

# Reflection of Consumers' Material Values on Brand Bullying

## Tüketicilerin Materyalist Değerlerinin Marka Zorbalığına Yansıması

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### ABSTRACT

The concept of materialism which expresses the importance given to material objects, expresses devotion to material needs and desires. Materialism affects people's attitudes and behaviors. For materialists, property, life and identity are important concepts. In addition, materialistic tendencies negatively affect young people and create feelings such as greed and stinginess. Bullying is a behavior that involves physical or psychological violence resulting from the power imbalance between the victim and the bully. This behavior, which is common among young people, especially in schools, includes characteristics such as "repetition", "intentionality" and "power imbalance". The act of bullying can be caused by an imbalance in social status and is often associated with peer pressure. The study aimed to measure whether consumers' material values are reflected in brand bullying and the findings were examined using the structural equation method. According to the results obtained, it was seen that consumers' material values affect brand bullying. The study revealed that brand identity and loyalty have a positive effect on centrality and success values, while brand bullying has a negative effect. In addition, the study is considered important because it can provide a basis for future studies by understanding consumers' behavior in the market and expanding the information in the literature. It is also thought that the study will guide future studies by conducting it on consumers with different demographic and descriptive characteristics.

### KEYWORDS

Tangible value, Brand, Brand bullying, Bullying

### ÖZ

Maddi nesnelere verilen önemi ifade eden materyalizm kavramı, maddi ihtiyaç ve arzulara bağlılığı belirtmektedir. Materyalizm insanların tutum ve davranışlarını etkiler. Materyalistler için mülkiyet, yaşam ve kimlik önemli kavramlardır. Materyalist eğilimler gençleri olumsuz yönde etkilemekte ve açgözlülük, cimrilik gibi duyguların oluşmasına neden olmaktadır. Zorbalık ise, mağdur ile zorba arasındaki güç dengesizliğinden kaynaklanan fiziksel veya psikolojik şiddet içeren bir davranıştır. Özellikle okullarda, gençler arasında yaygın olan bu davranış, "tekrarlama", "kasıtlılık" ve "güç dengesizliği" gibi özellikleri barındırmaktadır. Zorbalık, sosyal statüdeki dengesizlikten kaynaklanabilmekte ve sıklıkla akran baskısıyla ilişkilendirilmektedir. Çalışmada, tüketicilerin maddi değerlerinin marka zorbalığına yansıtıp yansımadığını ölçmek amaçlanmış ve bulgular yapısal eşitlik yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlar doğrultusunda, tüketicilerin maddi değerlerinin marka zorbalığını etkilediği görülmüştür. Çalışmada, marka kimliği ve sadakatinin merkezîyet ve başarı değerleri üzerinde olumlu, marka zorbalığının ise olumsuz etkisi olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca çalışma, tüketicilerin pazardaki davranışlarını anlama ve literatürdeki bilgileri genişletip, ilerideki çalışmalara temel oluşturabileceği için önemli görülmektedir. Araştırmanın farklı demografik ve tanımlayıcı özelliklere sahip tüketicilere yapılarak gelecekteki çalışmalara rehberlik edeceği de düşünülmektedir.

### ANAHTAR KELİMELELER

Maddi değer, Marka, Marka zorbalığı, Zorbalık

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## INTRODUCTION

Materialism refers to the value placed on material objects. This concept reflects people's dependence on material needs and desires. It also affects people's attitudes and behaviors (Belk, 1985). For materialists, material possessions are very important for their life and identity. Materialistic tendencies affect young people negatively and create feelings such as greed and stinginess. Individuals with materialistic tendencies are generally prone to shopping and show loyalty to certain brands (Eroğlu and Kılıç, 2021).

The concept of bullying refers to a behavior involving physical or psychological violence resulting from power imbalance. This behavior which is common among young people, especially in schools has characteristics such as repetition, intentionality and power imbalance. Bullying can be caused by an imbalance in social status and is often associated with peer pressure (Farrington, 1993; Aslan and Polat, 2023). This makes young people prefer certain brands and lead to brand bullying. People who do not use popular or desirable brands are often ostracized and bullied.

In line with the above information, the main purpose of the research is to determine whether consumers' material values are reflected in brand bullying. In this context, data were obtained from 420 participants through a questionnaire and analyzed using structural equation modeling.

