığınızı size ne sıklıkta anlatmıştır?

Hiç	Çok az	Biraz	Oldukça	Çok

10. Anneniz yürümeye başladığınızı size ne sıklıkta anlatmıştır?

Hiç	Çok az	Biraz	Oldukça	Çok

6.4. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Sizin için uygun olanı seçiniz.

1) Kendimi en az diğer insanlar kadar değerli buluyorum.

a) Çok doğru b) Doğru c) Yanlış d) Çok yanlış

2) Bazı olumlu özelliklerim olduğumu düşünüyorum.

a) Çok doğru b) Doğru c) Yanlış d) Çok yanlış

3) Genelde kendimi başarısız bir kişi olarak görme eğilimindeyim.

a) Çok doğru b) Doğru c) Yanlış d) Çok yanlış

4) Ben de diğer insanların birçoğunun yapabildiği kadar bir şeyler yapabilirim.

a) Çok doğru b) Doğru c) Yanlış d) Çok yanlış

5) Kendimde gurur duyacak fazla bir şey bulamıyorum.

a) Çok doğru b) Doğru c) Yanlış d) Çok yanlış

6) Kendime karşı olumlu bir tutum içindeyim.

a) Çok doğru b) Doğru c) Yanlış d) Çok yanlış

7) Genel olarak kendimden memnunum.

a) Çok doğru b) Doğru c) Yanlış d) Çok yanlış

8) Kendime karşı daha fazla saygı duyabilmeyi isterdim.

a) Çok doğru b) Doğru c) Yanlış d) Çok yanlış

9) Bazen kesinlikle kendimin bir işe yaramadığımı düşünüyorum.

a) Çok doğru b) Doğru c) Yanlış d) Çok yanlış

10) Bazen kendimin hiç de yeterli bir insan olmadığını düşünüyorum.

a) Çok doğru b) Doğru c) Yanlış d) Çok yanlış

6.5. Emotion Regulation Difficulty Scale – Short Form

Duygu D zenleme G çl g   leđi-Kısa Form (DDG -16)

Ařađıdaki ifadelerin size ne sıklıkla uyduđunu, her ifadenin yanında yer alan 5 dereceli  lek  zerinden deđerlendiriniz. Her bir ifadenin altındaki 5 noktalı  lekten, size uygunluk yuzdesini de dikkate alarak, yalnızca bir tek rakamı yuvarlak iine alarak iřaretleyiniz.

	Hemen hemen hi (% 0-% 10	Bazen (% 11- % 35)	Yaklařık Yan yarıya (% 36- % 65)	ođu zaman (% 66- % 90)	Hemen hemen her zaman (% 91- % 100)
1. Duygularıma bir anlam vermekte zorlanırım.					
2. Ne hissettiđim konusunda karmařa yařarım.					
3. Kendimi k�tu hissettiđimde iřlerimi bitirmekte zorlanırım.					
4. Kendimi k�tu hissettiđimde kontrolden ıkarım.					
5. Kendimi k�tu hissettiđimde uzun s�re b�yle kalacađına inanırım.					
6. Kendimi k�tu hissetmenin yođun depresif duyguyla sonulanacađına inanırım.					
7. Kendimi k�tu hissederken bařka Őeylere odaklanmakta zorlanırım.					
8. Kendimi k�tu hissederken kontrolden ıktıđım korkusu yařarım.					
9. Kendimi k�tu hissettiđimde bu duygundan dolayı kendimden utanırım.					
10. Kendimi k�tu hissettiđimde zayıf biri olduđum duygusuna kapılırım.					
11. Kendimi k�tu hissettiđimde davranıřlarımı kontrol etmekte zorlanırım.					
12. Kendimi k�tu hissettiđimde daha iyi hissetmem iin yapabileceđim hibir Őey olmadıđına inanırım.					
13. Kendimi k�tu hissettiđimde b�yle hissettiđim iin kendimden rahatsız olurum.					
14. Kendimi k�tu hissettiđimde kendimle ilgili olarak ok fazla endiřelenmeye bařlarım.					
15. Kendimi k�tu hissettiđimde bařka bir Őey d�řünmekte zorlanırım.					
16. Kendimi k�tu hissettiđimde duygularım dayanılmaz olur.					