### 1. THE CONCEPT OF MATERIAL VALUES

The concept of "materialism" is recognized as the importance attached to the possession of material objects (Burroughs and Rindfleisch, 2002). "The Oxford English Dictionary" defines materialism as "devotion to material needs and desires, neglect of spiritual matters; a lifestyle, idea or tendency based entirely on material interests". The understanding of materialism influences people's attitudes and behaviors in various situations, including consumption areas (Richins and Dawson, 1992). However, it has been observed that there is a negative relationship between "materialism" and "happiness" in people's lives. It is believed that materialistic individuals cannot have happiness because they are not satisfied with life, cannot enjoy it and want unrealistic happiness (Belk, 1985). Their possessions and possessions are very important for their lives and identities (Richins and Dawson, 1992). The increase in materialistic actions has a particularly negative impact on young people. Increasing materialistic tendencies negatively affect not only the consumption culture of young people but also their school performance, their attitudes at school and their relationships with their peers (Goldberg et al. 2003). Materialistic traits that lead people to unhappiness may also include characteristics such as greed, stinginess and jealousy. People may feel these emotions and want to have objects, experiences or things that others have (Belk, 1985).

According to Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002), materialism causes conflict and stress among people with high collective tendencies. In the study with 14-year-old participants, it was observed that people with high levels of materialism in this age group had more direct and indirect purchasing influence on their parents. It was also observed in the study that people in this age group with high levels of materialism are very sensitive to advertisements and promotions and are interested in new products. In addition, they tend to shop and save less (Goldberg et al. 2003). According to the study conducted by Churchill and Moschis (1979), the value of materialism in individuals increases depending on the duration of television viewing and communication with peers. In addition, according to the data obtained, female participants show a lower materialistic tendency than male participants. In other words, it was observed in the study that female participants had lower materialistic attitudes than male participants. Goldberg et al. (2003) found that the children of materialistic people also have more materialistic behaviors. In a study conducted by Goldsmith and Clark (2012) with 187 US students, it was observed that the level of materialism in individuals had a positive relationship with purchasing status-enhancing products. In the research, it was determined that people with low materialistic tendencies do not try to gain status through brands. In a study conducted by Segal and Podoshen (2012) with 1180 Americans, it was examined whether there is a difference between consumers' gender and "materialism", "conspicuous consumption", "brand loyalty" and "impulse buying behaviours". In the study, differences were found in terms of consumers' gender, materialistic levels, conspicuous consumption and impulse buying behaviours. However, in the study, it was determined that the materialistic levels of men were higher than women. Additionally, it has been observed that the conspicuous consumption levels of male consumers are higher than female consumers. The study also revealed that female consumers exhibit more impulse buying behaviour than male consumers. However, the study revealed that there was no significant difference between the materialistic levels and brand loyalty of male and female consumers. Based on the study conducted by Podoshen and Andrzejewski (2012) with more than 500 consumers, a positive relationship was found between materialism and brand loyalty. According to the data obtained in the study, consumers who are loyal to a particular brand and have high materialistic tendencies exhibit avoidance behaviour towards the brand when their materialistic

levels decrease. A study conducted in an "Imam Hatip" high school in Turkey which provides religion-oriented education shows that high school students' interest in social responsibility issues increases as their materialistic levels decrease. Additionally, the results show that there is no difference between the gender of the students participating in the study and their material value levels (Koç, 2020).

In Yavuz's (2017) study on the reasons for shopping on Instagram, it was determined that as the materialism level of the participants increased, they spent more time on Instagram and made purchases. In addition, it was determined that participants who were less generous or had high levels of jealousy shopped more on Instagram. In another study, it was examined whether there is a relationship between young people's attitudes towards spending time on social media and watching television with their materialism levels and conspicuous consumption behaviors. According to the study conducted among high school students, a positive relationship was found between materialism and conspicuous consumption. In addition, the study found that peer-to-peer communication, television and social media use have an impact on the materialism levels of young people. In addition, social media and peer communication were found to be effective on ostentatious consumption (Balıkçioğlu and Volkan, 2016). In a study conducted by Öztürk and Nart (2016) with university students, it was concluded that being interested in fashion plays a mediating role between materialistic tendency and unplanned purchasing.

In line with the above information, it can be said that materialism affects many choices and behaviors in terms of consumption. It is also seen that "materialism" affects the type and quantity of products purchased (Richins and Dawson, 1992). However, the desire to have and buy things can lead young people to greed, aggressive and negative behaviors. Dissatisfaction with possessions makes individuals more unhappy and disturbs their psychology (Goldberg et al. 2003; Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002). Sometimes, people show their unhappiness and dissatisfaction by behaving aggressively towards the people around them. This aggression may sometimes be through the brands used by the people around them.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF BRAND BULLYING

The concept of bullying which does not have a universally accepted definition (Farrington, 1993) is defined as a behavior involving physical or psychological violence resulting from a power imbalance between the victim and the bully (Smith and Brain, 2000). In other words, "bullying" is defined as a systematic and repeated attack by some aggressive individuals on their victims (Olweus, 1978; Olweus, 1977; Olweus, 1980). Bullying is quite common especially among young people and in schools. It is seen that a great majority of the young population is exposed to bullying or exhibits this behavior (Farrington, 1993; Carney, 2000). This violent behavior is quite common among adolescents especially in schools (Jia and Mikami, 2018; Ayas and Pişkin, 2011). In order to identify a behavior as bullying, there must be repetition, intentionality and power imbalance. Considering these three characteristics, bullying is explained as the systematic abuse of power among adolescents (Menesini and Salmivalli, 2017). In addition, bullying among adolescents in schools is increasing day by day (Talu and Elmas, 2020; İme, Çınar, Keskinoglu and Kütük, 2020; Ayas and Pişkin, 2011).

According to research on bullying, the number of bullies and bully perpetrators is increasing day by day (Carney, 2000). According to a study conducted in Finland, "19%" of students are bullied or exhibit this behavior at least once a week (Kaltiala-Heino et al. 1999). In a study conducted with high school students in Scotland, it was found that "7.5%" of the students were "bullies" and "16.7%" were "victims" (Karatzias, Power and Swanson, 2002). Based on the study conducted by Panayiotis et al. (2010) with 1645 students in Southern Cyprus, "5.4%" of the participants were "bullies", "7.4%" were "bullied or victims", and "4.2%" were both "bullies and victims". According to the findings of the study, older male students bully more than female students. However, even though boys engage in this behavior more than girls, both girls and boys are victimized equally (Farrington, 1993). In a study conducted by Nansel et al. (2001) with 15686 students, "13%" of the participants were bullies, "10.6%" were bullied and "6.3%" were both. According to the study, male students are more likely to be both "victims" and "bullies" than female students. In addition, the prevalence of bullying is higher among 6th and 8th graders than 9th and 10th graders. The data obtained in the studies on bullying in Turkey do not show a great deal of variation. According to the research conducted by Atik (2006) in Turkey, "4.6%" of the students are bullied, while "21.3%" are victims of bullying. Additionally, in the research, "6.5%" of the students were both "victims" and "bullies". In addition, "44.7%" of the students have never been involved in bullying. The most common type of bullying practiced in the study was found to be verbal. According to the study conducted by Gültekin (2003), the rate of victimized students was "13.9%" and the rate of attacking personal belongings in bullying was "12.5%". In the study conducted by Gökler (2007), "27%" of the students were identified as victims, "10%" as bullies and "21%" as both "victims" and "bullies". In the study, it was found that there were more males in the bullying, victim and bully groups. In Kartal and

Bilgin's (2009) study, "41.3%" of the students were "victims", "3.3%" were "bullies" and "29.9%" were both "victims and bullies". In the findings of Pişkin (2010), "35.1%" of the students were victims, "30.2%" were bullies and "6.2%" were in both categories. According to the findings, male students were more likely to be in the bully and bully-victim groups while female students were more likely to be in the victim group. In addition, according to the data, it was determined that students from upper socioeconomic level schools bullied more than students from middle and lower segments. It is seen that the type of bullying is verbal. Based on the study conducted by Ayas and Pişkin (2011), there are differences between the levels of exposure to bullying or bullying of students studying in different types of high schools. According to the study, the students who are exposed to bullying the most are studying in industrial vocational high schools and the students who bully the most are studying in private high schools. In addition, students studying in "Anatolian High Schools" are in the group who are exposed to bullying the least and who bully the least. In Dölek's (2002) study, "31.5%" of 5th graders were victims, "23.95%" of 7th graders and "10.61%" of 9th graders. The understanding of bullying is based on the idea that those who are stronger oppress and disturb those who are weaker than them. In this context, older students are believed to be physically stronger. Therefore, it is understandable that upper class students bully lower class students. In other words, the fact that lower grade students bully less can be explained by the fact that these students are the youngest students in the school and do not have the physical or psychological strength to bully upper grade students (Ayas and Pişkin, 2011).

Bullying can be practiced not only physically but also verbally or emotionally. Behaviors such as mocking, humiliating, excluding from a social group and ridiculing a person are also perceived as bullying (İme, et al. 2020). Bullying can be caused not only by physical power imbalance but also by imbalance in social status (Menesini and Salmivalli, 2017). It is seen that especially adolescents want to be in harmony with their peer groups (Valentine, 2000). The search for conformity causes adolescents to want to look like the people in the groups they desire (Grouzet et al. 2005). This leads adolescents to use certain brands (Isaksen and Roper, 2016). According to the research conducted by Roper and Shah (2007), it was found that children between the ages of 7 and 11 have a high degree of brand awareness and have knowledge about what is fashionable. In the study carried out by Hogg et al. (1998), the symbolic meaning of clothes is very important for children between the ages of 7-10. It was found that the image of brands selling sports products is especially important among this age group. According to a study conducted with Finnish youth aged 16-20, the use of cell phones by young people is associated with fashion and impulsive consumption (Wilksa, 2003). Not only clothing or electronic products but also food choices among young people are a sign of image and status (Stead, McDermott, MacKintosh and Adamson, 2011). The acceptance of consumption as a status especially among young people leads to the acceptance of people who do not use that brand as nonconformists (Roper and Shah, 2007). This situation has led to the concept of brand bullying which is the bullying that a person does to another person because of a brand that he/she uses or does not use (Kucuk and Aledin, 2021; Williams and Littlefield, 2018; Breitsohl, Jimenez and Roschk, 2022). In this context, research with children and adolescents has shown that low-income people who cannot afford accepted brands are victims of bullying (Isaksen and Roper, 2016). It has been found that young people prefer 'cool' brands in order to minimize the possibility of being bullied (Williams and Littlefield, 2018). Having a brand with a high social status can cause young people to feel constant pressure. Not having the desired brand makes young people feel worthless and lowers their self-esteem. Especially children between the ages of 7 and 11 feel bad and excluded because they do not own high-status brands (Roper and Shah, 2007). In addition, students bully those who do not use popular or desirable brands and those who use those brands are perceived as having higher status (Williams and Littlefield, 2018). In his study, Wooten (2006) investigates adolescents' encounters with humiliating behaviors on the basis of consumption norms. In the study, it was observed that adolescents excluded, ridiculed and warned their peers who violated consumption norms. In other words, those who do not use brands approved by their environment may be subjected to discrimination and bullying. This situation leads to low self-esteem and social exclusion (Roper and Shah, 2007). In the study carried out by Williams and Littlefield (2018), it was determined that students were excluded through overt and covert violence due to branded products. For example, people who use brands such as Nike, Abercrombie & Fitch are considered to have high social status while brands such as "K-Mart" and "Walmart" are not.

In the light of the above information, it can be said that the position and image of brands determine the position and image of consumers. The use of undesirable brands among social groups may cause people to be bullied secretly or openly. It has been observed that people who do not want to be bullied determine their brand choices accordingly. It should not be forgotten that the struggle to have the latest fashion products and brands with high status forces individuals financially (Roper and Shah, 2007).

### 3. THE PRESENT RESEARCH

In the study, whether consumers' material values are reflected in brand bullying is examined by equation modeling. For this purpose, Breitsohl et al.'s (2022) study titled "Investigating consumers' motives for consumer brand-cyberbullying on social media" and Anlı's (2020) study titled "Adaptation of the Material Values Scale to Turkish" were used in the research. In the research, convenience sampling method was used in order to reach the data quickly and easily (Kurtuluş, 2010). This content materialist introductions are generally due to the growth of young people (Goldberg, Gorn, Peracchio and Bamossy, 2003: 279) survey studies for educational universities. In addition, the volumes considered suitable for research on problem solving in the studies are distributed between 300 and 500 (Naresh and Birks, 2000: 351). According to the table where the placement capacity of Serekan (2002) is measured appropriately, the number of suitable sections of the 1000000-person compartment is given as 384. In this context, a survey was used as a good research method and a survey was conducted on 420 students at the Faculty of Communication at Marmara University.

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is an advanced statistical method used to analyze complex relationships, especially in social sciences. SEM differs from other analyses in that it can work with both observed variables and unobservable, latent variables. The structural model reveals cause-effect relationships. In this model, direct and indirect effects between dependent and independent variables are determined. Equation modeling in SEM allows evaluating all relationships between observed and latent variables in a single analysis. This modeling is quite effective in analyzing complex relationships and understanding the effects of mediating or moderating variables. Such models make the relationship more understandable and mathematically express the structural connections between variables (Aksay and Ay, 2016; Jacobs and Wallis, 2005; Dursun and Kocagöz, 2015; Kline, 2023).

In this context, SPSS 24.0 program was used for statistical analyses in the study. "Descriptive Statistical Methods" ("Mean", "Standard Deviation", "Median", "Frequency", "Ratio", "Minimum", "Maximum") were used to evaluate the study data. Explanatory factor analysis was used in the study. "LISREL 8.7" and "Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)" were used in the research.

### 4. FINDINGS

#### 4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Of the participants, 27.1% (n=114) were male and 72.9% (n=306) were female. 58.8% (n=247) were aged 18-20 years and 41.2% (n=173) were 21-25 years old. 31.7% (n=237) were bachelor's degree, 68.3% (n=119) were postgraduate. 1.4% (n=6) were married, 98.6% (n=414) were single. 14.0% (n=59) were worked, 86.0% (n=361) were don't work. 31.4% (n=132) had incomes between 0-4000 TL, 30.7% (n=129) had incomes between 4001-6000 TL, and 37.9% (n=159) had incomes between 6001-8000 TL.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics**

		n	%
<b>Gender</b>	<i>Female</i>	306	72.9
	<i>Male</i>	114	27.1
<b>Age</b>	<i>18-20 Age</i>	247	58.8
	<i>21-25 Age</i>	173	41.2
<b>Education</b>	<i>Bachelor'sDegree</i>	133	31.7
	<i>Postgraduate</i>	287	68.3
<b>Marital Status</b>	<i>Married</i>	6	1.4
	<i>Single</i>	414	98.6
<b>Do you work?</b>	<i>Yes</i>	59	14.0
	<i>No</i>	361	86.0
<b>Income</b>	<i>0-4000 TL</i>	132	31.4
	<i>4001-6000 TL</i>	129	30.7
	<i>6001-8000 TL</i>	159	37.9

#### 4.1.1. Results of "Explanatory Factor Analysis" and "Confirmatory Factor Analysis"

The "Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)" goodness of fit measurement and "Bartlett's sphericity test" were examined to measure the applicability of explanatory factor analysis. The closer "The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin"

measure is to 1, the more appropriate it is to perform factor analysis on the current data (Zivadinovic, 2004). In the analysis, it was calculated as 0.826 in the scale of material values and 0.896 in the scale of brand-cyberbullying. As a result of the data obtained, it was considered appropriate to analyze the group of data. Based on the results of exploratory factor analysis, the items of the scale consist of four sub-dimensions. The total variance explanation rate of the scales was calculated as 66.38% for the material values scale and 74.02% for the brand-cyberbullying scale. According to researchs, it is known that the larger the variance ratios obtained as a result of the analysis, the stronger the factor structure. In social fields, it is considered sufficient for this variance ratios to be between "40%" and "60%" (Karagöz, 2017). The results of the study support these findings. In addition, it was seen in the findings obtained in the study that all values were within the ranges in the literature.

**Table 2: "KMO" and "Bartlett's Test Results of Material Values and Brand-Cyberbullying Scales**

	Material Values	Brand-Cyberbullying
<b>"Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy"</b>	<b>0.826</b>	<b>0.896</b>
<b>"Chi-Square"</b>	973.458	5406.619
<b>"Df"</b>	28	325
<b>"Sig."</b>	<b>&lt;0.000</b>	<b>&lt;0.000</b>

The validity of the measurement model, evaluated with convergent and discriminant validity, is examined. According to Azwa et al. (2016), convergent validity shows the tendency of all items to confirm each other. In this context "Composite Reliability (CR)" indicates the consistency of constructs, while "Variance in Variance (AVE)" measures the amount of variance relatively attributable to the construct. According to Pervan et al. (2018), "The Composite Reliability (CR)" for each structure must be 0.6 and above and AVE must be 0.5 and above. Moreover, even if the "AVE" is less than 0.5 but the composite reliability is greater than 0.6, the convergent validity of the structure is still sufficient (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

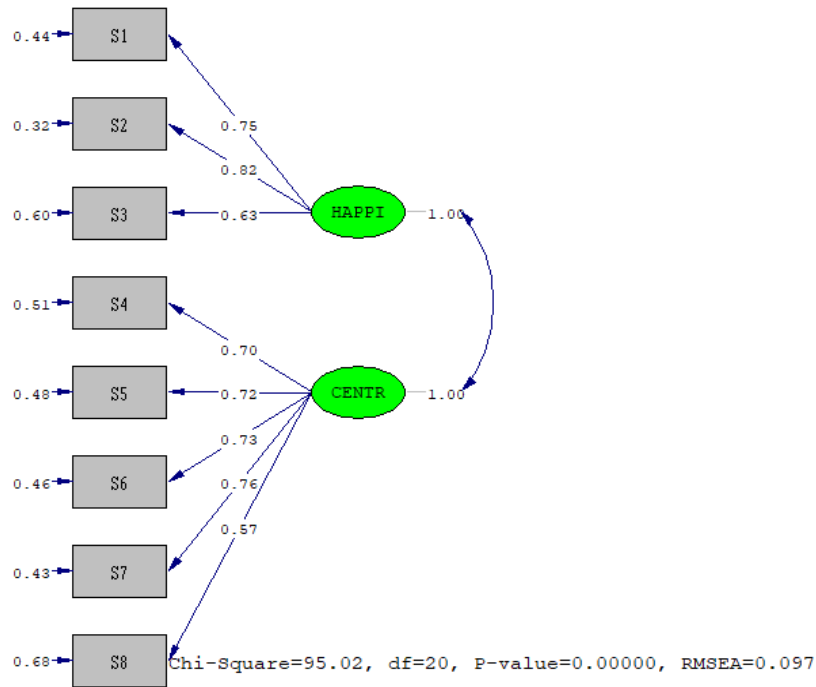
In the analysis conducted in the study, it can be said that convergent validity is achieved if the composite reliability values are higher than 0.6 for each structure, even if the AVE is less than 0.55 (Pervan et al. 2018). In the study, "CR" and AVE Values" were found to be above the specified values, and the results are shown in "Table 3" below. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), the Cronbach alpha values of the scales used in the research between 0.70 and 0.99 mean that the scales used are reliable. Since "Cronbach's Alpha" values were determined within these determined ranges, it was determined that the scales used in the study were reliable.

**Table 3: Results of the "CR", "AVE", and "Cronbach's Alpha Value of the Material Values and Brand-Cyberbullying Scales"**

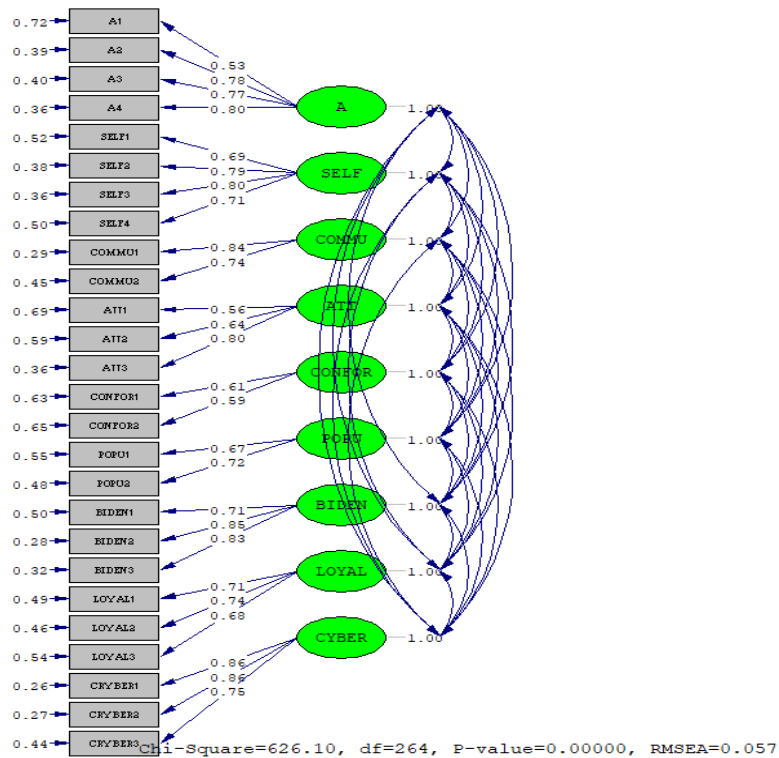
	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	CR
<b>"Happiness"</b>	<b>0.761</b>	<b>0.544</b>	<b>0.780</b>
<b>"Centrality and Success"</b>	<b>0.747</b>	<b>0.489</b>	<b>0.826</b>
<b>"Affiliation"</b>	<b>0.824</b>	<b>0.501</b>	<b>0.797</b>
<b>"Self-acceptance"</b>	<b>0.830</b>	<b>0.561</b>	<b>0.836</b>
<b>"Community"</b>	<b>0.768</b>	<b>0.627</b>	<b>0.770</b>
<b>"Attractiveness"</b>	<b>0.711</b>	<b>0.454</b>	<b>0.710</b>
<b>"Conformity"</b>	<b>0.777</b>	<b>0.460</b>	<b>0.629</b>
<b>"Popularity"</b>	<b>0.748</b>	<b>0.484</b>	<b>0.652</b>
<b>"Brand Identification"</b>	<b>0.834</b>	<b>0.639</b>	<b>0.840</b>
<b>"Brand Loyalty"</b>	<b>0.741</b>	<b>0.509</b>	<b>0.757</b>
<b>"Consumer Brand-Cyberbullying"</b>	<b>0.859</b>	<b>0.681</b>	<b>0.864</b>

The  $\chi^2 / df$  (4.75), “RMSEA” (0.097) “CFI” (0.97) and “NFI” = (0.95) values of the material values scale are within the acceptable fit values. It is shown in “Figure 1”. The  $\chi^2 / df$  (2.37), “RMSEA” (0.057), “CFI” (0.97) and “NFI” = (0.95) values of the brand cyberbullying scale are within the acceptable limits of fit. It is shown in “Figure 2”. (Erkorkmaz et al. 2013).

**Figure 1: Values of the Material Values Scale**



**Figure 2: Values of the Brand-Cyberbullying Scale**



### 4.1.2. Result of Structural Equation Modeling

The results of “The Sem” of the research are given below. “Goodness-Of-Fit Statistics” and “Limits of The Structural Model” in “Figure 2” and “Figure 3” are given in “Table 4”.

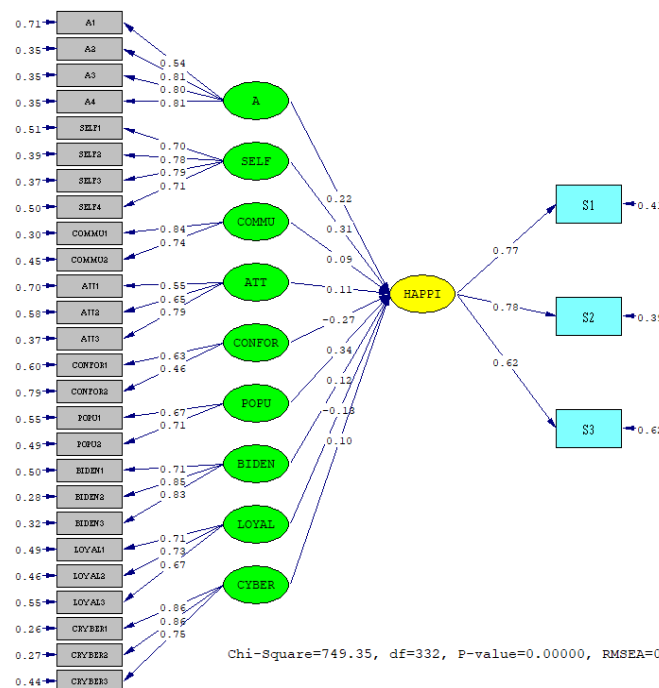
**Table 4: “Limits and The Results of the Structural Model”**

“Fitness Criterion”	“Perfect Fitness”	“Acceptable Fitness”	“Model 1”	“Model 2”
“ $\chi^2 / df$ ”	“ $1 \leq \chi^2 / df \leq 3$ ”	“ $3 < \chi^2 / df \leq 5$ ”	2.25	2.34
“RMSEA”	“ $0 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.05$ ”	“ $0.05 < RMSEA \leq 0.10$ ”	0.055	0.057
“NFI”	“ $0.95 \leq NFI \leq 1$ ”	“ $0.90 < NFI < 0.95$ ”	0.95	0.95
“NNFI”	“ $0.95 \leq NNFI \leq 1$ ”	“ $0.90 < NNFI < 0.95$ ”	0.97	0.96
“SRMR”	“ $0 \leq SRMR < 0.05$ ”	“ $0.05 \leq SRMR < 0.10$ ”	0.055	0.064
“CFI”	“ $0.97 \leq CFI \leq 1$ ”	“ $0.95 \leq CFI < 0.97$ ”	0.97	0.97

The characteristics of the model outputs indicate an acceptable to excellent fit, as in “Table 2”. Additionally, in addition to the criteria,  $\{\chi^2 / df\}$  being less than 3 also indicates an acceptable fit. This means that for model 1 and model 2, a  $\chi^2 / df$  value less than 3 is statistically significant (Erkorkmaz, et al. 2013).

As can be seen in “Figure 1”, "Affiliation" has a positive effect on "Happiness" with a coefficient of 0.22. "Self-acceptance" has a “positive effect” on "Happiness" with a coefficient of 0.31. "Community" has a “positive effect” on "Happiness" with a coefficient of 0.09. "Attractiveness" has a “positive effect” on "Happiness" with a coefficient of 0.11. Conformity has a “negative effect” on "Happiness" with a coefficient of 0.27. "Popularity" has a “positive effect” on "Happiness" with a coefficient of 0.34. "Brand Identification" has a “positive effect” on "Happiness" with a coefficient of 0.12. "Brand Loyalty" has a “negative effect” on "Happiness" with a coefficient of 0.13. "Consumer Brand-Cyberbullying" has a “positive effect” on "Happiness" with a coefficient of 0.10.

**Figure 3: The Results of The Structural Equation Modeling 1**

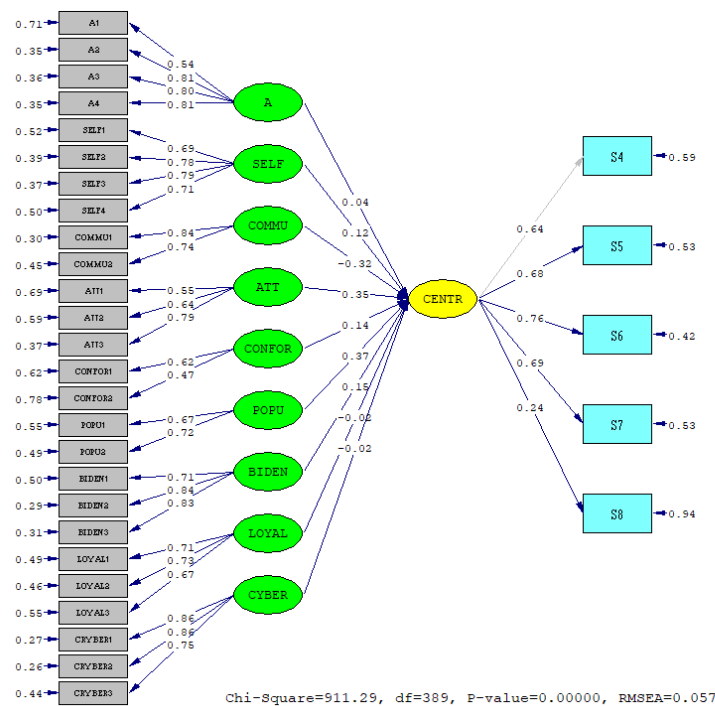


As can be seen in “Figure 2”, “Affiliation” has a “positive effect” on "Centrality and Success" with a coefficient of 0.04. “Self-acceptance” has a “positive effect” on "Centrality and Success" with a coefficient of



0.12. “Community” has a “negative effect” on "Centrality and Success" with a coefficient of 0.32. “Attractiveness” has a “positive effect” on "Centrality and Success" with a coefficient of 0.35. “Conformity” has a “positive effect” on "Centrality and Success" with a coefficient of 0.14. “Popularity” has a “positive effect” on "Centrality and Success" with a coefficient of 0.37. “Brand Identification” has a “positive effect” on "Centrality and Success" with a coefficient of 0.15. “Brand Loyalty” has a “negative effect” on "Centrality and Success" with a coefficient of 0.02. “Consumer Brand-Cyberbullying” has a “negative effect” on "Centrality and Success" with a coefficient of 0.02.

Figure 4: The Results of The Structural Equation Modeling 2



**CONCLUSION**

“Materialism” is defined as the importance attached to the possession of material objects. In addition, materialism exists in people as a lifestyle, thought or tendency based entirely on material interests. This understanding affects people's attitudes and behaviors in various situations including consumption areas. In particular, materialistic actions negatively affect young people not only their culture of consumption but also their school performance, attitudes at school and relationships with peers. Materialism can lead to negative behaviors such as greed, stinginess and jealousy in young people. It also creates a desire to have objects, experiences or possessions that others have.

The bullying that a person inflicts on other people because of the brands they buy or do not buy is called brand bullying. It is observed that young people are sometimes subjected to bullying because they do not use popular brands. It was found that young people generally prefer "cool" brands in order to avoid bullying. It was also observed that having a brand with a high social status creates pressure on young people and not having a desirable brand can lower self-esteem. In some cases, those who do not use popular or desirable brands are bullied and those who use these brands are perceived as having higher status. In conclusion, it can be said that the position and image of brands determine the social position and image of consumers.

According to the study conducted by Ergen (2014), it was observed that young people perceive material values as a means of happiness more than older people. It was determined that these participants who perceived material values as a means of happiness had less sustainable consumption behaviors. In our research, it was also determined that the coefficient of brand bullying has a positive effect on happiness. In the study carried out by Öztürk and Nart (2016), it was found that materialism has a positive effect on using fashionable products. Additionally, it is seen in the study that materialism has a positive effect on unplanned purchasing behavior. In this context, it can be said that individuals with high materialism values consume more and adapt to new products and trends faster. According to the data we obtained in our research, being popular, loyalty and self-acceptance positively affect individuals' happiness. In this context, it can be thought that individuals

turn to brands in order to be popular to accept themselves and to feel belonging to a place. On the reasons why students are bullied, it was found that the bullies wear ugly clothes or have ugly haircuts or wear outdated glasses (Frisén, Holmqvist and Oscarsson, 2008). According to the study carried out by Breitsohl et al. (2022), consumers who want to be popular and attractive are highly likely to engage in brand bullying against others while those who want to connect with the people around them and help the society are less likely to do this behavior. In addition, according to the research, consumers who identify with a brand and are loyal to it are highly likely to engage in brand bullying. In our research, it is seen that brand bullying has a negative effect on centrality and success which are the sub-dimensions of the material values scale.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

It is thought that the findings of the research will help brands to better understand the attitudes and behaviors of consumers. It is believed that the data obtained will guide brands in determining their advertising tactics. Brands that understand consumer attitudes and behaviors can improve their communication activities based on the data obtained in the research. In this context, it is thought that the study will contribute to the literature. However, the survey used in the research was conducted with the participation of Marmara University students. In this context, the demographic characteristics of the participants constitute the limitation of the research. Therefore, it is believed that the study will shed light on future research to be conducted among consumers with different demographic characteristics, cultures, attitudes and behaviors.

### **ETHICS STATEMENT**

“For the research of this article, Ethics Committee Approval was received in accordance with the decision of the Ethics Committee of Marmara University Social Sciences Institute” dated 2023-13-01 and numbered 2023-3”.

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